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Al-Mutanabbī's Poem *al-Ra'y Qabla Shajā'at al-Shuj'ān*: Reason before the Courage of the Brave: A Rhetorical-Analytical Study

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Abstract

In the field of contemporary literary analysis, it is worth mentioning analytical applied studies dedicated to the rhetoric of literature, which are aimed at developing systematic methods for analyzing the stylistic and rhetorical depth of the literary work. The purpose of this research is to conduct a rhetorical analysis of the poem "al-Ra'y Qabla Shajaa'at al-Shujaa'n" ("Judgment Before the Courage of the Brave") written by Abu al-Tayyib al-Mutanabbi, emphasizing the author's place among other literary figures as well as the artistic importance of the discussed poem. The problem studied in this paper is represented by the lack of research dedicated to the complete rhetorical analysis of this work despite the importance of the poem in the context of Arabic literature. The aim of this research lies in the rhetorical analysis of the mentioned poem and its relationship with the literary construction of the discussed work and its key idea that reflects such concepts as reason, leadership, and heroism. This paper uses the descriptive and analytical approach in order to analyze the rhetorical strategies used by the poet, the figurative meaning, and stylistic constructions of the analyzed literary work. In particular, the rhetorical devices have a crucial effect on creating the coherence of the poem in terms of its thematic and artistic unity.

Keywords: Arabic poetry, Abbasid era, al-Mutanabbi, al-Ra'y Qabla Shajā'at al-Shuj'ān, rhetorical analysis

In the Name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful Praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds, who conferred on mankind the favor of eloquence (ni'mat al-bayān). Peace and blessings be upon the bearer of the eloquent Arabic tongue, who said, "Indeed, some poetry contains wisdom" [1, al-Adab, 6145], and upon his family and Companions altogether.

Applied analytical works on Arabic Rhetoric ('ulūm al-balāgha) have achieved great recognition in the current literary scholarship. Yet their contribution—their actual addition to our understanding of classical texts—remains vague and generalised in many cases. It is in this respect that the present study aims to fill a gap and offer a specific rhetorical analysis of a classical poetic text by one of the greatest Arabic poets. The study provides a thorough rhetorical analysis of the poem "al-ra'y qabla shajā'at al-shuj'ān" ("Reason Before the Courage of the Brave") by the poet al-Mutanabbī and demonstrates how his rhetorical artistry reinforces the philosophical concept expressed in the poem—that the priority of intellect is greater than that of courage.

Why should we choose al-Mutanabbī? The reason for this is simple. First, he enjoys the highest status among Abbasid poets. His poetry is characterized by its power, density, and impressive visuality. However, this alone would not distinguish him from other poets of that time. The key feature that makes al-Mutanabbī special is the close connection between his poetic work and personal qualities as well as life experience. His life and career were restless and dynamic; he valued his own worth very highly and faced intrigues from rival poets and patrons. As a result, his poetry was not created occasionally for a specific sponsor; it rather reflected his personality, philosophy of glory, power, and heroism. Hence the words of the renowned authority on Arabic, Abu Ali al-Farisi: "I have never seen a man comparable to him in his kind!" [2, 222]; and also al-Dhahabī: "There is no one in the world more poetic than he; and as for one like him, he is rare" [3, 2: 94].

Al-Mutanabbī lived in times of political instability. In fact, the Abbasid caliphate declined at that time, giving rise to other powers. There were several rulers who were not officially acknowledged as caliphs but had great political influence. They ruled in Baghdad (Būyids), in Syria (Hamdānids), in Egypt (Ikshīdids), and in Khurāsān (Sāmānids). These conditions would usually make poets' careers chaotic. However, this was exactly the opposite in the case of al-Mutanabbī. On the one hand, political instability increased his mobility—he would seek new courts wherever it would serve his purposes. On the other hand, he spent quite a lot of time at various courts, praising rulers, accepting their lavish gifts, and enjoying the atmosphere of political instability. In particular, he visited 'Aḍud al-Dawla al-Būyī; he praised him and accepted generous gifts in return. However, there was one incident when this patron asked him about his opinion on the question whether the latter surpassed Sayf al-Dawla in his generosity. Al-Mutanabbī answered that "These [gifts] are more numerous, but are characterized by affectation; those [of Sayf al-Dawla] are few in number, but offered with sincerity." This answer resulted in his death [4, 15: 273].

However, the most influential relation al-Mutanabbī had and the one that inspired his best poems belonged to Sayf al-Dawla al-Ḥamdānī. According to Ibn Khallikān, Aleppo, at that time, was a political center where Sayf al-Dawla's court gathered many distinguished poets and scholars [5, 1: 1412]. Sayf al-Dawla matched the ideal of al-Mutanabbī in terms of ambition, self-esteem, and glorification of chivalry. For nine years (approximately from 337 to 346 AH), al-Mutanabbī was able to compose the poems reflecting his philosophy of intellect, courage, and heroism, as well as celebrating his patron Sayf al-Dawla [6, 46–50].

Our target poem, "al-ra'y qabla shajā'at al-shuj'ān" ("Reason Before the Courage of the Brave") is dated back to the same period. Its topic is Sayf al-Dawla's victory over the Byzantine forces in the town of Āmid in 345 AH. At the same time, it conveys Sayf al-Dawla's philosophy of leadership and warfare, presents the principles of chivalry and wisdom, and displays the ability to reflect complex philosophical concepts in language of stylistic grandeur and eloquence. Moreover, the first verse of this poem is now firmly established in the minds of people through proverbs and sayings:

al-ra'yu qabla shajā'ati al-shuj'ān

huwa awwalun wa-hiya al-maḥallu al-thānī

("Reason comes before the courage of the brave; it occupies the first rank, while courage occupies the second.")

The memorability of this verse results from both its message and its rhetorical features, which consist in restriction (qaṣr), foregrounding, and opposition. The rhetorical characteristics will be studied below in detail.

It needs to be noted that despite the fame and importance of the poem, there is no independent study of it in the contemporary literary scholarship. Commentaries on the Dīwān by al-Mutanabbī can be easily found in great abundance; however, they provide general explanations of the poem's meaning, without going deeper into its rhetorical structure. There have been some references to this poem in some works; however, the only author to discuss the poem in detail is Dr. Laṭīfa al-Ḍāyif in 2021, who analyses the thematic structure, diction, and syntax of this poem, yet only up to the 18th verse out of 49. Another source that discusses our poem is "Kursī al-Mutanabbī," a YouTube channel by a Jordanian writer named Ayman al-'Utūm. There, the author discussed this poem for several episodes, providing explanations of vocabulary and interpretation of meanings; however, the part devoted to its rhetorical dimension is rather sketchy. Therefore, none of these sources can provide a comprehensive rhetorical analysis of the poem.

All these facts create a problem area in the field. Specifically, there is a need for an academic study aimed at demonstrating al-Mutanabbī's use of rhetorical devices to convey his philosophy of leadership, chivalry, courage, and

wisdom.

In order to contribute to specialized studies of al-Mutanabbī and classical Arabic poetry in general, it is necessary to provide a comprehensive rhetorical analysis of our poem and demonstrate the role of different rhetorical devices in conveying its semantic content. It will show how al-Mutanabbī employed his rhetorical arsenal (such as simile (tashbīh), metaphor (isti'āra), metonymy (kināya), paronomasia (jinās), opposition (ṭibāq)) to convey a philosophy of leadership, chivalry, courage, and wisdom. Furthermore, the paper will also give a chance to explore al-Mutanabbī's literary genius, as well as his sources of inspiration.

What are the goals of this study? Our study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of al-Mutanabbī's poem, including its artistic, intellectual, dictional, and stylistic dimensions, especially with regard to rhetorical aspects and figures (al-jawānib al-bayāniyya wa-al-balāghiyya). This analysis involves exploration of al-Mutanabbī's figurative images (tashbīh, isti'āra, kināya), stylistic phenomena such as foregrounding and deferment (taqdīm wa-ta'khīr), and his rhetorical embellishments (muḥassināt badī'iyya). However, we will try to answer not only the question of which rhetorical devices the poet uses but also where and why he uses them and in which way. We will ask ourselves how the poet employs rhetorical means to express the concept of glorification of intellect, courage, and heroism in the figure of Sayf al-Dawla. Does it help in shaping an artistic image of this poem? Does this poem possess an artistic structure (binya fanniyya)? How does this poem serve a good example of literary creativity for students?

Thus, our research questions are as follows: What are the prominent rhetorical features of the poem under study? How does al-Mutanabbī employ his rhetorical arsenal to convey concepts of courage, chivalry, and leadership? In which places does the poet's literary creativity (mawāḍi' al-ibdā' al-adabī) manifest itself most clearly? What sources of novelty and innovation (muhallat) are contained in the poet's rhetorical imagery (al-ṣuwar al-balāghiyya)? What means does the poet use to reflect the relationship between intellect and courage in the poem? How are artistic and linguistic factors combined in building up an artistic image of this poem? Is it possible to speak about its artistic structure?

In the meantime, our implicit assumption is that al-Mutanabbī did not use rhetorical devices only as an element of decoration (lil-zakhrafa al-lafziyya). He incorporated them in the semantic structure, aiming to make it even more profound and accentuating its main aspects.

Descriptive-analytical approach (al-manhaj al-waṣfī al-taḥlīlī) is used in our research. This type of analysis implies the identification of rhetorical phenomena (al-zawāhir al-balāgiyya) and their subsequent interpretation from the perspective of artistic and aesthetic functions. Thus, our study starts with a short description of the poem and its historical background, followed by dividing it into thematic verse units (al-waḥdāt al-maqṭa'iyya al-mawḍū'iyya), each of them corresponding to one semantic axis and one central idea. Each unit is subjected to a literary analysis; namely, its rhetorical artistry (ṣinā'a balāgiyya), meaning of verses, as well as explanation of unknown vocabulary are provided. Analysis of the poem relies on classical commentaries on Dīwān of al-Mutanabbī and Arabic lexicon.

