The Aesthetics of Exaggeration in al-Mutanabbī's Qaşīdat Ahulman Narā

Mütenebbî'nin Ehulmen Nerâ Adlı Kasidesindeki Abartı Estetiği

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Öz

Bu çalışma, ünlü Arap şairi Mütenebbî'nin Bedr b. Ammâr'a hitaben inşâd ettiği ilk methiye kasidesindeki abartılı ifadelerin psikolojik ve estetik yönlerini ele almaktadır. Araştırma, Mütenebbî'nin mübalağa sanatını yalnızca bir ifade biçimi değil, aynı zamanda birey ve toplum üzerinde etkili bir araç olarak nasıl kullandığını incelemektedir. Çalışmada, şairin abartılı dilinin, kahramanlık ve idealleri vurgularken okuyucuya duygu yoğunluğu yaşatan ve estetik bir değer sunan bir yöntem olduğu savunulmuştur. Araştırma, edebi metinlerdeki abartının bilinçli bir şekilde kabul edilmesini ve "inanmamanın askıya alınması" kavramı bağlamında incelerken, okuyucunun psikolojik eğilimlerine odaklanmıştır. İnanmamanın askıya alınması teorisi, okurun mantığını geçici olarak devre dışı bırakarak eserin olağanüstü unsurlarını sorgulamadan kabul etmesini ifade etmektedir. Bu, okurun eserin büyüsüne kapılmasını ve hayal gücünün sınırlarını zorlayan hikâyeleri keyfle deneyimlemesini sağlamaktadır. Bu bağlamda şair, insan psikolojisinin derinliklerine inerek, gerçeklikten kaçış sunan bir dramatik uyum oluşturmaktadır. Mütenebbî'nin şiirlerinde cesaret, cömertlik ve ahlaki olgunluk gibi kavramların mübalağa yoluyla yüceltilmesi, hem bireysel hem de toplumsal beklentilere hitap eden bir ifade biçimi olarak değerlendirilmiştir. Çalışmanın bulguları, Mütenebbî'nin abartılarının, döneminin kültürel ve sosyal yapılarıyla uyumlu olduğunu ve okuyucunun hayal gücüne etkili bir şekilde hitap ettiğini göstermiştir. Bununla birlikte, şairin bazı beyitlerinde, mübalağanın estetik değerini zayıflatan ifadeler bulunduğu da vurgulanmıştır. Sonuç olarak şu bulgular elde edilmiştir: Çalışmanın bulguları içerisinde en önemlisi, Mütenebbî'nin mübalağalı anlatımlarının, şiire estetik bir derinlik kazandırmanın ötesinde, okuyucunun hayal gücünü harekete geçiren ve duygusal bir yoğunluk sunan güçlü bir ifade biçimi olduğunun tespit edilmesidir. Ancak, bazı beyitlerde mübalağanın estetik sınırlarının aşılması, abartının etkileyiciliğini zayıflatabilmektedir. Bu durum, mübalağanın dengeli bir şekilde kullanılmasının sanatsal değer açısından kritik olduğunu göstermektedir. Görüldüğü kadarıyla şairin mübalağalı tasvirlere olan eğilimi, yalnızca bireysel edebi hüner değil, aynı zamanda dönemin toplumsal beklentileri ve psikolojik ihtiyaçlarıyla da yakından ilişkilidir. Özellikle cesaret ve cömertlik gibi erdemlerin yüceltilmesi, toplumsal statü ve şairin kendi kimliğini pekiştirme arzusunu yansıtmaktadır. Makale, Mütenebbî'nin kelime oyunlarına ve zıtlık içeren ifadelerine yer verdiği bazı beyitlerin, sanatsal olgunluk bakımından yetersiz kaldığını ortaya koymuştur. Bu, mübalağanın yalnızca içeriğin değil, dil ve üslubun da bir denge unsuru olarak değerlendirilmesi gerektiğini göstermektedir. Mütenebbî'nin mübalağaları, bir yandan klasik Arap edebiyatındaki geleneksel estetik anlayışlarla uyumlu bir şekilde inşa edilirken, diğer yandan yenilikçi bir yaklaşım sergileyerek farklı edebi standartlar oluşturmuştur. Bu durum, onun şiir anlayışında yerleşik kalıpları dönüştüren bir etkisi olduğunu kanıtlamaktadır. Sonuç olarak, Mütenebbî'nin mübalağa sanatındaki ustalığı, onun hem dönemin estetik değerleriyle uyumlu hem de bu değerleri aşan bir şair olduğunu göstermektedir. Ancak, bazı beyitlerde estetik derinliğin zayıflaması, mübalağanın dikkatli ve dengeli kullanılmasının önemini bir kez daha vurgulamaktadır. Bu analizler, Mütenebbî'nin şiirinde estetik başarının ve eleştiriye açık yönlerin bir arada var olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Arap dili ve belagatı, Arap şiiri, Mütenebbî, Mübalağa, Psikoloji.

