



## The Literary Analysis of al-Mutanabbī's Baqā'ī Shā'a Ode for Badr b. 'Ammār from the Perspective of Rhetorical Devices

Mütenebbī'nin Bedr b. Ammār İçin Söylediği Bekâî Şâe Kasidesinin Edebi Sanatlar Açısından Tahlili

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**Abstract:** The literary journey of the Arab poet al-Mutanabbī is often divided into distinct phases, with the nine years he spent as the court poet of the Hamdānī Emir Sayf al-Dawla widely regarded as the pinnacle of his career. Preceding this celebrated period, however, are the three years he spent under the patronage of Badr b. 'Ammār, the governor of Tabriz. This earlier phase represents a crucial stage of maturity in the poet's development, serving as a significant prelude to his later peak. While most scholarly attention has been devoted to al-Mutanabbī's Hamdānī period, the Badr b. 'Ammār phase has received comparatively less critical examination. Nevertheless, it holds considerable importance in the poet's literary trajectory, marked by the composition of numerous high-quality poems. This study focuses on one of al-Mutanabbī's panegyric odes from the Badr b. 'Ammār period, offering an in-depth analysis of its rhetorical devices. The findings suggest that the poet largely adhered to the conventional structure of the panegyric tradition established during the Abbasid era, without introducing substantial innovations. The poem maintains the expected sections of the genre and does not exhibit significant formal departures. However, several stylistic features that later became hallmarks of al-Mutanabbī's poetry—such as hyperbolic expressions, intricate similes and metaphors, and the integration of aphoristic wisdom—are already evident in this ode. The analysis also identifies certain weaknesses in the rhetorical elements of the poem, which are discussed comprehensively and summarized in the conclusion. These observations contribute to a nuanced understanding of this transitional yet formative phase in al-Mutanabbī's literary career. These have been elaborated in detail in the study and presented as findings in the conclusion section.

**Keywords:** Arabic Language and Rhetoric, Abbasid Poetry, al-Mutanabbī, Badr b. 'Ammār, Panegyric.

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**Öz:** Arap şairi Mütenebbī'nin (ö. 354/965) edebi hayatı belirli dönemlere ayrılmaktadır. Edebiyat tarihçileri ve şiir eleştirmenlerinin dikkat çektikleri bu evreler içerisinde zirve sayılabilecek dönem, şairin Hamdānī Emiri Seyfüddevle (ö. 356/967) ile tanışıp onun saray şairi olarak yanında kaldığı dokuz yıllık zaman dilimidir. Bundan önceki evre ise Taberī Valisi Bedr b. Ammār'ın yanında kaldığı üç yıllık süredir. Bu dönem, şairin zirve öncesi olgunluk dönemini temsil etmektedir. Şair üzerine yapılan akademik çalışmaların büyük bir kısmı zirve döneme yoğunlaşmış, buna karşılık Bedr b. Ammār dönemi nispeten ihmal edilmiştir. Hâlbuki bu dönem de şairin edebi kariyerinin önemli bir basamağıdır ve oldukça nitelikli şiirler söylemiştir. Bu çalışmada işbu döneme ait kasideler içerisinde, şairin istidadını gösterdiği bir methiye kasidesi edebi sanatlar ekseninde incelenmiştir. Görüldüğü kadarıyla şair, bu kasidesinde Abbasi dönemi methiye geleneğini olduğu gibi devam ettirmiştir. Methiye kasidesinden beklenen fasıllara olduğu gibi riayet etmiş ve şekil bakımından bir yenilik getirmemiştir. Şairin daha sonraki dönemde alamet-i farikası sayılacak mübalağalı anlatımları, teşbih ve istiare uygulamaları ve özellikle de hikmet içerikli beyitleri serpiştirmesi kendini belirgin surette hissettirmektedir. Kasidenin edebi sanat açısından zayıf tarafları da bulunmaktadır. Çalışmada bunlar ayrıntılı olarak ele alınmış ve bulgu olarak sonuç kısmında paylaşılmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Arap Dili ve Belagati, Abbasi Şiiri, Mütenebbī, Bedr b. Ammār, Methiye.

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## 1. Introduction

Abū al-Tayyib al-Mutanabbī was born in 303/915 in the Banū Kinda quarter of Kufa<sup>2</sup> and experienced a turbulent early life. At the age of nine, following the Qarmatian invasion in 312/924, he migrated with his family to the Semāwa desert, where he was raised among Bedouin Arabs. This environment, known for preserving the purity of the Arabic language, played a pivotal role in nurturing his poetic talent.<sup>3</sup> In 316/928, as a result of a second Qarmatian incursion, he relocated to Baghdad, where he immersed himself in the study of Arabic. There, he received instruction from prominent scholars in grammar, rhetoric, and poetry, while benefiting from the city's vibrant libraries and literary culture. In 318/930, al-Mutanabbī journeyed to Syria, composing eulogies in cities such as Manbij, Latakia, and Tripoli (Trablus al-Shām) for financial gain. However, his aspirations extended beyond such transient achievements; he sought to secure a position of influence and authority. Driven by this ambition, he aligned himself with a Bedouin-led rebellion in Latakia. His association with this movement led to accusations of claiming prophethood, culminating in his imprisonment by the Ikshīdīd governor of Homs, Lu'lu', in 322/934. Following his release in 324/936, al-Mutanabbī resumed his pursuits. Between 325 and 328/937–940, he traveled extensively, composing poetry in cities such as Damascus, Aleppo, Latakia, Tiberias, and Antioch. These efforts reflected his determination to rise above the constraints of a transient livelihood dependent on modest patronage and to establish himself as one of the preeminent poets of the Arab world.

