


al-Marrār b. Munqidh's Life and Poetry

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Arabic Language and Literature | Kars, Türkiye

Abstract

In the scholarly examination titled "al-Marrār b. Munqidh's Life and Poetry", a focused lens is turned towards the somewhat elusive figure of al-Marrār b. Munqidh, shedding light on his life and, more notably, his poetic contributions during the Umayyad era. The article's methodological approach centers on a twofold analysis, first drawing from the limited biographical data available about al-Marrār b. Munqidh to paint a picture of the poet and his socio-cultural environment, and then engaging in a meticulous exploration of his poetic oeuvre to discern the thematic and stylistic choices that characterized his work. Subject-wise, the research emphasizes the importance of studying lesser-acknowledged poets like al-Marrār b. Munqidh to fill gaps in the collective understanding of the Umayyad poetic landscape. His verses, although not dominantly featured in current literary circles, are intricate tapestries weaving the sentiments, intellect, and cultural motifs of his age. Thus, through his poetry, readers and scholars can glean nuanced insights into the multifaceted world of the Umayyad era, making his works indispensable for anyone seeking a comprehensive grasp of the period's literary milieu. Regarding scope, while the article does delve into al-Marrār b. Munqidh's biography, it primarily emphasizes the exploration of his poetry. Given the paucity of detailed records about his life, the emphasis on his poetic works is not just a choice but a necessity. This, in turn, allows the article to cast a wide net over the expanse of Umayyad poetry, positioning al-Marrār's contributions within this broader framework. By juxtaposing his poetic techniques and themes with those of his contemporaries, the research offers a holistic perspective on the dynamics and divergences that marked the Umayyad poetic tradition. The article underscores the importance of al-Marrār b. Munqidh not just as a poet, but as a key to unlocking the subtleties of his age. His poetry, with its distinctive thematic concerns and stylistic elements, becomes a mirror reflecting the broader societal, cultural, and intellectual shifts of his time. By studying his works, the research asserts that one can gain a deeper understanding of the underlying currents that shaped the artistic expressions of the Umayyad poets. As for the research's purpose, it is manifold. Firstly, it aims to bring to the fore the life and works of a poet who might otherwise remain on the periphery of Arabic literary studies. In doing so, it not only champions the cause of al-Marrār b. Munqidh but also underscores the need to continually revisit and reassess historical literary figures, thereby preventing them from fading into obscurity. Furthermore, by anchoring its analysis in the broader context of Umayyad poetry, the research endeavors to enrich our understanding of the epoch, drawing attention to the intricacies and innovations that defined it. Methodologically, the research adopts a blended approach. It employs historical analysis to piece together the scant details of al-Marrār b. Munqidh's life, cross-referencing various sources to ensure accuracy and reliability. Simultaneously, for the exploration of his poetry, a close textual analysis is employed.

Keywords

Arabic Language and Literature, Classical Arabic Poetry, Poets from the Umayyad Caliphate, Umayyad Poetry, al-Marrār b. Munqidh.

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Dizinlenme Bilgisi



Merrâr b. Münkiz'in Hayatı ve Şiirleri

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Öz

Merrâr b. Münkiz'in Hayatı ve Şiirleri" başlığını taşıyan bu bilimsel çalışmada, anlaşılması zor bir figür olarak karşımıza çıkan Merrâr b. Münkiz'in hayatına ve daha da önemlisi Emevî dönemindeki şiirsel katkılarına ışık tutulmaktadır. Makalenin metodolojik yaklaşımı iki yönlü bir analize dayanmaktadır. Bu bağlamda öncelikle Merrâr hakkında elimizde bulunan sınırlı miktardaki biyografik verilerden hareketle şairin ve sosyo-kültürel çevresinin ana hatları tayin edilmekte, ardından da eserlerini karakterize eden tematik ve stilistik tercihlerini tespit etmek maksadıyla şiirsel külliyyatın titiz bir şekilde mütalaa edilmesine girişilmektedir. Konu bakımından araştırma, Emevî dönemindeki şiir muhitine dair müşterek anlayıştaki boşlukları doldurmak için, Merrâr b. Münkiz gibi daha az tanınan şairlerin incelenmesinin önemini vurgulamaktadır. Onun şiirleri, günümüz edebiyat çevrelerinde kendisine belirgin bir yer edinebilmiş değildir. Öte yandan bu edebî ürünler, şairin yaşadığı çağın duygularını, fikriyatını ve kültürel motiflerini yansıtan girift sanat eserleridir. Dolayısıyla okuyucular ve akademisyenler onun şiirleri aracılığıyla Emevî döneminin çok yönlü dünyasına dair tafsilatlı malumatlar edinme imkanına sahiptir ve bu durum da onun eserlerini dönemin edebî ortamını kapsamlı bir şekilde kavramak isteyen herkes için vazgeçilmez kılacaktır. Kapsam açısından ise bu makale, Merrâr b. Münkiz'in biyografisine değinmekle birlikte, öncelikle onun şiirlerinin incelenmesine yoğunlaşmaktadır. Nitekim onun hayatı hakkındaki ayrıntılı kayıtların azlığı göz önünde bulundurulduğunda, şiirleri üzerinde yapılan yoğunlaşma sadece bir tercih değil, aynı zamanda bir zaruriyet olarak da karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Öte yandan bu durum, makalenin Emevî şiirinin geniş perspektifini gözlemleyebilmesine ve Merrâr'ın katkılarını bu geniş perspektif içerisinde konumlandırabilmesine imkân sağlamaktadır. Yapılan araştırma, onun nazım tekniklerini ve temalarını çağdaşlarınınkiyle bir araya getirerek Emevî şiir geleneğine damgasını vuran dinamikler ve ayrışmalar hakkında bütüncül bir bakış açısı sunmaktadır. Bahis mevzu makale, Merrâr b. Münkiz'in sadece bir şair olarak değil, aynı zamanda çağının inceliklerini ortaya çıkaran kilit bir isim olarak da temayüz ettiğinin altını çizmektedir. Kendisine özgü tematik kaygıları ve üslup unsurlarıyla onun şiirleri, döneminin daha geniş toplumsal, kültürel ve entelektüel değişimlerini yansıtan bir ayna haline gelmektedir. Dolayısıyla mezkûr araştırma, onun eserlerini incelemek suretiyle, Emevî şairlerinin sanatsal ifadelerini şekillendiren temel akımlar hakkında da daha derin bir anlayış kazanılabileceğini savunmaktadır. Araştırmanın amacı ise esasen çok yönlüdür. İlk olarak, aksi takdirde Arap edebiyatı çalışmalarının yeterli önemi vermediği bir konumda kalabilecek bir şairin hayatının ve eserlerinin ön plana çıkartılması amaçlanmaktadır. Bu yapılırken, yalnızca Merrâr b. Münkiz'in öneminin savunulmasıyla yetinilmemekte, aynı zamanda tarihî ve edebî figürlerin sürekli olarak yeniden mütalaa edilmesi ve yeniden değerlendirilmesi hususundaki ihtiyacının da altı çizilmektedir. Böylece bu şahsiyetlerin bilinmezlik içerisinde kaybolmaları önlenmiş olmaktadır. Ayrıca bu çalışma, analizini Emevî şiirinin daha geniş bağlamına oturup, dönemi tanımlayan inceliklere dikkat çekerek dönem hakkındaki anlayışımızı zenginleştirmeye de çalışmaktadır. Metodolojik açıdan ise araştırma, karma bir yaklaşımı benimsemektedir. Merrâr b. Münkiz'in hayatının yetersiz miktardaki verilerini bir araya getirmek için tarihsel analizden yararlanmakta, doğruluk ve güvenilirliği sağlamak için çeşitli kaynaklara çapraz referanslar vermektedir. Eşzamanlı olarak şiirlerinin tetkik edilebilmesi için yakın bir metin analizi kullanılmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler

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Abstracting and Indexes



Introduction

In the annals of classical Arabic literature, certain luminaries' contributions resonate with an enduring potency, offering a lens through which we can access the socio-cultural and intellectual climates of bygone eras. Among these figures, al-Marrār b. Munqidh emerges as a particularly captivating subject. al-Marrār b. Munqidh may not be widely recognized in modern poetry circles. However, his contributions to Arabic literature are undeniably significant. Delving into his works offers an intimate encounter with the Umayyad period, a time of profound cultural and intellectual ferment. Through his verses, one can trace the subtle intricacies and rich textures that defined the era's artistic landscapes. As one delves into al-Marrār's oeuvre, the multifaceted nature of his poetic expression becomes apparent, shedding light on the societal norms, personal tribulations, and the overarching ethos of his time. This article seeks to offer an in-depth exploration of al-Marrār b. Munqidh's life and poetic legacy, situating his contributions within the broader tapestry of Arabic literary tradition and emphasizing his unique voice that has echoed through centuries. Through an integrated analysis of his biography and poetic compositions, we aim to elucidate the nuances of his works and the historical context that molded them, offering scholars and enthusiasts alike a comprehensive understanding of this seminal figure and his indelible mark on Arabic literature.

