Tone as Structure and Symptom: A Stylistic Reading of Abū aṭ-Ṭayyīb Al-Mutanabbī's "Stop Blaming Me!"

النغمة بوصفها بُنية ومعنى: قراءة أسلوبية في قصيدة المتنبي "ملومُكما يجلّ عن الملام"

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Abstract

The study aims to demonstrate that cultural diversity is a legitimate demand and a human reality that must be accepted, as it is a social necessity for peaceful living. The visionary and prospective outlook in light of the social openness of our current era requires us to examine the impact of cultural diversity on the preservation of humanity. The research aims to demonstrate this according to a purposeful vision and has adopted an inductive-analytical method to achieve this. The problematic issue is defined by the main question: Does considering cultural diversity have an impact on preserving the purpose of humanity? And what are the ways to achieve this? The study concluded several results, the most important of which is that Islam is characterized by its cultural inclusivity, and it considers respecting cultural diversity as a legitimate requirement and a path for preserving humanity.

Keywords: Cultural Diversity - Human Dimension - Peaceful Coexistence - Purposeful Study.

ملخص البحث

تهدف الدراسة لبيان أن التنوع الثقافي يشكل سنة إلهية وحقيقة بشرية لا بد من تقبلها، وأن احترام هذا التنوع الثقافي يعد مطلبا شرعيا فهو ضرورة مجتمعية لحياة سلمية؛ إن النظر المآلي والاستشرافي في ظل الانفتاح الاجتماعي الذي يشهده عصرنا الحالي يحتم علينا الوقوف على مدى أثر التنوع الثقافي في حفظ الإنسانية. ويهدف البحث لبيان ذلك وفق رؤية مقاصدية، وقد اعتمد البحث على المنهج الاستقرائي التحليلي لتحقيق ذلك.

تتحدد إشكالية الموضوع في سؤال رئيس: هل مراعاة التنوع الثقافي له أثر في حفظ مقصد الإنسانية؟ وما هي السبل المؤدية إلى ذلك في ضوء مقاصد القرآن والسنة؟ حيث خلص البحث إلى عدد من النتائج أهمها: أن الإسلام أتسم بشموليته الثقافية واعتبر احترام التنوع الثقافي مطلبا شرعيا ومسلكا من مسالك حفظ الإنسانية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التنوع الثقافي - البعد الإنساني- التعايش السلمي- دراسة مقاصدية.

I. Introduction: Rethinking Tone in Arabic Poetics

Despite Al-Mutanabbī's enduring stature in Arabic literary heritage, critical attention to tone as an analytic category in his verse remains surprisingly limited. Much of the scholarship has privileged thematic grandeur, rhetorical virtuosity, or political context, often sidelining the subtle emotional gradations embedded in lexical choice, syntactic rhythm, and performative voice. As Roger Allen observes, classical Arabic criticism tended to emphasize maʿnā and bayān while leaving affective texture undertheorized (Allen, An Introduction to Arabic Literature). Likewise, Shukrī ʿAyyād argues that tonal inflection in Arabic poetry is frequently "embedded in performance rather than commentary," making it easy for later critics to overlook (ʿAyyād, al-Lugha walIbdāʿ).

This study proposes a reorientation: to foreground tone as a structural and semantic principle in Malūmukumā Yajillu ʿan alMalām ("Stop Blaming Me!"). Tone, as this article contends, not only colours poetic expression but anchors the poem's existential stakes - mediating between pride and vulnerability, assertion and irony, performative bravado and personal fracture. The poem's semantic ambiguity, formal dexterity, and acoustic resonance invite a recalibration of interpretive strategies. Drawing upon Arabic poetics (ʿAyyād; ʿAbd alṢabūr), stylistic theory (Holes; Monroe), and comparative hermeneutics (Eliot; Todorov), this study interrogates the interplay between declared meaning and latent affect, poetic heroism and spiritual unrest.