As the poet frequently emphasizes in his poems, he was always on a quest. This quest pushed him to constantly explore new places and realize his inner potential. In this context, the year 328/939 can be considered as one of the turning points in which the poet realized and developed his literary identity. On this date, al-Mutanabbī met Bedr b. Ammār al-Harshānī al-Asadī, the governor of Damascus under the Syrian amīr al-umarā' Ibn Rāik (d. 330/942), and this acquaintance marked an important turning point in the poet's career.<sup>4</sup> Bedr b. Ammār's patronage was like a salvation for the poet and he began to sing poetry under his patronage. In the words of Ṭahā Husayn, al-Mutanabbī, like a thirsty traveler, changed his direction as soon as he saw water.<sup>5</sup> Bedr b. Ammār's Arab origin and his harsh attitude towards the Persians particularly attracted al-Mutanabbī, who was an Arab nationalist poet, and this strong character inspired him.<sup>6</sup> In this period, the foundations of the poet's literary career were laid and he completed his literary style and the process of self-knowledge with his six eulogies addressed to Bedr b. Ammār. The ode of praise, which is the subject of this study, occupies an important place as the third ode he wrote for Bedr b. Ammār.

This ode addressed by al-Mutanabbī to Bedr b. Ammār stands out as a typical example that embodies important elements of the Arabic eulogy tradition of the Abbasid period. The ode consists of 47 couplets in total. The meter of wāfir is used and lām is preferred as the revī letter. This meter and letter choice reflect the stylistic patterns of the eulogy genre of the period. At the same time, the introduction of the qasida includes the motif of waqfatun talaliyya (longing after the beloved), which is common in Arabic literature.<sup>7</sup> Such an introduction reflects the aesthetic understanding of the period as a form of expression that expresses the pain and longing felt in the absence of the beloved. Especially this introduction in ghazal form, which extends up to 17 couplets, has an important place in determining the emotional state of the ode before the transition to the text. In the ode, *takhallus* is performed and the transition to the praise (methiye) part is made. This transition shows that the general structure of the classical eulogy ode

<sup>2</sup> Abū al-Barakāt al-Anbārī, *Nuzhetu al-albāb*, trans. Ibrāhīm al-Sāmūrā'ī (Jordan: Mektebat al-Manār, 1405/1985), 219.

<sup>3</sup> Abū Bakr Ahmad b. 'Alī b. Sābit al-Khatīb al-Baghādī, *Tārīhu Baghdād*, ed. Mustafā Abdūlqādir (Beirut: Dār al-Kutubi al-'Ilmiyye, 1417), 4/324.

<sup>4</sup> İsmail Durmuş, "Mütenebbī", Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 2006), 32/195. (195-200).

<sup>5</sup> Ṭahā Husayn, *Ma'a al-Mutanabbī* (United Kingdom: Muesseset al-Hindāwī, 2013), 109.

<sup>6</sup> Mahmūd Muhammad Shāqir, *Kitāb al-Mutanabbī* (Cairo: Sharqat al-Quds, 1977), 259.

<sup>7</sup> Ikhsān Mahmūd Suleimān, "al-Maqān fi al-muqaddimāt al-talaliyya fi shi'ri al-muallakāt", *Majallatu al-bahsi al-ilmi fi al-ādāb* (2020), 204; Safāuddīn Ahmad al-Qaysī, "Bināiyyat al-atlāl wa al-dalālatu al-remziyya wa al-hāiyya", *Majallatu al-awliyyātu al-turās* 17 (2017), 29.

is adhered to both formally and content-wise. At the same time, there are several couplets of wisdom throughout the ode, which reveals that the ode is not only intended for praise but also contains philosophical and didactic aspects of the period. Another noteworthy feature is that the beloved woman throughout the ode is not merely a concrete depiction of a person, but rather an idealized figure. This idealized woman is a common theme in the art and literature of the period and provides an idealized presentation of love and beauty as well as the poet's individual desire. All these elements show that the ode is shaped in accordance with the eulogy tradition of the period and follows the patterns set by the literary tradition.

This study focuses on an in-depth analysis of the ode composed by al-Mutanabbī for Bedr b. ‘Ammār, with particular attention to its rhetorical and literary features. Given the existence of over a hundred studies in Turkish and Arabic academia addressing the poet's life and literary career, this work deliberately avoids revisiting well-trodden ground. A review of the available literature reveals that this specific qasida has not been the sole subject of any previous academic study, thus providing an opportunity to explore it as a unique and independent topic. The primary objective of this study is to offer a comprehensive examination of the ode, emphasizing its literary and rhetorical dimensions, such as figures of speech, figurative expressions, linguistic harmony, and rhetorical sophistication. In doing so, the study aspires to make an original academic contribution to the field. While metaphors and similes in al-Mutanabbī's works—whether across his entire *Dīwān* or within specific qasidas—have been extensively analyzed in numerous books, theses, articles, and conference papers on Arabic literature, this particular qasida presents an opportunity to approach these elements selectively. Accordingly, this study does not delve into detailed analyses of metaphors and similes, as these aspects are already well-covered in existing scholarship.<sup>8</sup> Instead, it concentrates on the qasida's distinct rhetorical and literary merits, situating its analysis within the broader framework of rhetorical arts while addressing aspects that remain underexplored in the current literature.

## 2. Rhetorics

### 2.1. Husn al-Ibtida

The *matla‘*, which constitutes the opening couplet of a *qasida* in Arabic poetry, serves as the foundation for a critical rhetorical art that literary critics have identified as a key aesthetic criterion. In his article *Berâat-i İstihlâl* in the *Encyclopedia of the Religious Foundation of Turkey*, Hacımüftüoğlu summarizes the definitions of this art as follows: *it is the skillful art of beginning a composition, whether prose or verse, with an engaging and elegant style, employing words and phrases that hint at the central purpose and content.*<sup>9</sup> Over time, this rhetorical device has come to be known as *hüsnü'l-ibtidâ* (the beauty of initiation).