1. The Life of al-Marrār b. Munqidh

al-Marrār b. Munqidh b. 'Amr al-'Adawī (d. 100/718 [?]) is recognized as a luminary among Arab poets of Islam's formative century. Records indicate his birth name as Ziyād, while "al-Marrār" served as his epithet. He was a scion of the Banū al-Adawiyya tribe, tracing its ancestral roots to Mālik b. Ḥanzala b. Mālik b. Zayd Manāt b. Tamīm. On occasion, al-Marrār is denoted by the cognomen al-Ḥanzalī. Some sources even present him as Ziyād b. Ḥamal b. Sa'd al-Adawī, leading to conjectures that they might pertain to two separate poets. A considerable segment of al-Marrār's life was anchored in Najd. Notably, he is documented to have traveled to Yemen. In his oeuvre, there exists a poem that critiques the eminent city of Ṣan'ā' while concurrently extolling the region where his tribe resided. al-Marrār found his place among the poets of the Umayyad Caliphate, aligning himself with the seventh Umayyad caliph, Sulaymān b. 'Abd al-Malik (d. 99/717). Sharing his era with poets like Jarīr (d. 110/728 [?]) and al-Farazdaq (d. 114/732), his compositions bolstered al-Farazdaq in the satirical critique of Jarīr, resulting in accounts of their poetic altercations. al-Āmidī (d. 371/981) commemorates him as an illustrious poet. From al-Marrār's extant works, segments dedicated to the theme of "fakhr" (pride or boasting) are prominent, along with verses resonating with romantic sentiments.¹

Existing scholarly resources provide scant insights into the life of al-Marrār b. Munqidh. The paucity of concrete data regarding his dates of birth and demise is evident in these materials. Given that he thrived during the first Hijri century and observed the nascent years of the second Hijri century—simultaneously being a contemporary of illustrious Umayyad poets such as Jarīr, al-Farazdaq, and Dhū al-Rumma (d. 117/735)—it becomes academically justifiable to categorize al-Marrār as a poet of the Umayyad period. The prevailing canon in Arabic literature accords him a place among esteemed Islamic poets.² While al-Marrār garnered recognition as a distinguished poet during his era, it is indubitable that his renown has not sustained through to modern times. Presently, al-Marrār predominantly features in the annals of overlooked Arab poets. In works elucidating Arabic literary chronicles, his biography and poetic contributions are frequently absent. Research endeavors concerning him in the Arab scholarly domain remain markedly sparse. Evidently, Western academicians appear reticent to delve deeply into al-Marrār's oeuvre. The precipitous decline of al-Marrār's once-stellar repute in the modern context can likely be attributed to the exceedingly restricted anthology of his poetry accessible today.

2. The Poetry of al-Marrār b. Munqidh

In the nascent stages of Arabic literature, the tradition of conveying tales, histories, and poetic verses was predominantly oral. This rich oral culture was deeply rooted in the Arab societal fabric, wherein skilled raconteurs and poets would recite epics, histories, and poetic compositions from memory in gatherings and events. The transience of this medium, however, meant that

¹ Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975), 2/383; Khayr al-Dīn al-Ziriklī, *al-A'lām*, (Beirut: Dār al-'Ilm lil-Malāyīn, 2002), 3/55; Abū Muḥammad 'Alī b. Sa'īd b. Ḥazm al-Andalusī, *Jamhara ansāb al-'Arab*, Critical ed. Evariste Lévi-Provençal (Egypt: Dār al-Ma'ārif, n.d.), 436; Ibn Qutayba, *al-Shi'r wa al-shu'arā'*, Critical ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, n.d.), 2/697-698; 'Abd al-Qādir b. 'Umar al-Baghdādī, *Khizāna al-adab wa-lubb lubāb lisān al-'Arab*, Critical ed. 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn (Cairo: Maktaba al-Khānjī, 1418/1997), 5/255; Abū 'Ubayd Allah Muḥammad b. 'Imrān al-Marzubānī, *Mu'jam al-shu'arā'*, ed. Fritz Krenkow (Beirut: Maktaba al-Qudsī - Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1402/1982), 409.

² Rushdī 'Alī Ḥasan, "Shi'r al-Marrār b. Munqidh al-'Adawī", *Majalla Jāmi'a Tishrīn li-l-Dirāsāt wa al-Buḥūth al-'Ilmiyya* 11/1.2 (1409/1989), 29-30.

much of the invaluable literary content was susceptible to the vagaries of human memory, evolving societal norms, and the passage of time. Without the permanence offered by written records, a significant portion of these oral narratives and poems were lost to history. This ephemeral nature of early Arabic literature is strikingly illustrated in the case of al-Marrār b. Munqidh. While he was a luminary of his era, echoing the cadences and ethos of his time through his poetic verses, the reliance on oral transmission meant that only a fraction of his extensive oeuvre has survived to the present day. The fragments that remain serve as a poignant reminder of the vast literary treasures that might have been lost from this early period and the challenges historians and scholars face in piecing together the comprehensive tapestry of early Arabic literary culture.³

The oeuvre of al-Marrār b. Munqidh, regrettably, has not been transmitted to contemporary times in the structured form of a compiled *dīwān*. Presently, there exists no corroborative evidence indicating that a compilation of his poetic verses occurred during his lifetime. Moreover, even in ensuing periods characterized by scholarly endeavors to curate and assemble poetic anthologies, there remains an absence of indications that al-Marrār's compositions were systematically collected. The extant manuscripts of Ibn Nadīm (d. 385/995 [?]), notably, remain devoid of any mention or reference to a dedicated compilation of al-Marrār's poetic contributions. Consequently, contemporary interactions with al-Marrār's verses are largely confined to sporadic excerpts dispersed across diverse literary compendiums. It is worth noting that several lexicons exemplify instances where his poetry serves as illustrative references. While myriad sources might cite an isolated line or fragment from his compositions, the brevity and fragmented nature of such references diminish their overall academic significance. Nonetheless, amidst these sources, two seminal works are distinguishable for their pivotal roles in disseminating select compositions of al-Marrār's to the present era: *al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt* authored by al-Mufaḍḍal aḍ-Ḍabbī (d. 178/794 [?]) and *al-Ḥamāsa al-Kubrā* penned by Abū Tammām (d. 231/846).⁴

Delving into the extant poems of al-Marrār b. Munqidh via close examination of specific examples presents an invaluable avenue for a deeper understanding of his poetic genius. Each poem, or even fragment thereof, encapsulates not just the rhythmic and linguistic brilliance for which classical Arabic poetry is renowned, but also provides invaluable insights into al-Marrār's unique voice, the nuances of his expressions, and his idiosyncratic take on themes, motifs, and societal observations. Contextualizing these individual examples within the broader literary and socio-cultural backdrop of his era allows scholars and readers alike to appreciate the layers of meaning, intertextuality, and the intricate interplay between form and content inherent in his work. This analytical approach, centered on tangible examples, offers a tangible touchstone, anchoring abstract literary discussions in concrete textual realities and facilitating a more holistic grasp of al-Marrār's contributions to Arabic literature.

In the annals of classical Arabic poetry, the essence of contemplation often melds with the allure of the environment, leading to verses that are both evocative and profound. Such is the case with a piece by the venerable poet, al-Marrār. In one of his poems, at first glance, his composition might appear to be a mere celebration of camels and palm trees, two significant symbols in desert culture. However, a deeper introspection reveals a layered exploration of wealth, both fleeting and eternal, and the human desire for a lasting legacy. With the elegance characteristic of his style, al-Marrār paints a vivid tapestry that challenges our notions of value, pushing us to look beyond the ephemeral and recognize the truly enduring bounties of life. The aforementioned poem, while having varied versions in different sources, comprises twelve verses in the traditional narrative [*Wāfir*]:

1. "وَكَايُنْ مِنْ فَتَى سَوُوْ تَرَزُوْهِ يِعْلُكُ هَجْمَةً حُمْرًا وَجُونََا

2. يَضَنْ بَحْمَهُ وَأُوْدَمُ فِيْهَِا وَيَتْرُكُهُ لِقَا لِقَا آخِرِيَا

3. فَإِنَّكَ إِنْ تَرِي إِبِلًا سِيَاوَانَا وَتُصْبِحُ لَا تَرِيَنَّ لَنَا لَبُونَا

4. فَإِنْ لَنَا حَظًّا نَائِرَ نَاعِمَاتٍ عَطَاءَ اللّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِيْنَا

³ Ḥasan, "Shi'r al-Marrār b. Munqidh al-'Adawī", 30.

