Reflections of Socio-Cultural Alienation in Abbasid-Era Poetry: A Sociological Analysis Based on the Cases of Ebü'l-'Atâhiyye, İbnü'r-Rûmî, and Mütenebbî

Ebü'l-'Atâhiyye, İbnü'r-Rûmî ve Mütenebbî Örneğinde Abbâsî Dönemi Şiirlerinde Sosyo-Kültürel Yabancılaşmanın Yansımaları –Sosyolojik Bir İnceleme

Mohammed Abdulkareem YASEEN

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi, Yozgat Bozok Üniversitesi,
İlahiyat Fakültesi, Arap Dili ve Belagatı ABD
Assist. Prof. Dr., Yozgat Bozok University,
Faculty of Theology, Arabic Language and Rhetoric
mohammed.yaseen@yobu.edu.tr
ORCID: 0000-0002-4909-6408

Öz

Bu çalışma, Abbasî dönemi Arap şiirinde görülen sosyo-kültürel yabancılaşma konusunu, her biri farklı bir boyutta ele alan Ebu'l-ʿEbü'l-ʿAtâhiyye, İbnü'r-Rûmî ve Mütenebbî'nin şiirleri üzerinden ele almaktadır. Araştırma; Ebü'l-ʿAtahiyye'nin, psikolojik yabancılaşmayı ifade eden tefekkür ve mürtedilik unsurlarını taşıyan beyitleri, İbnü'r-Rûmî, çoğunlukla siyasi yabancılaşmayı dile getiren toplumsal şiirleri ile ahlaki yozlaşmanın bir yansıması olarak Mütenebbî'nin şiirlerini farklı boyutları ile ortaya koymaktadır. Çalışmada, seçilen şiirler titizlikle incelenmiş, ele alınan şairlerin hayatları ile bulundukları sosyo-kültürel çevre karşılaştırmalı olarak analiz edilmiş ve bilim edebiyat ve kültürel açıdan doruk noktasında olan bu dönemde sosyo-kültürel yabancılaşma ele alınmıştır. Çalışma kapsamında; toplumsal bağların, ahlaki felsefenin ve ağıt gibi unsurların şiirdeki yansımaları ele alınmış, Abbasî dönemde sosyo-kültürel yabancılaşmanın edebiyat üzerindeki önemi vurgulanmıştır. Makalenin temel amaçlarından biri de her bir şairin ele alınan konuya yönelik özgün yaklaşımının, insan faktörü üzerindeki katkılarını ortaya çıkararak klasik Arap şiiri bağlamında bilgi birikimini zenginleştirmektir. Çalışma metot olarak; edebi eleştiri ile tarihsel yaklaşımı harmanlayan nitel bir analiz yöntemine dayanmakta olup şairlerin bulundukları çevre ve kullandıkları dilin ışığında sağlam temellere dayalı yorumlar sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Arap Dili ve Belâgatı, Abbâsî dönemi Şiiri, Sosyo-kültürel yabancılaşma, Şair kimliği ve toplumsal bağlam, Psikolojik ve siyasî temsiller, Edebiyat Tarihi Analizi.

Abstract

This article examines the theme of existential alienation in Abbâsî-id-era Arabic poetry through the works of three major poets, each exemplifying a distinct dimension of alienation. The study focuses on the introspective and ascetic verses of Abū al-ʿAtāhiyya as expressions of psychological alienation, the socially engaged and often disillusioned poetry of Ibn al-Rūmī as a voice of political alienation, and the proud, morally reflective oeuvre of al-Mutanabbī as an embodiment of ethical alienation. Through a close reading of representative poems and a comparative analysis of these poets' lives and

contexts, the research illuminates how feelings of estrangement and disconnection were articulated in a period renowned for its cultural and intellectual achievements. The scope of the inquiry spans personal laments, social commentary, and moral philosophizing in verse, highlighting the importance of alienation as a literary and existential motif in the Abbasid era. The purpose of this study is to enrich our understanding of classical Arabic poetry by revealing how each poet's unique approach to alienation contributes to a multifaceted portrait of human experience. Methodologically, the article employs a qualitative analysis that combines literary criticism with historical contextualization, providing an interpretation grounded in the poets' own milieu and idiom.

Keywords: Arabic Language and Rhetoric, Abbasid-Period Poetry, Socio-Cultural Alienation, Poet Identity and Social Context, Psychological and Political Representations, Literary-Historical Analysis.

1.Introduction

Abbasid poetry transcends artistry, embodying deep psychological, social, and existential alienation amid shifting structures from tribal solidarity to state centralization. The poet's fractured identity—torn between institutional service and personal authenticity—reflects broader societal dislocation. Through Ibn Khaldūn's lens of social cohesion, Al-Jābirī's critique of cultural duality, and Edward Said's vision of the marginalized intellectual, Abbasid verse emerges as a subtle act of resistance, capturing the poet's estrangement from authority, self, and heritage. This study foregrounds the poetry of Ibn al-Rūmī as a poignant exemplar of such existential alienation[1]. Al-Mutanabbī's political defiance and Abū al-ʿAtāhiyya's ascetic retreat exemplify poetic voices that, far from being marginal, channel the plight of the marginalized and resist both authority and social objectification. As İzzeddin Al-Manasra asserts,

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1 Rajab Ibrahim Ahmed Ivaz, "Psychological Alienation: An Inquiry into the Poetry of Ibn al-Rūmī," Faculty of Arabic Language, Sultan Abdul Halim Muʾazzam Shah International Islamic University 30/118 (July 1, 2019), 15.

alienation in modern Arabic poetry emerges not as an intellectual abstraction, but as an existential response to the complexities of history and identity[2].

This study, employing a sociological-analytical lens, synthesizes textual and semiotic analysis to explore alienation—psychological, social, and spiritual—as articulated in Arab critical thought. Drawing on Ibn Khaldūn's insights into marginalized identity and al-Jābirī's deconstruction of Arab cultural structures, it interrogates the intellectual's estrangement as depicted by Edward Said. In the Arab context, alienation is not mere detachment but a profound existential rupture, rooted in classical poetry, where estrangement and loss become symbolic of a fractured relationship between self, society, and destiny.

Conceptual Framework of Alienation

Alienation(Arabic: al-ightirāb-الاغتراب), a multidimensional construct, signifies a profound estrangement from self, society, or essential values. It embodies existential disconnection, wherein individuals are severed from their authentic identity and communal bonds—a complex condition shaped by psychological, cultural, and social dynamics[3]. Alienation, a perennial concern observed amid human upheaval and transition, is here conceptualized through the confluence of Arab intellectual heritage and Western existentialism, delineating its essential forms.

Arab Perspectives on Alienation

Izz al-Din al-Manasra frames alienation in modern Arabic poetry as an existential condition arising from historical trauma, fractured identity, and cultural dislocation. Engaged with the legacies of colonialism and exile, Arab poets articulate a deep estrangement from both heritage and the modern world, suspended between tradition and modernity. While Ibn Khaldun did not name "alienation," his theory of ʿasabiyyah provides a sociological fra-

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2   Fatima Ali Shahouri, "Alienation and Symbolism Between Heritage and Personal Experience in the Poetry of Izzeddin al-Manasra," Haramoon Platform (blog), August 20, 2023.