For this art to manifest effectively in poetry, the poet, particularly in the opening of a *qasida*, must avoid expressions considered ill-omened or suggestive of misfortune. This requirement underscores the importance of the opening couplet being both aesthetically pleasing and structurally sound. In eulogies, the poet is specifically expected to steer clear of themes such as lamentation, depictions of desolation, alienation, the loss of youth, or criticisms of time, as such topics are more appropriate for elegies or poems centered on misfortune. Negative connotations in the opening couplet could leave the listener with a sense of bad omen or misfortune.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, the *matla‘* must achieve aesthetic perfection,

<sup>8</sup> The following are the prominent studies conducted in Turkish academia about the poet: Şirin Gökaya, *el-Mütenebbî'nin Şiirlerinde Yaşam Felsefesi* (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, 2011); Dursun Hazer, “el-Mutenebbî'nin Şiirinde Humma Tasviri”, *Gazi Üniversitesi Çorum İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 2/4 (2003), 17-36; Esat Ayyıldız, “el-Mutenebbî'nin Seyfuddevle'ye Methiyeleri (Seyfiyyât)”, *BEÜ İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 7/2 (Aralık 2020), 497-518.; İbrâhîm Nâcî, “Arap Şiirinin Önde Gelen İki Şairi; el-Ma‘arrî ve el-Mutenebbî'nin Mukâyesesi”. çev. Osman Düzgün, *Nûsha* 12/35 (2012), 131-144; Abdurrahman Özdemir, “el-Mütenebbî'nin Şiirinde Marâş”, *Sakarya Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 14 (2006), 159-18; Muhammed Mahmut Olçun, “Klasik Arap Şiirinde Methiyenin Gelişimi”, *Şırnak Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 29 (Aralık 2022), 32-62; Muhammed Mahmut Olçun, *Hilâfet Dönemi Endülü's Şiirinde Methiye* (Ankara Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Doğu Dilleri ve Edebiyatları Ana Bilim Dalı, Arap Dili ve Edebiyatı Bilim Dalı, 2022).

<sup>9</sup> Nasrullah Hacımüftüoğlu, “Berâat-i İstihlâl”, *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 1992), 5/470.

<sup>10</sup> Abū Hilāl al-Hasan b. ‘Abdillāh b. Sahl al-‘Askarī, *Kitāb al-Şinā‘atayn: al-kitāba wa al-shī‘r (or: al-naẓm wa al-nesr)*, ed. Ali Muhammad al-Bijāwī (Beirut: al-Maktabat al-‘Unsuriyya, 1419), 431.

characterized by refined diction, a soft tonal quality, and a seamless introduction to the poem's emotional tenor.

Furthermore, the poet's opening expressions—often involving praise of the beloved (*taṣbīb*)—should be pleasing to the ear, untainted by sadness, and in harmony with the overall tone of the *qasida*. The couplet should establish a strong connection with the rest of the poem, allowing the meaning to resonate immediately and illuminating the work as a whole. The *matla'* thus creates the crucial first impression, serving as a prelude that echoes like a melodious tune in the listener's mind.<sup>11</sup>

Equally important is the coherence between the two lines of the opening couplet; the first hemistich should not appear disjointed or unrelated to the second. A poor beginning, marred by a negative impression, risks validating the adage, "If the sediment is at the barrel's top, the wine is bad," thereby diminishing the audience's engagement with the poet's work.<sup>12</sup>

In this context, the *matla'* of al-Mutanabbī's eulogy demonstrates a masterful application of these principles. The first couplet of this ode reads:

وَحَسَنَ الصَّبْرِ زَمُوا لَا الْجِمَالَا      بَقَائِي شَاءَ لَيْسَ هُمْ إِرْتَحَالَا

*They didn't want to go, my being wanted to go;*

*They put my patience on the road, not the camels.*<sup>13</sup>

The poet's style in this couplet aligns with the conventions of the classical Arabic eulogy (*madīh*). Within this tradition, it is customary for poets to introduce their compositions with *nasīb* or *taṣbīb*, a prelude characterized by expressions of longing for an idealized beloved, often portrayed from various perspectives. Each poet uniquely interprets the theme of separation, embedding their personal experiences within this literary framework. In this context, the longing depicted in al-Mutanabbī's opening couplet reflects the nomadic lifestyle of Bedouin tribes, dictated by seasonal migrations.

The beloved, a member of such a nomadic tribe, is preparing to depart with her people. As part of the journey's preparations, halters (*zimām*) are placed on the camels, signaling the imminent separation. The poet, observing these final moments, conveys his anguish with the following sentiment: *It is my being that departs now, not you*. Through this line, he suggests that it is not merely the beloved who is leaving, but his very existence that departs with her. By choosing the term *baqā'ī* (my being) rather than conventional expressions such as *my heart*, *my soul*, or *my dear*, al-Mutanabbī underscores the depth of his attachment, portraying his beloved as synonymous with his entire existence.

In the second hemistich, the poet reinforces this sentiment by vividly visualizing the caravan's departure. He states, *They restrained not the camels, but my patience*, an expression laden with powerful imagery. Here, patience (*ṣabr*), likened to a bridle or halter, symbolizes his diminishing capacity to endure the pain of separation. The halters that guide the camels are metaphorically crafted from the poet's own patience, binding his emotions and marking the beginning of an unbearable farewell. This metaphor is both original and profound, illustrating the poet's inner turmoil and his struggle to contain his emotions as the caravan, bearing his beloved, prepares to depart.

This couplet demonstrates al-Mutanabbī's remarkable ability to convey complex emotions with layered meaning and rhetorical depth. However, the question arises: is it suitable to begin the *qasida* with such an emotionally charged couplet? The answer lies in the broader structure of the ode. While the *matla'* is undeniably striking, evoking the poet's anguish and engaging the audience, the subsequent transition to

<sup>11</sup> Abū al-Mahāsīn Taqīyuddīn Abū Bakr b. 'Alī b. 'Abdillāh b. Hija al-Hamawī, *Khizānat al-adab wa-ghāyat al-Arab*, ed. 'Isām Shemyū (Beirut: Dāru l-hyā, 2004), 1/19.