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Abstract

This study examines the psychological and aesthetic aspects of exaggerated expressions in the poetry of the renowned Arab poet al-Mutanabbī. The research explores how al-Mutanabbī employed the art of exaggeration not merely as a stylistic device but also as a tool that profoundly influenced both individuals and society. The study argues that his hyperbolic language served as a method to emphasize heroism and ideals, creating an emotional impact while offering aesthetic value to the reader. The research investigates the conscious acceptance of exaggeration in literary texts, within the framework of the concept of "suspension of disbelief", focusing on the psychological inclinations of the audience.

al-Mutanabbī's use of exaggeration to exalt virtues such as courage, generosity, and moral maturity is analyzed as a form of expression that resonates with both individual and societal expectations. The findings reveal that al-Mutanabbī's exaggerations align with the cultural and social structures of his era and effectively engage the reader's imagination. However, the study also highlights instances where certain verses fail to maintain the aesthetic value of exaggeration. Ultimately, al-Mutanabbī's art of exaggeration is presented as an element that adds aesthetic depth to literary texts. The most significant finding of the study is that al-Mutanabbī's hyperbolic expressions, beyond adding aesthetic depth to his poetry, are a powerful form of expression that stimulates the reader's imagination and offers emotional intensity. However, in some verses, the crossing of aesthetic boundaries with hyperbole can weaken the impact of the exaggeration. This indicates that the balanced use of hyperbole is critical for artistic value. As observed, the poet's inclination towards hyperbolic depictions is closely related not only to individual literary skill but also to the societal expectations and psychological needs of the era. The exaltation of virtues such as courage and generosity reflects the desire for social status and the poet's own quest to reinforce his identity. The article demonstrates that some verses, which include wordplay and expressions with contradictions, fall short in terms of artistic maturity. This suggests that hyperbole should be evaluated not only in terms of content but also as a balance of language and style. al-Mutanabbī's hyperboles, on one hand, align with traditional aesthetic values in classical Arabic literature, while on the other hand, they exhibit an innovative approach that creates new literary standards. This shows that his poetry has a transformative effect on established conventions. Ultimately, al-Mutanabbī's mastery of hyperbole demonstrates that he was a poet who was both in harmony with the aesthetic values of his time and transcended them. However, the weakening of aesthetic depth in certain verses further underscores the importance of using hyperbole carefully and in balance. These analyses reveal that al-Mutanabbī's poetry contains both aesthetic success and aspects that are open to critique.

Keywords: Arabic language and rhetoric, Arabic poetry, al-Mutanabbī, Exaggeration, Psychology.

Introduction

When we engage with a literary work, whether it is poetry or a novel, we often understand that what is described within the text has never actually occurred. Furthermore, in fictional novels, we also acknowledge that some events, said to have happened, are fantastical impossibilities from a rational perspective. This acceptance, which is pardoned and even embraced in novels, is no different in poetry. In poetry, both the poet and the audience know that what is sometimes expressed has not happened and could not possibly happen. Despite this, a poet or a master of fiction does not consider such imaginative, extravagant, and unrealistic depictions to be insulting to their audience. Similarly, the reader does not accuse the creator of the work of being superstitious, deceptive, or a liar. There is a mutual agreement at play here. Simply put, both the seller and the buyer consent to the sale of imagination at the price of reality. This transaction, conducted entirely above the clouds, never sets foot on the ground of reality as we know it, with the products on display being entirely imaginary. For the reader, chasing verses and stanzas in poetry, or scenes and episodes in novels, entails temporarily suspending their sense of reality and putting logic on hold. While observing the imaginary events depicted in the text, the reader sets aside the usual lens of reason and logic, donning the imaginative lens provided by the author to witness the extraordinary scenes of fantastical worlds. This naturally raises the question: Why does the reader put on this lens? The question that comes to our minds now has, naturally, also occurred to those before us. The English poet and literary critic Samuel Taylor Coleridge (d. 1834) emphasized the importance of an individual suspending their logic momentarily to embrace the extraordinary elements presented in a literary work. He encapsulated his reflections on this phenomenon with the concept of "Suspension of Disbelie." (Coleridge, 2014, 387). Later, Umberto Eco expanded on this idea with the notion of a "fictional agreement" (Eco, 1995, 87). Within this framework, Coleridge explains the metaphorical "lens" that we put on through the mysterious expectations embedded deep within human psychology. According to him, a skilled poet delves into the depths untouched by the light of consciousness, suspending all judgments derived from experience. This poet can compel us to read the wildest tales filled with ghosts,