⁴ Ḥasan, "Shi'r al-Marrār b. Munqidh al-'Adawī", 31; Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Marzūqī, *Sharḥ Dīwān al-Ḥamāsa li-Abī 'Alī Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Marzūqī*, ed. Aḥmad Amīn - 'Abd al-Salām Hārūn (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1411/1991), 2/1389-1404; al-Mufaḍḍal al-Ḍabbī, *Dīwān al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt: Ma'a sharḥ wāfir li-Abī Muḥammad al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad b. Bashshār al-Anbārī*, Critical ed. Charles James Lyall (Beirut: Maṭba'a al-Ābā' al-Yasū'iyyīn, 1920), 122-126, 142-159; al-Mufaḍḍal al-Ḍabbī, *al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, Critical ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir - 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, n.d.), 72-74, 82-93.

5. طَلَّ بِنَ الْبَحْرِ بِالْأَذْنَابِ حَتَّى شَرِينِ جِمَامَهُ حَتَّى رَوَيْنَا
 6. تَطَّلَاوِلِ مَحْرَمِي صُدُودِي أَشْيِي بَوَائِكَ مَا يُبَالِيَنَّ السُّنِينَا
 7. كَأَنَّ قُرُوعَهَا فِي كُلِّ رِيحٍ جَوَارٍ بِالذَّوَابِ يَنْتَصِرِينَا
 8. بَنَاتُ الدَّهْرِ لَا يَحْفَلْنَ مَحَلًّا إِذَا لَمْ تَبْقَ سَائِمَةٌ بَقِينَا
 9. إِذَا كَانَتِ السُّنُونُ مُجَلِّحَاتٍ خَرَجْنَ وَمَا عَجْفُنَ مِنَ السُّنِينَا
 10. يَسِيرُ الضَّمِيرُ ثُمَّ يَحُلُّ فِيهَا مَحَلًّا مُكْرَمًا حَتَّى يَبِينَا
 11. فَتِلْكَ لَنَا غِنَى وَالْأَجْرُ بَاقٍ فَعُضِّي بَعْضَ لَوْمِكَ يَا طَعِينَا
 12. بَنَاتُ بَنَاتِهِمَا وَبَنَاتُ أُخْرَى صَوَادٍ مَا صَادِينَ وَقَدْ رَوَيْنَا"

1. How often you see a man of wicked demeanor clinging to his herd of camels, both red and black!
2. He withholds what he should rightfully give from them, earning disapproval in the process. Yet, he will inevitably leave them to others (upon his death).
3. Indeed, if you see camels in the possession of others, but notice not a single milking camel among us...
4. Know that we possess, in their stead, lush palm orchards, a gift from God, the Lord of all beings.
5. Their roots reach deep, seeking the vast reservoirs of water below, drinking their fill until satiated.
6. They stand as tall as the twin cliffs of Ushayy that they face, bearing fruit abundantly, unfazed by the years of drought.
7. Their highest branches, swaying in every breeze, are like young girls tugging at each other's tresses.
8. Daughters of Fortune, they don't waver in the face of drought; even when no grazing animal survives, they persist.
9. In years that bring harsh conditions, they rise and do not weaken or wither from the challenges.
10. The traveler walks and then takes refuge beneath them, resting in a place of honor until he decides to move on.
11. These are our riches, and the benefits from them remain with us. So, lessen some of your criticism, O lady!
- 12) The daughters of their daughters, and the daughters of others, stand tall and are never parched, having been fully quenched.⁵

In this composition, al-Marrār delves deep into themes of temporality, human nature, the transient essence of worldly wealth, and the everlasting grandeur of God-given gifts. It is a contemplative ode that, while seemingly simple in its description of camels and palm trees, touches upon profound philosophical and societal observations. At the onset, the poet introduces us to a man with a "wicked demeanor", possessive of his herd of camels, symbolic of wealth and prosperity in many ancient cultures. The colors "red and black" are evocative, suggesting not only the diversity of his wealth but perhaps also the mix of good and bad actions or intentions associated with it. The poet subtly critiques this man's possessiveness, noting that despite his tenacity in withholding from others, mortality will strip him of these worldly possessions. This fleeting nature of material wealth stands in stark contrast to the deeper, eternal values which the poem will later highlight.

The transition to the third and fourth lines serves as a pivot, shifting the reader's attention from camels to another significant symbol: the palm trees. Unlike the transient and mortal camels, palm trees in the poem are portrayed as a divine gift, lush and ever-providing, a representation of wealth that is both temporal and spiritual. The poet's choice to juxtapose camels with palm

⁵ al-Ḍabbī, *Dīwān al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt: Ma'a sharḥi wāfir li-Abī Muḥammad al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad b. Bashshār al-Anbārī*, 122-126; al-Ḍabbī, *al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, 72-74.

trees is telling. While both are sources of sustenance and wealth in their respective contexts, camels, being mortal, signify fleeting worldly riches, whereas the palm trees stand for a more enduring, divine bounty. Water, often symbolic of life and sustenance, is a theme that al-Marrār elaborates on. The palm trees' roots delve deep, seeking water, which they find in abundance. This action of seeking and drawing sustenance from deep sources can be a metaphorical representation of spiritual quest and fulfillment.

The analogy of the trees standing tall "as the twin cliffs of Ushayy" paints a picture of resilience, strength, and grandeur. The poet's choice of the cliffs as a comparator further emphasizes the permanence and sturdiness of these God-given bounties, especially when they remain unfazed in the face of adversities, like drought. The seventh line, where the swaying branches of the trees are likened to young girls tugging at each other's tresses, introduces a layer of playful vivacity. This vivaciousness contrasts beautifully with the previous descriptions of endurance and depth, offering a complete portrayal of life – one that is deep-rooted yet vibrant. The subsequent lines emphasize the trees' resilience, particularly in the face of challenges like droughts. They stand as unwavering "Daughters of Fortune", contrasting with the earlier described mortal camels. The poet seems to underscore the difference between man-made or acquired wealth and what is divinely bestowed and nurtured.

As we journey further into the poem, the imagery of a traveler seeking refuge beneath the trees adds another dimension. This scene can be interpreted in multiple ways: as a literal representation of travelers seeking shade, or metaphorically, as souls seeking solace in spiritual wisdom and divine gifts. Towards the concluding lines, there's an address to an unnamed "lady", which introduces an intimate tone. The poet gently requests her to lessen her criticism, suggesting a societal or personal critique he might be facing regarding his choices or values. Lastly, the depiction of the daughters of the palm trees, standing tall and never thirsty, epitomizes the essence of the poem. It encapsulates generational legacy, nature's bounty, resilience, and the infinite circle of life. This lineage of trees, quenched and tall, symbolizes a legacy that's everlasting, unlike the fleeting nature of mortal wealth. In sum, al-Marrār's poem is a lyrical meditation on the interplay of mortality and eternity, materialism and spirituality.

In the annals of Arabic poetry, al-Marrār's magnum opus stands out as his extensive ode characterized by its "R" rhyme scheme. Within his seminal work, al-Ḍabbī represents this piece as a standalone ode. However, scholarly commentaries on al-Ḍabbī's text postulate that this poem might, in fact, be an amalgamation of two distinct odes.⁶ The practice of merging distinct poems—ones that share congruent form and rhyme—into a singular composition is not an aberration in the traditions of Arabic literature. Given the prevailing hypothesis delineated in these commentaries, it seems judicious to interpret this illustrious ode as a composite of two individual poems. This integrated composition, typically spanning ninety-five verses, manifests its first segment in fifty-two lines. A discernible shift to an alternate poem is evident commencing from the fifty-third line. This assertion stems from the poet's thematic transition in the fifty-third verse to delineate forsaken territories—a motif customarily echoed in the prologues of classical Arab odes. Notably, the initial fifty-two verses are inaugurated with an allusion to a woman, Khawla. This intricate piece of poetic artistry is a testament to the profound depth of Arabic literature, capturing the essence of a rich culture, traditions, and the timeless nature of human experiences. The poet embarks on a deeply personal journey, exploring themes of aging, memories of past loves, the majesty of nature, and the intricacies of relationships with both allies and foes. The vivid descriptions of horses and camels aren't just a celebration of these majestic animals but serve as metaphors for strength, resilience, and the indomitable spirit of the Bedouin life. Similarly, the portrayal of wild donkeys and the scorching desert heat provides a stark reminder of the challenges and harsh realities of life in the desert. Yet, amidst these vivid imageries, the poet's voice shines through with pride, not just in his own accomplishments, but also in the rich lineage from which he hails. This prelude to the verses that follow serves as a doorway, inviting readers to step into a world where the past interweaves seamlessly with the present, where every word paints a picture, and where the soul of a culture is laid bare in its purest form [Ramal]:

1. عَجَبٌ خَوْلَةَ إِذْ تُتَكَبَّرُ نِي أُمُّ رَأَتْ خَوْلَةَ شَيْخًا قَدْ كَبِرَ

2. وَكَسَّاهُ الْدَهْرُ سَبًّا نَاصِعًا وَتَحَنَّى الظُّهُرُ مِنْهُ فَطَاطِرُ

3. إِنْ تَرَى شَيْئًا فَيَا نِي مَا جِدُّ دُو بَلَاءٍ حَسَنٍ غَيْرُ عُمُرُ

⁶ al-Ḍabbī, *Dīwān al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt: Ma'a sharḥ wāfir li-Abi Muḥammad al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad b. Bashshār al-Anbārī*, 142-153; See Ghāda Jamil Qurani Muḥammad Yūsuf, "Muqāwama al-Zaman fī Rā'iyya al-Marrār b. Munqidh", *Majalla Kulliya al-Ādāb bi-Qinā* 57 (2022), 399-437.

4. مَا أَنَا الْيَوْمَ عَلَى شَيْءٍ مَضَى يَا بِنْتَةَ الْقَوْمِ تَوَلَّى بِحَسْرٍ
 5. قَدْ لَبِسْتُ الدَّهْرَ مِنْ أَفْنَانِهِ كُلَّ فَنٍّ حَسَنٍ مِنْهُ حَسْرٍ
 6. وَتَعَلَّلْتُ وَبِإِلِي نَاعِمٍ بَغَزَالِ أَحْوَرِ الْعَيْنَيْنِ غَرٍّ

1. It's surprising how Khawla denies me or has Khawla seen an old man grow older?
2. Time has draped him in a pure white garment and his back has bent, making him look diminished.
3. Sure, you see gray, but I'm still potent, tested by challenges but not inexperienced.
4. Today, I don't stress over the past; O daughter of the tribe, if you turn away, do so with regret.
5. I've worn life's experiences; every art form, every beautiful aspect, I've embraced.
6. I've repeatedly enjoyed times with my delicate beloved, whose eyes are intense in their blackness and whiteness, and who is inexperienced.⁷

Within al-Marrār's contributions to the vast expanse of Arabic poetry, one finds a deep exploration of themes such as age, self-worth, memory, and the intricate dynamics of personal relationships. This poem immediately commences with a compelling juxtaposition: the poet's amazement at Khawla's denial juxtaposed against the process of aging. This juxtaposition serves to emphasize the inescapable nature of time and the societal perceptions attached to the aging process. The mention of Khawla is especially notable, suggesting a personal connection between the poet and the named individual—a beloved or a figure of admiration. The progression of time and its effects on the human form are further elucidated in the subsequent lines. al-Marrār vividly personifies time as a force that has adorned the aging individual in a "pure white garment". This imagery evokes dual connotations. On one hand, white often symbolizes purity and wisdom, attributes commonly associated with old age. On the other hand, the encroachment of white hair is a universal emblem of aging, hinting at the inevitable physical transformations that accompany the passage of years.

A tangible manifestation of age's toll is portrayed in the depiction of the bent back, which not only signifies the physical weariness often induced by time but also subtly echoes societal attitudes. The bent posture can be perceived as a representation of the diminished status or value often ascribed to the elderly in certain societies. However, al-Marrār skillfully pivots from this contemplation of age's external manifestations to a firm assertion of enduring inner vitality and resilience. The acknowledgment of gray hair serves as a metaphorical bridge to this assertion. While the exterior may exhibit signs of wear, internally, the poet affirms his unyielding potency, suggesting a spirit undeterred and undiminished by temporal challenges. The ensuing lines further emphasize the poet's equanimity and acceptance of life's vicissitudes. The call to the "daughter of the tribe" exemplifies a broader appeal to society or a specific individual, urging recognition of the poet's value. By suggesting that any turn away should be tinged with regret, al-Marrār is emphasizing the depth of his experiences and the richness of his life's tapestry. This tapestry is vividly illustrated in the subsequent verses. The poet's embrace of "every art form" and "every beautiful aspect" serves as an eloquent testament to a life lived fully, with a keen appreciation for beauty in its myriad forms. Furthermore, the reflection on the "delicate beloved" evokes images of past romantic liaisons, underscoring the depth of these encounters. The portrayal of the beloved as "inexperienced" insinuates a disparity in their phases of life or might emphasize the pristine innocence of youthful affection.

al-Marrār proceeds in his poem with these subsequent lines [Ramal]:

7. وَبَطَّنْتُ مَجُوداً عَازِباً وَكَفَّ الْكَوَاكِبِ دَا نَوْرٍ نَمِيرٍ
 8. يَبِيعُ دِقْدُرَهُ ذِي عُذْرٍ صَلْتَانٍ مِنْ بَنَاتِ الْمُنْكَدِرِ
 9. سَأَيْلُ شِرْمَرَاخُهُ ذِي جَبِّبٍ سَأَلِطِ السُّنْبِكِ فِي رُسْنِ عَجْرٍ

⁷ al-Ḍabbī, *Dīwān al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt: Ma'a sharḥi wāfir li-Abī Muḥammad al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad b. Bashshār al-Anbārī*, 142-153; al-Ḍabbī, *al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, 82-88.

10. فَارِحِ قَدْ فَرَّ عَنْهُ جَانِبٌ وَرَبَّاعٍ جَانِبٌ لَمْ يَتَّعِرْ
 11. فَهُوَ وَوَرْدُ اللَّوْنِ فِي أَرْبَعِ رَابِعٍ وَكَمَيْتُ اللَّوْنِ مَا لَمْ يَزْبِرْ
 12. نَبَعْتُ الْحَطَّابَ أَنْ يُغْدَى بِهِ نَبَغِي صَيْدِ نَعَامٍ أَوْ حُمُرْ
 13. شُنْدُفٌ أَشْدَفٌ مَا وَرَعْتَهُ فَإِذَا طُوطِيٌّ طَيَّارٌ طِمْرُ
 14. يَصْرَعُ الْعَيْرِينَ فِي نَفْعِهِمَا أَحْوَذِيٌّ حِينَ يَهْوِي مُسْتَمِرْ
 15. ثُمَّ إِنْ يُنْزَعِ إِلَيَّ أَقْصَاهُمَا يَخْبِطُ الْأَرْضَ اخْتِطَاطَ الْمُحْتَفِرْ
 16. أَلِيزُ إِذْ خَرَجْتَ سَأَلْتَهُ وَهِيَ لَا تَمَسُّحُهُ مَا يَسْتَقِرْ
 17. قَدْ بَلَوْتَنَاهُ عَلَى عَلَاتِهِ وَعَلَى التَّيْسِيرِ مِنْهُ وَالضُّمْرُ
 18. فَإِذَا هِجَنَاهُ يَوْمًا بَادِنَا فَحِضَّارٌ كَالضُّرَامِ الْمُسْتَعِرْ
 19. وَإِذَا نَحْنُ حَمَصْنَا بُدْنَهُ وَعَصَا رَنَا فَعَقَّبُ وَحُضْرُ
 20. يُؤَلِّفُ الشَّدَّ عَلَى الشَّدِّ كَمَا حَفَّشَ الْوَابِلَ عَيْثُ مُسْبِكِرْ
 21. صِيفَةُ النَّعْلِ بِأَذْنِي جَرِيهِ وَإِذَا يُرْكَضُ يَعْفُورُ أَشِيرْ
 22. وَنَشَاصِيٌّ إِذَا تَفَرَّعُ لَمْ يَكْدُ يَلْجِمُ إِلَّا مَا قُسِرْ
 23. وَكَأَنَّكَ كَلَّمْنَا نَعْدُو بِهِ نَبَغِي الصَّيْدِ بِيَّازٍ مُنْكَدِرْ
 24. أَوْ بِمِ رِيحِ عَلَيَّ شِرَانِيَّةِ حَشَّاهُ الرَّامِي بِيَّازٍ حُسْرُ
 25. دُو مِرَاحٍ فَإِذَا وَقَرْتَهُ فَذُلُولُ حَسَنِ الْخَلْقِ يَسْرُ
 26. بَيْنَ أَفْرَاسٍ تَتَّالِجُنَ بِهِ أَعُوجِيَّاتٍ مَحَاضِرِ بِيْرَضُ
 27. وَلَقَدْ تَمَرَّحُ بِبِي عِيدِيَّةِ رَسْمَلَةَ السَّوْمِ سَبَبْتَاةً جُسْرُ
 28. رَاضِيهَا الرَّانِضُ ثُمَّ اسْتُعْمِيَتْ لِقِرَى الْهَمِّ إِذَا مَا يَحْتَضِرْ
 29. بِيَّازِلٍ أَوْ أَخْلَفَتْ بِيَّازِلَهُ عَاقِرٌ لَمْ يُحْتَلَبْ مِنْهَا فُطْرُ