3   Anoud Al-Enazi, Academic Journal of Research and Scientific Publishing, "Manifestations of Alienation in Contemporary Arabic Poetry: A Critical Analytical Study" 6/66 (October 5, 2024), 211–223.

mework for understanding how the dissolution of social cohesion underlies cultural fragmentation[4], Ibn Khaldun discerned that as societies succumb to decadence and individualism, the dissolution of communal bonds breeds alienation, particularly amid periods of transition. The erosion of shared virtues by luxury and complacency undermines cohesion, fostering estrangement and internal fragmentation—a phenomenon echoed in contemporary scholarship as a catalyst of societal decline[5].

Western Existential Perspectives on Alienation

Alienation, central to Western existential thought, is defined by Erich Fromm as a deep psychological estrangement fostered by capitalist society. Reduced to cogs in an economic machine, individuals become isolated and anxious, their true selves obscured by imposed superficiality[6]. This state produces a fractured self, marked by anxiety and emptiness—an experience Erich Fromm defines as a "socially patterned pathology" rooted in cultural self-alienation. Paul Tillich extends this, interpreting alienation as spiritual estrangement from the "Ground of Being," where even sin signifies humanity's existential rupture from God, others, and the authentic self[7]. Tillich, in The Courage to Be (1952), contends that modernity engenders profound spiritual anxiety, as individuals confront existential despair rooted in the perceived absence of ultimate meaning or purpose[8]. Spiritual alienation is a profound solitude of the soul—a state of being severed from one's essential belonging, feeling exiled and cosmically displaced[9], Tillich contends that overcoming humanity's inherent separation demands courage and faith, as alienation extends beyond the social and psychological to signify a profound spiritual estrangement—a severance from ultimate meaning that gives rise to existential despair.

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4   Zhilwan Tahir - Abdulwahed Jalal Nuri, "Comparative Perspectives on Societal Decline: Ibn Khaldun, Toynbee, and Hegel," HISTORICAL: Journal of History and Social Sciences 3/4 (January 17, 2025), 431–446.

5   Tahir - Nuri, "Comparative Perspectives on Societal Decline."

6   Erich Fromm, The Sane Society (Abingdon, Oxon: Taylor and Francis, 2012).

7   M. Fontanini Walter, "Paul Tillich and the Genesis of Existential Psychology," Kaleidoscope History 14/28 (2024), 219–261.

8   Paul Tillich, The Courage to Be (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980),36.

9   Tillich, The Courage to Be, 47.

Four Key Forms of Alienation

This study articulates four converging forms of alienation as critical frameworks for reading Abbasid poetry, especially in Ibn al-Rūmī, al-Mutanabbī, and Abū al-ʿAtāhiyya. Foremost is Psychological Alienation: the self's acute estrangement from its own core. Psychoanalysts such as Freud, Fromm, and Horney define alienation as a persistent psychic malaise—anxious, disoriented, emotionally fragmented.

Fromm, in particular, perceives alienation as a profound estrangement wherein one becomes a stranger to oneself—not merely by an existential rupture, but by the dissolution of coherent selfhood. He eschews fixed essences, instead advocating for individuality and spontaneous self-realization beyond all imposed constraints[10].

Social alienation denotes a deep estrangement from collective values, marked by inner conflict and powerlessness—a timeless, universal condition arising when individuals fail to align with their society's dominant ethos[11].

Political alienation denotes a profound sense of estrangement from political authority, marked by powerlessness or dissent. Frequently articulated by poets in response to oppression, it manifests as either apathetic withdrawal or defiant resistance, reflecting the individual's marginalization under unjust rule[12]. Alienation in poetry often emerges as defiance against injustice, yet at its core, it reflects an existential rupture—a severance from meaning, self, and the divine. In Tillich's view, this spiritual estrangement breeds a profound despair, leaving the individual suspended in emptiness and longing for transcendence[13].

Alienation—political, social, and psychological—serves as a unifying paradigm in Abbasid poetry, wherein the works of Ibn al-Rūmī, al-Mutanabbī, and Abū al-ʿAtāhiyya embody estrangement as a profound existential theme.

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10 Ahmed Ali Al-Falahi, *Alienation in Arabic Poetry in the Seventh Century A.H* (Amman: Ghidaa Publishing and Distribution House, 2013),23.

11 Al-Falahi, *Alienation in Arabic Poetry in the Seventh Century A.H*,25.

12 Al-Falahi, *Alienation in Arabic Poetry in the Seventh Century A.H*.

13 Tillich, *The Courage to Be*.

2. Key Concepts

As discussed comprehensively in the conceptual framework above, alienation is formally defined as an existential state of estrangement or disconnection experienced by individuals from themselves, their society, and core values. Sociologically, it involves the individual's separation from social structures and communal bonds[14]. Philosophically, it pertains to a loss of meaning or spiritual connection with one's existential purpose[15].

This study specifically explores the intricate interplay of psychological, social, and cultural dimensions of alienation among Abbasid poets. Psychological alienation refers to an internal sense of isolation, anxiety, and loss of authentic selfhood (Fromm, 1941)[16]. Social alienation arises as marginalization amid societal upheaval (Seeman, 1959), while cultural alienation reflects the tension between individual identity and dominant cultural norms, signaling deeper civilizational conflict (Fanon, 1967)[17]. Each of these categories is elaborated in detail with theoretical references in the previous section (Conceptual Framework).

Psychological Alienation in the Poetry of Ibn al-Rūmī

Ibn al-Rūmī's elegiac verse, especially upon his son's death, epitomizes psychological alienation in Abbasid poetry—unveiling profound inner division and existential anguish through piercing self-reflection.

فَلله كيفَ اخْتَار وَاسطَةَ العِقْدِ	تَوَخَّى حِمَامُ الموتِ أوْسَطَ صِبْيَتِي
وآنَسْتُ من أفْعاله آيةَ الرُّشِدِ	على حِينَ شَمْتُ الخيْرَ من لَمَحَاتِهِ
بعيداً على قُرْب قريباً على بُعْدِ[18]	طَوَاهُ الرَّدَى عنِّي فأضحَى مَزَارُهُ

O allah—death claimed the heart of my kin:

wisdom in bloom, now dust within.

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14 Melvin Seeman, "On The Meaning of Alienation," American Sociological Review 24/6 (December 1959), 783.

15 Tillich, The Courage to Be.

16 Erich Fromm, Escape from Freedom (New York: Avon Books, 1969).

17 Frantz Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks (London: Pluto Press, 2002).

18 Hussein Nassar, The Dīwān of Ibn al-Rūmī (Cairo, Egypt: General Egyptian Book Organization Press, 2003), 1/184.

Near in memory, yet far in form—

a grave stands where grace was born.

This elegy distills profound psychological alienation, as the poet's loss of his son fractures his sense of self, meaning, and connection to the world, a rupture deepened by social disillusionment and satirical critique of faithless patrons.

أنِفت منه الأنوف   لك أنفٌ يابن حربٍ

[19]وهو في البيت يطوف   أنت في القُدس تصلِّي

"Even the proud disdained you—

A nose indeed, O son of Ḥarb!

You circle the Kaʿba in hollow show,

Feigning prayer in Jerusalem."

This inner estrangement enacts a metaphorical exile—a perpetual alienation from one's authentic self and homeland, rendering the poet an eternal stranger, existentially unmoored[20].Amidst social fragmentation, the Abbasid poet's acute self-awareness, shaped by inner discord, gave rise to a profound critical insight woven into his poetry[21].