Recent scholarship has begun to foreground tone more explicitly in readings of alMutanabbī. Ceyhun Aliyev's comparative study of alMutanabbī's Diwan in Al-Amali (2025) highlights the poet's "linguistic style," "heroism," and "individualism", offering a foundation for tonal inquiry. Likewise, Azāhir Muḥyī ElDīn ElAmīn's analytical study (2024) emphasizes how alMutanabbī's poetry is inseparable from his "distinctive character," "rebellious spirit," and "invitation to contemplate the self and the world", all of which shape the emotional register of his verse. Studies of stylistic patterning, such as Fatima Naṣr and ʿAbd alḤamīd Muʿīfī's analysis of stylistic interaction in AlMutanabbī's Mīmiyya (2025), demonstrate how tone emerges from phonological, syntactic, and rhetorical interplay. These contributions collectively underscore the timeliness of revisiting tone not as a secondary embellishment but as a central interpretive axis.

Methodologically, this study employs close reading informed by Eliot's poetics of voice, Todorov's interpretive hierarchy, and Strauss's model of indirect articulation. By tracing tonal oscillations across syntactic, rhythmic, and metaphorical terrains, it maps alMutanabbī's poetic consciousness not as a singular voice but as a dialectic of personas - knight, patient, exile, satirist - each emerging through tonal inflection. Ultimately, the study positions tone as both epistemological signal and emotional structure, revealing Malūmukumā Yajillu ʿan alMalām as a dramatic monologue whose volatility is central to its poetic identity.

Having established the need for a tonal re-reading of the poem, the study proceeds to examine how tone operates structurally and symptomatically across its metaphors, rhythms, and dramatic postures.

II. Related Studies

Scholarly engagement with alMutanabbī has traditionally gravitated toward themes of heroism, rhetorical grandeur, and the poet's complex relationship with power. Foundational commentarial traditions, such as those of alBarqūqī, and modern analytical approaches by critics like ʿAyyād, Aḥmad ʿAbd alMuʿṭī Ḥijāzī, and Aḥmad Badawī have illuminated the poet's linguistic precision, metaphorical density, and philosophical temperament. Yet, despite this rich heritage, tone has often remained a secondary or implicit concern, treated as an aesthetic byproduct rather than a structural principle. Earlier stylistic readings tended to isolate individual lines or rhetorical devices without tracing the tonal architecture that binds the poem's emotional and conceptual layers.

More recent scholarship has begun to reconsider tone as a central interpretive category in alMutanabbī's oeuvre. James E. Montgomery (2022) foregrounds the poet's shifting emotional registers and the instability of his selffashioning, offering a foundation for tonal inquiry. Aliyev's comparative study (2025) highlights alMutanabbī's linguistic style, heroic selfpresentation, and individualistic ethos, all of which shape the tonal dynamics of his verse. Likewise, ElAmīn (2024) emphasizes the poet's rebellious spirit, distinctive character, and invitation to contemplate the self and the world, framing tone as a vehicle for psychological and philosophical expression. Naṣr and Muʿīfī's analysis of AlMutanabbī's Mīmiyya (2025) demonstrates how tone emerges from phonological, syntactic, and rhetorical interplay. Taken togeth-

er, these contributions underscore the timeliness of reconsidering tone not as a decorative embellishment but as a central interpretive axis. Yet, for all their insight, they neither undertake a comprehensive tonal mapping of the poem nor conceptualize tone as both structural principle and symptomatic expression - a critical gap that the present study seeks to address.

The present study differs from these contributions in both scope and method. Whereas previous analyses often focus on isolated stylistic features or specific verses, this study undertakes a fullpoem tonal mapping, situating tone within a broader theoretical framework that integrates Arabic poetics, Western hermeneutics, and stylistic theory. By treating tone as both structure and symptom, the study reveals Malūmukumā Yajillu ʿan alMalām as a polyphonic dramatic monologue negotiating pride, exile, illness, and fractured agency. In doing so, it offers a more integrated and theoretically expansive account of alMutanabbī's artistry, contributing a fresh perspective to contemporary debates on voice, performance, and emotional structure in classical Arabic poetry.

III. Theoretical Framework: Tone as Structure and Symptom

Understanding tone in alMutanabbī's poetry requires a conceptual apparatus capable of accounting for both its surface declarations and its latent emotional undercurrents. While earlier sections have situated tone within contemporary scholarship, this section turns to the theoretical foundations that enable a deeper reading of tone as both structure and symptom.