1. THE POEM "REASON BEFORE THE COURAGE OF THE BRAVE": AN INTRODUCTION

The qaṣīda under consideration was written in the period of great victory. Sayf al-Dawla had recently defeated the Byzantines in Āmid, and al-Mutanabbī took the opportunity to praise him—even though, as will become clear soon, the praise was more concerned with ideological principles than military success [8, 2: 59].

With 49 verses, this poem flows smoothly. The used meter is called kāmil (baḥr al-kāmil). It is the grandest meter of classical Arabic poetry and has traditionally been linked with such topics as idea elaboration, glorification (fakhr), and panegyric (madḥ). All these topics are central to the poem in question, namely grandeur of speech (jazālat al-alfāz), strength, greatness, and incitement of warlike ardour. However, the meter choice goes beyond conventions: the meter includes a continued rhythm (imtidād) in its metrical feet (taf'īlāt). This rhythm is responsible for an important stylistic feature: each proposition must be considered before proceeding to the next one due to the nature of the meter. In this way, the poem becomes solemn and splendid (bahā'), as it announces itself as something that should not be hurried through [9, 183, 241].

And now we come to another significant stylistic feature—the rhyme (qāfiya). In the poem in question, it is a uniform -ni rhyme made by means of the nūn letter with the kasra ending. What is so important about that? The sound created by the rhyme does not last too long and is not extended too much either, which gives it the character of repeated statement—phonetically pronounced affirmation. And since the poem is fundamentally concerned with assertions about the proper order of the world (reason before courage, wisdom before actions), such an assertive quality of the rhyme cannot go unnoticed.

1.1. THEMATIC APPROACH OF THE POEM

The poem can be analyzed through the following six themes:

- wisdom and priority of the mind;

- bravery, chivalry, and the fame of Sayf al-Dawla;
- Sayf al-Dawla's horses, and their preparedness for the combat;
- descriptions of the battle and fight;
- results of the battle and wisdom of warfare;
- Arab honor presented through Sayf al-Dawla.

Firstly, Al-Mutanabbī states that one must take a thought (*al-ra'y*), before acting rashly. In this respect, human and military superiority is achieved not through strength alone, but through reason. Then, the poet shifts his focus from courage and chivalry to preparation for the battle, battle itself, its results, and ends up describing Arab honor in Sayf al-Dawla.

1.2. LEXICAL CHOICE (AL-ALFĀZ)

As already discussed, the poem's diction depends on the poet's state of mind. Each thematic group requires a different lexicon, revealing the author's intentions and ideas at different stages of the poem.

The first passage about intellect and wisdom — which al-Mutanabbī was meant to introduce the readers to — is sober, balanced, almost entirely conceptual. Words such as al-ra'y (reason), al-'uqūl (intellects), al-insān (man), al-nufūs (souls) abound; and comparisons, evaluations predominate in the text. Thus, al-āmmāl wa-al-humam (the ambitions and the desires), awwal wa al-thānī (the first and the second), adnā (lowlier), tafāḍalat (they rose in ranks) make up the main lexis of the part. Neither dust nor blood, neither horsemen nor warriors, however, are described here.

Once the poet moves to chivalry and courage, his vocabulary changes dramatically. He now uses concrete terms such as suyūf (swords), al-ṭa'n (the thrust), al-ḥimām (death), al-maydān (field of combat); his criticism of cowards is expressed through short phrases: "takhidhū al-majālis fī al-buyūt" ("They have confined themselves to their homes"); "tawahhamū al-la'b al-waghā" ("They mistook war for a game"); he does not employ decorative figures of speech but chooses words that correspond to his attitude towards the subjects.

When the poet talks about horses, his vocabulary gains some kind of mobility, dynamism: verbs of motion are widely used such as qāda (led), yughīr (raids), yarmī (hurls), 'abarna (they crossed), yaqmuṣna (they prance). Again, sensory terms ground the actions mentioned above such as al-ghubār (dust), al-'uyūn (the eyes), al-mā' (water), bārid (cold). However, the unusual image appears here: "sawābiḥan ka-annamā yubṣirna bi-al-ādhān" ("Gliding through the water as though they could see with their ears"). The poet personifies horses, making them quasi-conscious, mobile animals; moreover, the poet depicts them breaking the laws of nature as if they were always on the move — both on earth and in water.

What about the vocabulary used in the description of the battle? The latter acquires an almost harsh character: rhetorical embellishments become less common; words acquire the hardness of sounds: zubar al-ḥadīd (fragments of iron), al-jamājim (skulls), mutaṣa'likīn (brigands), 'uqm al-buṭūn (barren wombs), ḥawālik al-alwān (pitchblack in colour). It seems as if the author tries to convey the harshness of the battle even through the sounds of syllables.

And what if the killing stops? Then the author's vocabulary gradually becomes softer. The theme of swords is replaced by thoughts concerning their consequences. Thus, terms like āmāl (hopes), ḥurimū (were denied), aṭa'nahu fī ṭā'at al-Raḥmān ("They obeyed him in obedience to the All-Merciful") begin to prevail in the text. As if trying to close the intellectual cycle of the poem, the author chooses measured declarative sentences, such as:

wa-idhā al-rimāḥu shaghalat muhjata thā'irin
shaghalathu muhjatuhu 'ani al-ikhwāni

("When spears preoccupy the lifeblood of a vengeful warrior, his own lifeblood distracts him from his kinfolk")

and

talqā al-ḥusāma 'alā jarā'ati ḥaddihi
mithla al-jabāni bi-kaffi kulli jabāni

("You encounter the sharp sword, for all the boldness of its edge, as a coward would encounter it in the hand of every coward").

Finally, in the last part of the poem, the poet speaks explicitly praising Sayf al-Dawla; hence, a change in his lexical choice occurs. Words

1.3. STYLE (AL-USLŪB)

In terms of style, too, the development of themes in this poem leads the reader from intellect and judgment, to chivalry and martial prowess, and finally to calm but wise praise.

Here al-Mutanabbī makes a remarkable choice. He begins his qaṣīda eulogising the valiant actions of his patron with argumentation (uslūb ḥijājjī). He tries to convince his reader first, and move him/her later. The lines "al-ra'yu qabla shajā‘ati al-shuj‘ān" ("reason before the bravery of brave men") encapsulate this method: argument first, emotion later. Causal logic features in "lawlā al-‘uqūl". Comparisons and rankings reappear in words like awwal (first), thānī (second), adnā (less). This use of argumentation at the beginning of a panegyric qaṣīda is exceptional.

As he turns to the theme of chivalry and bravery, the style itself becomes majestic. It features lexical splendor (jazāla), along with semantic weightiness. The syntax becomes terse and firm. As soon as the horses appear on the scene, the poem turns epic (uslūb malḥamī). Verb after verb comes in rapid succession, painting the picture of a horse running and charging. There comes place-name after place-name—Manbij, al-Rān, Arsanās. Expansiveness of space joins the expansiveness of time. In other words, the poem changes from the description of war into the performance of war itself.

Finally, in the concluding sections of the poem, al-Mutanabbī brings himself back under control. He returns to generalization and assertion, and adds some proverbial wisdom, such as:

talqā al-ḥusāma ‘alā jarā'ati ḥaddihi
mithla al-jabāni bi-kaffi kulli jabāni

(“You meet the sharp sword, despite the boldness of its edge, as the coward meets it in the hand of every coward”).

Then, in gentler tones,

yā man yuqattilu man arāda bi-sayfihi
aṣbaḥtu min qatlāka bi-al-iḥsāni

(“O you who kill whomever you will with your sword... I am one of those you have killed with your kindness”).

Thus we come full circle. The poem that started out with argument finishes with awe and wonder. The sword that took the life of al-Mutanabbī gives it new life by virtue of its owner

2. RHETORICAL STUDY

2.1. FIRST SECTION: WISDOM AND THE PRIMACY OF INTELLECT

al-ra'yu qabla shajā‘ati al-shuj‘ān
huwa awwalun wa-hiya al-maḥallu al-thānī

(“Reason comes before the courage of the brave: it occupies the first rank, while courage occupies the second.”)

fa-idhā humā ijtama‘ā li-nafsin mirratin[1] *balaghat mina al-‘alā'i kulla makān*

(“When the two are joined in a soul of firm resolve, that soul attains every station of glory and eminence.”)

wa-la-rubbamā ṭa‘ana al-fatā aqrānahu
bi-al-ra'yi qabla taṭā‘uni al-aqrān

(“Many a time a young warrior pierces his rivals through reason, before the exchange of thrusts among rivals.”)

lawlā al-‘uqūlu la-kāna adnā ḍayghamin
adnā ilā sharafin mina al-insān

(“Without the existence of intellects, the lowest form of predatory animal would have been nobler than a man.”)

wa-lammā tafāḍalati al-nufūsu wa-dabbarat
aydī al-kumāti ‘awāliya al-murrān

(“‘Had souls not distinguished themselves in rank and had the hands of the warriors in armor not wielded the long, sturdy poles of the murrān lances...”)

[1] Commentators on al-Mutanabbī’s *Dīwān* note that the word is transmitted in three variant readings. One reading is *mirra* (with kasra), and *nafs mirra* denotes a soul that is severe and strong; the intended meaning here is firmness of resolve and soundness of intellect. Another reading is *murra* (with ḍamma), and *nafs murra* is a soul that has experienced bitterness (*murr*) and thereby become hardened and strengthened. A third reading is *ḥurra* (with ḥā'). We have adopted *mirra* (with kasra) here because it accords with the sense of strength, because of the beauty of its sound in context, and in conformity with the choice of the editors and commentators of al-Mutanabbī’s *Dīwān* in their editions [10, 4: 174]; [11, 1611]; [8, 2: 59].