3.Marginalized Identity

In the Abbasid era, poets—particularly of Arab or mixed descent—endured profound existential alienation, their identities eroded by prevailing cultural hegemonies and ethnic strife. Pressed by such forces, they often asser-

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19 Ahmed al-Hāshimī, The Jewels of Eloquence: On Meaning, Expression, and Rhetorical Embellishment (UK: Hindawi Foundation, 2019), 1/314.

20 Thaer Deeb, "'On Exile: Its Names, Pleasures, and Sorrows,'" Awan Media Platform (Accessed April 13, 2025).

21 Edward W Said, Reflections on Exile and Other Essays (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2003), 180.

ted their individuality defensively. As Ibn Khaldūn observes, the subjugated, in emulating their conquerors, forfeit their own cultural essence[22].

Some poets, rather than imitating, defied marginalization by powerfully affirming their distinct identities. Al-Mutanabbī, for example, embodied such resistance, exalting his Arab heritage and asserting that Arab prosperity was impossible under non-Arab rule.

أَحَدَثُ شَيءٍ عَهداً بِها الْقِدَمُ	أَحَقُّ عافٍ بِدَمعِكَ الهِمَمُ
تُفْلِحُ عُربٌ مُلوكُها عَجَمُ	وَإِنَّما الناسُ بِالمُلوكِ وَما
وَلا عُهودٌ لَهُم وَلا ذِمَمُ[23]	لا أَدَبٌ عِندَهُم وَلا حَسَبٌ

Grieve not for the past, but for lost nobility;

A nation falters when strangers wield the crown.

The ruler reflects the soul of his people—

Yet now, thrones are seized by the dishonorable,

Faithless men, void of heritage or virtue.

He evokes an inexpressible self, alienated by circumstance. Abū al-ʿAtāhiyya's exclusion, rooted in humble origins, and his ascetic poetics, resist the age's opulence. Al-Jābirī ascribes this rupture to the Abbasid mind's hybridization, which burdened the poet with an existential dissonance between inherited authenticity and imported norms[24].

Existential anxiety compelled many poets to adopt the mantle of the marginal intellectual, whose estrangement enabled incisive critique from society's periphery. For the Abbasid poet, marginalization was at once alienation and empowerment, transforming the poet's identity into a locus of dissent

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22 Abd al-Rahman Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah* (Damascus: Dar Ya'rub, 2004), 1/1/359.

23 Ahmad ibn 'Abd Allah Abu al-'Ala'al-Ma'arri, Ebü't-Tayyib al-Mutenabbî. Al-Lami' al-'Aziz Sharh-Diwan al-Mutanabbî (Riyadh: King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies, 2008), 1/1228.

24 Mohammed Abed Al-Jabri, The Arab Ethical Mind: A Critical and Analytical Study of Value Systems in Arab Culture (Beyrut: Center for Arab Unity Studies, 2001), 1/225.

against political and cultural authority, and affirming his distinct critical voice[25].

In Abbasid poetry, identity alienation and existential anxiety transcend personal emotion to achieve profound artistic expression. For Ibn al-Rūmī, verse became both a mirror of estrangement and a crucible for transforming suffering into lasting aesthetic form. His elegies articulate solitude and loss, while satire protests corruption and injustice. Thus, his poetry testifies to literature's power to distill lived crises into enduring, evocative art—a continual search for justice amid existential disquiet[26].Al-Mutanabbī fashioned his poetry as a theatre for his singular, estranged self, elevating the first-person voice to heroic stature. Through persistent emphasis on the "I," he cultivated an image of exalted solitude, most strikingly embodied in his self-portrayal as a prophet spurned by his own people.

وَسِمامُ العِدا وَغَيظُ الحَسودِ | أَنا تِربُ النَدى وَرَبُّ القَوافي

غَريبٌ كَصالِحٍ في ثَمودِ[27] | أَنا في أُمَّةٍ تَدارَكَها اللَّـهُ

I am kin to generosity, master of verse

a venom to my enemies, a thorn in the heart of the envious.

In a nation touched only by God's mercy,

I am a stranger, like Sālih among Thamūd.

The poet's metaphor of alienation echoes that of Prophet Salih, embodying his own marginalization. Abū al-ʿAtāhiyya channels estrangement by forsaking convention, centering his poetry on asceticism and wisdom. Meditating on life's transience and worldly futility, his verse quietly resists materialism, favoring spiritual insight above temporal allure.

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25 Edward William Said, *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1994), 1/44.

26 Ivaz, "Psychological Alienation: An Inquiry into the Poetry of Ibn al-Rūmī," 19.

27 Abu al-ʿAla'al-Ma'arri, *Ebü't-Tayyib al-Mutenabbî. Al-Lami' al-ʿAziz Sharh-Diwan al-Mutanabbî*, 1/1270.

<div dir="rtl">

عَذاباً كُلّما كَثُرَت لَدَيهِ   أرى الدُنيا لِمَن هِيَ في يَدَيهِ

وَتُكرِمُ كُلَّ مَن هانَت عَلَيهِ   تُهينُ المُكرَمينَ لَها بِصُغرٍ

وَخُذ ما أنتَ مُحتاجٌ إِلَيهِ[28]   إِذا إِستَغنَيتَ عَن شَيءٍ فَدَعهُ

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The world's gifts only deepen the suffering of those who covet them, while true honor belongs to those who remain unattached. Those who disregard worldly allure find dignity, whereas those who revere it are diminished. Wisdom lies in taking only what is truly needed and letting go of excess, for contentment and spiritual wealth surpass all material riches.

These verses vividly articulate the position of the ascetic, who — estranged from a world rife with deceit — perceives existence as a realm of affliction and abasement. Each poem thus becomes a literary vessel for alienation: through intricate symbolism and metaphor, the marginalized poet maps an anxious inner landscape while confronting external realities. This portrayal surpasses individual catharsis, becoming a creative force imbued with universal resonance. In doing so, literature elevates the particularity of the poet's estrangement into a timeless expression of the broader human condition.

Contemporary critical thought affirms the generative power of alienation in artistic creation. Edward Said, for instance, emphasizes the fertile potential of exile and estrangement as catalysts for cultural and intellectual innovation, asserting that such experiences not only incite creativity but are often essential to its emergence[29].

Abbasid poets in exile transmuted existential anguish into innovative verse, forging the model of the existential poet — one who interrogates being through daring form and potent symbolism. This study bridges existential alienation with detailed analyses of Ibn al-Rūmī, Al-Mutanabbī, and Abū al-ʿAtāhiyya, elucidating alienation, marginality, and poetic representation within a critical framework.

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28 Shukri Fayşal, *Abū Al-'Atāhiyah: His Poetry and Accounts* (Damascus University Press, 2009), 1/667.

29 Deeb, "On Exile."

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4.Echoes of Estrangement ʿ Asabiyet, Identity, and the Poetic Self in Abbasid Times

Ibn Khaldūn's concept of ʿAsabiyet, a kinship-driven solidarity, illuminates the poet's alienation in Abbasid society—where the loss of communal bonds thrusts the individual into isolation and existential marginality[30]. Amidst Abbasid cosmopolitanism, Ibn al-Rūmī—born of Greek and Persian descent—epitomized alienation, lacking tribal belonging and caliphal favor. Bereft of communal protection and beset by personal loss, he channeled his profound psychological exile into a poetry marked by pessimism and acerbic satire, his marginalization both cause and content of his verse[31].