The concept of tone in literary criticism, particularly within Arabic poetics, has long remained elusive, overshadowed by a critical preference for overt thematic interpretation or rhetorical ornament. Ṣalāḥ ʿAbd al-Ṣabūr's pioneering reflections in A New Reading of Our Classical Poetry (1982) call for renewed engagement with tonal nuance as a performative structure, arguing that classical Arabic verse often encodes emotional and epistemic layers that exceed traditional interpretive categories. His analysis of irony in the verse of al-Munaḵẖḵẖal al-Yashkurī demonstrates how tone can function as a site of implicit meaning, where the poem's emotional undercurrents surface through gesture, rhythm, and dramatic inflection.

In parallel, Louis Althusser's notion of symptomatic reading invites attention to examine fissures in textual intention-moments where form "be-

trays" unconscious content. Leo Strauss's theory of esoteric meaning further complicates the dichotomy between authorial clarity and rhetorical disguise, suggesting that meaning may operate beneath the surface, accessible only through coded tonal gestures. Together, these frameworks collectively illuminate tone as a structural symptom, revealing tensions between what the poem declares and what it withholds.

Tzvetan Todorov's interpretive hierarchy provides an additional lens, distinguishing between primary, secondary, and incidental layers of meaning. This model aligns seamlessly with AlMutanabbī's intricate semantic layering, where overt declarations of pride coexist with latent registers of fatigue, irony, and existential unrest. Todorov's model enables a reading in which tone becomes a hierarchical signal, guiding the reader through shifting planes of meaning.

Furthermore, T. S. Eliot's concept of the "second voice" in poetry introduces a dramatic dimension essential to this study. Eliot posits that poetic utterance often contains multiple voices - the voice of the poet, the voice of the persona, and the voice of the cultural or moral tradition. This triadic model resonates strongly with AlMutanabbī's poem, where the speaker oscillates between heroic selfassertion, ironic selfexposure, and cultural performance.

To ground these theoretical insights in contemporary scholarship, it is useful to consider how recent studies illuminate the tonal mechanisms at work in alMutanabbī's verse. Montgomery's reading of the poet's shifting emotional registers demonstrates how alMutanabbī's selfpresentation is shaped by fluctuating intensities of feeling, a dynamic that aligns closely with tone as symptomatic expression. Aliyev's comparative work clarifies how linguistic patterning and selffashioning operate as tonal cues, revealing the poet's reliance on stylistic contrast to negotiate identity. Complementing these perspectives, ElAmīn foregrounds the poet's rebellious temperament and philosophical restlessness, offering a framework for understanding tone as a site where psychological tension becomes formally legible. Finally, the stylistic analysis by Naṣr and Muʿīfī demonstrates how phonological texture, syntactic movement, and rhetorical interplay generate tonal complexity at the microlevel of the verse. Taken together, these studies help articulate tone not merely as an aesthetic effect but as a structural principle that mediates between emotion, form, and poetic consciousness.

Having articulated the conceptual foundation for tonal reading, the study now turns to applied interpretations, beginning with a pivotal moment in Al-Mutanabbī's poem that dramatizes voice, pride, and performative irony.

Tonal Interpretations: Voice, Irony, and Symbolic Imagery

ʿAbd al-Ṣabūr was among the first to critically examine tone in Arabic poetry, identifying instances of irony in the verse of al-Munaḵẖḵẖal al-Yashkurī. He proposed that theatrical gestures in oral recitation function as embodied markers of tonal intent. For ʿAbd al-Ṣabūr, revisiting classic poetry within its original performative and cultural context offers the potential to uncover tonal registers often obscured by conventional hermeneutics.

In a similar vein, ʿAyyād in his seminal work Language and Creation (al-Lugha wa-l-Ibdāʿ, 1988) reinterprets Al-Mutanabbī's poem "Stop Blaming Me!" by resituating it within its socio-historical framework, thereby exposing tonal inflexions that had previously remained latent:

وَكُـــــــلُّ بُـغـــــامِ رازِحَـــــــةٍ بُغامي عُيونُ رَواحِلي إِن حُرتُ عَيني

My camel's eyes, my guides, when sight doth dim,

Each bellowing beast doth lead my limb. (1)

ʿAyyād reads these lines as a moment of self-mockery. He argues that the poet, when directionless, is reduced to a beast, seeing only as a camel sees, and speaking in a voice that echoes its groaning. By collapsing the boundary between human intellect and animal instinct, Al-Mutanabbī appears to parody his own vulnerability.