2.1.1 General Meaning

In this line, the poet establishes his premise that one needs intelligence first, then one needs courage second. Why? For the simple fact that individually none of these virtues would be enough. Intelligence with no courage would be uselessness, while courage with no intellect would be rashness. When both virtues are present in the soul of someone resolute and stubborn (nafs mirra), the person reaches heights of eminence. The author sets a condition in his lines here.

This is followed by shocking comparisons. The author says that superiority of humans to animals consists of their reason. In other words, without having intellect, a human is worth less than any wild beast. Glory has come due to having intellect.

Young warriors may defeat other people who pose as their rivals using proper opinions (bi-al-ra'y). Here the poet uses military vocabulary ṭa'ana, which means thrusting or piercing. It seems, however, that in this case, the author does not refer to any act of killing or defeating enemies; rather, he describes the position of his rival, who is achieved thanks to his intelligence.

Without having intellect, souls would not have been distinguished from each other. The hands of those men in armor (warriors) would never hold a weapon and never make themselves murrān lances and direct these to thrust their enemy in battle. Intellect has enabled them and guided them, while courage alone is blind and is always used only through intellect [11, 1611]; [8, 2: 59–60]. This forms the foundation of the poem's philosophy, and all subsequent verses—praise for Sayf al-Dawla's courage, his chivalry, and his military prowess—are built around it.

2.1.2 Rhetorical Analysis

Let us begin with noticing the structure of the sentences. Al-Mutanabbī is neither asking questions, making suppositions nor raising doubts. Every sentence in this passage affirms something. Declarative sentences (al-jumla al-khabariyya) are meant for affirming, asserting and convincing. What Al-Mutanabbī says here is not open for debate or discussion, because it presents something he considers self-evident. This type of rhetoric can be described as legislation rather than exploration.

One might say that al-rā'y ("reason") is right at the beginning of the passage: al-ra'yu qabla shajā'ati al-shuj'ān. Reason before courage. This word order alone makes the point without the need to use any other rhetoric devices. However, the poet goes further to present something more complicated. The construction huwa awwalun wa-hiya al-maḥallu al-thānī ("it occupies the first rank, while courage occupies the second") is the example of qaṣr iḍāfī ("restriction"): it implies a comparison and the relationship between two subjects. The separating pronoun (ḍamīr al-faṣl), used twice in this construction, suggests exclusivity and importance of what follows: only reason deserves to be the first in the ranking, while no one else does. So, when al-Mutanabbī puts emphasis on the predicate by using the phrase huwa awwalun, he means: "only it ranks first". At the same time, the use of separating pronoun in wa-hiya al-maḥallu al-thānī implies that courage cannot claim the highest place, although it is second. This is how the hierarchy was formed.

The restriction has already been made. The next step is making it vivid with metaphors. In the phrase ṭa'ana al-fatā aqrānahu bi-al-ra'y ("a young warrior pierces his rivals through reason"), there is an implicit metaphor (isti'āra makniyya): reason is compared to a weapon. While the latter is not specified, one of the qualities of a weapon, ṭa'ana ("piercing"), is pointed out. It is not just guidance, but something much more powerful — reason itself is piercing. Likewise, dabbarat aydī al-kumāti 'awāliya al-murrān ("the hands of the armored champions directed the tall tough shafts of the murrān lances") is another implicit metaphor, where the predicate dabbarat (directing/ planning) represents intellects, which were omitted.

Further, al-Mutanabbī employs some more subtle devices: a metonymy in the phrase nafsin mirratin ("a soul of firm resolve"): strength and resolute character are attributed to the subject through the description of his heart. In the phrase adnā ḍayghamin ("the lowliest of predatory beasts"), there is also metonymy: weakest predatory animal — dog or anything of this kind — is referred to by its qualities and status among animals.

In the verse lawlā al-'uqūlu la-kāna adnā ḍayghamin adnā ilā sharafin mina al-insān ("Were it not for intellects, the lowliest of predatory beasts would be closer to nobility than man"), we see an implicit simile (tashbīh ḍimnī): man without reason is implicitly compared to the animal of the lowest standing. In addition to that, the repetition of the adjective adnā ("lowliest"/"closer"), used twice in the same verse, emphasizes the contradiction between man and beast where reasoning is in question.

Finally, antithesis (ṭibāq) can be seen in the pairing of awwal and al-thānī ("first" and "second"). However, the purpose of using ṭibāq is not the indication of the ranking order, but rather expressing of semantic opposition: neither of these can occupy the position of the other.

Thus, in just a few verses, al-Mutanabbī has created the whole small system of rhetoric. The order was assigned by restriction, then it was made vivid through the use of metaphors, sharpened through metonymy, emphasized with the help of repetition and finally secured with the aid of antithesis. Everything is dedicated to one and only proposition.

2.2. SECOND SECTION: EVALUATING COURAGE, CHIVALRY, AND THE DISTINCTION OF SAYF AL-DAWLA

lawlā sumuwwu suyūfihi wa-maḍā'uhu
lammā sulilna la-kunna ka-al-ajfān

("Were it not for the lofty standing of his swords and his penetrating resolve, were they to be drawn [by any other hand], they would be as useless as scabbards.")

khāḍa al-ḥimāma bi-hinna ḥattā mā durā
a-min iḥtiqārin dhāka am nisyān

("He waded into death with them, such that it could no longer be discerned whether this was out of contempt for death or out of oblivion of it.")

wa-sa'ā fa-qaṣṣara 'an madāhu fī al-'ulā
ahlu al-zamāni wa-ahlu kulli zamān

("He strove [for glory], yet the people of his time—and the people of every time—fell short of his reach in the heights of eminence.")

takhidhū al-majālisa fī al-buyūti wa-'indahu
anna al-surūja majālisu al-fityān

("They have taken to sitting in their houses, while in his view saddles are the true gathering places of young warriors.")

wa-tawahhamū al-la'iba al-waghā wa-al-ṭa'nu fī
al-hayjā'i ghayru al-ṭa'ni fī al-maydān

("And they imagined warfare to be mere play—yet the thrusting of battle is not the thrusting of the arena.")

2.2.1 General Meaning

It should be noted that in the introductory part, the author is trying to show Sayf al-Dawla's achievements through the prism of intellect. The fact is that the perfect wisdom of the ruler is manifested in the conduct of all his business, including conducting campaigns against enemies, including the current campaign against the Byzantines.

Without Sayf al-Dawla—he who drew them—the swords are idle, lying unused, like blades yet in their sheathes. Swordsmanship is measured by the hand that wields it. As the famous proverb attributed to Amr ibn Ma'adikarib reads, "It is not the sword that acts; it is the hand that moves it." [10, 4: 175].

Sayf al-Dawla plunged himself headlong into death's own jaws. Indeed, so far did he go into them that one can hardly decide whether the cause of such an advance was his disdain of death, or whether he had simply forgotten about the danger that loomed before him. Recall that in the introductory part, al-Mutanabbi stated that the ruler possesses a perfect mind. Therefore, his great courage stems not from a lack of consideration but from the highest possible manifestation of wisdom. Such examples of the use of parallelism belong to the rhetorical means employed by the poet.

According to the poet, Sayf al-Dawla strove and attained the topmost rank of honor and glory, while others of his time —nay, men of all ages—failed to attain the height of his position; none ever attained to such a position [8, 2: 61]. They are content merely to remain in their houses. Such, asserts al-Mutanabbi, is the state of men of low mettle. Whereas to sayf Al-Dawla, the best gathering places of heroes are those on horseback in the battlegrounds. Thus al-Mutanabbi repeats the words of 'Antar —the famous desert knight of pre-Islamic times—who said, "My cushion is the saddle." [11, 1613]; [12, 356]. This echo establishes a link between Sayf al-Dawla and the type of desert knight known as a muruwwa except for the fact that the former commands armies rather than tribesmen. Al-Mutanabbi attempts to redefine notions of desert courage from the point of view of the Ḥamdānid ruler.

Al-Mutanabbi draws a sharp contrast between two concepts of war. First, he emphasizes that thrusting of war is not the same as the thrusting of sports, since, according to the author, in the first case, there is no survival of a person. Therefore, the difference between the two is that in one there is a desire for preservation of life and health, while in the other there is none [11, 1614]. For al-Mutanabbī, real courage is not the absence of fear but the suspension of the instinct for self-preservation. This, in his view, is what distinguishes Sayf al-Dawla.

2.2.2 Rhetorical Analysis

First of all, instead of saying that Sayf al-Dawla makes the swords effective, al-Mutanabbī uses an extended simile (tashbīh mursal), in which both the sword and the scabbard lack function. The praise in this case applies to Sayf al-Dawla rather than to the sword. The warrior is more important than his weapon.

Then we see the image of death. Al-Mutanabbī designates it by a metonymy (kināya), al-ḥimām, which actually means "battlefield." But the poet does not stop at that. He says that Sayf al-Dawla "waded into death," khāḍa al-ḥimām, which, in terms of rhetoric, is an implied metaphor (isti'āra makniyya): Sayf al-Dawla "waded into the sea," because one can wade into deep waters without any guarantee that one will be able to go through them and come out on the other side.

This is followed by the rhetorical question: a-min iḥtiqārin dhāka am nisyān? "Was it out of contempt for death, or out of oblivion of it?" Obviously, this is not a literal question. It is a non-literal interrogative (inshā' ṭalabī). Actually, what al-Mutanabbī wanted to say is that he is bewildered with this feat of heroism. As to the rhetorical devices used in this verse, they are ingenious justification (ḥusn al-ta'līl), in which the poet invents an imaginary or whimsical cause of some event. In this case, the cause of such a bold act of a hero was found in either contempt of death or oblivion of it.