30. تَتَّقِي الْأَرْضَ وَصَوَانَ الْحَصَى بِوَقَاحِ مُجْمَرٍ غَيْرِ مَعْرُورٍ

7. I took refuge in a fertile, isolated place, drenched by abundant rain, where stars shine their brightest, aiming to hunt there.
8. I ride a horse with a wide stride, distinct by its forehead hair, swift among al-Munkadir's lineage.
9. A horse displaying a white mark on its head, whose hoof prominently hits upon its thick fetlock.
10. One that has lost a tooth on one side and another tooth on the other side remains intact.
11. He is rosy in hue when his hair stands on end and more of a brownish shade when it does not bristle.
12. We send out wood gatherers early for it, seeking to hunt ostriches or wild donkeys.
13. A horse that leans heavily to one side when restrained, but when released, it's as swift as a bird in flight.
14. He overtakes the two wild asses amidst their dust; swift and agile, he charges forth unwaveringly.
15. Then, if you pull him back at the end of their dash, he stomps the ground impatiently, like someone trying to uncover a water source.
16. The moment he regains his composure after a short sprint, we try to soothe him, but his restless spirit can't be calmed as if alarmed or startled.
17. We've tested his endurance during times of abundance and ease, as well as during the lean times and rigorous sessions.
18. When we urge him forward, even in his well-fed state, his sprint erupts like flames consuming dry wood.
19. When we've conditioned him, stripped down his excess weight, and pushed him to his limits, he runs and then runs again, always ready for another sprint.
20. He layers sprint upon sprint, much like a persistent rain cloud that releases relentless downpours one after the other.
21. At a slower pace, he moves with the cunning swiftness of a fox, but when unleashed, he's agile and swift like a lively gazelle.
22. When spooked, he rears like a towering storm cloud—hard to rein in without a firm hand.
23. Every time we set out at dawn to hunt, riding him feels like soaring on a diving hawk, sharp and swift.
24. Or like shooting a precision arrow from a top-notch bow, carefully crafted with the best of feathers for perfect flight.
25. He's spirited, full of zest. Yet, when calmed, he's docile—gentle in nature and a breeze to handle.
26. His lineage boasts of champions—especially from the breed of al-A'waj, legends for their mighty gallops and athletic jumps.
27. Often by my side, I have a sprightly camel from 'Id's clan, with a gentle gait, her chest boldly forward, ever so swift.
28. The expert tamed her, then let her rest and flourish, kept as my solace for times when worries weigh heavy.
29. She's around nine, maybe just a year older, a barren camel, untouched—never has she given milk.
30. Guarding herself against the rough earth and sharp gravel, she has a sturdy pad beneath, still untouched by wear and tear.⁸

In this portion of al-Marrār's poem, there's a marked transition from human experiences and relationships to a vivid and intricate portrayal of equine and desert life, providing a window into the socio-cultural tapestry of the era. al-Marrār vividly depicts a landscape teeming with life: a "fertile, isolated place" where rain is plentiful and stars shine their brightest. This serves not just as a testament to the beauty of nature but also suggests the realm of memories, dreams, and solitude where the poet might have found solace. Much of the poem, however, is dedicated to a detailed and affectionate portrayal of a horse, highlighting the critical role these animals played in Bedouin life, both practically and symbolically. The horse is characterized by a series of contrasting traits, suggesting both its wild spirit and its domesticated nature. This equine description mirrors the earlier personal reflections of the poet. The horse's agility, speed, and restless spirit mirror the poet's earlier proclamations of his enduring vitality despite age. Furthermore, there is a clear appreciation for the art and science of conditioning the horse, which stands as an allegory for nurturing, patience, and understanding the value of both rest and exertion. The poet's intimate knowledge of the horse's behavior, from its racing instincts to its reactions when startled, paints a larger picture of a society where understanding and taming the natural world was of paramount importance.

In the selected segment of al-Marrār's composition, he subtly shifts focus, towards its conclusion, to elucidate upon his camel.

⁸ al-Ḍabbī, *Dīwān al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt: Ma'a sharḥi wāfir li-Abī Muḥammad al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad b. Bashshār al-Anbārī*, 142-153; al-Mufaḍḍal al-Ḍabbī, *al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, 82-88.

The section concerning the camel is distinctly more concise compared to the preceding elaboration on the horse. Historically, Arab poets exhibited an intricate affinity for the meticulous portrayal of camels and horses. Yet, to the modern reader, such exhaustive accounts can seem prolix. A salient challenge in translating the ardor imbued within the original Arabic verse into other languages is the lack of congruent terminologies pertaining to various domesticated creatures in Arabic. Consequently, contemporary audiences, when approaching these compositions in languages other than their native Arabic, might perceive them as somewhat repetitious. However, such a perspective does not diminish the intrinsic literary and philological merit of the verse.

al-Marrār's composition moves forward with the ensuing verses [Ramal]:

31. مِثْلَ عَدَاءِ بَرُوضَاتِ الْقَطَا قَلَصَتْ عَنْهُ ثِمَادٌ وَعُودٌ

32. فَحَلَّ قُوبٌ ضُمَّرٌ أَقْرَابُهُا يَنْهَسُ الْأَكْفَالَ مِنْهَا وَيَزُرُّ

33. خَبَطَ الْأَزْوَاطَ حَتَّى هَاجَهُ مِنْ يَدِ الْجَوَازِاءِ يَوْمَ مُصْمَمِرٍ

34. لَهَبَانٌ وَقَدَّتْ حِرْزَانُهُ يَرْمِضُ الْجُنْدَبُ مِنْهُ فَيَصْرُرُ

35. ظَلَّ فِي أَعْلَى يَفْعَاجِ جَادِلًا يَفْسِمُ الْأَمْرَ كَقَسَمِ الْمُؤْتَمِرِ

36. أَلَسُنَّ مَنَانٍ فَيَسْتَقِيهَا بِهِ أَمْ لِقَلْبٍ مِنْ لَعَاطٍ يَسْتَتِمِرُ

37. وَهَوَّ يَفْلِسِي شُعْمًا أَعْرَافَهُا شُخْصُ الْأَبْصَارِ لِلْوَحْشِ نُظْرُ

31. She moves like a wild donkey in the meadows of Qatā, especially when water sources, even the morning dew, vanish and escape her reach.

32. As the leader among slender-waisted female asses with lean sides, he fiercely grips their haunches with his teeth, biting down hard.

33. He tramples over the remnants until he's confronted by a fiercely hot day from the hand of Gemini.

34. The sizzle is so intense that cicadas sing loudly, basking in the heat.

35. The he-ass remains on the highest mound, pondering, deciding matters like a convener.

36. He wonders whether to go to Sumnān to quench their thirst or persist towards the springs of Lughāt.

37. While he combs through the untidy manes of the she-asses, their eyes intently observing the wild beasts grazing peacefully in the field.⁹

In this section of al-Marrār's composition, one can observe a further immersion into the nuances of desert life, this time pivoting to the behaviors and struggles of desert fauna. There's a noticeable emphasis on the movement and behavioral patterns of the wild donkey, which functions as a prominent symbol. The imagery of the wild donkey moving in the meadows of Qatā conjures up vivid scenes of vast landscapes and wilderness. This not only underscores the vastness of the Arab landscape but also portrays the resilience of desert creatures. The mention of water sources eluding the donkey serves as a powerful metaphor for the harsh, unforgiving conditions of the desert, as well as the constant quest for sustenance that defines life within it. Furthermore, the portrayal of the male donkey taking charge, particularly in its interactions with the female species, provides insights into animalistic hierarchy and dynamics within this ecosystem. The male donkey's decisive nature is emphasized, alluding to his role as the protector and leader, as he ponders the challenging choice between two water sources. Such a moment can be perceived as a commentary on the struggles and weight of leadership, even within the animal kingdom. Intriguingly, the atmosphere is heightened with the depiction of an extremely hot day, characterized by the evocative imagery of the Gemini's hand, providing a clear nod to astrological influences. This is complemented by the sound imagery of cicadas, whose songs are associated with