<sup>12</sup> Abū Mansūr al-Seālībī, *Yetimat al-dehr*, ed. Mufid Muhammad Kumeyha (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1403/1983), 1/181.

<sup>13</sup> Abū al-Tayyib al-Mutanabbī, *Dīwān al-Mutanabbī* (Beirut: Dāru Beyrūt, 1403/1983), 139-142. Subsequent references to lines from the poet's ode do not necessitate the inclusion of page numbers.

the eulogy's main subject—praise of Bedr b. 'Ammār—must achieve an aesthetically seamless progression. The success of this transition, central to the rhetorical art of *takhallus*, will be examined in a later section.

It is worth noting that some critics of Arabic poetry have highlighted certain perceived flaws in this opening couplet.<sup>14</sup> They argue that the first hemistich reflects an air of self-importance, bordering on grandiosity, and criticize the verse for its intricate structure, contrived style, and lack of coherence.<sup>15</sup> Despite these critiques, the couplet offers significant insights into al-Mutanabbī's early stylistic explorations as he sought to refine his poetic craft. These observations underscore the poem's value as a reflection of the poet's developmental process and his experimentation with artistic expression.

## 2.2. Husn al- Khātima

In Arabic poetry, just as the opening couplet (*matla'*) is expected to possess a unique aesthetic, the final couplet (*khātima*) is also anticipated to exhibit a distinct artistic quality. Literary critics have encapsulated this expectation with the concept of *husn al-khātima* (the beauty of the conclusion). According to these critics, not only poets but all eloquent speakers, regardless of their intent, should strive to conclude their words in the most elegant and impactful manner. A strong and aesthetically pleasing conclusion is considered a fundamental principle that enhances both the rhetorical and artistic value of the composition.

The reasoning behind this lies in the nature of human memory: the final words linger in the audience's mind, often more vividly than the preceding content, due to their proximity to the moment of recall. As a result, great care has historically been devoted to crafting endings that are not only refined and melodious but also powerful and profound. The concluding lines should carry a sense of closure, signaling to the audience that the purpose and objective of the speech or poem have been fulfilled.

This emphasis on aesthetically pleasing conclusions was not a hallmark of the pre-Islamic (*Jāhiliyya*) poets, who often neglected this aspect. However, poets of later periods, including Abū Nuwās (d. 198/813 [?]), al-Buḥturī (d. 284/897), Abū Tammām (d. 231/846), and al-Mutanabbī, elevated *husn al-khātima* to an art form.

In summary, both poets and writers are advised to conclude their works with elegance, sweetness, and depth, as the final words are those most likely to resonate with and be remembered by the audience. The effort invested in crafting a compelling conclusion enhances the overall impact of the piece. An analysis of the final couplet of al-Mutanabbī's *qasida* within the framework of this rhetorical art reveals that he concludes with an impressive display of hyperbole, effectively aligning with the purpose of eulogy:

وَأَعْجَبُ مِنْكَ كَيْفَ قَدَّرْتَ تَنْشَأَ      وَقَدْ أُعْطِيتَ فِي الْمَهْدِ الْكَمَالَ

*I am amazed at you—how could you have grown like this when you had already attained perfection even as an infant in the cradle?*

The ode, centered on the theme of eulogy, concludes with a striking expression of astonishment (*ta'ajjub*) by al-Mutanabbī. In this final remark, the poet marvels at the remarkable moral maturity of the individual he praises, claiming that they had already achieved perfection even as an infant in the cradle. He expresses wonder at how such a person could have continued to grow if they were created in a state of innate perfection. This sentiment of amazement, which the poet cannot suppress, serves as a fitting and coherent conclusion to the overall structure of the ode. Given the preceding verses extolling the qualities of the subject—such as their courage and generosity (*sakhāva*)—ending the composition with this profound expression of admiration reinforces the unity and rhetorical elegance of the poem.

<sup>14</sup> Seālibī, *Yetīmat al-dehr*, 1/183.

<sup>15</sup> Abū Muḥammad al-Hasan b. 'Alī b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Dabbī al-'Atis al-Tinīsī, *Kitāb al-Munşif*, trans. Omar Khalifa b. Idrīs (Benghazi: Jāmi'atu Kāy Yūnis, 1994), 516; Abu al-Ḥasan al-Jurjānī, *al-Wasaṭa bayna al-Mutanabbī wa ḥuṣūmih*, thk. Muhammad Abu al-Fadl Ibrāhīm (B.y.: Matba'atu Isā al-Bābī, ts.), 416.

### 2.3. Husn al-Takhallus

In Arabic poetry criticism, *takhallus* is considered a vital aesthetic criterion that facilitates a seamless transition from the prologue (naşīb or tashbīb) to the eulogy, ensuring a harmonious flow that is both pleasing to the ear and intellectually satisfying. Defined as the poet's abrupt shift from one thematic realm to another, *Takhallus* transforms the initial meaning into a precursor or justification for the subsequent one. The success of this technique lies in its ability to maintain an uninterrupted progression within the poem, with each part contributing to the overall unity, creating a composition that feels cohesive and fluid. This transition underscores the poet's mastery, particularly in moments when such shifts in theme might otherwise prove challenging. It is during these critical moments that *takhallus* reveals the poet's expressive power and skill.<sup>16</sup>

While *Takhallus* did not carry significant aesthetic value in pre-Abbasid poetry, it evolved into a key artistic feature in later periods. Early poets' transitions were relatively straightforward and lacked the refinement of later practices. However, as poetry's emphasis on harmony and fluency grew, poets began to treat these transitions as a deliberate artistic form, enhancing the overall aesthetic integrity of the qasida. The smoothness and coherence of transitions became synonymous with literary success.<sup>17</sup>