The next verse announces the hero's superiority: Wa-sa'ā fa-qaṣṣara 'an madāhu fī al-'ulā ahlu al-zamāni wa-ahlu kulli zamān ("He strove, yet the people of his time—indeed, of every time—fell short of his reach"). By putting emphasis on the struggle of Sayf al-Dawla and postponing the enumeration of all the rest, al-Mutanabbī uses a rhetorical device known as a restriction (qaṣr), according to which the author speaks of only one particular thing, thus excluding everyone else: the speaker himself has attained the peak of excellence, whereas others have remained behind. Moreover, the phrase ahlu al-zamāni wa-ahlu kulli zamān ("people of his time and people of every time") is used here twice for the sake of rhetorical repetition and generalization. There is an antithesis between the verb sa'ā ("he strove") and the verbs qiṣṣaru ("they fell short").

One of the most interesting verses, from the perspective of rhetoric, is this one: Takhidhū al-majālisa fī al-buyūtihī wa-'indahu anna al-surūju majālisu al-fityān ("They take to gathering in their houses, while in his view saddles are the proper gathering places of young warriors"). Firstly, this verse offers us a case of antithetical parallelism (muqābala) between two types of behavior. Whereas the former represents comfort and relaxation, the latter shows heroism. Secondly, the phrase takhidhū al-majālisa fī al-buyūt is a metonymy for luxurious living and laziness. The phrase al-surūju majālisu al-fityān is also a metonymy, in which the poet speaks of heroism and chivalrousness; however, at the same time, it is a condensed simile (tashbīh balīgh), since the particle of comparison and the resemblance itself are omitted, and only the poles remain. Finally, the poet adds an explanatory particle 'indahu ("according to him"). This particle tells us that these saddles are not compared to meeting places for the hero, but that they are the very places he chooses.

Finally, the last verse in this selection addresses the theme of reproach. The author states: Wa-tawahhamū al-la'iba al-waghā wa-al-ṭa'nu fī al-hayjā'i ghayru al-ṭa'ni fī al-maydān ("They thought warfare to be a mere pastime—yet the thrusting of battle is not like the thrusting of the arena"). What is worth noting here is that, although the structure of the initial phrase, wa-tawahhamū al-la'iba al-waghā, is wa-tawahhamū al-waghā al-la'ib, yet the poet changes its order, placing the second object (al-la'ib, "pastime") first and the first one (al-waghā, "warfare") second. This is inversion, taqdīm wa-ta'khīr, suggesting that war and play are opposite to each other, whereas only the latter is appropriate for the arena.

2.3. THIRD SECTION: SAYF AL-DAWLA'S HORSES, THEIR PREPARATION, AND THEIR PLUNGE INTO BATTLE

qāda al-jiyāda ilā al-ṭi'āni wa-lam yaqud
illā ilā al-'ādāti wa-al-awṭān

("He led the steeds into the fray—yet he did not lead them except to what they were accustomed to and to their homelands.")

kullu bni sābiqatin yughīru bi-ḥusnihi
fī qalbi ṣāḥibihi 'alā al-aḥzān

("Every horse born of a nobly bred mare launches a raid, through its beauty, upon the sorrows lodged in its rider's heart.")

in khulliyat rubiṭat bi-ādābi al-waghā
fa-du'ā'uhā yughnī 'ani al-arsān

("If left unrestrained, it is bound by the disciplines of war; a mere call to it suffices in place of reins.")

fī jaḥfalin satara al-'uyūna ghubāruhu
fa-ka-annamā yubṣirna bi-al-ādhān

("In a host whose dust veils all eyes, as though they could see with their ears.")

yarmī bihā al-balada al-ba'īda muzaffarun
kullu al-ba'īdi lahu qarībun dān

("A victorious commander hurls them toward the distant land; every distant place is, to him, close at hand.")

fa-ka-anna arjulahā bi-turbati Manbijin
yaṭraḥna aydiyahā bi-ḥiṣni al-Rān

("As though their hind legs were upon the soil of Manbij, they cast their forelegs forward as far as the fortress of al-Rān.")

ḥattā 'abarna bi-Arsanāsa sawābiḥan
yanshurna fīhi 'amā'ima al-fursān

("Until they crossed Arsanās swimming, scattering upon its waters the turbans of the horsemen.")

yaqmuṣna fī mithli al-mudā min bāridin
yadharu al-fuḥūla wa-hunna ka-al-khiṣyān

("They plunge into water that is like knife-blades in its coldness, which renders the virile stallions like geldings.")

wa-al-mā'u bayna 'ajājatayni mukhalliṣun
tatafarraqāni bihi wa-taltaqiyān

("And the water, between two towering clouds of dust, serves as a divider—by which they are parted and by which they converge.")

2.3.1 General Meaning

Sayf al-Dawla's horses charge. They do not move hesitantly or unwillingly, but rather they move as if returning to a place they know well—to the traditions of war and the homelands of their spirit.

All of Sayf al-Dawla's horses come from high-blooded mares, the very best horses. The rider, when he gazes on his horse, falls victim to a raid carried out by beauty; this raid is launched not at his enemies but at the sorrow stored within his heart. Beauty takes up arms and strikes at the sorrows of the soul.

Sayf al-Dawla's horses have been subjected to severe discipline—discipline so strict that they no longer require reins. In lieu of restraining them, they are now obediently disciplined. The mere voice of command is sufficient without any use of restraints or ropes; voice is sufficient for response alone.

Now the cavalry charges forth. This army is huge. The dust kicked up by the horses blocks their view. For they have no ability to see ahead of themselves. And so they listen, relying on their sense of hearing in lieu of seeing. As al-Mutanabbī says in his poem, they see by hearing ("ka-annamā yubṣirna bi-al-ādhān"). Here, the sensory roles have been reversed. At the height of battle, hearing becomes seeing.

The successful general leads them toward all of the distant lands. The horses move toward these places without delay. Everything that is distant becomes near at hand to him. When the horses tread upon the soil of Manbij in Syria, their forelegs extend as far as the fortress of al-Rān in Byzantine lands. Such an act is impossible, but al-Mutanabbī depicts it as if the horses could do it. There is nothing to prevent their progress or obstruct them in any way whatsoever.

They swim across the river Arsanās. Upon the surface of the water their turbaned riders are scattered. The water of the river is extremely cold—so cold that the ripples created become as if knife-blades ("al-mudā"). In such an extreme cold, even the stallions become neutered. Their masculine vigor becomes weakened due to the coldness of the waters. Even the strongest horses are unable to resist it.

In such a way the whole army separates into two groups: those who have crossed the river and those who have not. Each group raises a cloud of dust that billows upwards into the sky. The flowing waters of the river separate them. But at the same time, when the clouds rise to great heights, they merge together [10, 4: 176–178]; [11, 1615–1616]; [8, 2: 62–64].

2.3.2 Rhetorical Analysis

In this entire section, al-Mutanabbī maintains the declarative mode (uslūb khabarī). The poet does not engage in discussion or speculation. Rather, he makes statements about Sayf al-Dawla—exaggerating the glory, majesty, and mythic nature of his horses.

The opening line is rich with literary devices. First, it presents an implied metaphor (isti'āra makniyya): the steeds are compared to rational animals whose habits and desires include adhering to the laws of nature and longing for their homes. The vehicle of the comparison (the rational human being) is elided, but its implications (laws of nature and longing for home) are kept. Next, we have restriction of speech (qaṣr) achieved through negation and exception (al-nafy wa-al-istithnā'): "He led them except to their laws and homelands." The restriction rules out any possibility of arbitrariness in Sayf al-Dawla, who respects his horses' wishes. Moreover, conciseness of expression through ellipsis (ījāz bi-ḥadhf) is used in the phrase kullu bni sābiqatin ("all horses, the sons of noble mares"). The meaning of the omitted word faras (horse) is suggested by context. The ellipsis fits the dynamic movement of the steeds. Finally, al-Mutanabbī gives special prominence to the prepositional phrase fī qalbi ṣāḥibihi ("within the soul of its rider"), thus practicing foregrounding (taqdīm), which emphasizes the effects of the horses on their riders' spirits.

The third verse contains another implied metaphor. "Khulliyat rubiṭat bi-ādābi al-waghā" ("If left unrestrained, it is bound by the disciplines of war") compares the disciplines of war to the reins (rasan), which constrain a horse's will. The vehicle of the metaphor (reins) is elided, while one of its logical components (bound) is preserved. With this metaphor, al-Mutanabbī emphasizes the highly disciplined nature of Sayf al-Dawla's army and the subordination of the soldiers to his authority. This device is intensified in the second hemistich: "Fa-du'ā'uhā yughnī 'ani al-arsān" ("A mere call is enough in place of the reins"). No physical ropes are needed; the mere sound of the voice commands the horses.

Another example of a simile (tashbīh tamthīlī) occurs in "fī jaḥfalin... fa-ka-annamā yubṣirna bi-al-ādhān" ("Within the cloud of dust raised by the multitude of the immense army... it seems that they see with their ears"). In this line, al-Mutanabbī compares the orderliness of movements of Sayf al-Dawla's soldiers to the manner in which an unusual being, whose senses are limited by conditions of combat, sees its surroundings with ears.

The next few verses ("Yarmī bihā al-balada al-ba'īda... kullu al-ba'īdi lahu qarībun dān") combine many literary devices. First, "Yarmī bihā" ("He hurls them") refers to a metonymy (majāz mursal) based on causality: hurling is the cause of striking the distant target. The latter is a metaphor for the horses' speed and efficiency in warfare. Furthermore, in "bi-hā" ("with them"), there is the literary device of foregrounding (taqdīm). The phrase receives particular emphasis due to its position in relation to the direct object. The expression "kullu al-ba'īdi lahu qarībun dān" ("every distant place is close to him") represents both a metonymy and a restriction (kināya wa-qāsr) based on inversed positions of the subject and predicate, i.e., "qarībun dān kullu al-ba'īdi". "Distant" and "close" represent an antithesis (ṭibāq), which implies a very short interval of time in reaching the target.