Al-Mutanabbī's life reveals the plight of genius amid divided loyalties: his failed attempt to forge tribal unity through revolt and prophecy led to imprisonment and restless exile among distant courts. Ultimately, his relentless ambition went unrewarded, leaving him alienated from a society that denied him the recognition he craved[32].

4.1.Comparative Synthesis: Divergent Manifestations of Alienation among Three Abbasid Poets

Despite disparate lives, Ibn al-Rūmī, al-Mutanabbī, and Abū al-ʿAtāhiyya transmute alienation into creative vitality, each refracting estrangement through a singular poetic lens. Ibn al-Rūmī's introspective irony, al-Mutanabbī's defiant grandeur, and Abū al-ʿAtāhiyya's ascetic wisdom collectively reveal that, in Abbasid verse, marginalization becomes a generative force—interrogating power, redefining selfhood, and imbuing Arabic poetry with existential and cultural profundity. Estrangement, thus, is not merely endured but artistically reimagined as a source of vision from the periphery.

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30 Satiʾ al-Husri, Studies on Ibn Khaldun's Muqaddimah (United Kingdom: Hindawi Foundation, 2021), 85.

31 Salim Jilti Bin Ziyan, "The Psychology of Ibn al-Rumi in the Critique of al-Aqqad and al-Mazni and Its Impact on His Poetry: A Comparative Study" 10/1 (May 2, 2020), 28.

32 Yusuf Hussein, "Manifestations and Motivations of Psychological and Social Alienation in Al-Mutanabbī's Poetry," Journal of the Faculty of Arts, Benha University 28/1 (April 1, 2012), 21.

4.2.From İbn Khaldūn's perspective

From Ibn Khaldūn's lens, both Ibn al-Rūmī and al-Mutanabbī manifest profound alienation rooted in the absence of cohesive ʿasabiyya. Ibn al-Rūmī's poetry mourns this estrangement through elegiac melancholy and biting satire, while al-Mutanabbī converts isolation into self-assertion and defiance. Each poet's creative force springs from marginalization, yet their works chart distinct paths through the fractured solidarities of their era.

4.3.From the perspective of Faslı thinker Mohammed Abed, Al-Jabri

From Mohammed Abed Al-Jabri's perspective, Arab consciousness is shaped by internal structures that perpetuate marginalization and cultural fragmentation. His Critique of Arab Reason exposes how entrenched epistemologies have fostered a persistent conservatism, suppressing intellectual renewal and transformative aspirations[33].

In the Abbasid literary sphere, poets like Abū al-ʿAtāhiyya—who eschewed courtly conventions in favor of ascetic and philosophical verse—were often marginalized, their innovation deemed subversive by cultural and political authorities invested in traditional norms[34].

Such deviation inevitably positioned him in opposition to both political authority and official culture—a marginalization that was not merely circumstantial, but systemic.

For instance, in lines such as:

"أرى الدُنيا لِمَن هِيَ في يَدَيهِ

"عَذاباً كُلَّما كَثُرَت لَدَيهِ"

("I see the world, a torment in the hands of its holder,

Its miseries multiplying for whomever clings to it.")

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33 Al-Jabri, The Arab Ethical Mind: A Critical and Analytical Study of Value Systems in Arab Culture, 1/235.

34 Al-Jabri, The Arab Ethical Mind: A Critical and Analytical Study of Value Systems in Arab Culture, 1/241.

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Abū al-ʿAtāhiyya, as al-Jābirī reveals, personifies the existential crisis of Arab intellectual tradition—a poet torn between ethical truth and courtly conformity. His marginalized, ascetic verse crystallizes the struggle between critical renewal and the weight of tradition, transforming personal alienation into a subtle defiance that both exposes and challenges the entrenched structures of Arab cultural consciousness[35].

4.4.Said, Edward William

Edward Said posits that the marginalized intellectual—often exiled and estranged—achieves a singular critical freedom, becoming a voice of conscience and principled dissent. In this light, al-Mutanabbī and Ibn al-Rūmī exemplify the Abbasid poet as outsider, their creative defiance and innovation arising precisely from social and institutional marginality[36]. al-Mutanabbī departed radically from traditional representations of the poetic self, elevating his persona in unprecedented ways within Arabic poetry. He presented himself as a peerless warrior and singular thinker who stood above his contemporaries, to the extent that his self-confidence led him, in his youth, to claim prophethood as a challenge to convention. This extraordinary conception of the poetic self reveals al-Mutanabbī's acute awareness of his role as an autonomous intellectual—one who defines himself not through validation by authority, but by imposing his unique vision upon the world around him[37].

Ibn al-Rūmī, far from a compliant courtier, emerged as a subversive voice whose verse—like al-Mutanabbī's—transforms alienation into deliberate dissent, rendering personal exile a public indictment of civilization.

4.5.Comparative Reflection:

Both al-Mutanabbī and Ibn al-Rūmī embody Said's marginalized intellectual, yet their alienation differs profoundly: al-Mutanabbī exalts exile as heroic

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35 Luqman bin Usman Imam Abdul Latif, "Abu Al-'Atahiyyah's Perspective on Religious Moderation in Arabic Poetry," Jurnal Al Bayan: Jurnal Jurusan Pendidikan Bahasa Arab 16/1 (June 23, 2024), 53.

36 Said, Representations of the Intellectual, 1/79.

37 al-Essa Rashid - Sura M. Khrais, "The Poet Glorifies His Poetry: AL-Mutanabbi and Shakespeare as a Model," International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature 4 (September 1, 2015), 208.

singularity, while Ibn al-Rūmī's irony unveils a more wounded, introspective estrangement. Thus, each poet transmutes marginality into art—one with assertive grandeur, the other with mordant irony—illuminating the complex textures of Abbasid intellectual otherness.

5.The Transition from Nomadism to Urbanism

The poetry of the Abbasid era eloquently mirrors the profound shift from nomadic austerity to urban cosmopolitanism, as Bedouin themes yielded to the refined sensibilities of city life—marking a literary evolution that both recorded and reimagined the contours of Arab civilization[38].

Abbasid poets, shaped by urbane life, exchanged wild animal imagery for gentler domestic scenes, yet their verse remains haunted by a yearning for a vanished Bedouin world. This subtle estrangement—caught between refined city and ancestral desert—imbues their poetry with quiet longing, as seen in al-Mutanabbī's undying affinity for the wilderness of memory[39].

Ibn al-Rūmī's poetry articulates acute alienation amid his diverse urban context, reflecting pervasive social dissonance. In contrast, Abū al-ʿAtāhiyya abandoned worldly pleasures for ascetic reflection on mortality, distancing himself from prevailing hedonism. The shift from nomadism to urbanism thus engendered in Abbasid poets a profound paradox: the simultaneous allure of the present and longing for the past, fostering both adaptation and inner estrangement[40].

5.1.Comparative Synthesis: Divergent Manifestations of Estrangement among Abbasid Poets

Though shaped by differing lives, Ibn al-Rūmī, al-Mutanabbī, and Abū al-ʿAtāhiyya each transmute estrangement into poetry. For Ibn al-Rūmī, alienation wounds inwardly, yielding elegy and satire; for al-Mutanabbī, it beco-

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38 Yasmina Muhammad Mahmoud Omar, "The Characteristics of Poetry in the Abbasid Era," Wadi Al-Nil Journal for Studies and Research – Issue 8 1/1 (2015), 215.