One of the most prominent critics of this art, Abū 'Alī al-Hātimī (d. 388/998), emphasized the importance of maintaining unity between the prose section and the eulogy or satire that follows. According to him, the sections of the qasida should not feel disjointed, but should flow together in harmony, much like the interconnectedness of the organs in the human body. Disruptions in this unity, he argued, diminish the aesthetic appeal of the poem and lower its value. Master poets, therefore, place great emphasis on ensuring that the entire ode maintains a sense of coherence and elegance, transforming the poem into a unified and impactful piece, akin to a well-crafted letter or a powerful speech.<sup>18</sup>

In this context, *takhallus* can be considered as an important art that makes the structure of the qasida perfect and interconnected. The harmony achieved in the transition to praise ensures not only the integrity of the ode, but also the satisfaction of the praised person.<sup>19</sup>

The name of al-Mutanabbī is often mentioned as one of the poets who uses this art most effectively, and it is stated that *takhallus* is strongly present in his poetry.<sup>20</sup>

As in many of his odes, al-Mutanabbī has made a deliberate effort to employ this art when transitioning from ghazal to eulogy. In the first 17 couplets of the 47-couplet ode, there is no mention of Bedr b. Ammār, the subject of the eulogy. In fact, a listener unfamiliar with the Abbasid-period Arabic ode might assume that this initial section is entirely focused on ghazal. In this ghazal introduction, the poet expresses his longing for the woman he loves, his pain, her physical beauty, the suffering caused by her separation, and so on. After this, he describes in three couplets his constant travels:

فَتُودِي وَالْعَرَبِيَّ الْجَلَّالَا	أَلِفْتُ تَرْحُلِي وَجَعَلْتُ أَرْضِي
وَلَا أَرْمَعْتُ عَنْ أَرْضِ زَوَالَا	فَمَا حَاوَلْتُ فِي أَرْضٍ مُقَامَا
أَوْجَّهَهَا جَنُوبًا أَوْ شَمَالَا	عَلَى قَلْقٍ كَأَنَّ الرِّيحَ نَحْيَا

*I have become so accustomed to the nomadic life that I have made the earth my saddle's wood and my imposing camel my companion I neither tried to settle in any land nor had any intention of dismounting (from the camel's*

<sup>16</sup> Ziyā al-Dīn Ibn al-Asīr, *al-Maṣāl al-sā'ir fī al-'abīl al-kātib wa al-shā'ir*, ed. Muhammad Muhyiddīn Abdulhamīd (Beirut: Mekteneb al-Asriyya, 1430), 2/244.

<sup>17</sup> Ibn Tabatābā al-Alawī, *ʿIyāru al-shi'r*, ed. Abdulazīz b. Nāṣir al-Mānī' (Cairo: Mektebat al-Hānī, ts.), 184.

<sup>18</sup> Abū 'Alī Muhammad b. Ḥasan b. Muzaffar al-Baghdādī al-Hātimī, *Hilyat al-muḥāḍara* (Iraq: Dāru al-Rashīd, 1979), 1/ 22.

<sup>19</sup> Ibn Rashīq al-Qayrawānī, *al-Umda fī Mahāsīn al-Shi'r* (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1401/1981), 1/127.

<sup>20</sup> Abdullāh Tayyīb al-Majzūb, *al-Murshid ilā Fahm Ash'ār al-'Arab* (Kuwait: Dār al-Āsār al-Islāmiyya, 1409/1989), 5/307.

back).

*In constant motion, it was as if the wind were beneath me; I directed it, whether toward the South or the North.*

In these three couplets, the poet's bravery is highlighted. In the Arab world, travel itself entails numerous hardships. The scorching heat of the desert, the solitude of the night, the danger of predators, the prevalence of bandits, the risk of getting lost on the roads, and the scarcity of water—these factors have made travel synonymous with difficulty and hardship in Arab culture. Therefore, the state of travel (rihla) offers the Arab poet an excellent opportunity to emphasize courage and heroism. al-Mutanabbī uses this very boldness to transition to the eulogy. The poet, who fearlessly embarks on journeys atop his camel, now has the goal of reaching Bedr b. Ammār. He has braved countless difficulties to get there. For the poet, it is now time to turn the focus to the person of praise:

إِلَى الْبَدْرِ بْنِ عَمَّارٍ الَّذِي لَمْ  
يَكُنْ فِي غُرَّةِ الشَّهْرِ الْهِلَالَا

*To Bedr b. Ammār, whose moon's face has never shown a crescent*

In this verse, the poet addresses Bedr b. Ammār, describing him as always shining brightly, like the full moon. The Arabic word "bedr" refers to the moon when it is fully illuminated, which occurs only once a month during the full moon phase. At other times, the moon appears as a crescent and gradually transitions into the full moon phase. Here, the poet characterizes Bedr b. Ammār by saying that he has never been in the crescent phase, meaning he is always as radiant as the full moon.

In this verse, it is possible to question the aesthetic balance in the transition from the ghazal to the eulogy. When considering the lack of aesthetic unity between the transitions, it becomes clear that the poet has not established a strong connection between the themes. In the first eleven verses, the poet expresses his longing for the beloved and describes her physical beauty. In the following three verses, the poet focuses on the pain and suffering he experiences. The next three verses emphasize the poet's courage and audacity. Finally, in the verse where the transition to eulogy occurs, the poet expresses his arrival at Bedr b. Ammār after his journey. However, there is a lack of connection between the different themes of love pain, travel, and courage, and the transitions lack logical coherence. This weakness in the transitions shows that the poet has failed to explain the relationship between the themes in more depth. For example, the connection between the love pain expressed in the first verses and the journey is unclear; the question of why the poet is constantly traveling remains unanswered. At this point, the poet's journey could be interpreted as an escape from or a search for a solution to the pain of love, but this connection has not been clearly stated. Moreover, it is difficult to establish the relationship between the emphasis on courage in this journey and the poet's arrival at Bedr b. Ammār. Reaching Bedr b. Ammār could be seen as reaching a peak or achieving a final goal, but there has been no clear explanation of how this process relates to the poet's courage.