"Ka-anna arjulahā bi-turbati Manbijin yaṭraḥna aydiyahā bi-ḥiṣni al-Rān" ("So that their feet seem to be in the earth of Manbij while their hands are casting themselves on the fortifications of al-Rān") is yet another simile. In this case, a very fast horse moving across distances at incredible speed is compared to an immensely fast creature whose back legs are placed in one location, whereas its front legs stretch towards the distant fortifications. By using this simile, al-Mutanabbī transports the reader to the scene where the extraordinary vision takes place. The hyperbole is deliberate; no actual horse can perform such actions.

As for the simile referring to swimming, it contains a variety of literary devices. The phrase "Yanshurna fīhi 'amā'ima al-fursān" ("Scattering upon its waters the turbans of the horsemen") presents a metonymy, meaning the horses' tremendous speed and skill in swimming to such an extent that their turbans fly off their heads and scatter in the air. The phrase "Yaqmuṣna fī mithli al-mudā min bāridin" ("They plunge into water like knives into its coldness") is a metaphor (isti'āra taṣrīḥiyya): water is compared to knife blades. The tenor (cold water) is elided, whereas the vehicle (knives) is expressed. "Mudā" in this phrase means the sharp edge of a knife blade. "Kā-annah huma ka-al-khiṣyān" ("Which turns them as limp as geldings") is a simile (tashbīh mursal) comparing horses with geldings, the similarity being their powerlessness.

The last line of this selection includes an antithesis (ṭibāq) between "Tatafarraqāni" ("They part") and "Taltaqiyāni" ("They converge"), emphasizing the churning effect of the water caused by passing of the steeds. Two clouds of dust, separated by the river, expand and converge.

All these literary devices serve purposes beyond decoration. In combination, they create their own rhythmic structure, personify the horses, transform them into legendary animals, reduce them through the chilling effect, divide them in half, and reunite them. Reading this selection is like experiencing the battle through the poet's eyes. Al-Mutanabbī has transformed a descriptive account into an action-packed experience.

2.4. FOURTH SECTION: THE DEPICTION OF BATTLE AND DIRECT ENGAGEMENT

rakaḍa al-amīru wa-ka-al-lujayni ḥabābuhu
wa-thanā al-aʿinnata wa-huwa ka-al-ʿiqyān

(“The prince charged, and its surface was like silver; then he turned the reins, while it was like pure gold.”)

fatala al-ḥibāla mina al-ghadā'iri fawqahu
wa-banā al-safīna lahu mina al-ṣulbān

(“He twisted ropes for it from the braids floating above, and built ships for it from the crosses.”)

wa-ḥashāhu ʿādiyatan bi-ghayri qawā'ima
ʿuquma al-buṭūni ḥawālika al-alwān

(“He filled it with running vessels that had no legs, barren of womb, pitch-dark in colour.”)

ta'tī bi-mā sabati al-khayūlu ka-annahā
taḥta al-ḥisāni marābiḍu al-ghizlān

(“Bearing what the steeds had taken captive, as though, beneath the fair ones, they were the resting places of gazelles.”)

baḥrun taʿawwada an yudhimma li-ahlihi
min dahrihi wa-ṭawāriqi al-ḥidthān

(“A sea accustomed to extending its covenant of protection to its people against the vicissitudes of time and the calamities of fate.”)

fa-taraktahu wa-idhā adhamma mina al-warā
raʿāka wa-istathnā banī Ḥamdān

(“Yet you forded it, and though it had extended its protection to all mankind, it spared you and exempted the sons of Ḥamdān for your sake.”)

al-mukhfirīna bi-kulli abyaḍa ṣārimin
dhimama al-durūʿi ʿalā dhawī al-tījān

(“Those who violate, with every white, sharp sword, the protective pact of armour upon the crowned ones.”)

mutaṣaʿlikīna ʿalā kathāfati mulkihim
mutawāḍiʿīna ʿalā ʿazīmi al-shān

(“Living with the austerity of desert knights despite the abundance of their dominion, humble despite their immense stature.”)

yataqayyalūna zilāla kulli muṭahhamin
ajala al-ẓalīmi wa-ribqata al-sarḥān

(“They repose in the shade of every perfectly formed steed—swifter than the ostrich and able to tether the wolf.”)

khaḍaʿat li-munṣulika al-manāṣilu ʿanwatan
wa-adhalla dīnuka sā'ira al-adyān

(“The necks submitted to your sword by force, and your religion humbled all other religions.”)

wa-ʿalā al-durūbi wa-fī al-rujūʿi ghaḍāḍatun
wa-al-sayru mumtaniʿun mina al-imkān

(“Retreat along the mountain passes was a disgrace, and advance was precluded from the realm of possibility.”)

wa-al-ṭuruqu ḍayyiqatu al-masāliki bi-al-qanā
wa-al-kufru mujtami'un 'alā al-īmān

("The mountain paths were narrowed by bristling spears, while unbelief gathered in full force against faith.")

nazarū ilā zubari al-ḥadīdi ka-annamā
yaṣ'adna bayna manākibi al-'uqbān

("They looked at the masses of iron as though they were soaring up between the shoulders of eagles.")

wa-fawārisin yuḥyī al-ḥimāmu nufūsahā
fa-ka-annahā laysat mina al-ḥayawān

("And horsemen whose souls death itself brings to life—as though they were not of the race of mortal creatures.")

mā zilta taḍribuhum dirākan fī al-dhurā
ḍarban ka-anna al-sayfa fīhi ithnān

("You ceased not to strike them in swift succession upon their crowns—a striking in which one sword seemed two.")

khaṣṣa al-jamājima wa-al-wujūha ka-annamā
jā'at ilayka jusūmuhum bi-amān

("Singling out skulls and faces, as though their bodies came to you under a pledge of safety.")

fa-ramaw bi-mā yarmūna 'anhu wa-adbarū
yaṭa'ūna kulla ḥaniyyatin mirnān

("So they cast aside that which they had been defending and turned their backs, trampling every resonant bow underfoot.")

yaghshāhum maṭaru al-saḥābi mufaṣṣalan
bi-muthaqqafin wa-muhannadin wa-sinān

("There covered them a rain of clouds, distinct and successive—with straightened lances, Indian blades, and spearheads.")

2.4.1 General Meaning

All the necessary preparations have been completed by Al-Mutanabbī. Firstly intellect, then the spirit of chivalry, then the horses prepared for battle. Finally the battle itself.

The Crossing of the River Arsanās. When the king with his steeds rushes through to cross the river Arsanās, it shimmers like silver. But when he leaves, the river turns into gold—the gold of his enemies' blood. The colours are strictly specified. Silver before the killing and gold after it. In the poetry of Al-Mutanabbī, the river becomes the measure of the massacre.

He slaughters so many people that the spoils of war become huge. And he uses ropes taken from their hair for tying up ships. While making ships, he uses their wooden crosses as building material. So he constructs vessels on the river — the vessels without legs, barren-bellied, and pitch-black. These are no ordinary ships but the means for conquering, built from the symbols of the enemy's religion.

On these ships he sends captive women. They sit inside quietly and fearfully. Here Al-Mutanabbī, unexpectedly becoming gentle, says that they remind him of gazelles resting in their enclosures.

This river Arsanās is an incredibly big river. It resembles a raging sea. No one can reach the Byzantines. The river engulfs anyone who dares to approach. Having grown used to protecting everyone living around it from catastrophes sent by Time, now it protects Sayf al-Dawla himself. It saves sons of Ḥamdān in honor of him. That is why only Sayf al-Dawla succeeded in crossing that river.

The Ḥamdānids: Their Might and Austerity. Those sons of Ḥamdān who cross over at his command are great warriors with bright white swords. They cut down the covenant of the armour which their crowned enemies had trusted to protect themselves. No armor can protect them from those.

These Ḥamdānids lead the life of desert knights (ṣa'ālīk). Their raids and wars happen often. But despite the high rank, they remain meek before other people. That is another paradox—plenty of sovereignty but poverty. That's how

Al-Mutanabbī redefines the concept of nobility. Nobility does not mean being rich, but willingness to sacrifice everything for the sake of the battle. None of the forerunners can compete with them. The enemy cannot escape.

Addressing Sayf al-Dawla. Now the poet speaks directly to Sayf al-Dawla. Necks bend down not according to the will of kings but as required by Sayf al-Dawla's sword. The religion of Islam subdues any other religion.

The day becomes fatal for Byzantines. The passes are tightly packed by the threatening spears on all sides. There is nowhere to advance and there is nowhere to retreat. The forces of unbelief surround the forces of faith.

The Climax of the Battle. The enemy looks at them and perceives them as horsemen armed to the teeth and riding like eagles. Horsemen whose soul is filled with life by the very Death. The sword beats so fast that it acts in twofold measure. As if all of these horsemen came to their prince with the pledge of security.

They throw away their bows, run away and trample their own weapons with their feet [10, 4: 178–182]; [11, 1617–1622]; [8, 2: 65–70].

2.4.2 Rhetorical Analysis

Declarative mode and conjunction. As elsewhere in the poem, the primary mode is the declarative mode (uslūb khabarī). However, the role of such declarations is not limited to narration. These sentences also glorify, praise, and magnify. The poet does not report a series of events; he describes an animated scene of heroic warfare.

Also common is the use of conjunction (waṣl) in the beginning of the verses: rakaḍa al-amīr—wa-ka-al-lujayni ḥabābuhu—wa-thanā al-aʿinna—wa-huwa ka-al-ʿiqyān—wa-banā al-safīna—wa-ḥashāhu ʿādiyatan. The effect of short sentences following each other creates a fast-paced rhythm for the depiction of the battle scenes.

Initial similes and the ships. The similes ka-al-lujayni ḥabābuhu ("its surface was like silver") and wa-huwa ka-al-ʿiqyān ("it was like pure gold") are succinct ones (tashbīh mujmal). Radiance/whiteness is the suppressed feature in the former simile, while red-gold colour is suppressed in the latter one. Then comes the violent image. Fatala al-ḥibāla mina al-ghadā'ir ("He twisted ropes from the braids"): this is an implied metaphor (istiʿāra makniyya), comparing braids of hair with ropes. The vehicle (rope) is suppressed, but fatala (twisting) is retained.[2] Banā al-safīna lahu mina al-ṣulbān ("He built ships from the crosses") is a metonymy (kināya) meaning the total defeat and triumph over enemies.