39 Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, "Abbasid Panegyric: Badīʿ Poetry and the Invention of the Arab Golden Age," British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies 44/1 (January 2, 2017), 46.

40 Baqir Jalwi Alwan, "The Impact Of The Environment On The Poets Of The First Abbasid Era ،(Images And Meaning)," Researcher Journal For Islamic Sciences 2 (2021), 16.

mes heroic solitude and the assertion of selfhood; for Abū al-ʿAtāhiyya, it is a chosen detachment, a vantage for moral critique. Together, their verses reveal alienation in Abbasid poetry as a generative force—one that transforms marginality into literary innovation and renders the periphery a crucible of vision.

6.Political Centralization and the Abbasid Authority

During the Abbasid era, political centralization in Baghdad transformed poetry into a tool of imperial prestige. Poets, especially those of diverse origins, rose through state patronage, gaining status through talent rather than lineage. Yet, this patronage bound poets to caliphal authority, making their verse both a vehicle of power and a reflection of the complex interplay between creativity and political control[41].

The centralization of power under the Abbasids engendered a paradox: poetic creativity was stifled by loyalty and censorship, as the regime politicized knowledge and repressed dissent, subjecting poets to intellectual coercion and persecution for transgressing sanctioned norms[42].

History reveals poets' tragic destinies at the hands of power: Beşşâr b. Bürd was flogged to death for heresy and satire, while Abū al-ʿAtāhiyya suffered imprisonment for transgressing courtly bounds[43].

The Abbasid poet's privileged proximity to power came at the cost of artistic autonomy, as central authority both celebrated and constrained him. Forced to choose between compliant praise and the peril of authentic expression, the poet's creativity was circumscribed, engendering a profound tension between seductive patronage and existential estrangement[44].

6.1.Comparative Perspective: Poetic Agency and Alienation under Centralized Authority

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41 Serdar Cihan Güleç, "Margaret Larkin. Al-Mutanabbī: Voice of the Abbasid Poetic Ideal," Abant İzzet Baysal Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi, (April 7, 2023), 211.

42 Şefaettin Severcan, Din-Siyaset İlişkisi-3 Abbasiler Dönemi (Fecr Yayın Grubu, 2024).

43 Abd al-Hādī Aḥmad Abū al-Qāsim, "The Poetry of Abū Al-ʿAtāhiyya in the Balance of Classical Criticism," Al-Andalus Journal for Human and Social Sciences 1/58 (2022), 86.

44 ʿAlī Ibn-al-Ḥusain Abu-'l-Farağ al-Iṣfahānī - Iḥsān ʿAbbās, Kitāb al-Aġānī (Bairūt: Dār Ṣādir, 2008), 1/122.

Under Abbasid centralization, Ibn al-Rūmī, al-Mutanabbī, and Abū al-ʿAtāhiyya each forged distinctive poetic agencies amid the burdens of patronage. Ibn al-Rūmī's verse oscillates between satirical critique and elegiac alienation, revealing the wounds of proximity to power. Al-Mutanabbī, blending audacity and irony, transforms panegyric into self-assertion, rendering poetry an arena of existential defiance. In contrast, Abū al-ʿAtāhiyya's asceticism constitutes both ethical resistance and self-chosen estrangement. Thus, poetic alienation, shaped by centralized authority, becomes a creative act—a wellspring of innovation and existential profundity.

7.The Poet's Place Between Palace and People

The Abbasid poet stood poised between palace and populace, his art conferring legitimacy upon rulers while voicing the yearnings of the streets. Within courtly circles, poetry was power's adornment; beyond, it animated the lives of all. Literary brilliance enabled social ascent, as exemplified by Abū al-ʿAtāhiyya, whose journey from humble merchant to court laureate revealed how poetry could transcend boundaries and unite the exalted with the ordinary[45]. Al-Mutanabbī's journey from obscurity to the courts of power embodies a poetic existence suspended between the common and the elite—celebrated yet never fully embraced by either. This liminality, marked by gentle alienation, allowed him to render the people's struggles in verses fit for princes, enriching Arabic poetry with both regal gravitas and popular authenticity. Such a role fostered an abiding quest for belonging, as Abbasid poets, ever between ruler and populace, distilled from their internal exile a profound and enduring humanism[46].

7.1.Comparative Perspective: Navigating Between Power and People

Ibn al-Rūmī cloaked incisive social critique in irony, positioning himself as an eternal outsider to both court and city. Abū al-ʿAtāhiyya converted marginality into moral authority, adopting ascetic verse to critique privilege

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45 Izz al-Din Ibn al-Athir al-Jazari, Al-Lubab Fi Tahdhib al-Ansab (Baghdad: Al-Muthanna Library, 2004), 1/451.

46 Safaa Al-Shudifat - Ahmad Al-Harahsheh, "The Sign of Silence in the Prison Poetry in the Abbasid Era until the End of the Fourth Century AH. 'A Semiotic Stylistic Study in Selected Cases,'" Arts and Social Sciences Series 3/1 (June 12, 2024), 88.

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from within and without. Al-Mutanabbī, by contrast, dramatized the poet's shifting proximity to power—at once exalting, confronting, and embodying the people's voice.

"أنا الذي نَظَرَ الأعمى إلى أدبي"

"I am he whose poetry the blind have seen"—a declaration of the poet's reach beyond palace walls.

وفي مثل ذلك يقول ديك الجن الحمصي ممتدحا نفسه ومفتخرا بها حيث يقول:

لِقَيْصَرٍ ولِكِسْرَى مَحْتِدِي وأبي	إنِّي امْرُؤٌ بازلٌ في ذُرْوَتَيْ شَرَفٍ
لا يَضِقْ في الأرْضِ مُضْطَرَبيْ	فإنْ وتَحْظَ بها وإنْ يَضِقْ
وصَارمٌ مِنْ سُيوفِ الهِنْدِ ذُو شُطَبِ	حَرْفٌ أمُونٌ ورأيٌ غَيْرُ مُشْتَرَكِ
ويَنْطَويْ جَيْشُها عن جَيْشِه اللَّجِبِ	وخَوْضُ لَيْلٍ تَهابُ الجِنُّ لُجَّتَهُ
إلا رَضِيعَا لِبَانٍ في حِمَىً أَشِبِ[47]	ما الشَّنْفَرَى وسُلَيْكٌ في مُغَيَّبةٍ

Thus, the negotiation between palace and populace becomes a crucible for poetic identity: each poet's navigation of this social threshold both defined and enriched the possibilities of Abbasid verse, blending the prestige of proximity to power with the authenticity of the public's voice.

Among the verses composed in praise of princes and caliphs—wherein the poet subtly veils his own discontent and irony toward the reality endured by poets—are these lines written in honor of Prince Abū al-Ḥasan.