Professor Enani approaches the verse via commentary found in traditional dīwān sources, such as those of al-Barqūqī and al-Yāzijī, which maintain that the camel guides the poet in moments of disorientation. Yet, Enani expresses skepticism toward this reading. He questions the conceit that the poet might take pride in having his sight surpassed by a camel, or in the notion that the camel's voice mirrors his own-a paradox that may point to a deeper undercurrent of tonal irony.

1- All translated lines cited in this study derive from the author's complete poetic translation of the poem, provided in the Appendix.

Ḥijāzī offers a parallel interpretation in his work, The Poem of No: A Reading in Rebellion and Outlaw Poetry; however, his focus differs in tone and rhetorical stance.

What, then, gives rise to such divergent readings? One plausible answer lies in the symbolic resonance of the camel in Arabic poetics. Rooted in Bedouin life and desert epistemology, the camel often operates as both a literal companion and a metaphorical mirror. Its role in sustaining movement, offering shelter, and navigating isolation renders it a strong figure of interdependence and endurance. In "Stop Blaming Me!" the camel's guidance and vocalization open up interpretive possibilities that straddle the line between pride and parody:

- **Pride and Resilience:** Al-Mutanabbī's frequent alignment of self with heroic fortitude suggests that the camel may function as an extension of his autonomy and resilience, a creature emblematic of loyalty and survival in barren terrain.
- **Irony and Isolation:** Alternatively, the verse may carry a sardonic undertone, gesturing toward the poet's alienation and the absence of human companionship. The camel's voice becomes a surrogate for his own-an acoustic echo of solitude rather than triumph.

Building on these interpretive trajectories, this study now turns to a close stylistic and analytical reading of Al-Mutanabbī's "Stop Blaming Me!" to uncover the tonal and structural complexities embedded within its verse. By attending to both overt and latent tonal registers, the analysis seeks not only to illuminate Al-Mutanabbī's performative brilliance but to contribute to broader theoretical conversations surrounding voice, irony, and poetic persona in classical Arabic literature.

Textual Analysis: Structure, Tone, and Poetic Technique

This section engages directly with the formal scaffolding and historical resonances of Al-Mutanabbī's poem. By tracing its tonal cadence, contextual triggers, and rhetorical architecture, the analysis uncovers the technical strategies through which poetic voice and emotional tension unfold.

1. Historical Resonance and Dramatic Unity

Before engaging with the poem's technical poetics, it is essential to establish the historical and emotional framework that informs its rhetorical urgency and tonal structure. Composed during a period of physical affliction and political estrangement, Al-Mutanabbī's verse alludes to his departure from Egypt following a bout of fever (Al-Barqūqī, 1986: 272). Two interrelated contexts shape the poem's genesis:

(A) A desire to flee Egypt and sever ties with Kāfūr al-Ikhshīdid.

(B) A physical illness (fever) that afflicted the poet during his journey.

The interplay between geographical exile and physical vulnerability engenders a dramatic atmosphere marked by direct address, expressive lamentation, and profound emotional introspection. The poem attains its structural cohesion not through a linear narrative but through the stratification of these emotive themes, which interlink the individual stanzas via a consistent tonal register and recurring symbolic motifs.

This narrative strategy, rooted in classical Arabic poetic traditions and extended into modern verse, imbues the text with structural cohesion and dialogic resonance. While both fever and departure are central to the poem's affective landscape, critical reception has tended to foreground the former. The relative novelty of "fever" as a poetic trope-in contrast to the more conventional motif of departure-may account for this interpretive preference, inviting new readings of illness as metaphor, rupture, and rhetorical disguise.

2. Cadence: Meter, Rhyme, and Affective Modulation

Al-Mutanabbī's poem employs al-Wāfir (اَلْوَافِرُ) meter, structured through the metrical feet مُفَاعِلَتُنْ فَعُولُنْ, whose sonic pattern offers both repetition and variation. Renowned for its rhythmic vitality and tonal balance, this meter fosters auditory ease and emotional resonance, enhancing both compositional fluency and reader reception (Anīs, 1972: 87). Often associated with themes of pride, dignity, and elegiac reflection, al-Wāfir demonstrates dynamic affective range- capable of evoking grandeur when intensified and introspection when softened (Badawī, 1996: 344). Within this poem, the meter mirrors the poet's psychological volatility, inviting heightened emotional engagement and generating what Badawī terms a kind of "mental pleasure" (1996: 279).