In wa-ḥashāhu ʿādiyatan ("He filled it with running vessels"), we see ellipsis (ījāz bi-ḥadhf). The underlying structure would be wa-ḥashāhu safīnatan ʿādiyatan ("He filled it with running ships"), but the head noun is suppressed, while only its modifier is retained. Al-Mutanabbī deviates from standard vocabulary by employing the verb ḥashā ("to stuff"), which suggests an implied metaphor (istiʿāra makniyya). Instead of the traditional verb ajrā ("to run over"), he used a metaphor likening the river to a container (vehicle), which could be stuffed with the ships (concomitant).

The description of the ships continues with metonymies. ʿĀdiyatan bi-ghayri qawā'ima ("running vessels with no legs") is a metonymy for strength and swift movement. ʿUquma al-buṭūni ḥawālika al-alwān ("barren of womb, pitch-dark in colour") is a metonymy of solidity and power. Then comes the analogical simile (tashbīh tamthīlī): ta'tī bi-mā sabati al-khayūlu ka-annahā taḥta al-ḥisāni marābiḍu al-ghizlān. The women imprisoned in the ships are compared to gazelles resting in their cages. And the phrase sabati al-khayūlu ("taken by steeds") is an intellectual trope (majāz ʿaqlī): the poet personifies the steeds, attributing the act of capture to them. This is the manifestation of chivalry even among animals.

The river as sea and protector. In the verse baḥrun taʿawwada an yudhimma li-ahlihi, the poet employs two interrelated metaphors. First, an explicit metaphor (istiʿāra taṣrīḥiyya): al-Arsanās river is compared to a vast sea (baḥr). The tenor (river) is suppressed, while the vehicle (sea) is described. Secondly, implied metaphor (istiʿāra makniyya): the sea is compared to a human protector who extends protection to the inhabitants around him. The vehicle (human) is suppressed, while its concomitants are retained: yudhimma (protecting), adhamma (protected), raʿāka wa-istathnā (guarded and exempted from punishment). At the same time, in the same verse we encounter min dahrihi ("against his time"), which is a contextual metonymy based on a whole-part relation (majāz mursal bi-al-luzziyya), where the entire period of time stands for the catastrophes occurring during it. In addition, ṭawāriqi al-ḥidthān ("the catastrophes of fate") is a metonymy (kināya) for sudden tragedies.

The Ḥamdānids: armour, crowns, austerity, and speed. Here we observe an implied metaphor: armour is compared to a human being endowed with an attribute of inviolability (ḥurmah), which can be broken. The vehicle is suppressed in the simile; the concomitant dhimmah (covenant of protection) is retained. The Ḥamdānids broke the covenant of protection of the others.[3] Dhawī al-tījān ("owners of the crown") is a metonymy of kings. Bi-kulli abyaḍa ṣārimin ("with every white and sharp sword") is a metonymy of the sword itself based on its attributes of brilliance and sharpness. Mutaṣaʿlikīn is a metonymy for the austerity of the Ḥamdānids. Between mutaṣaʿlikīn (austerity) and kathāfati mulkihim (abundance of

[2]While it may be argued that the vehicle is not hidden but explicitly stated as "ropes" in the simile, it should be noted that the poet does not describe the braids of hair as such, saying that the ropes were twisted. In the same vein, al-Mutanabbī does not compare the braids of hair to anything else, saying that it was a rope, thus making an implication about metaphor.

[3]At first glance, it may be suggested that in the phrase dhimama al-durūʿi we witness concision through ellipsis (ījāz bi-ḥadhf): al-dhimma aṣḥābi al-durūʿ ("the covenant of protectors of armour"). Nevertheless, we believe that the intention of al-Mutanabbī here goes beyond the simple omission of a single word. His choice allows us to see the armour itself as inviolable and powerful. Thus, the rhetoric image becomes stronger.

dominion) there is an antithesis (ṭibāq ma'nawī)—poverty and richness are opposed here. The same opposition appears between mutawāḍi'īn (modesty) and 'azīmi al-shān (great stature). The verb yataqayyalūna ("they rest") is a derivative metaphor (isti'āra taba'iyya): the poet makes use of rest meaning constantly warring with the enemy; war becomes their rest. And al-zalīm ("tyrant") is implicitly compared with the ostrich; this is an implicit simile (tashbīh ḍimnī). Thus, Sayf al-Dawla's steeds surpass the ostrich in terms of speed and can tie down the wolf.

Direct address and the submission of the enemies. The comparison of the sword of the poet's sovereign with a ruler to whose commands all submit is also implied in khaḍa'at li-munṣulika al-manāṣilu 'anwatan. As such, it is an implied metaphor. The vehicle (the ruler) is suppressed; however, his attributes, namely khaḍa'at (submitting) are retained. Sayf al-Dawla's supremacy is demonstrated clearly. In wa-adhalla dīnuka sā'ira al-adyān, there is an implied metaphor of religion being like a possessor of domination. Sayf al-Dawla's struggle is not for personal gain, it is in the interest of Islam. The three successive statements—wa-'alā al-durūbi wa-fī al-rujū'i ghaḍāḍatun, wa-al-sayru mumtani'un mina al-imkān, and wa-al-ṭuruqu ḍayyiqatu al-masāliki bi-al-qanā—make a chain of metonymies (kināyāt) denoting the ruggedness of the paths; the impossible passage but only with an effort and, finally, the huge amount of weapons. The phrase wa-al-kufru mujtami'un 'alā al-īmān is an implied metaphor as well: unbelievers are like a group of men, who join their efforts. The vehicle is suppressed; only its concomitant —mujtami' ("come together") is retained. Moreover, between al-kufr and al-īmān there is an antithesis (ṭibāq).

The climax: eagles, death, and the sword. Zubaru al-ḥadīd ("masses of iron") is a contextual metonymy, which is based on the causal relation (majāz mursal bi-al-sababiyya): the iron is mentioned as the cause for weaponry. Nazarū ilā zubari al-ḥadīdi ka-annamā yaṣ'adna bayna manākibi al-'uqbān is a tashbīh tamthīlī (analogical simile): the upward motion of weapons is likened to flying of eagles so much so that the weapons appear to fly over the backs of eagles. Death is implicitly likened to a personifying figure in fa-waḥyā al-ḥimāmu nufūsahā ("and death has brought back to life"). It is an implied metaphor (isti'āra makniyya): the vehicle —a life-giver—is suppressed; its concomitant is retained. Death revives, rather than kills, the horsemen. Then follows the implicit simile (tashbīh ḍimnī): fa-ka-annahā laysat mina al-ḥayawān ("she does not belong to the race of man"). Finally, the phrase ka-anna al-sayfa fīhi ithnān ("as if you fight with two swords") is an analogy: one sword strikes the enemy as fiercely as if it was two of them. The multiplicity is present in the weapon itself. In khaṣṣa al-jamājima wa-al-wujūha ka-annamā jā'at ilayka jusūmuhum bi-amān, the poet again makes use of analogical simile: the scene of striking heads is like people appearing in front of Sayf al-Dawla seeking a safe passage. The second part of the hemistich is also an implied metaphor: the bodies are like people who seek a covenant of protection.

The closing line: weapons as rain. And the last verse, yaghshāhum maṭaru al-saḥābi mufaṣṣalan, features an implicit simile (isti'āra taṣrīḥiyya): weapons striking the enemy are like raining. The vehicle (weapons) is suppressed, while the concomitant maṭar saḥābi mufaṣṣalan ("driving rain") is employed.

Concluding this analysis, it should be mentioned that all these devices work together in harmony to constitute a rhetorical scheme.

2.5. FIFTH SECTION: THE OUTCOMES OF THE BATTLE AND MARTIAL WISDOM

ḥurimū alladhī amalū wa-adraka minhum
āmālahu man 'āda bi-al-ḥirmān

("They were denied that which they had hoped for—yet he who returned empty-handed, among them, attained his utmost hope.")

wa-idhā al-rimāḥu shaghalna muhjata thā'irin
shaghalathu muhjatuhu 'ani al-ikhwān

("When spears preoccupy the lifeblood of a vengeance-seeker, his own lifeblood distracts him from his comrades.")

hayhāta 'āqa 'ani al-'iwādi qawāḍibu
kathura al-qatīlu bihā wa-qalla al-'ānī

("Far indeed was their return to battle hindered by cutting swords—by which the slain were many and the captives were few.")

wa-muhadhdhabun amara al-manāyā fīhim
fa-aṭa'nahu fī ṭā'ati al-Raḥmān

("And a noble prince commanded death to descend upon them, and they obeyed him—this being in obedience to the All-Merciful.")

qad sawwadat shajara al-jibāli shuʿūruhum
fa-ka-anna fīhi musiffata al-ghirbān

("Their hair turned the trees of the mountains black, as though crows, skimming close to the ground, were upon them.")

wa-jarā ʿalā al-waraqi al-najīʿu al-qānī
fa-ka-annahu al-nāranju fī al-aghṣān

("And the deep-crimson blood flowed over the leaves, as though it were the red bitter orange upon the boughs.")

inna al-suyūfa maʿa alladhīna qulūbuhum
ka-qulūbihinna idhā iltaqā al-jamʿān

("Swords stand with those whose hearts are as the hearts of swords when the two hosts meet.")

talqā al-ḥusāma ʿalā jarā'ati ḥaddihi
mithla al-jabāni bi-kaffi kulli jabān

("You will find the sharp sword, for all the boldness of its edge, like a coward in the hand of every coward.")

2.5.1 General Meaning

Defeat and flight have driven the Byzantines. Here, al-Mutanabbī describes what they were feeling—total despair.