أبو الحسين المُصعَبُ	قدِم الأميرُ أخو الأمير
لوجهه والمَرْحَبُ	فالأهلُ والسهلُ المريغُ
معروفُهُ لا يُحجَبُ	مَلِكٌ أغرٌّ مُحجَّبٌ
يحميهِ مالٌ مُنْهَبُ[48]	يغدو بِعرْضٍ وافرٍ

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47 *Muḥyī al-Dīn Darwīsh, Dīwān Dīk Al-Jinn al-Ḥimṣī (Damascus: Arab Writers Union (Ittiḥād al-Kuttāb al-ʿArab), 2004), 78.*

48 Nassar, *The Dīwān of Ibn al-Rūmī*, 1/250.

The prince arrives—his brother's noble kin,

Abū al-Ḥusayn, exalted in his name.

For him, the fields and friendly faces smile,

And every meadow greets him, glad he came.

A radiant king, his virtues veiled in light—

Yet none can shroud the fame his deeds bestow.

He walks amidst abundance day and night,

His fortune guarded, riches in full flow.

8.Dismantling the Relationship Between the Ruler and the Intellectual/Poet

Despite the deep affinities that often flourished between poets and Abbasid rulers—bonds nurtured by patronage and poetic celebration—their relationship was fraught with volatility and impermanence. This fragile alliance was perennially vulnerable to the turbulence of conscience and power: poets sometimes withdrew in protest, unwilling to sacrifice integrity upon the altar of royal favor, while others were exiled by shifting political winds or personal adversity.

Contemporary scholarship underscores the ephemeral nature of such ties, revealing a world in which poets might embrace rebellion, choose principled isolation, or dwell in ambiguity, eschewing both praise and censure. Notably, figures such as Diʿbil ibn ʿAlī al-Khuzāʿī embodied a defiant independence, refusing to trade poetic vision for proximity to power, and elevating their art above all material enticement[49].

Other poets began their careers in the embrace of political power but ultimately turned against it when their aspirations collided with the arrogance of the ruler. al-Mutanabbī, for example, wandered among various Palaces in

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49 Ahmed Suwaylem, Poets and Power (Cairo: Dar Al-Shorouk Publishing House, 2003), 1/104.

pursuit of glory commensurate with his genius. Yet, when his hopes were dashed, he lampooned Seyfüddevle El-Hamdânî and Kâfûr, Ebü'l-Misk el-İhşîdî in scathing verses, turning panegyric into biting invective. As stated by the researcher Muhammed Emin Bayır in his seminal work." Mütenebbî Kâfûr'un yanına 346/957 yılında gelmiş ve ona methiye yazmaya başlamıştır. Onu gördüğünde okuduğu methiyesi Mısırda nazmettiği ilk şiir olup Dîvân'ında öne çıkan şiirlerindendir:

وَحَسبُ المَنايا أَن يَكُنَّ أَمانِيا   كَفى بِكَ داءً أَن تَرى المَوتَ شافِيا

Ölümü şifa olarak görmen sana hastalık olarak yeter.

Ecelin korkusu bile kendisine yeter.

Bu kasidesinde Kâfûr'dan kendisine toprak ve yöneticilik vermesi hususunda beklenti içerisinde olduğuna dair bazı telmihler de vardır:

فَيَرجِعَ مَلكاً لِلعِراقَينِ والِيا   وَغَيرُ كَثيرٍ أَن يَزورَكَ راجِلٌ

Birinin seni ayaküstü ziyaret edip Irak'a kral olarak dönmesi şaşılacak bir şey değildir"[50].

Moreover, as the researcher Professor Dr. Adnan Arslan further elucidates about al-Mutanabbī while praising Emir Badr ibn ʿAmmar, driven by a hope for patronage and generous gifts, he declares

مار عن الشغل بالورى شغل[51]   وفي إعتمار الامير بدر بن عم

The tragic death of Ibn al-Rūmī—allegedly poisoned by a governor intolerant of his satirical edge—epitomizes the rupture between poet and power. Revolutionary poets discerned a profound reality: authority, by its essence, recoils from criticism, while the authentic poet, guardian of transcendent ideals, inevitably finds himself at odds with the imperatives of rule. The poet's allegiance is to conscience and society; the ruler's demand is subservience to the throne. This irreconcilable tension fostered a deep crisis of trust, dissolving the traditional alliance between sovereign and intellectual. Thus emerged

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50 Muhammed Emin bayır, Mütenebbî ve Şiirlerinde Gazel Unsurları (İstanbul: Ark   Kitapları Özgü Yayınları, 2023), 84.

51 Adnan Arslan, "Literary Analysis of Al-Mutanabbī's Ode: Ab'Ad Na'y al-Malīḥa al-   Bakhhal," Ordu İlahiyat 4 (March 28, 2025), 13.

the dichotomy between the sycophantic court poet and the independent seeker of truth, who often labored in isolation from political authority.

This schism solidified during the waning Abbasid era, as the caliphal state—consumed by internal strife—abandoned its literary patronage. Poets, mourning the decline of both poetry and polity, bore witness to the end of an age in which poet and ruler were bound by mutual regard. Bereft of patronage, the poet was left to confront the solitude of his vocation[52].

By the twilight of the Abbasid epoch, poets such as Abū al-ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarrī, who embraced isolation and eschewed patronage, and al-Mutanabbī, who wandered in pursuit of elusive ideals, embody a profound existential estrangement. In this period, the intellectual is irrevocably severed from temporal authority, withdrawing either into the sanctity of contemplation or embarking upon solitary wanderings in search of redemption. This schism marks the dissolution of the once-dynamic dialectic between poet and sovereign. Liberated from the constraints of the court, the poet stands solitary before the abyss of existence, transmuting alienation and disillusionment into an enduring wellspring of wisdom and emotion. Thus, the collapse of the ruler–intellectual bond emerges as an inevitable prelude to the poet's reclamation of selfhood and ethical purpose, enriching the Arabic poetic tradition with a profound humanism born of solitude and independence[53].

8.1. Comparative Synthesis: Divergent Paths of Autonomy and Estrangement among Abbasid Poets

The fractured bond between poet and authority in the Abbasid era engendered distinct yet convergent forms of poetic autonomy. Al-Mutanabbī transmuted personal and political disillusionment into a bold self-affirmation, casting himself as the indomitable, heroic intellectual who would not yield to any sovereign. Ibn al-Rūmī, conversely, wielded irony as both shield and blade, his verse oscillating between biting satire and mournful introspection—an

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52 Mustafa al-Shak'a, Poetry and Poets in the Abbasid Era (Beirut: Dar al-'Ilm li'l-Malayin, 2011), 1/233.

53 Jum'ah bint Safar bin Sa'id al-Zahrani, Man in the Perspective of Ibn Al-Rumi and al-Mutanabbi: Between Praise and Criticism. (Saudi Arabia: Umm al-Qura University, PhD Dissertation, 2003), 44.

unflinching testament to the psychic costs of precarious patronage. In contrast, Abū al-ʿAtāhiyya elected withdrawal, cultivating an ascetic detachment that reframed alienation as an act of philosophical and ethical resistance.

Yet, despite their divergent strategies, all three poets converged upon the affirmation of the poetic self—an autonomous locus of meaning disentangled from political exigency. In this way, their estrangement became not mere symptom but a creative force, redefining intellectual autonomy and enriching the humanistic tapestry of Arabic literary tradition.