magicians, spirits, and secret charms with vivid interest.This tendency, deeply rooted in our nature, allows a good poet, if their work maintains harmony, to construct a unique dramatic possibility. Even when the characters and events approach impossibility, this possibility suffices to provide dramatic pleasure. Such a poet, aware of the subtleties hidden beyond our senses, does not expect us to stay fully awake and believe. Instead, they ask us merely to immerse ourselves in a dream-like state, with open eyes and judgment momentarily hidden in the background, ready to reawaken at any moment. At that time, they only request one thing: that we do not show we disbelieve.The reader willingly accepts this demand from the poet and prepares to be enchanted by the text. Therefore, the reasons behind the mutual agreement between the reader and the writer can be said to lie in human psychology. Indeed, humans are not purely rational and logical beings; they also possess imagination a realm vastly different from the world we know. This realm offers pleasures, journeys, and most importantly, thrilling pursuits that can only be experienced there.A good poet is one who can liberate the reader from the shackles of reality, allowing them to roam freely in the boundless valley of imagination. Just as experiencing a beautiful dream is delightful, living in the fictional worlds of poetry and novels is equally appealing. Crafting pleasant dreams and imagining beautiful visions provide comfort and joy, just as literary works take readers by the hand and transport them to entirely different worlds.When we bring this discussion to the use of hyperbole in poetry, it becomes evident that exaggeration as an artistic device is directly related to the elements mentioned above. Consequently, the expectations of a reader encountering a novel or poem cannot be limited to a representation grounded solely in reason and logic. For this reason, the aesthetic value of hyperbolic depictions and imaginative imagery that appeal to the breadth of human creativity cannot be restricted to rational and logical criteria. Thus, critiquing hyperbole in literary texts through the lens of reason and logic alone would be inappropriate.This study aims to provide a critical evaluation of the hyperbolic style in the first laudatory ode written by the ʿAbbāsid-era Arab poet al-Mutanabbī for a commander named Badr ibn ʿAmmār. al-Mutanabbī's frequent use of hyperbole is analyzed here not through rational or logical frameworks but within an aesthetic context. Given the extensive body of biographical research on al-Mutanabbī's life and poetic career, this study specifically focuses on the hyperbolic style in this selected ode to provide a more nuanced analysis. While al-Mutanabbī's divan and odes have been the subject of numerous academic studies in the Arab world, this particular laudatory ode addressed to Badr ibn ʿAmmār has not been critically examined independently. This gap enhances the study's originality and underscores the need for an in-depth analysis of this ode in terms of hyperbolic style. The primary objective of this study is to reassess the aesthetic qualities of the ode in the context of the poet's stylistic choices and the literary norms of the period.This study is based on qualitative methods such as literature review and document review. In the study, primary sources written since the early periods of Islam were used and contemporary sources in the field were also used.

1. An Overview of al-Mutanabbī's Hyperboles

The history of Arabic poetry, as in all literatures, is closely tied to the political, cultural, and social structures of the time. The poetry of the Pre-Islamic period (Jāhiliyyah) deeply reflects the traces of desert life and Bedouin culture (al-Ḫafājī, 26). In the poetry of this era, the clarity and simplicity of meaning immediately stand out; there is no forced interpretation, no distant associations, nor any extreme flights of imagination. Whether the poet is expressing emotions or depicting nature, they carefully avoid excess, exaggeration, and exceeding logical boundaries (Dayf, 1960, 1/219).

However, by the time of the Abbasid period, exaggeration in poetry becomes quite popular, leading to debates among literary figures. According to some, the use of hyperbole in literature is a sign of weakness. They claim that hyperbole arises from the speaker's inability to create new meanings or derive one meaning from another. They also argue that the inability to enhance the beauty of speech with rhetorical figures, choose beautiful words, or combine these words skillfully leads to inadequacy. To compensate for all these shortcomings and correct their faults, these poets resort to hyperbole, as it has a significant impact on the listener (Ibn Abū al-Isbaʿ, 148). On the other hand, there are those who view hyperbole as an art, even offering it as a literary figure in itself. The most notable name in this regard is Ibn al-Muʿtazz (d. 296/908) (Ibn al-Muʿtazz, 1990, 162). The author sought to draw a well-rounded

theoretical framework for the rhetorical figures a literary artist would need and developed the concept of al-Ifrād fī'l-Ṣifāt for hyperbole.

It is said that the first Arab poetry theorist to use the term "hyperbole" was Kudāmah b. Jaʿfar (d. 337/948). He defined hyperbole as follows: Hyperbole is when a poet adds something beyond what is necessary to fulfill a purpose, even though the situation would have been sufficient for achieving the intended goal. What stands out in this definition is the poet's desire to express a situation more effectively. Another motivation driving the poet toward hyperbole is their refusal to settle for the current meaning (Qudāma b. Jaʿfar, 1303, 365). This psychological state of the poet also caught the attention of Abū Hilāl al-Askārī (d. after 400/1009). He defined hyperbole as: Hyperbole is to push the meaning to its extreme limits and its furthest objectives, not being satisfied with the lowest degrees or the closest levels (Askārī, 1419, 365). As seen, both major figures in Arab literary criticism highlighted the same core point regarding hyperbole: poets do not settle for expressing a meaning in its simplest form. The main reason for this is most likely connected to human psychology, as mentioned in the introduction.