Their hopes of victory went unfulfilled, but there was irony in the situation: the man who had fled from battle without any spoils of war, empty-handed, achieved his greatest hope, that is to say, his survival. In saving his own skin, the Byzantine soldier lost sight of his friends and had nothing to contribute to them, being unable to come to their assistance in any way.

But the poet proceeds: "How distant were their return to the battlefield! Their return was cut short by slashing swords, the dead being numerous and the living few; and by the high-minded and refined prince, Sayf al-Dawla—the obedient servant of Death." And al-Mutanabbī tells us further that Death is only an obedient servant of God. Thus, the victory was both military and blessed by God.

Then comes another description that is truly spectacular. Their hair, shed on account of slaughter, has made the mountain trees black. Like black crows who settled down among them. And simultaneously, their blood—blood intensely red—is flowing out over the leaves, making the branches black and the leaves deep red, as if these were bitter oranges hanging from the boughs. Al-Mutanabbī does not tell us anything about the scene. Instead, he shows it to us through colors. The black of the killed warriors' hair, and the red color of their blood.

Two verses give rise to a vivid picture. Colors are combined. The slain people's hair makes the mountain trees appear to be black crows resting amid the trees; their blood makes the branches appear to be black and the leaves crimson—bitter orange. Strange, beautiful, and terrifying image.

After this picture of horror, al-Mutanabbī gives us a piece of wisdom—wisdom born amidst the bloody scenes of war. "Swords provide victory only to the men whose hearts resemble the hearts of swords,"—says the poet, referring to firm, resolute, bold hearts that do not hesitate in a battle. Do you not understand that in the hands of the cowardly swords are absolutely useless? [10, 4: 182–184]; [8, 2: 70–74]; [11, 1622–1624].

This is the poem's lesson, stated plainly. A sword is only as good as the heart that wields it. And a heart is only as good as the mind that guides it. The circle closes. The poem that began with reason before courage ends with courage in the hands of the reasonable.

2.5.2 Rhetorical Analysis

The Paradox of Empty-Handed Return In the first paradox, adraka minhum āmālahu man ʿāda bi-al-ḥirmān ("he who returned empty-handed attained his utmost hope"), al-Mutanabbī puts forward the direct object (āmālahu, "his hope") and defers the subject (man ʿāda bi-al-ḥirmān, "he who returned empty-handed"). The proper word order would be adraka man ʿāda bi-al-ḥirmān āmālahu. Syntactic inversion produces suspense (tashwīq). The listener wonders what hopes those deprived of the spoils could have attained. He gets his answer—"he who returned empty-handed"—and finds out that in their escape with nothing more than their heads, they attained the very fulfillment of their hopes.

The same passage contains another example. In the line wa-idhā al-rimāḥu shaghalna muhjata thā'irin ("when spears preoccupy the lifeblood of a vengeance-seeker"), the noun al-rimāḥ is fronted, thus emphasizing its role in the action described. Al-rimāḥu shaghalna muhjata thā'irin is an intellectual trope (majāz ʻaqlī), created on the basis of causality. The subject, or the real cause of preoccupying, is left implicit. Another case of this figure is found in shaghalathu muhjatuhu ʻani al-ikhwān ("his own lifeblood distracts him from his comrades"). In this phrase, al-muhjatu ("his lifeblood") serves as the vehicle, while shaghalathu ("it preoccupied him") stands for the attribute. The lifeblood of a warrior who seeks vengeance upon his enemies distracts him so much from everything else that it takes over his mind completely.

The Barring of Return and the Obedience of Death In the verse hayhāta ʻāqa ʻani al-ʻiwādi qawāḍibu ("far indeed was their return hindered by cutting swords"), the omission of the direct object pronoun ("them") creates concision (ījāz bi-ḥadhf). By doing so, al-Mutanabbī emphasizes the power, speed and intensity of the actions performed by the cutting swords. The metonymy (kināya) of this line is the statement kathura al-qatīlu bihā wa-qalla al-ʻānī ("by which the slain were many and the captives were few").

There is yet another metonymy of the same line, namely amara al-manāyā fīhim fa-aṭaʻnahu ("he commanded death among them, and they obeyed him"). There is also an implied metaphor (istiʻāra makniyya) here: al-manāyā ("dooms") is the tenor likened to a fighting army that receives a command and obeys. The vehicle (army) is implicit here, while its attributes amara ("he commanded") and aṭaʻnahu ("they obeyed him") stay explicit. In this metonymy and implication of a metaphor, there is an element of ingenious justification (ḥusn al-taʻlīl): fa-aṭaʻnahu fī ṭāʻati al-Raḥmān ("and they obeyed him, this being in obedience to the All-Merciful"). The army of death obeys Sayf al-Dawla because in doing so it fulfills a divine command.

The Visual Tableau: Hair and Blood In the line qad sawwadat shajara al-jibāli shuʻūruhum ("their hair turned the trees of the mountains black"), the poet puts forward the direct object (shajara al-jibāli, "trees of the mountains") and then moves to the subject (shuʻūruhum, "their hair"). It seems the poet chose to mention the visible sign of the battle—darkened trees of the mountain—first and then moved on to the cause—dark hair of the slaughtered. Furthermore, this line implies another metaphor: the hair (tenor) is likened to something that colors or dyes. Again, only the attribute of the vehicle—sawwadat ("it darkened")—is left implicit.

This line forms a whole analogical simile (tashbīh tamthīlī), for it compares the trees blackened by the hair of the slaughtered Byzantine soldiers to similar trees covered by crows.

The following line, wa-jarā ʻalā al-waraqi al-najīʻu al-qānī fa-ka-annahu al-nāranju fī al-aghṣān ("and the deep-crimson blood flowed over the leaves, as though it were the red bitter orange upon the boughs"), is a perfect simile (tashbīh tāmm al-arkān). Here are the four components of the simile: tenor (red blood), vehicle (red bitter orange), ka-annahu ("as though"), and the attribute—color (perhaps, shape).

All together, these verses form a vivid visual tableau. The trees of the mountain are covered with the blackness of hair of the dead—so that they resemble trees covered with crows. Leaves of those trees have dark spots—like the ones of trees covered with red bitter oranges. Black, red. Hair, blood. Crows and fruits. The poet has made a color wheel out of carnage.

The Martial Wisdom: Hearts Like Swords In the concluding passage of the poem, al-Mutanabbī expresses his wisdom of war. In the line qulūbuhum ka-qulūbihinna ("their hearts are as the hearts of swords"), al-Mutanabbī draws a metaphor between the hearts of the warriors and the hearts of swords in terms of their solidity, firmness and decisiveness. In the word qulūbihinna ("hearts of swords"), there is an implication of another metaphor: al-sword is likened to an ordinary human warrior. The vehicle (human) remains implicit, while one of its attributes—heart—stays explicit. Thus, the poet portrays swords as having hearts like human beings.

Finally, in the last line, talqā al-ḥusāma ʻalā jarā'ati ḥaddihi mithla al-jabāni bi-kaffi kulli jabān ("you encounter the sharp sword, for all the boldness of its edge, as a coward would encounter it in the hand of every coward"), al-Mutanabbī makes yet another simile (tashbīh tamthīlī): he compares the sword held by a coward to that coward in somebody's hands. As for the first occurrence of al-jabān ("coward"), it stands here as a metonymy (kināya): in reality, the coward here is the owner of that sword, whereas the cowardly sword is in his hands.

All these figures bring the poem full circle. The introduction of it claims that reason has to control the courage. The conclusion states that sword should follow the heart. But if the heart of a warrior is to be like the heart of sword, it should follow reason as well. Al-Mutanabbī does not forget about where he started from.

2.6. SIXTH SECTION: THE GLORY OF THE ARABS THROUGH SAYF AL-DAWLA

rafaʻat bika al-ʻarabu al-ʻimāda wa-ṣayyarat
qimama al-mulūki mawāqida al-nīrān

("Through you the Arabs raised the tent-pole and turned the summits of kings into fire-pits.")

ansābu fakhrihim ilayka wa-innamā

ansābu aṣlihim ilā ʻAdnān

("The genealogies of their pride trace back to you, whereas their genealogies of origin trace back only to ʻAdnān.")

yā man yuqattilu man arāda bi-sayfihi
aṣbaḥtu min qatlāka bi-al-iḥsān

("O you who deal death abundantly to whomsoever you will with your sword—I have become one of those slain by your benevolence.")

fa-idhā ra'aytuka ḥāra dūnaka nāzirī
wa-idhā madḥtuka ḥāra fīka lisānī

("When I behold you, my gaze is thrown into bewilderment before you; and when I praise you, my tongue is struck dumb in your presence.")

2.6.1 General meaning

The poem is now heading towards its end. This time Al-Mutanabbī addresses Sayf al-Dawla directly.

Through you the Arabs have set up their tent-pole. The tent-pole sustains all. Without it there is nothing but collapse. Sayf al-Dawla is the very tent-pole of the Arabs. They have reached so great heights that even the peaks of their foe-kingdoms are burning like fire. The peaks of the kingdoms —the kings' crowns and thrones —are being used as fuel. Sayf al-Dawla is not only defeating his enemies; he is burning the symbols of their power. How many have died among them at his hand?

The poet makes an ingenious distinction next. If the Arabs physically descend from ʻAdnān, then the genealogies of their pride and dignity descend from Sayf al-Dawla alone. One genealogy springs from physical bloodline, while the other rises from spiritual lineage. In a way, Al-Mutanabbī has rewritten Arab history for Sayf al-Dawla.

At last, the poet delivers his encomium to its conclusion. By means of your sword you dole out abundant death unto whomsoever you please; and you have made me one of your captives—one of those you kill in mercy. What an odd encomium. Instead of praising Sayf al-Dawla for having honored him or enriched him in some manner, Al-Mutanabbī praises him for killing him —mercifully, with kindness. For with his sword that destroys the enemy, he kills the poet mercifully —and willingly.