9.Representations of Existential Alienation in Abbasid Poetry

The poetic oeuvre of Ibn al-Rūmī, al-Mutanabbī, and Abū al-ʿAtāhiyya forms a compelling tableau of existential estrangement in the Abbasid age. Each poet, while voicing alienation through his unique psychological and ethical sensibility, reveals in his verse the deep anxieties that haunted his epoch. Among them, Ibn al-Rūmī stands as the quintessential figure of psychological alienation; his poetry is suffused with a vivid sense of inner turmoil, social detachment, and irreparable grief. His elegy for his son, where he confesses to a solitude unmitigated even in the presence of others, becomes a haunting emblem of this condition. Through such lines, Ibn al-Rūmī articulates an existential fracture—a retreat of the self into a realm of private anguish, perpetually estranged from communal existence. In this way, his verse becomes not only a chronicle of personal sorrow but also a literary manifestation of the profound alienation that marked his age[54].

مالَ من شُرطةٍ ومن كُتّابِ	أتُراني دون الألى بلغوا الآ
بالمنى في النفوس والأحبابِ	وتِجارٍ مثل البهائم فازوا
تحتها جاهليَّةُ الأعرابِ	فيهمُ لُكنةُ النَّبيط ولكنْ
ظاهِر السُّخْف مثلهم لَعَّابِ	أصبحوا يلعبون في ظلِّ دهرٍ

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54 Mohammed Mahmoud Al Mashaykh - Mohammed Issa Al Hourani, "The Dualism of Death and Life in the Elegy of Ibn Alromi to His Mother – Stylistics Study," Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences 3/5 (May 30, 2019), 5.

غيرَ مُغنين بالسيوف ولا الأقْـ	ـلامِ في موطنٍ غَنَاءَ ذُبابِ
ليس فيهم مُدافعٌ عن حريمٍ	لا ولا قائمٌ بصدر كتابِ
كاذبي المادحين يعلمُه اللهُ	عُدول الهُجاة والعُيَّابِ
شَغَلتْ موضعَ الكُنى لا بلِ الأسْـ	ـماء منهم قبائحُ الألقابِ
خيرُ ما فيهُم ولا خيرَ فيهم	أنهم غيرُ آثمي المُغتابِ
ويظلون في المنَاعم واللذ	ذاتِ بين الكواعب الأترابِ
لَهُمُ المُسمِعَاتُ ما يُطربُ السا	معَ والطائفاتُ بالأكوابِ[55]

The poet laments a society where honor and distinction are claimed by the unworthy—officials and merchants whose achievements are hollow, their virtues illusory. The truly noble are overshadowed by those whose only inheritance is ignorance and play. Lacking both courage and scholarship, these figures contribute nothing to the defense of virtue or the advancement of knowledge. Their reputations are built on empty titles and deceitful praise, while genuine merit is absent. Even amidst opulence and pleasures, their enjoyments are unearned, and their highest morality is merely the avoidance of open vice—a barren virtue. Thus, the poet mourns the triumph of mediocrity and the eclipse of true excellence.

In al-Mutanabbī's poetry, alienation emerges not merely as a personal sentiment but as a profound existential crisis—an estrangement wrought by unfulfilled ambition and the persistent denial of recognition within a capricious political landscape. His poetic self, forged in the crucible of genius and pride, aspires ceaselessly to distinction, yet remains exiled from the very spheres he seeks to inhabit. Wandering from court to court, al-Mutanabbī encounters not the embrace of appreciative patrons, but a relentless indifference that deepens his sense of marginalization. The resultant disillusionment, vividly inscribed in his verses, transforms personal longing into a broader indictment of a political order inhospitable to greatness. Thus, his alienation is

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55 Nassar, The Dīwān of Ibn al-Rūmī, 1/263.

both an intimate elegy and an implicit, enduring challenge to the structures that stifle exceptional talent.

وَلا نَدِيمٌ وَلا كَأْسٌ وَلا سَكَنُ   بِمَ التَعَلُّلُ لا أَهْلٌ وَلا وَطَنُ

ما لَيسَ يَبْلُغُهُ مِن نَفسِهِ الزَمَنُ   أَريدُ مِن زَمَني ذا أَن يُبَلِّغَني

مادامَ يَصحَبُ فيهِ روحَكَ البَدَنُ   لا تَلقَ دَهرَكَ إِلّا غَيرَ مُكتَرِثٍ

فَ وَلا يَرُدُّ عَلَيكَ الفائتَ الحَزَنُ   ما يَدومُ سُرورٌ ما سُررتَ بِهِ

تَجري الرِياحُ بِما لا تَشتَهي السُفُنُ   ما كُلُّ ما يَتَمَنّى المَرءُ يُدركُهُ

وَلا يَدِرُّ عَلى مَرعاكُمُ اللَبَنُ   رَأَيتُكُم لا يَصونُ العِرضَ جارُكُم

وَحَظُّ كُلِّ مُحِبٍّ مِنكُمُ ضَغَنُ[56]   جَزاءُ كُلِّ قَريبٍ مِنكُمُ مَلَلٌ

In solitude and exile, the heart searches for solace, but finds neither kin nor comfort—no friendly voice, no refuge in joy or oblivion. The soul's deepest desires reach for what even time itself cannot deliver, yearning beyond the limitations of fate.

Let us greet each fleeting day with gentle detachment, for neither delight nor sorrow endures; mourning cannot reclaim what has vanished. Destiny seldom grants all that the heart desires—fortune's winds may scatter even the most hopeful ships.

Among such company, loyalty and honor are strangers; blessings are withheld, and familiarity breeds only weariness. Thus, every closeness yields disappointment, and all affection sours to bitterness.

Al-Mutanabbī here invokes the image of ships caught in adverse winds to symbolize the tumultuous forces of fate and the erratic whims of those in power—forces that clash with the poet's lofty aspirations. His marginalized identity, shaped by a dream to stand as an equal to authority or to share in its glory, finds itself alienated within a society that fails to acknowledge its worth. The turbulent winds, unwelcome to the ship's course, metaphorically represent the external barriers that thwarted his ambitions and deepened his sense of estrangement from the political sphere surrounding him. Thus, al-Mutanabbī's poetry becomes a literary embodiment of the self's struggle against its historical reality, articulating through powerful rhetorical imagery a

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56 Abu al-'Ala'al-Ma'arri, *Ebü't-Tayyib al-Mutenabbî. Al-Lami' al-'Aziz Sharh-Diwan al-Mutanabbî*, 1/244.

veiled rebellion against marginalization and a proud inward withdrawal in the face of disillusionment and alienation from his era[57].

In Abū al-ʿAtāhiyya's poetry, one discerns a profound moral alienation amidst the hedonism of the Abbasid elite. Assuming the mantle of an ascetic, he renounces the fleeting allure of worldly pleasures, voicing a poignant protest against spiritual estrangement and the eclipse of life's true purpose in an age enamored with material excess. Through the solemn cadence of a preacher, his verses expose the emptiness of earthly pursuits, offering a countervailing ethical vision—a remedy to the prevailing disquiet. In addressing his peers, Abū al-ʿAtāhiyya evokes the certainty of mortality, inviting reflection on the enduring questions of existence.