After these points on hyperbole, our opinion in this matter is that the view that hyperbole is simply a lie and therefore has no place in literature is incorrect. Leaning toward such an opinion is entirely contrary to the natural flow of life. The primary reason that leads us to this conclusion is that metaphors, after all, are also forms of hyperbole. In fact, metaphors are frequently found in the Qurʾān and hadiths. Proverbs, which are ingrained in the oral culture of every nation, also contain a certain degree of hyperbole. A proverb expresses a general truth about a particular event, but we all know that the ruling contained in the proverb does not always apply to every situation or individual. For example, the Turkish proverb "Azıcık aşım kaygısız başım" (a little food is enough for a worry-free life) expresses a general idea that having little wealth can lead to a peaceful life. However, this may not apply to everyone or every situation. For some, having little wealth may lead to financial difficulties and a stressful life. This clearly shows that the proverb contains a hyperbolic generalization that cannot be universally validated. From these points, we can conclude: although hyperbole contains unrealistic elements, the human need for this unreality is also a reality. Hyperbole, which opens the door to offering the reader multi-layered meanings and vast imaginations, provides both a mental escape and aesthetic satisfaction as a truth of art. Yes, hyperbole exceeds the boundaries of reality as we know it, but in doing so, it deepens emotions, stimulates the imagination, and invites the reader on a mental journey. In this context, hyperbole is not merely a decorative art; it is also a form of expression that answers existential human quests.

It must be emphasized that literary experts and scholars of eloquence have not objected to hyperbole when it is used in a way that does not exceed limits, does not become excessive, and does not appear strange or ugly to people. They agree on hyperbole when it is based on imagination and makes sense within context. However, this acceptance comes with a condition: hyperbole should not create the illusion that the speaker is presenting all elements of a truth. On the contrary, the reader or listener should recognize that these expressions are used for hyperbolic purposes, and a heightened intensity is extracted from them, which is acceptable as a meaningful interpretation (Meydanī, 1996, 2/451).

Great literary theorists such as ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī (d. 471/1078-79) admitted that well-executed hyperbole can have a captivating effect, but they also warned that when used excessively or recklessly, hyperbole can create the opposite effect and harm the artist's craft. They emphasized that for hyperbole to be accepted as a true form of art, an approach that is arbitrary or overly exaggerated should be avoided, and instead, it should be applied in harmony with the subtleties of language and the depth of meaning, cautiously and balanced, as demonstrated through examples (al-Jurjānī, 2001, 164, 183,184).

Regarding the use of hyperbole in al-Mutanabbī's poetry, it can be said that al-Mutanabbī is the poet who elevated the hyperbolic style, which was already at its peak in Abbasid Arabic poetry, to its highest point. Indeed, the biographical sources on his life and works clearly demonstrate his inclination toward exaggerated depictions (Namir, 2018, 333). At this point, the following question naturally arises: Why did al-Mutanabbī feel the need to emphasize hyperbolic depictions so strongly?

In our research, we found a direct answer to this question in an article by two Iranian Arab literature scholars. This study thoroughly examines the psychological factors underlying al-Mutanabbī's hyperbolic style in his poetry. According to the researchers, the most significant factors that fuel the elements of hyperbole in his works are powerful motivations related to the human inner world. Among these, the desire for personal superiority, self-glorification, and self-satisfaction are particularly prominent. The study suggests that al-Mutanabbī frequently resorted to exaggerated depictions in his poetry to meet these psychological needs. In this context, al-Mutanabbī's hyperbolic style is associated with his desire to reinforce his self-confidence and present a strong identity to the outside world. The researchers argue that this style also reflects the poet's inner conflicts and search for self-assurance.

Here, an important observation is made: al-Mutanabbī may have used his poetry, which is centered around hyperbole, as a defense mechanism against the challenges he faced both individually and socially. However, it is clear that al-Mutanabbī's hyperbole-driven poetic understanding cannot be explained by psychological factors alone. The researchers also assess his tendency for hyperbole in light of the Arab culture and social norms of the time. In this context, the authors conclude that in addition to his personal inclinations, the literary tradition of the period and the social conditions played a decisive role in his preference for hyperbole (Muḥammadī and Isfahānī, 2021, 105).

We agree with the above observations of both researchers, but it is also possible to mention another psychological factor underlying al-Mutanabbī's focus on hyperbolic style. This factor is that the poet could achieve personal gain through these exaggerated depictions. After all, poets of that time viewed poetry as a source of income, and the use of poetry as an economic tool was quite common (Rāid, 2010, 421-466). In other words, being a poet was considered a highly lucrative career Thus, the poet's praise of his addressee with extraordinary attributes also had a material counterpart. Therefore, the hyperbolic praise in these odes, which paved the way for someone to become wealthy and influential, also served to achieve material goals more quickly. This too can be considered another psychological motive driving al-Mutanabbī toward a hyperbolic style.