In conclusion, compared to the later works of Al-Mutanabbī during his artistic peak, especially the applications of *takhallus* in his poems about Sayf al-Dawla, it can be seen that here al-Mutanabbī falls short in his expected artistic performance. The weakness of the transitions between the verses and the lack of connection between the themes highlight the shortcomings and disorganization in the poet's expression during this period. If the poet had established a more consistent pattern of meaning in the transition between the ghazal and eulogy, by creating stronger connections between the themes, he could have prevented the reader's attention from wandering. This would have allowed the poet's art to maintain aesthetic unity and enabled the reader to experience the text more profoundly.

### 3. Exaggerations/ Hyperbole

Hyperbole, which has a negative connotation in Turkish but is considered an artistic device in literary texts due to its impact on speech, is regarded as an aesthetic criterion under the title *el-İfrâd fi's-sıfat* in rhetorical sources. The Arab poetic theorist, Qudāma b. Ja'far (d. 337/948 [?]), who is said to have first used the term hyperbole, defined it as follows: *Hyperbole is when a poet, despite a situation being sufficient to achieve the intended purpose, goes beyond and adds something to the situation in a way that better serves its*

meaning and goal.<sup>21</sup> This definition indicates the poet's desire to create a stronger effect in their expressions. At the same time, the poet's tendency not to settle for the existing meaning also emerges as an important motivation for this art. Similarly, Abū Hilāl al-'Askarī (d. after 400/1009) offered a similar perspective on hyperbole, defining it as: *Hyperbole is to carry the meaning to its utmost limits and distant goals; in this process, the expression should not remain at a lower level nor be satisfied with more immediate stages.*<sup>22</sup> This approach highlights the poet's effort to enrich the meaning and enhance the power of expression.

When we think of Abbasid-era Arabic poetry, al-Mutanabbī comes to mind, and when al-Mutanabbī is mentioned, hyperbole is almost immediately associated. The poet's hyperbolic style points to the vast imagination he possessed. He is aware of this ability, and most of his poetic success relies on this talent. In this ode, he also uses hyperbole effectively. In the vast majority of these hyperboles, the poet's success is admirable. In some instances, however, his style can be afflicted by artificiality and wordplay. Therefore, the poet's hyperbolic expressions under this heading can be analyzed in two distinct categories.

### 3.1. Qualitatively Exaggerates

In the following couplet, the poet depicts the intense pain he experiences during the moment of separation and how his world is overwhelmed with turmoil, describing it in a highly effective form of hyperbole:

فَكَانَ مَسِيرُ عَيْسِهِمْ دَمِيلاً      وَسِيرُ الدَّمْعِ إِثْرُهُمْ إِهْمَالاً  
كَأَنَّ الْعَيْسَ كَانَتْ فَوْقَ جَفْنِي      مُنَاخَاةً فَلَمَّا ثَرَّنَ سَالاً

*The camels were moving slowly,  
And behind them, my tears flowed like a flood.  
It seemed as though those camels had settled on my eyelids,  
And when they rose and moved, my tears began to fall.*

In this description, the poet highlights how, as the beloved rides a camel from her tribe, attention is drawn to the camels' initial slow movements. As the camels begin to move, the poet's tears also begin to flow from their source. The connection between these two movements enriches the meaning, making the expression powerful. In this passage, al-Mutanabbī also uses the rhetorical device of *muqābala* (juxtaposition), which is part of the *badī'* figures. In the first line, he compares the camels' slow movement with the flood of his tears. This creates a comparison between the camels' slow pace and the torrential flow of the poet's tears. In the second line, the hyperbole reaches its peak, building on the previous image. The movement of the camels and the outpouring of tears is exaggerated by stating: "As if the camels were resting on my eyelids, and due to the pressure they exerted, the flow of tears was halted." The poet manages to hold back his tears until the camels stand up, after which the pressure on his eyelids is released, allowing the tears to flow like a flood behind them. This hyperbole, constructed through a simile, is built on the relationship between the camel, the beloved, movement, eyes, and tears. The poet's presentation of this connection through a poetic composition enhances the aesthetic value and adds depth to the meaning of the verse.

Another example of a refined hyperbole appears toward the end of the ode. Here, the poet exaggerates the praise of the person by likening him to the sky and comparing his beautiful character to the planets:

أَقْلَبُ مِنْكَ طَرَفِي فِي سَمَاءٍ      وَإِنْ طَلَعَتْ كَوَاكِبُهَا خِصَالاً

<sup>21</sup> Abū al-Faraj Qudama b. Ja'far, *Naqd al-Shi'r* (Istanbul: Matbaatu'l-Cevâib, 1303), p. 50.

<sup>22</sup> Abū Hilāl al-Hasan ibn Abdullah ibn Sehl al-'Askarī, *Kitab al-Sina'atayn: al-Kitaba wa al-Shi'r*, ed. Ali Muhammad al-Bajawi (Beirut: al-Maktabat al-Unsuriyya, 1419), p. 365.



*Stars were born with beautiful morals, I, on the other hand,  
direct my gaze to the sky in you.*

We must admit that we cannot fully reflect the literary beauty of this verse in its translation. This is because, in this verse, where the figures of simile (tashbih) and metaphor (istiara) intricately intertwine, the meaning the poet intends to convey is quite rich, yet the expression is concise, limited to just a few words.

First, the poet indirectly compares the person being praised to the sky. The first word of the verse, أَقْلَبُ (I turn), means "to turn" or "to rotate." When used with طَرَفِي ("my eye"), it metaphorically means "I turn my gaze upon you." When a person looks up at the sky in the dark of night, they see countless stars, and in order to observe all of them, they must turn their gaze repeatedly. They do not focus on a single point. Each star is like a separate lantern adorning the sky. Similarly, the person being praised has a vast and expansive character, like the sky. The stars within this expansive character represent the noble qualities of the person being praised, shining brightly and majestically for the eye to behold. In this sense, virtues like generosity, courage, knowledge, wisdom, dignity, insight, loyalty, and many other moral values are likened to stars guiding the way in the dark of night.