⁹ al-Ḍabbī, *Dīwān al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt: Ma'a sharḥi wāfir li-Abī Muḥammad al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad b. Bashshār al-Anbārī*, 142-153; al-Ḍabbī, *al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, 82-88.

the scorching heat. This adds an auditory dimension to the narrative, embedding the reader further into the environment. Lastly, the leader's contemplative stance atop a mound, coupled with the observation of other creatures in their natural habitats, adds depth and layers to the narrative. It serves to showcase the balance of power, decision-making, and observational acuity, which can be inferred as traits inherent to leadership, be it in humans or animals. Such observations are emblematic of the intricate ties between nature and survival, an enduring theme within traditional Arabic poetry.

al-Marrār's poetic expression extends with the following lines [*Ramal*]:

38. "وَدَخَلْتُ الْبَابَ لَا أُعْطِي الرَّشَى فَحَبَّانِي مَلِكٌ غَيْرُ زَمِيرٍ
 39. كَمْ تَرَى مِنْ شَانِيٍّ يَحْسُدُنِي قَدْ وَرَاهُ الْغَيْظُ فِي صَدْرٍ وَغَيْرٍ
 40. وَحَشَاوَتُ الْغَيْظُ فِي أَضْلاَعِهِ فَهُوَ وَ يَمْشِي حَظْلَانًا كَالنَّقِيرِ
 41. لَمْ يَضِرْنِي وَلَقَدْ بَلَعْتُهُ قَطَعَ الْغَيْظُ بِصَابٍ وَصَيْرٍ
 42. فَهُوَ لَا يَبْرَأُ مَا فِي نَفْسِهِ مِثْلَ مَا لَا يَبْرَأُ الْعِرْقُ النَّعِيرِ
 43. وَعَظِيمِ الْمَلِكِ قَدْ أَوْعَدَنِي وَأَتَتْنِي دُونَهُ مِنْهُ النُّنْدُزُ
 44. حَنِقٍ قَدْ وَقَدَتِ عَيْنَاهُ لِي مِثْلَ مَا وَقَدَ عَيْنَيْهِ النَّمِيرُ
 45. وَيَبْرَى دُونِي فَلَا يَسْطِيعُنِي خَرَطَ شَوْكٍ مِنْ قَتَادٍ مُسْمِهِرٍ
 46. أَنَا مِنْ خِنْدِفٍ فِي صُيَّابِهَا حَيْثُ طَابَ الْقَيْبُ مِنْهُ وَكَثُرُ
 47. وَلِي النَّبْعَةُ مِنْ سُلاَفِهَا وَلِي الْهَامَةُ مِنْهَا وَالْكُبْرُ
 48. وَلِي الزُّنْدُ الَّذِي يُورِي بِهِ إِنْ كَبَا زَنْدٌ لَيْسَ أَوْ قَصُورُ
 49. وَأَنَا الْمَذْكُورُ مِنْ فِتْيَانِهَا بِفَعَالِ الْخَيْرِ إِنْ فَعَلَ ذِكْرُ
 50. أَعْرِفُ الْحَقَّ فَلَا أَنْكِرُهُ وَكَذَلِكَ بِي أَنَسٌ غَيْرُ عَقُورُ
 51. لَا تَرَى كُلِّيَّ إِلَّا أَنَسًا إِنْ أَتَى خَابِطٌ لَيْلٍ لَمْ يَهْرُ
 52. كَثُرَ النَّاسُ فَمَا يُنْكِرُهُمْ مِنْ أَسِيفٍ يَبْتَغِي الْخَيْرَ وَحُرُ"

38. I've entered many doors without paying a bribe, and a generous king has gifted me.

39. How many do you see who despise and envy me, with rage settled in their chests like an overwhelming ailment?

40. I've suppressed the anger within him, making him walk staggeringly, like a ram with a twisted tendon.

41. He caused me no harm, yet I made him swallow bitter chunks of indignation.

42. Indeed, what's festering in his soul won't heal, much like a profusely bleeding vein can't be stopped.

43. Numerous are the powerful rulers who've tried to intimidate me, sending their threats even before our paths crossed.
44. Their fury is palpable, their gaze igniting with anger upon seeing me, much like a leopard's eyes blaze in wrath.
45. Yet, they realize the path to me is laden with challenges — as daunting as navigating through the piercing thorns of tragacanth.
46. I hail from the lineage of Khindif, from the purest of bloodlines where noble ancestry is both rich and abundant.
47. (I stand tall), representing the core strength of our clan, bearing both its honor and magnificence.
48. I possess the fire-stick that always produces flames, even when inferior ones fall short.
49. I'm renowned among their warriors for my acts of generosity, especially when actions come into discussion.
50. I recognize all valid claims and don't argue against them; moreover, my dogs are amiable and they don't bite.
51. You won't see any of my dogs showing hostility; even if a lost person comes at night, they won't growl.
52. Numerous people come by, but none are treated as strangers by my dogs, be it a slave seeking a favor or a free man.¹⁰

In this subsequent portion of al-Marrār's poetic narrative, the shift is palpable as the poet delves into the realm of human relationships, personal identity, societal values, and reflections on honor, generosity, and leadership. The portion initiates with a bold declaration of the poet's ability to transcend barriers, inferred from his reference to entering many doors without the necessity of bribes. This not only serves as a testament to the poet's own sense of honor and incorruptibility but also subtly critiques societal conventions where influence and favor can be bought. Coupled with the reference to a generous king gifting him, it can be inferred that the poet is held in high regard by figures of authority and possesses a distinguished reputation. However, as with many in prominent positions, envy and resentment cast their shadows. al-Marrār describes detractors who harbor intense animosity towards him. The vivid imagery of rage being akin to an "overwhelming ailment" provides a compelling insight into the magnitude of this hostility. This tension is further explored with the depiction of adversaries who are metaphorically incapacitated by their own ire, drawing a parallel to a limping ram.

The mention of powerful rulers attempting to intimidate the poet before a confrontation illuminates the poet's stature and the perceived threat he represents to them. al-Marrār employs the fierce imagery of a leopard's blazing eyes to communicate the depth of their animosity. Yet, their attempts to confront him are hindered by formidable challenges, emphasizing the poet's resilient defenses and unwavering stance. The pride in lineage is a recurring theme in Arabic poetry, and al-Marrār draws attention to his own esteemed ancestry, attributing to the lineage of Khindif. Such references underscore the importance of familial honor, legacy, and societal standing in the cultural milieu of the period. The poet's personal qualities are brought to the forefront, especially his ability to produce results when others falter, his celebrated generosity among warriors, and his judicious nature, symbolized by his recognition of valid claims without disputes. The concluding verses introduce a softer dimension, revolving around the poet's domestic environment, where even his dogs embody his principles of hospitality, generosity, and peace.

al-Marrār distinguishes himself within Arabic literary traditions, especially with his adeptness in crafting ghazal, or love poetry. The subsequent poem provides an eloquent window into the poet's ardent contemplations and consuming desires. Engaging with al-Marrār's composition is tantamount to delving into a layered tapestry; each verse presents a spectrum of emotion and sensory evocation. The composition extends over forty-three verses [Ramal]:

1. هَلْ عَرَفْتَ الدَّارَ أَمْ أَنْكَرْتَهَا بَيْنَ تَيْرِكَ فَشَسَّيْ عَيْتُورُ

2. جَرَّرَ السَّيْلُ بِهَا عَثُونَهُ وَتَعَفَّتْهُ مَا مَدَّ الْيَجُّ بَكْرُ

3. يَتَقَارِضُنَ بِهَا حَتَّى اسْتَوَتْ أَشْهُرَ الصَّيْفِ بِسَافٍ مُنْفَجِرُ

4. وَتَرَى مِنْهَا رُسُومًا قَدْ عَفَتْ مِثْلَ خَطِّ اللَّامِ فِي وَحْيِ الزُّنْزُرِ

5. قَدْ نَرَى الْبَيْضَ بِهَا مِثْلَ الدُّمَى لَمْ يَخُتْنُهُنَّ زَمَانٌ مُقَشَّرُ

¹⁰ al-Ḍabbī, *Dīwān al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt: Ma'a sharḥ wāfir li-Abī Muḥammad al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad b. Bashshār al-Anbārī*, 142-153; al-Ḍabbī, *al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, 82-88.