2. Topics of Hyperbole
2.1. Courage

In Arabic poetry, whether political or military, the most praised qualities in a leader are generosity and courage (Qayrawānī, 1981, 2/135). The emphasis on the feeling of courage, which represents standing firm in the face of the enemy and not hesitating in the face of danger, in poetry indicates that Arab society has always been intimately involved with the concept of war. Indeed, the pre-Islamic Arabs' expressions of tribal wars, such as Ayyām al-'Arab (the days of the Arabs), the jihād with the polytheists during the Medinan state-building process in Islam, and the expansive conquests during the Umayyad period, show that Arabs were in a continuous state of conflict, whether internally or externally. Even in the 10th century, during al-Mutanabbī's time, conflicts in the Syrian region never ceased. The weakening of central authority in the Abbasid Khilāfah along with tensions between local emirs and the Byzantines, further entrenched the culture of conflict within Arab society. This historical backdrop made courage an indispensable virtue, particularly for the political and military elite. Leaders such as sulṭāns, wazīrs, amīrs, and military commanders, who occupied the upper echelons of the state in such a tense environment, were primarily distinguished by their courage. This is why poets often praised the courage of caliphs, sultans, and commanders who actively participated in wars. In their panegyric odes, poets competed with one another to portray courage in unique and original ways. While courage, as a concept, remains singular in nature, its manifestation and expression differ from one battle to another. This is where the poet's task truly comes into play. A poet proves their superiority by portraying courage in an original style that has never been expressed by any other poet. al-Mutanabbī is a poet who has firmly established his mastery in this area and has made a lasting name for himself in the history of Arabic poetry. One of the key factors that helped him display his skill was his use of hyperbole. He depicted courage in such unique exaggerations that it is as if each verse bears his signature through his style. Since there are countless examples of such hyperboles in his divan, providing just a few striking

examples will be enough to demonstrate the depth and impact of his style[1].

قَتَلْتَ نُفُوسَ العِدا بِالحَدِيدِ   حَتّى قَتَلْتَ بِهِنَّ الحَدِيدا

You extinguised the souls of the enemies with swords;

So much so that you killed the swords with those very souls.

This verse is found in the first ode, marking the turning point between al-Mutanabbī's early years, during which he composed hastily written poetry to make a living, and his later works, where he reached the pinnacle of artistic achievement in his Sayfīyāt poems. In this ode, we witness the sincere emotions al-Mutanabbī felt for the successful Arab commander Badr b. ʿAmmār, an unabashed Arab nationalist. Here, al-Mutanabbī is at the early stages of his poetic career. He has received patronage from ʿAmmār, who holds him in high esteem. As Taha Hussein put it, just as a person lost in the scorching deserts would rejoice upon finding water, al-Mutanabbī in this panegyric ode is filled with similar enthusiasm (Ḥusayn, 2013, 109). The joy of having met ʿAmmār and receiving his admiration is manifested in the hyperbole used to describe courage in this verse.

In the above verse, exaggeration is evident. The first line describes the ordinary act of killing enemy soldiers with swords. There is nothing extraordinary about this action in terms of admiration for the person being praised. The poet adds an unexpected and startling image to this ordinariness. The swords strike the enemy soldiers' bodies with such continuous and relentless force that it seems not the soldiers are dying, but the swords themselves. Instead of killing the enemy soldiers with swords, the poet suggests that the swords, through the enemy's bodies, are killed themselves. Through this exaggerated depiction of broken swords amidst the enemy bodies, it becomes clear that the poet is referring to ʿAmmār's extraordinary courage.

In another verse of the same ode, the poet expresses courage with a similar exaggerated approach:

وَهَوْلٍ كَشَفْتَ وَنَصْلٍ قَصَفْتَ   وَرُمْحٍ تَرَكْتَ مُباداً مُبِيدا

You revealed many fears, broke swords,

.And left the spears in such a way that they both destroy and are destroyed

In this verse, the poet employs taʿdīd, a rhetorical device that has become a discipline under the umbrella of Badīʿ (rhetoric). This art is defined as the successive arrangement of words or phrases in the same form, giving the poem a specific rhythm and emphasis. The phrases Wa-hawlin kashafta wa-naṣlin qaṣafta, and Wa-rumḥin tarakata in the verse are arranged in the same form, i.e., with an omitted preposition and noun + verb. The poet uses this technique in many of his odes in his divan. Here, however, he utilizes this rhetorical device to make the hyperbole more effective.

The phrase "You revealed many fears" is an exaggeration. According to the poet's depiction, Ammar did not instill fear in the enemy; they were already fearful. He simply brought these fears to light. In the second element, Ammar has broken many swords. The poet suggests, through the image of broken swords, that Ammar has torn apart numerous people until their swords were shattered into pieces, which aligns with the meaning of the previous verse. On the other hand, the person being praised has thrown spears at the enemy in such a way that two different outcomes occur. Due to the speed of the spears' trajectory and the force of their impact, the spears are shattered into pieces. In this case, the spears are مُباداً (utterly destroyed). At the same time, the spears are also مُبِيدا (destructive). While both words come from the same root etymologically, their different forms enrich the meaning of the verse. As we can see, al-Mutanabbī's use of hyperbole in this verse, through his skillful use of language, rhythmic harmony, and descriptive power, turns it into art.

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[1]   (Mutanabbī, 1983, 133) Since only one qasida of the poet is analyzed in this study, there is no need for further citation in the subsequent couplets.

In another verse in the ode, the poet employs personification, a rhetorical device, by humanizing the necks, which are parts of the human body. The exaggeration in this verse is so striking that it diminishes the artistic level of the previously successful hyperboles:

<div dir="rtl">

الطُلى أَن تَكونَ الغُمودا   بِهَجرِ سُيوفِكَ أَغمادَها تَمَنّى

</div>

Because your swords constantly abandoned their scabbards,

The necks began to long to be scabbards.