When I look at you, my eyes are confounded with wonder at the majesty, awesome grandeur, and awe-inspiring splendor in you. And when I seek to praise you, my tongue remains absolutely dumb-stricken—too overwhelmed to enumerate your qualities or speak of your noble excellence[10, 4: 184–185]; [11, 1624]; [8, 2: 75–76].

The poem that began with reason before courage ends with wonder before Sayf al-Dawla, as both the tongue and the gaze fail.

2.6.2 Rhetorical Analysis

The Tent-Pole and the Glory of the Arabs. The poem begins its final section with rafaʻat bika al-ʻarabu al-ʻimāda ("through you the Arabs raised the tent-pole"). Notice that al-Mutanabbī starts the verse with the prepositional phrase bika ("through you"). Tqdīm al-jār, that is, the foregrounding of the preposition at the beginning of a sentence or clause, denotes exclusivity and specification of the meaning. In other words, the glory of the Arabs has been raised through al-Mutanabbī alone.

Metaphor (istiʻāra taṣrīḥiyya) is another prominent figure of speech that the poet uses in this verse. The glory and honour of the Arabs are likened to the central pole (ʻimād) of the tent. The tenor (glory) is left out of mention, while the vehicle (al-ʻimād) is explicitly mentioned. It is an elegant and precise metaphor. After all, the tent-pole holds everything else in place. Without it, the tent collapses. Sayf al-Dawla is the tent-pole—the axis about which the honour of the Arabs raises and sustains itself.

Next comes a metonymy (kināya): ṣayyarat qimama al-mulūki mawāqida al-nīrān ("and turned the summits of kings into places where fires are kindled"). The summits of kings, their crowns, their thrones, have turned into something that can be used to kindle fires. What we actually mean by this line is the total destruction or annihilation of the enemies of al-Mutanabbī.

And finally, here comes another implicit metaphor: ansābu fakhrihim ilayka ("the genealogies of their pride trace back to you"). Pride is compared to a person who possesses his own lineage. In this metaphor, the vehicle (the person), along with its concomitant (ansāb or genealogies), is left unstated. What is retained, however, is the act performed by this person: the act of tracing lineage (ansābi, ilayka). The poet likens pride to the action of tracing lineage—lineage that leads to Sayf al-Dawla.

2.6.3 Distinction Between Physical Descent and Honour

With regard to wa-innamā ansābu aṣlihim ilā 'Adnān, ("whereas their genealogies of origin trace back only to 'Adnān"), there is a particular rhetoric strategy at work here: restriction (qaṣr). Through the use of innamā ("only" or "indeed"), al-Mutanabbī achieves a rhetorical restriction (qaṣr). The genealogy of the Arabs' origin is confined strictly to 'Adnān. Now, when contrasted against the first half of the verse — ansābu fakhrihim ilayka ("the genealogies of their pride trace back to you"), the implied restriction becomes evident. Their lineage in pride and honour is confined strictly to Sayf al-Dawla. This is called relational restriction (qaṣr iḍāfī).

Their physical descent traces back to 'Adnān. Their honour traces back to Sayf al-Dawla.

Al-Mutanabbī, therefore, rewrites Arab genealogy.

2.6.4 Annihilation and Bewilderment of the Poet

Now, consider aṣbaḥtu min qatlāka bi-al-iḥsān ("I have become one of those slain by your benevolence"). As already mentioned above, it is an implied metaphor (isti'āra makniyya). Benevolence is likened to a weapon (sword) which kills. In this metaphor, the weapon (vehicle), along with its concomitant (death or qatl), is left out of mention. Sayf al-Dawla's kindness is so great that it kills the poet metaphorically speaking.

Finally, the two concluding lines: ḥāra dūnaka nāzirī ("my gaze is bewildered before you") and ḥāra fīka lisānī ("my tongue is struck dumb in your presence"). The two lines contain metonymy (kināya), in which the poet describes his intense admiration for Sayf al-Dawla, his profound veneration, and how utterly incapable he is of praising him adequately with words.

The poet uses the imagery of both sight (nāzirī) and speech (lisānī). In this way, he describes how bewildered he is in Sayf al-Dawla's presence—how utterly incapable of praising him appropriately in speech and in vision.

The Circle is Closed. While the poem started off with reason being greater than courage, the closing lines of this poem see wonder come before Sayf al-Dawla. While the first part emphasized the strength of reason, the second part emphasizes the failure of the mind, tongue, and eye in comprehending the grandeur of the praised one.

3. CONCLUSION

The qaṣīda of al-Mutanabbī unfolds according to the process of development from wisdom through the description of the heroic art of war and into outright praise. The vocabulary and rhetorical means used are fully coherent with this development pattern. They run from a sober and rational intellectual style, through the dynamic and warlike kinetic style, into the emotional lyric one. Let us formulate the findings made during the analysis conducted above.

The Poet's Artistic Ability and Style. The poet has shown himself to be gifted with extraordinary artistic and literary abilities in rendering judgements in a rational manner and scenes and feelings in a vivid and realistic way. Thus, he creates an artistic unity and immortality for his poem.

The poet throughout uses mostly declarative sentences (al-jumal al-khabariyya) in a strikingly convincing style. The declarative style can be used for assertion and affirmation. This style is appropriate for proclaiming facts, opinions, or judgments, as well as for rational persuasion of the reader. In the poem of al-Mutanabbī, we do not find any disputable statements, just the author's judgements about life, chivalry, jihād, sovereignty, and other things that he considers incontestably true about Sayf al-Dawla al-Ḥamdānī. The poet succeeds in making reason, in his opinion, the basis of everything and giving it a vivid picture through images.

Density of Figurative Images. The density of figurative images (ṣuwar bayāniyya) in al-Mutanabbī's poem brings the battle described into such a vivid life that one may almost see it. It emphasizes reason being the source of courage. Thus, the poet shows that he has reached the highest level of his craft in the discipline of 'ilm al-bayān.

Consider the verse baḥrun ta'awwada an yudhimma li-ahlihi. Here, al-Mutanabbī uses two simultaneous metaphors (isti'āratān) in just one short sentence. The first one is an explicit metaphor (isti'āra taṣrīḥiyya), in which a river called Arsanās is likened to a sea due to its vastness. The second one is an implicit metaphor (isti'āra makniyya), as a sea, i.e., a man possessing the noble and generous nature, is likened to someone preserving dhimmah—the covenant of protection of those seeking asylum and preventing any army from approaching the sea and the persons staying on its banks.

In the next verse, takhidhū al-majālisa fī al-buyūti wa-'indahu anna al-surūja majālisu al-fityān, there are an antithetical parallelism (muqābala), two metonymies (kināyatān), and a concise simile (tashbīh balīgh). The antithetical parallelism lies in a contrast between gatherings inside one's house suggesting an easy and quiet life and the gatherings at saddles—an allegory of bravery. The first metonymy is associated with luxury in the phrase takhidhū al-majālisa fī al-buyūt. The second metonymy stands for chivalry in the phrase al-surūju majālisu al-fityān. Lastly, a condensed simile is found in the author's likening of saddles to gathering places without using any signs of comparison or aspects of resemblance.

Imagery Innovation and Preciseness of Vocabulary. Another characteristic feature of al-Mutanabbī's poem is the innovative images he creates. For instance, in qad sawwadat shajara al-jibāli shu'ūruhum fa-ka-anna fīhi musiffata al-

ghirbān and wa-jarā ʻalā al-waraqi al-najīʻu al-qānī fa-ka-annahu al-nāranju fī al-aghṣān, he paints a picture in which the colours of the mountains blend. The mountains' trees get covered with the colour of the hair of the killed soldiers, as if flocks of crows have settled down on them, while leaves turn red because of the blood spilled, which is likened to the red bitter oranges on tree branches.

Likewise, in yanshurna fīhi ʻamāʾima al-fursān, al-Mutanabbī gives a metonymy (kināya) meaning the outstanding swiftness and skill of horses. Indeed, they swim so fast that the turbans of horsemen get scattered through the air.

The poem also demonstrates the preciseness of the used lexicon. While the words al-qalb (heart) and al-rūḥ (soul) might have been used, the poet chose al-muhja. It is stronger from the viewpoint of rhetoric because the latter word is a synonym of the former but refers only to the essence of reason, unlike al-qalb that means soul, heart, and lifeblood. Moreover, the word thāʾir (vengeance-seeker) implies fury and courage at the same time.

Important Topics and Styles Used. Speaking about the themes and the main ideas of al-Mutanabbī's poem devoted to praising Sayf al-Dawla after his victorious war with the Byzantines, one should mention the following concepts: military wisdom based on reason; unusual and extraordinary battlefield courage; religious legitimacy, mentioned in several poems' parts (wa-adhalla dīnuka sāʾira al-adyān, wa-al-kufru mujtamiʻun ʻalā al-īmān, fa-aṭaʻnahu fī ṭāʻati al-Raḥmān).

At last, one may see that al-Mutanabbī pays a lot of attention to the crafts of ʻilm al-bayān (imagery) and ʻilm al-maʻānī (rhetoric), using sparingly ʻilm al-badīʻ (verbal embellishment). Although the poet puts much effort into creating similes, metaphors, and metonymies, he does not show much interest in verbal embellishment (al-muḥassināt al-lafziyya), such as jinās, frequent ṭibāq, sajʻ, and tawriya. Therefore, it seems like the author wants to emphasize that everything he says is an absolute truth and does not require any unnecessary ornaments.

Final Remarks. Although the poet preaches the supremacy of intellect, some vivid images, such as the hair of enemies darkening the mountain trees and the crimson redness of their blood on the leaves and the outstanding swimming skills of horses, prove more powerful. Reason reigns over the courage of Sayf al-Dawla via the rational architecture of the poem. When the poet cannot find anything to say before Sayf al-Dawla, his tongue gets frozen.

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