6. يَتَلَهَّهِنَّ بِنَوْمَاتِ الضُّحَى رَاجِحَاتِ الْجِلْمِ وَاللَّائِسِ خُفْرُ
7. قُطُفَ الْمَشِيِّ قَرِيَّاتِ الْخُطَى بُدْنًا مِثْلَ الْعَمَامِ الْمُرْمِجِ
8. يَتَزَاوَرْنَ كَتَقَطَاءِ الْقَطَا وَطَعْمِنَ الْعَيْشِ حُلُوعًا غَيْرَ مُرِّ
9. لَمْ يُطَاوِعْنَ بِصُرْمٍ عَازِلًا كَادَ مِنْ شِدَّةِ لَوْمٍ يَنْتَجِرُ
10. وَهَوَى الْقَلْبِ الَّذِي أَعْجَبَهُ صُورَةُ أَحْسَنَ مَنْ لَثَّ الْعُمُرُ
11. رَاقَهُ مِنْهَا بِيَاضِ نَاصِعٍ يُؤْنِقُ الْعَيْنَ وَصَافٍ مُسْبِكِ
12. تَهْلِكُ الْمِدْرَاءُ فِي أَفْئَانِهِ فَاِذَا مَا أُرْسَلَتْهُ يَنْعِفُ
13. جَعْدَةٌ فَرَعَاءُ فِي جُمُوعِهِ ضَخْمَةٌ تَفْرُقُ عَنْهَا كَالضُّمْرِ
14. شَادِخٌ غُرَّتْهَا مِنْ نِسْوَةٍ كُنَّ يَفْضُلْنَ نِسَاءَ النَّاسِ عُرُ
15. وَلَهَا عَيْنَا خَاذُولٍ مُخْرِفٍ تَعَلَّقُ الضُّفَالُ وَأَفْنَانَ السَّمْرِ
16. وَإِذَا تَضَحَّكَ أَبْدَى ضِرْحَكُهَا أَفْحُونَانًا قِيدَتْهُ ذَا أَشْرُ
17. لَوْ تَطَعَّمَتْ بِهِ شَبَّهَتْهُ عَسَلًا شَيْبَ بِهِ نَلْجُ خَصْرِ
18. صَلَّتْهُ الْخَدُّ طَوِيلٌ جِيدُهَا نَاهِدُ الثُّنْدِيِّ وَلَمَّا يَنْكَسِرُ
19. مِثْلُ أَنْفِ الرُّمِّ يُنْبِي دِرْعَهَا فِي لَبَانٍ بَادِنٍ غَيْرِ قَفْرِ
20. فَهِيَ هَيْفَاءُ هَضِيمٍ كَشْحَهَا فَخَمَّةٌ حَيْثُ يُشَادُّ الْمُؤْتَرَّ

1. Do you recognize the dwelling, or is it unfamiliar to you—the location between Tibrāk and the rugged terrains of ‘Abaqur?
2. Torrents have graced it with their initial deluges, and the winds of the late night and early dawn have erased its marks.
3. (The forces of nature) have persistently evened it out, so during the summer months, it's been made flat, with soil drifted into depressions by winds and eroded from the top by flowing waters.
4. You might spot faint remnants nearly obliterated, resembling the script of the letter “lām” in manuscripts.
5. Once, we beheld there fair-skinned women, radiant as sculptures: untouched by the wear of time that ages all things.
6. They relish their late morning rest, epitomizing grace and warmth, always with utmost decorum.
7. Their strides are short, feet closely aligned: they're robust and appealing, reminiscent of lofty clouds.
8. They gracefully move from one tent to another, reminiscent of sandgrouse: savoring life's pleasures, untainted by its bitterness.
9. They resist the moralizing voice that advises them to distance themselves from me, a voice so intense in its reproach that it borders

on self-destruction.

10. My emotional core is captivated by an incomparable figure, unrivaled among those who don the veil.

11. Her luminous skin fascinates me; it offers a visual delight, augmented by her luxuriously long hair.

12. Hairpins are rendered inconspicuous within the density of her locks, which, when unfurled, skim the surface of the ground.

13. Her hair is voluminous and curly, emerging from a sizable cranium, and falls on either side in intricately woven tresses reminiscent of interlaced cords.

14. Her forehead is expansively white, distinguishing her from other women in the unparalleled whiteness of her frontal aspect.

15. Her eyes mirror those of a doe separated from its herd, staying close with her fawn during the onset of autumn, elegantly extending her neck to feed on branches of wild trees.

16. A laugh from her reveals teeth comparable to camomile blossoms, their natural whiteness accentuated by cosmetic antimon and the lines of youthful innocence.

17. Were you to experience a kiss, it would remind you of honey infused with the coolness of fresh snow.

18. Her cheeks display a flawless complexion, her neck elongates gracefully, and the nipples of her breasts remain prominent, yet unmarred (by life's burdens).

19. Resembling the snout of an oryx, her bosom, robust and ample, pushes forth her attire.

20. Her waist is delicate, lean around the sides, but pronounced below where her belt encircles.¹¹

The poem commences within the established norms of the *aṭlāl* tradition, a significant component of ancient Arabic poetry. This tradition typically invokes images of desolate and abandoned landscapes, setting a melancholic tone that evokes sentiments of longing, nostalgia, and the transience of love and life. al-Marrār situates his poem between the specificity of “Tibrāk” and the rugged terrains of “‘Abaqur”, instantly transporting the reader to a bygone era or moment. The poetic landscape, rendered nearly unrecognizable by the passage of time and nature’s forces, serves as a poignant metaphor for forgotten memories and bygone days of love and youth. The reference to faint remnants “resembling the script of the letter ‘lām’ in manuscripts” is particularly evocative, suggesting the almost illegible traces of a once cherished past, akin to old letters that have faded with time.

Transitioning from the desolate landscape, al-Marrār introduces figures of timeless beauty, the “fair-skinned women, radiant as sculptures”. Their description, unaffected by the wear of time, serves to juxtapose the permanence of beauty and memory against the fleeting nature of physical spaces and moments. Their grace, warmth, and delicate balance between indulging in life’s pleasures and maintaining decorum reflect the nuanced interplay of desire and restraint. However, it’s the tension introduced by the “moralizing voice” that offers a glimpse into the societal dynamics and norms, and perhaps the inherent conflicts of the poet’s own time. While the women embody an almost ethereal beauty, they are tethered by societal expectations, reflecting a perennial struggle between individual desires and societal obligations. The poet’s focused admiration of a singular woman elevates the narrative from a general musing to a deeply personal reflection. Her description, rich in natural metaphors, not only emphasizes her unparalleled beauty but also intertwines her essence with the vast tapestry of nature.

In his poetic journey, al-Marrār presents the subsequent verses [*Ramal*]:

21. يَهْطُ الْمِغْضَلُ مِنْ أَرْدَافِهَا ضَافِرُ أَرْدِفِ أَنْقَاءَ ضَافِرُ

22. وَإِذَا تَمَشَّيْتُ إِلَى جَارَاتِهَا لَمْ تَكُنْ تَبْلُغُ حَتَّى تَنْبَهْرُ

23. دَفَعْتُ رِبْلَتَهُمَا رِبْلَتَهُمَا وَنَهَّادَتْ مِثْلَ مِثْلِ الْمُنْفَعِرُ

24. وَهِيَ بَدَاءُ إِذَا مَا أَقْبَلْتُ ضَخْمَةُ الْجِسْمِ رَدَاخٌ هِيَ دَكْرُ

25. يُضْرَبُ السَّبْعُونَ فِي خَلْجَالِهَا فَإِذَا مَا أَكْرَهْتُ هُ يَنْكَسِرُ

¹¹ al-Ḍabbī, *Dīwān al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt: Ma‘a sharḥ wāfir li-Abī Muḥammad al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad b. Bashshār al-Anbārī*, 153-159; al-Ḍabbī, *al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, 88-93.