According to the poet's depiction, the swords used by Badr b. ʿAmmār in battle never return to their scabbards. This expression clearly indicates that he is in a constant state of conflict. The phrase "Because your swords constantly abandoned their scabbards" contains a reference to ghazal (love) poetry. The implication is that the scabbards, which are mere sheaths for the swords, are in love with the swords themselves. However, the swords are always separated from their scabbards, forever in a state of estrangement. Ammar keeps his swords outside their sheaths, always in a state of readiness for battle. This imagery symbolizes a courageous commander who is always engaged in the battlefield. The poet does not stop there; he desires to depict courage in an even more exaggerated tone, pushing the limits of imagination. He gives a wishful characteristic to the necks, portraying them as longing to become scabbards. When the enemy soldiers see that Ammar's swords never enter their scabbards, the necks of the soldiers also wish to be scabbards, so that these swords will never strike them. With this personification, al-Mutanabbī magnifies the hero's courage and his terrifying effect on the enemy through a great deal of hyperbole.

2.2. Generosity

The second virtue emphasized in the ode is generosity. As is customary in Arabic panegyric odes, al-Mutanabbī does not merely praise ʿAmmār's generosity to the extreme, but takes it to an exaggerated level that is logically impossible. This exaggeration is clearly evident in the following verse:

<div dir="rtl">

حَقَّرنا البِحارَ بِها وَالأُسودا   مُهَذَّبَةٌ حُلوَةٌ مُرَّةٌ

</div>

So virtuous, sweet, and bitter,

That we now look down upon the seas and lions.

In the first line of the verse, the three adjectives, which are listed one after another without reference to each other, praise Badr b. ʿAmmār in a succinct manner. The first adjective, مُهَذَّبَةٌ (well-mannered), expresses his moral maturity, حُلوَةٌ (sweet) represents his generosity, and مُرَّةٌ (bitter) signifies his courage and unwavering stance against his enemies. In the second line, the poet elevates both generosity and courage through exaggeration by claiming that they have come to look down upon the seas and lions. Seas contain countless fish and other creatures, providing sustenance to billions of lives, much like a mother nurturing her children. Moreover, seas are the source of freshwater found on land. They also carry water vapor through evaporation, which nourishes the plants and animals that depend on it. Therefore, the poet is expected to compare Badr b. ʿAmmār to the seas, which are manifestations of God's mercy, the merciful God (Rahman). However, such a comparison has become somewhat cliched in Arabic poetry and does not align with the poet's innovative style. After all, by the time of al-Mutanabbī, hundreds of Arab poets had already drawn comparisons between a generous person and the sea. Thus, the poet must establish a much more distinct connection between generosity and the sea. Here, al-Mutanabbī demonstrates his originality by essentially reversing the metaphor. Badr b. ʿAmmār is so generous that even the seas, symbols of abundance, prosperity, and sustenance, appear insignificant in comparison to him. According to the rules of metaphor, the compared element (مشبه به) should be stronger in the feature that the comparison emphasizes than the element being compared (مشبه). However, al-Mutanabbī flips this classical understanding by stating that the sea, which is usually a symbol of abundance, is weak compared to Badr b. ʿAmmār's generosity. Through this reversed metaphor, the poet enhances his praise of ʿAmmār using hyperbole and elevates it to a higher level, showcasing his originality beyond traditional formulas.

14

In another verse, where the poet praises both generosity and courage in a single line, he says:

وبالموت في الحرب تبقي الخلودا   كأنك بالفقر تبغي الغنى

As if you seek wealth in poverty,

And seek eternity in death in battle.

The first line of the verse clearly emphasizes generosity. The person being praised is so generous that he seeks wealth in poverty. That is, he distributes his possessions and wealth to others in acts of charity and kindness, leaving himself in a state of poverty. Just as people accumulate wealth in the pursuit of riches, the person being praised also expends his wealth with the same passion. The more he distributes, the richer he becomes, thinking that the less he keeps, the wealthier he will be. The second line of the verse elevates the virtue of courage. The person being praised is so brave and swift in battle that it seems as though he distributes death and life. He attacks with the knowledge that the road to eternity passes through death.

When this verse is considered within the broader strategic structure of the ode and viewed from a holistic perspective, it becomes apparent that al-Mutanabbī adopts a more balanced style here. While there is indeed an exaggeration in this verse, it does not reach the level of extraordinary imagery that pushes the limits of imagination or captivates the listener for an extended period. It is likely that the poet consciously aims to maintain a balance in the degree of unrealism in his hyperbolic expressions within the ode. By keeping the tone of exaggeration lower in some verses, he may have aimed to highlight the impact of the extraordinary expressions in the other verses.

2.3. Moral Maturity

In another verse, where the poet emphasizes moral maturity in an exaggerated manner, it is stated as follows:

كَأَنَّ لَهُ مِنهُ قَلباً حَسودا   يُحَدَّثُ عَن فَضلِهِ مُكرَهاً

When his virtues are spoken of, he is disturbed;

As if he has a heart that envies him.