From the perspective of literary devices, the word سَمَاءُ (sky) in this verse refers to the character of the person being praised. The pronoun مِنْكَ ("from you") can be considered the *mushabbah* (the object of comparison) since it represents the "you" who is being compared to the sky. Therefore, سَمَاءُ can be seen as the *mushabbah bih* (the thing being compared), and in this case, the simile is considered *baligh* (eloquent) because the comparison tool or element is not explicitly mentioned.

In another verse, the poet clearly stretches the limits of imagination to elevate the praise to an extreme level:

لَقَدْ أَمِنْتَ بِكَ الْإِعْدَامَ نَفْسٌ      تَعُدُّ رَجَاءَهَا إِيَّاكَ مَالًا

*People are so certain that they will not remain in nothingness without you,  
That they perceive hoping from you as if it were a fortune.*

In this verse, the generosity of the person praised by al-Mutanabbī is expressed in an exaggerated manner. Bedr b. Ammār is so open-handed that even the mere expectation of people from him instantly transforms into wealth and fortune. In other words, the hope of a needy person to receive a gift or charity from him is enough for the person to achieve what they desire. With this expression, the poet elevates the subject's generosity to its peak not only through a concrete act but also through an abstract concept—the idea that hope itself can turn into a fortune. This is an ultimate exaggeration, emphasizing the boundless generosity of the person being praised.

### 3.2. Aesthetically Weak Hyperboles

In this ode by al-Mutanabbī, while there are hyperboles that enrich the listener's imagination and add aesthetic depth and pleasure to the poem, there are also ordinary exaggerations that fail to transcend trivial expressions and do not carry artistic value. This can sometimes diminish the aesthetic level of the ode due to the hyperboles that fail to evoke admiration in the listener. An example of such hyperboles can be found in the following couplet. Here, the poet describes how powerful the horses are when they strike the ground with their hooves:

إِذَا وَطَّئَتْ بِأَيْدِيهَا صَخُورًا      يَفْتِنُ لَوْطَاءُ أَرْجُلِهَا رَمَالًا

*When the horses' hooves strike the rocks,  
the contact of their hooves turns the rocks into sand.*

This hyperbole in the verse is quite evident. No horse can turn rocks into sand with its hooves. There is no extraordinary element in this exaggeration. To describe a horse as having strong hooves and stomping the ground firmly while running, one would expect a more creative or interesting twist. In fact, claiming that a horse can turn rocks into sand does not require exceptional skill on the poet's part. Therefore, compared to the poet's other hyperboles, this verse cannot be said to offer a particularly captivating image.

In another verse, al-Mutanabbī again resorts to exaggeration when describing the qualities of his beloved. However, the descriptions he uses here are common elements that have become clichés in Arabic ghazals:

بَدَتْ قَمَرًا وَمَالَتْ خَوْطَ بَانٍ      وَفَاحَتْ عَنَبْرًا وَزَنْتَ غَزَالَا

*She appeared like the moon, swayed like a willow branch,  
smelled like amber, and gazed like a gazelle.*

In this verse, the poet compares the idealized woman's face to the moon, her body to a willow branch, her scent to amber, and her gaze to that of a gazelle. These types of comparisons are common in Arabic ghazal poetry, used to express themes of love, longing, and beauty. For instance, Qays b. Mulawwah (d. 690) compared his beloved Layla to the moon,<sup>23</sup> Omar b. Abū Rabia (d. 711-712) described a woman's body as resembling a willow branch<sup>24</sup> and her scent like amber,<sup>25</sup> while another woman's gaze was likened to that of a gazelle.<sup>26</sup> By using these metaphors, which had been employed by earlier poets, al-Mutanabbī's use of them may detract from his aesthetic originality. The frequent repetition of exaggerated beauty descriptions from the pre-Islamic and Umayyad periods in Arabic ghazals, which also appears in al-Mutanabbī's ode, gives the impression that the poet has failed to break free from tradition and has resorted to repetition rather than forging his own unique metaphors. Therefore, a critique could be made that, in this particular verse, the poet repeats conventional expressions rather than creating original imagery.

#### 4. Wisdom

The geographical and climatic structure of the Arabian Peninsula, characterized by desert and aridity, has undoubtedly influenced not only the lifestyle of the Arabs but also their cultural life. As a result, written culture did not develop, and instead, oral transmission based on narration served as an archive or library that preserved the collective memory. Consequently, the national and spiritual values they wished to pass down from generation to generation were conveyed not through books but through poetry. Among these values, the most important was their life experiences, which they formulated in the form of wisdom couplets. With the Abbasid period, wisdom gained an independent thematic identity in the literary tradition, and drawing from philosophy and theology, it became a means for many poets to demonstrate their skill. One of these poets, al-Mutanabbī, seemed to consider including a few wisdom couplets in every ode as an essential part of his poetry. Indeed, his poetry, with few exceptions, rarely lacks

<sup>23</sup> Qays b. Mulawwah, *Dīwān Qays b. Mulawwah* (Beirut: Dāru al-Kutubi al-'Ilmiyye, n.d.), 78. In one of his poems, Qays describes his beloved Layla as follows:

*She is of fair complexion, never deprived of bliss,  
Like the moon shining in the middle of a dark night.*

<sup>24</sup> Omar b. Ebī Rebīa, *Dīwān al-'Amr b. Abī Rabīa* (Beirut: al-Matba'at al-Mimaniyya, 1893), 44.

*The branch of the bān tree has drooped, its branches have softened,  
And a rain has fallen upon it, giving it life.*

<sup>25</sup> Omar b. Ebī Rebīa, *Dīwān al-'Amr b. Abī Rabīa*, 30.