مَيَّزتُ بَينَ العَبدِ وَالمَولى	وَلَقَد مَرَرتُ عَلى القُبورِ فَما
لم يَخلُ صاحِبُها مِنَ البَلوى	ما زالَتِ الدُنيا مُنَغَّصَةً
رُ البَثِّ وَالأحزانِ وَالشَكوى	دارُ الفَجائِعِ وَالهُمومِ وَدا
إذ صارَ تَحتَ تُرابِها مُلقى[58]	بَينا الفَتى فيها بِمَنزِلَةٍ

The poem reflects on the profound equality wrought by death, where distinctions of status and power dissolve within the silent domain of the grave. Life is portrayed as inherently fraught with sorrow and transience; affliction spares none, rendering the world a place of perpetual loss and unrest. The poet laments the ephemeral nature of human glory and youth, reminding us that both the exalted and the lowly ultimately succumb to the same fate, their traces lost beneath the earth. Thus, the poem offers a meditative elegy on mortality, humility, and the universality of human suffering.

Abū al-ʿAtāhiyya's verses eloquently proclaim the ultimate equality wrought by death, erasing all distinctions between master and servant. Thro-

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57 Abu al-ʿAlaʾal-Maʿarri, *Ebüʾt-Tayyib al-Mutenabbî. Al-Lamiʿ al-ʿAziz Sharh-Diwan al-Mutanabbî*, 1/246.

58 Ebû İshak al-ʿAtahiyah, Commentary on the Diwan of Abu Al-ʿAtahiyah (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 2004), 1/116.

ugh evocative imagery, he portrays the world as a theatre of tribulation, exposing the futility of material pursuits and society's estrangement from abiding moral truths. His retreat from the ostentations of his age was not mere personal asceticism, but a profound literary dissent—a call to rekindle the lost virtues of piety and contentment. In this way, his poetry becomes a universal lament for humanity's ethical alienation and a poignant appeal to recover spiritual authenticity as the path toward true reconciliation with oneself and the world[59].

9.1.Comparative Synthesis

This comparative analysis reveals not a mere inventory of personal crises, but an intricate tapestry of Abbasid sensibility, wherein alienation emerges as both an existential ordeal and a wellspring of literary ingenuity. Ibn al-Rūmī's plaintive verses capture the soul's solitude in the face of societal indifference, while al-Mutanabbī transmutes estrangement into heroic self-assertion and nuanced dissent. Abū al-ʿAtāhiyya, meanwhile, recasts moral alienation as a summons to spiritual renewal. Together, these poets embody the psychological, political, and ethical dimensions of alienation, converging on a profound insight: the poet's marginality is paradoxically central, granting him the vantage to critique, to create, and to endow Abbasid poetry with its timeless depth and universal appeal.

Conclusion

This study has revealed that existential alienation in Abbasid poetry is not merely a poetic motif or a subjective expression of emotional estrangement but rather a historically grounded and culturally embedded phenomenon. Through a critical examination of the poetic works of Abū al-ʿAtāhiyya, Ibn al-Rūmī, and al-Mutanabbī, the research demonstrates that alienation functioned as both a lived experience and a conscious literary strategy. Each poet developed a unique voice that articulated the psychological, political, and ethical dimensions of alienation, in response to the profound socio-cultural transformations of the Abbasid era. Far from being isolated cases, their expressions of estrangement mirror the fragmentation of identity and

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59 al-ʿAtahiyah, *Commentary on the Diwan of Abu Al-ʿAtahiyah*, 1/121.

belonging in an empire undergoing centralization, urbanization, and cultural hybridization.

The poetic voice of Abū al-ʿAtāhiyya emerges as a radical critique of the hedonistic ethos of Abbasid elite. His asceticism was not a withdrawal into personal piety alone, but a protest against the moral decay of palatial culture.

By rejecting themes of eroticism and panegyric, he positioned himself as a marginalized moralist whose voice spoke on behalf of a spiritual authenticity lost amidst the indulgence of the time. His verses elevate ascetic wisdom to the level of universal truth, embodying ethical alienation in a world that had abandoned metaphysical concerns in favor of material pleasures. In this context, Abū al-ʿAtāhiyya 's alienation acquires an ontological character, reflecting the poet's refusal to reconcile with a world he viewed as fundamentally corrupt and spiritually void.

Ibn al-Rūmī, by contrast, represents the archetype of psychological alienation, shaped by personal tragedy, social marginalization, and ethnic hybridity. Born to a non-Arab lineage and denied the patronage and recognition granted to others, he confronted his environment with a biting satire and melancholic elegies. His poetry reveals a deep inner rupture—one that speaks not only to personal suffering but also to a broader experience of social exclusion. His critical stance, rooted in an acute awareness of injustice and hypocrisy, transforms his alienated identity into a site of creative resistance. He becomes, in effect, an intellectual on the margins, whose outsider position allows him to observe society with sharp discernment and to expose its concealed contradictions.

Al-Mutanabbī exemplifies a more complex and ambivalent form of alienation—one characterized by a soaring ego in perpetual conflict with political realities. His poetry constructs a proud, almost prophetic self-image that challenges authority while simultaneously seeking validation from it. His existential alienation stems from the mismatch between his immense poetic genius and the failure of the political elite to recognize his worth. This duality—oscillating between self-exaltation and societal rejection—creates a dynamic poetic tension.

In his work, wherein poetic ambition collides with political marginalization. His verses, saturated with metaphors of displacement, wandering, and misrecognition, stand as a testament to the alienated self-striving to impose meaning upon an unresponsive world.

Viewed through the lens of sociological and intellectual frameworks, the study demonstrates that these three poets embody distinct, yet interconnected, modes of alienation—spiritual Abū al-ʿAtāhiyya, psychological Ibn al-Rūmī, and political-identity al-Mutanabbī. Each poet engages critically with his historical moment, transforming his estrangement into a poetic discourse that challenges dominant ideologies and cultural norms. The theoretical contributions of İbn Khaldūn, Muhammed Âbid, al-Jābirī, and Said, Edward William enrich this understanding by offering interpretive tools that link personal alienation to structural and epistemological forces. İbn Khaldūn's concept of ʿasabiyyah explains how the erosion of social solidarity and tribal affiliation intensified the poets' marginalization, while Muhammed Âbid, al-Jābirī's critique of Arab reason uncovers the mechanisms of cultural exclusion and stagnation. Said, Edward William's portrayal of the marginalized intellectual situates these poets within a broader tradition of dissenting voices who, from the periphery, hold a mirror to the heart of power.

The study concludes that alienation in Abbasid poetry is not an incidental theme, but rather a central mode of self-expression and cultural critique. The poets' experiences of marginalization, whether due to social class, ethnic background, political disillusionment, or spiritual rebellion, were sublimated into literary representations that carried enduring aesthetic and philosophical weight. Their poetry does not merely reflect a sense of personal dislocation; it constructs a counter-narrative to the dominant discourse of authority, opulence, and conformity. Thus, Abbasid poetry—often celebrated for its rhetorical elegance and Saray sophistication—must also be read as a site of resistance, where the voices of the alienated transform pain into insight, and estrangement into beauty.

In light of these findings, the study calls for a reevaluation of Abbasid poetic heritage, emphasizing the role of alienation as a productive force rather than a symptom of decline. The alienated poet, far from being a passive ob-

server or melancholic figure, emerges as a creative agent who redefines the relationship between poetry and society. His estrangement becomes a critical vantage point from which to interrogate the values, structures, and contradictions of his era. Future research might further explore how these patterns of alienation resonate with later periods of Arabic literary history, or how they intersect with other marginalized voices across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Ultimately, this study affirms that existential alienation—when poetically articulated—offers not only a lens into the soul of the poet but also into the conscience of an age.

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