It is an exceptional case when a person does not feel pleasure from words of praise. Generally speaking, human nature enjoys being praised and is disturbed by criticism or reproach. Of course, there are exceptional individuals for whom these statements do not apply, and having such maturity is a commendable moral quality. al-Mutanabbī identifies this extraordinary trait in Badr b. ʿAmmār by showing that he is disturbed by praise. He has such a noble character that instead of welcoming praise and commendations, he finds them unpleasant and feels insulted. To highlight this trait, the poet uses exaggeration, employing metaphor and metaphor within a metaphor (Istiʿārah). According to the second line of the verse, Badr b. ʿAmmār's situation can be likened to the following: The heart he carries is so envious that when his virtues and qualities are mentioned, he becomes extremely disturbed, as if jealousy is the cause. He does not want anyone to speak of him at all. In an attempt to make his exaggeration concrete and to showcase his literary skill, al-Mutanabbī presents this in the second line. He personifies the heart using istiare (metaphor), attributing the human quality of jealousy to it. He then compares Badr b. ʿAmmār to someone who possesses a heart like this.

The effectiveness of the first verse, known as the matla, is one of the criteria used to assess the literary skill of poets. In this case, the poet is expected to create a verse that is in harmony with the entire ode, stimulates curiosity to read the rest of the poem, and leaves an impression that the ode has reached a high level of literary quality. From this perspective, the quality sought in the matla, or the first verse, is a form of introductory aesthetics. In classical Arabic poetry criticism, authors often provide examples of successful and unsuccessful cases under the heading of matla, indicating that it is recognized as a standard literary aesthetic measure.

When examining al-Mutanabbī's ode through the lens of the matla, it becomes apparent that the poet bypasses the usual nasib (the introduction) and tashbib (the comparative metaphor) in his direct transition into praise.

<div dir="rtl">

أَمِ الخَلْقُ في شَخْصٍ حَيٍّ أُعيدا   أَحُلْماً نَرى أَم زَماناً جَديداً

</div>

Are we dreaming, or have we entered a new era?

Or has creation started anew in the form of a living being?

In this verse, al-Mutanabbī delivers an impressive praise of Badr b. ʿAmmār He compares the joy of meeting him to the delight of experiencing a beautiful dream or transitioning into a completely different era. The second line serves as a precursor to the intensity of hyperbole in the ode. The person being praised has gathered all the beauty of the world to himself, so much so that it seems as if God has recreated creation through him. All beauty has first been formed within his body, and from there it has spread throughout the entire universe. While the unrealism in the poet's expression is evident, the power of the hyperbole and the aesthetic grace of the language are equally captivating.

In another verse, al-Mutanabbī praises Badr b. ʿAmmār's moral maturity as follows:

<div dir="rtl">

وآيَة مجِدٍ أراها العبيدا   خلائق تهدى إلى ربها

</div>

He has such morality that it leads to his Lord;

He carries such a badge of honor that he shows it to his servants.

In this verse, following the depictions of generosity and bravery, the poet takes a holistic approach to praise Badr b. ʿAmmār's beautiful morality. The praise includes a reference to divine support, elevating the hyperbole. The phrase أراها العبيدا (He has shown it to his servants) in the second line suggests that Badr b. ʿAmmār's morality is exalted by God Himself and displayed as an emblem of honor to all people. It is clear that the poet aims to strengthen his praise with a divine confirmation. The term آيَة مجِد (the verse of honor or the emblem of honor) he chooses fits this context of divine affirmation. The word آيَة, meaning "sign" or "proof" in this context is used with a religious connotation, since it is commonly associated with the Qurʾān in Muslim societies, hinting at a religious reference.

2.4. Aesthetic Weaknesses in the Ode

Although al-Mutanabbī is widely regarded as a master of hyperbole, some of his exaggerations are not always considered elegant or commendable. Examples of this can be found in sources from various disciplines (Ibn Kathīr, 1999, 15/279). While the majority of the hyperboles in this ode exhibit the artistic maturity expected of a poet, in certain verses, the poet seems to rely too heavily on wordplay. For instance, in the following verse, the poet's way of describing generosity is convoluted and not particularly striking in terms of aesthetic appeal. Such examples suggest that while al-Mutanabbī uses hyperbole effectively, he sometimes pushes the boundaries, losing some of the aesthetic sensitivity.

<div dir="rtl">

جَوادٌ بَخيلٌ بِأَن لا يَجودا   أَميرُ أَميرُ عَلَيهِ النَدى

</div>

A prince, a prince, upon whom generosity has become his ruler;

So generous that he has become miserly by not being generous.

In the first line of the verse, there is no unique depiction characteristic of al-Mutanabbī. As the verse's commentaries suggest, before al-Mutanabbī, poets such as Namīrī (d. 190/805 [?]) and Abū Tammām (d. 231/846) also used similar descriptions to praise someone (Wāḥidī, 1999, 2/626). In the second line, the poet compares the refusal to be generous to a form of wealth. Then, he characterizes the person being praised as بَخيلٌ (miser), someone who refuses to share their wealth. The expression "the miser of not being generous" in a panegyric is rather jarring, unpleasant to the ear, and ungraceful.