*A young woman from whose body the scent of musk wafts like perfume,  
and there is also the fragrance of amber.*

<sup>26</sup> Omar b. Ebī Rebīa, *Dīwān al-'Amr b. Abī Rabīa*, 127.

*This heart is bound by love to a gazelle,  
adorned with a necklace of pearls and emeralds.*

reflections on humanity, society, life, and ethics, independent of the context of the ode. This particular ode is one such example. In the 47-couplet ode, 3 couplets are directly related to wisdom. In the following couplet, the poet strengthens the pain of separation, which he expresses in the *nasīb/tašbīb* section, by presenting it as a universally valid and fundamental observation. He introduces the emotional turmoil he is experiencing as a typical psychological state that can be applied to all of humanity:

أَشَدُّ الْغَمِّ عِنْدِي فِي سُرُورٍ      تَبَيَّنَ عَنْهُ صَاحِبُهُ إِتْقَالًا

*In my opinion, the heaviest sorrow lies in a happiness  
whose owner is certain will come to an end.*

In this couplet, al-Mutanabbī presents himself not as a poet engaged in literature and art, but as a wise figure who faces the bitter realities of life. The poet reflects a deep internal awareness of the transient nature of happiness with a very realistic and courageous tone. Human nature suffers from the idea that happiness will eventually end. As Said Nursi (d. 1960) puts it, the loss of pleasure is sorrow, and even the anticipation of that loss is sorrowful. In other words, when someone experiences a pleasure, the moment they think about its eventual end, the joy they feel is overshadowed by this thought, transforming it into a source of sorrow before it even concludes. The subtlety in the poet's observation is that the greatest suffering is not found in the current hardship, but in the happiness of those who are currently content. A person who is enduring hardship can find comfort in the thought that their pain will eventually pass, offering them a sense of relief. However, someone experiencing happiness is faced with the eventual loss of that pleasure, and the question arises: how can they console themselves?

In the other two wisdom couplets, the poet offers his life experiences on entirely different topics. Here, the artistic value of his words comes from the implied metaphors (*zimni tashbih*).

أَرَى الْمَشَاعِرِينَ عَرَوْا بِدَمِي      وَمَنْ ذَا يَحْمَدُ الدَّاءَ الْغُضَالَا  
وَمَنْ يَلُكُ ذَا قَمٍ مُرٍ مَرِيضٍ      يَجِدُ مُرًّا بِهِ الْمَاءَ الرُّلَالَا

*I see that those who aspire to be poets are busy condemning me;  
After all, who praises a terminal illness?  
Who, when they have a sick and bitter mouth, would call sweet water bitter?*

In these two couplets, the poet al-Mutanabbī engages in self-praise during the *fakhr* (pride) section. He elevates his own poetry by implying that many poets, unable to bear his greatness, criticize him. Through a subtle allusion, he implies: "Of course, many will envy a great poet like me; a fruitful tree is stoned." The poet seeks external confirmation for his self-praise, which is effectively established through implicit metaphors, strengthening the meaning. Two powerful metaphors assist the *fakhr* theme: the metaphor of a fatal illness and a diseased mouth. When a person is afflicted with a difficult, fatal disease, they do not praise it; instead, they lament their condition to anyone who listens. Likewise, al-Mutanabbī has become such an incurable ailment for other would-be poets. He believes that through his literary skills, he exposes their deficiencies in poetry and their crude language. The metaphor of the fatal illness is used to attack his critics. In the second couplet, he reinforces the same idea with a similar style. Here, he compares himself to sweet, pure water, while his rivals are like individuals with diseased mouths. Just as people with a cold lose their sense of taste and smell, the poets who harbor hostility toward al-Mutanabbī, unable to appreciate his superiority, remain ignorant of the elegance and artistry of his work.

In these two couplets, al-Mutanabbī, through indirect metaphors and a style based on wisdom, turns his individual conflict into a universal reflection of the human experience. The poet transforms his personal dispute into a metaphor that points to universal human weaknesses and the nature of relationships. By doing so, he makes his individual issues a mirror of human conditions, emphasizing the flaws and dynamics inherent in relationships.

## 5. Conclusion

As with everything, there is an evolution, and naturally, there is a developmental process in the poetic journey of the Abbasid poet al-Mutanabbî. The poet's literary journey, which began with his first attempts at writing ghazals during his childhood, has passed through several stages until it reached the great Arab poet al-Mutanabbî. There is a pre-zenith period in this process, as discussed in detail in the article. Becoming the official poet of a governor named Bedr b. Ammâr proved to be a literal springboard for al-Mutanabbî. In this study, the third of the six odes the poet directed to Ibn Ammâr is analyzed in terms of literary arts. As seen, while the poet made an effort to preserve the traditional characteristics of Arab encomiastic poetry, he also aimed to present some unique and original approaches. He included exaggerated descriptions in nearly half of the ode, which would later form the basis of his signature extraordinary hyperbolic imagery. However, he was still in his twenties and had another twenty-five years ahead of him to discover his full poetic potential. When compared to his later poetry, this poem shows signs of weakness in the transition between sections of the ode and in the structural integrity, marking that he was still in the developmental phase. However, it should be emphasized that the poet had found someone worthy of such praise for the first time in his literary career, and his feelings were very sincere. Indeed, the authenticity of the style, reflecting the sincerity of his admiration for the person he encountered for the first time, is evident. When the encomium is written with sincere emotions and accurately conveys a real or near-real sentiment, it demonstrates al-Mutanabbî's ability to reveal his inner talent. This ode is likely the proof of that. It is clear that during this period, the poet began to truly find himself, adding great sincerity to his poetry, especially with the deep admiration he felt for someone worthy of praise. As a conclusion, it must be stated that in this ode, which marks a significant milestone in his literary career, the poet effectively demonstrates his inner talent for the first time.

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