26. نَاعَمَتْهَا أُمُّ صِيدْقٍ بِبَرَّةٍ وَأَبَّ بِرُّبَهَا غَيْرُ حَكِرٍ
27. فَهِيَ خَاذِلَةٌ بِعَيْشِ نَاعِمٍ بِرَدِّ الْعَيْشِ عَلَيْهَا وَقُصِرَ
28. لَا تَمَسُّ الْأَرْضَ إِلَّا دُونَهَا عَنْ بَلَاطِ الْأَرْضِ نُوبٌ مُنْعَفِرٌ
29. تَطَّأُ الْخَزْزَلَ لَا تُكْرِمُهُ وَتُطِيلُ الذَّلِيلَ مِنْهُ وَتَجْرُ
30. وَتَرَى الرِّيطَ مَوَادِيحَ لَهَا شِعْرًا تَلْبَسُهَا بَعْدَ شِعْرٍ
31. ثُمَّ تَنْهَدُ عَلَيَّ أَنْمَاطِهَا مِثْلَ مَا مَالَ كَثِيبٌ مُنْعَعِرٌ
32. عَبَقُ الْعَبَبِ وَالْمِسْكَ بِهَا فَهِيَ صَفْرَاءُ كَعْرَجُونَ الْعُمُرُ
33. إِنَّمَا النَّوْمُ عِشَاءً طَفَلًا سِنَةٌ تَأْخُذُهَا مِثْلَ السُّكْرِ
34. وَالضُّحَى تَغْلِبُهَا وَقَدْ دَنَتْهَا خَرَقَ الْجُودِرِ فِي الْيَوْمِ الْخَبِيرِ
35. وَهِيَ لَوْ يُعْصَرُ مِنْ أَرْضَانِهَا عَبَقُ الْمِسْكَ لَكَادَتْ تَنْعَصِرُ
36. أَمْلَحُ الْخَلْقِ إِذَا جَرَدَتْهَا غَيْرَ سِيمَاطِينَ عَلَيْهَا وَسُورُ
37. لَحَسِبْتُ الشَّمْسَ فِي جِلْبَابِهَا قَدْ تَبَدَّتْ مِنْ غَمَامٍ مُسْفِرِ
38. صُورَةُ الشَّمْسِ عَلَيَّ صُورَتِهَا كَلَّمَا تَغْرُبُ شَمْسٌ أَوْ تَنْدُرُ
39. تَرَكْتَنِي لَسْتُ بِأَلْحِي وَلَا مِثْلَ لِقَائِي وَقَفَاةً فُقِيرُ
40. يَسْأَلُ النَّاسُ أَحْمَى دَاوَةَ أَمْ بِهِ كَانُ سُلَالٌ مُسْتَسِرُّ
41. وَهِيَ دَائِي وَشِفَائِي عِنْدَهَا مَنَعْتُهُ فَهُوَ مَلَوِي عَسِرُ
42. وَهِيَ لَوْ يَفْتُلُهَا بِبِي إِخْوَتِي أَدْرَكَ الطَّالِبُ مِثْلَهُمْ وَطَفِرُ
43. مَا أَنَا الدَّهْرُ بِنَاسِ ذِكْرَهَا مَا غَدَتْ وَرَقَاءُ تَدْعُو سَاقَ حُرِّ

21. The dress she adorns for intimate settings is filled by her curvaceous rear, reminiscent of consecutive dunes in the desert.

22. When she ventures out to meet fellow ladies, the journey nearly leaves her breathless.

23. As she moves, the flesh of her inner thighs meets, causing a sway in her stride, mirroring a palm tree uprooted by the wind.

24. Approaching, she must widen her stance due to her full-bodied frame and noticeable hips, resulting in a rhythmic sway with each step.
25. Anklets crafted from seventy miskals of silver are designed for her, yet they strain and snap due to the fullness of her legs when she attempts to wear them.
26. Raised by a devoted, nurturing mother, and a benevolent father who indulged her every whim.
27. She is surrounded by comfort and luxury in her life; her existence is serene, protected from adversities.
28. Her feet never make contact with the earth directly; instead, she treads upon lavish rugs to shield her from any dirt.
29. She walks on silk, regarding it with indifference; her lengthy garments made of it flow behind her.
30. One can observe the expensive linen disregarded by her, transformed into shifts that replace those she's cast aside.
31. She then reclines on her plush carpets, reminiscent of a sand dune collapsing due to an excavation beneath.
32. The aroma of ambergris and musk clings to her, and her skin has a saffron hue, akin to the blossoms of the date palm.
33. In the waning light of late afternoon, as the sun approaches its descent, she is enveloped in a sleep so profound, it mirrors the depth of intoxication.
34. The intense warmth of the mid-morning sun overwhelms her, rendering her as still as a young oryx frozen on a chilly day.
35. Were one to extract the scent of musk from her sleeves, she would be almost entirely consumed.
36. She's most captivating when stripped, save for the twin pearl strands on her chest and her bracelets.
37. It's as though the sun, previously veiled by her clothing, has suddenly burst forth, clouds dissipating.
38. Her form mirrors the sun's image, both in its radiant descent and its ascent.
39. Her presence leaves me in a limbo, neither fully alive nor as peaceful as one resting in a grave.
40. People ponder: 'Does he suffer from an intense fever, or is it a concealed ailment?'
41. She is my sole affliction and remedy; but she remains indifferent, thwarting my recovery.
42. Should my brothers take her life as recompense for mine, the one seeking justice would find his satisfaction and achieve his purpose.
43. As long as the dove continues to summon its mate, I shall never forget her throughout the ages.¹²

In this continuation of al-Marrār's poem, the portrayal of the woman becomes even more intricate and luxuriant, weaving together sensual, environmental, and societal elements to construct a vivid tapestry of admiration. The woman's physicality and grace are likened to the vastness and undulations of the desert. This evokes a connection to the natural world, suggesting a harmony and timelessness to her beauty. Her rear, compared to dunes, emphasizes an allure that is both imposing and naturally flowing. Furthermore, the vivid depiction of her movement, where the sway of her stride evokes an image of a palm tree moved by the wind, epitomizes the elegance and strength inherent in nature. Yet, these descriptions are not merely about physical beauty; they encompass societal expectations, status, and wealth. The anklets that snap under the fullness of her legs hint at a beauty that defies traditional adornments and norms. These normative confines are further elucidated by the nurturing environment she's been brought up in: her benevolent parents, her luxurious surroundings, and the expensive linens and silks that she seemingly discards with indifference. This paints a portrait of a woman who is, in many ways, a product of her affluent environment, yet is also transcendent of it. One of the more evocative motifs running through this section is the poet's use of sunlight as a metaphor for her radiant beauty. The comparison of her deep sleep to the depth of intoxication, the young oryx frozen in the mid-morning sun, and the sun unveiled by her clothing, all resonate with a sense of the ethereal. This is further strengthened by comparing her form to the sun's ascent and descent, suggesting cyclical continuity. The poet's emotional turmoil in her presence is palpable. She becomes both a source of torment and salvation. Her indifference to the poet's affection exacerbates his feelings of vulnerability. Closing on the timeless call of a dove summoning its mate, the poet avers an eternal remembrance of this woman. The dove, often symbolizing love and longing, ensures that she remains an indelible mark on his soul, echoing through ages.

CONCLUSION

The collective works and life journey of al-Marrār b. Munqidh serve as significant markers, illuminating the profound interplay of cultural, intellectual, and emotional undertones that defined the illustrious Umayyad period in Arabic literature. Within his

¹² al-Ḍabbī, *Dīwān al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt: Ma'a sharḥi wāfir li-Abī Muḥammad al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad b. Bashshār al-Anbārī*, 153-159; al-Ḍabbī, *al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, 88-93.

verses lies a labyrinthine world of longing, introspection, and vivid natural imagery. His verses do more than just chronicle his personal experiences and perceptions; they serve as mirrors reflecting the broader sociopolitical and cultural milieu of his era. A comprehensive study of al-Marrār's life provides invaluable insights into the intersections of the individual and the societal in pre-modern Arabic literature. As a poetic figure, al-Marrār masterfully navigated the delicate balance between personal expression and adherence to established poetic conventions, a duality intrinsic to the very heart of classical Arabic poetry. His commitment to the *aṭlāl* tradition, with its poignant reflections on abandoned encampments, serves as a prime example of this equilibrium. Through it, he manages to encapsulate a universal human experience—nostalgia—within a specifically Arab cultural framework.

Furthermore, al-Marrār's depictions of love and passion, both in their exultant and despairing facets, transcend temporal confines. The intricacy of his descriptions, whether of landscapes or beloveds, reveals a deep-seated appreciation for the nuances of existence. This detailed observation combined with the emotional depth forms a bridge connecting his ancient world to contemporary readers, offering a timeless resonance. In synthesizing an understanding of al-Marrār b. Munqidh's life and poetry, we are not merely engaging with the personal chronicles of a historic Arab poet. Rather, we are immersing ourselves in a dialogue with an era, a culture, and a set of artistic paradigms that have left an indelible mark on the trajectory of world literature. Engaging with his poetic legacy is not just an academic exercise; it is an exploration of human sentiment, culture, and the myriad ways in which we make sense of the world around us. In the grand tapestry of Arabic literature, al-Marrār remains a luminous thread, weaving together the personal and the universal, the temporal and the timeless.

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