Referring to Badr b. Ammar, whose generosity was almost beyond imagination, as a miser challenges the reader's perception and makes the expression unsuitable. In Badīʿ literature, there is a rhetorical art called al-madh bimā yashbihu az-zamm, where a speaker may seem to insult the subject while actually praising them. Here, al-Mutanabbī uses this technique with a hyperbolic twist, but the unsettling part is that the praise is forced through wordplay and contradictory connections. In this verse, it can be said that the poet, compared to other hyperboles, overemphasized the expression just for the sake of exaggeration.

As discussed in the main sections of this study, during al-Mutanabbī's time, there were numerous conflicts both within and outside the Abbasid Khilāfah. These constant tensions in a volatile region helped al-Mutanabbī shine as a war poet on the battlefield. Naturally, when depicting a battle, the primary artistic device al-Mutanabbī uses is hyperbole. In the examples discussed under the theme of courage, the poet's successful use of hyperbolic imagery stands out. However, in certain verses of this ode, the hyperbole falls flat. In the following example, when describing the scene of throwing spears into the bodies of the enemy and killing them, the poet fails to create a strong sense of horror:

<div dir="rtl">

رَدَدتَ بِها الذُبَّلَ السُمرَ سودا   وَرُبَّمَا حَملةٍ في الوَغى

</div>

You launched many attacks in battle;

You brought back the dark spears, blackened with blood.

In this verse, the poet depicts attacks on the battlefield and spears being retrieved, stained with blood. Compared to the rest of the ode, this verse feels rather ordinary. Throwing spears at the enemy and killing numerous people is a common motif frequently depicted in panegyric poetry. It is expected, and the poet is tasked with making it interesting through unique and captivating imagery. It must be noted that there is nothing particularly original in the image of the spear being retrieved with dried blood from the bodies of the soldiers. The fact that the spears hit the enemy does not represent the extraordinary that would merit inclusion in a panegyric ode. What is expected from the poet is to construct this scene with a style of hyperbole that leaves the listener in awe. The lack of such a style in this verse indicates how crucial timely and well-executed hyperbole is in adding aesthetic value to poetry.

One of the hyperboles we find questionable in the ode is al-Mutanabbī's statement in the following verse, where he expresses his desire to bow down to Badr b. ʿAmmār:

<div dir="rtl">

رضينا له فتركَا السجودا   طلبنا رضاه بترك الذي

</div>

We sought his favor by leaving what we had chosen for ourselves,

And we left bowing down.

According to this verse, the person being praised possesses such qualities of generosity and courage that the poet is so moved by admiration that he wishes to bow before him. However, Badr b. ʿAmmār graciously rejects the poet's wish to bow. In this verse, there is an exaggeration; the feeling of admiration reaches the point where it becomes an act of bowing. In our opinion, this exaggeration seems rather weak and unassertive compared to the examples discussed earlier. The hyperbole "We wanted to bow before your greatness, but you did not allow it" lacks the subtle elegance and depth of meaning that engages the reader's imagination. The simplicity of the verbs طلبنا (we sought), رضينا (we accepted), and فتركَا (we left) fails to produce the rich associations that would feed the reader's imagination, limiting the effectiveness of the hyperbole. Therefore, the simplicity of the language and the weakness of the imagery in this verse make it fall short in demonstrating the traditional aesthetic strength of al-Mutanabbī's hyperboles.

Conclusion

This article has thoroughly examined how al-Mutanabbī used hyperbole as a poetic device and the effects of this usage in aesthetic, psychological, and social contexts. The most significant finding of

the study is that al-Mutanabbī's hyperbolic expressions, beyond adding aesthetic depth to his poetry, are a powerful form of expression that stimulates the reader's imagination and offers emotional intensity. However, in some verses, the crossing of aesthetic boundaries with hyperbole can weaken the impact of the exaggeration. This indicates that the balanced use of hyperbole is critical for artistic value. As observed, the poet's inclination towards hyperbolic depictions is closely related not only to individual literary skill but also to the societal expectations and psychological needs of the era. The exaltation of virtues such as courage and generosity reflects the desire for social status and the poet's own quest to reinforce his identity. The article demonstrates that some verses, which include wordplay and expressions with contradictions, fall short in terms of artistic maturity. This suggests that hyperbole should be evaluated not only in terms of content but also as a balance of language and style. al-Mutanabbī's hyperboles, on one hand, align with traditional aesthetic values in classical Arabic literature, while on the other hand, they exhibit an innovative approach that creates new literary standards. This shows that his poetry has a transformative effect on established conventions. Ultimately, al-Mutanabbī's mastery of hyperbole demonstrates that he was a poet who was both in harmony with the aesthetic values of his time and transcended them. However, the weakening of aesthetic depth in certain verses further underscores the importance of using hyperbole carefully and in balance. These analyses reveal that al-Mutanabbī's poetry contains both aesthetic success and aspects that are open to critique.

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