Integral to this metrical framework is the poem's rhyme scheme, which enhances the musical continuity throughout the hemistiches and lines. The rawī (الرويّ) -the final consonant anchoring each verse-is represented by the Arabic letter mīm (م), a sound widely used in classical Arabic poetry for its melodic resonance and phonetic pliability (Anīs, 1972: 275). Al-Mutanabbī's deliberate selection of mīm avoids its more common pronominal function, instead employing it lexically to foreground its aesthetic purity. As Anīs notes, this "absolute" usage-free of grammatical attribution-is especially characteristic of highly polished poetic forms (ibid, 288). This strategic control over the pronominal possibilities of mīm resonates with what Aliyev identifies as AlMutanabbī's broader syntactic technique: the purposeful calibration of pronominal reference to shape the poem's rhetorical horizon. In his more recent study, Aliyev argues that AlMutanabbī's syntactic choices, including his deployment of "pronominal references," function as deliberate strategies to amplify the poem's universality (89).

Preceded consistently by the long vowel alif (أ) and followed by the terminal vowel yā' (ي), the rhyme achieves what might be termed verse-end consonance and assonance. This acoustic pairing sustains melodic momentum throughout the poem, enriching its aural texture and intensifying reader immersion. The resulting rhyme structure-marked by its precision, restraint, and avoidance of semantic redundancy-embodies a compositional elegance that reflects the poet's mastery of form and emotional modulation.

Functionally, this rhythmic pattern does more than provide sonic cohesion; it dramatizes the poet's fluctuating emotional register. The oscillation inherent in alWāfir's cadence mirrors the speaker's own movement between heroic assertion and physical depletion, allowing the meter to act as an audible analogue to his inner volatility. In tonal terms, the persistent recurrence of the mīmrhyme generates a pressure that resembles emotional insistence-an insistence to maintain dignity even as exhaustion seeps into the poetic voice. Thus, the metrical pattern becomes a structural enactment of the poet's psychological tension, transforming rhythm into an index of affective instability.

Having established the poem's historical and rhythmic foundations, the analysis now turns to its technical and symbolic architecture.

IV. Technical and Symbolic Domains: Structure, Tone, and Semantic Orientation

From a semantic and structural standpoint, the poem unfolds across multiple interlocking dimensions: linguistic texture, technical patterning, and syntactic design. They collectively construct its tonal and symbolic architecture. These facets revolve around two principal thematic axes: heroic self-fashioning through travel and lamentation over illness and perceived decline. In this section, the analysis centers on the poem's opening verses, where Al-Mutanabbī dramatizes his internal ethos and performs poetic agency through desert imagery, physical endurance, and spiritual defiance.

(a) The Journey and the Ego of Pride: Establishing Tonal Authority

The first seven lines of the poem establish a rhetorical foundation marked by declarative pride and existential autonomy. Al-Mutanabbī addresses two companions-real or rhetorical-deflecting blame and asserting that his deeds transcend the realm of speech. His refusal to be held accountable rests on an appeal to lived experience, which, he argues, surpasses the power of words:

Malūmukumā yajillu ʿan al-malām,

Wa-waqʿu faʿālihi fawqa al-kalām.

Your blame transcends mere words of shame;

His deeds outshine what speech can claim.

This opening dramatizes a voice swollen with self-assertion. The poet recounts his ability to traverse the desert without a guide, travelling unveiled through the searing heat, and leaving the reins loose in a gesture of radical self-reliance. The fusion between man and beast-his camel's eyes acting as his own-renders human and animal vision interchangeable, underscoring a shared orientation in an inhospitable landscape.

This motif of desert navigation is enriched by a cultural allusion: Al-Mutanabbī invokes a traditional Arab technique for locating rainfall by counting lightning flashes-a practice deeply rooted in Bedouin meteorology. Once the flashes reached a symbolic threshold (typically seventy or a hundred), travellers would pursue the rain-bearing clouds with renewed faith (Al-Barqūqī, 1986: 273). By invoking this practice, Al-Mutanabbī situates himself within

desert epistemology and frames his journey as both physical and metaphysical. In tonal terms, the desert becomes not merely a setting but a resonant field through which the poet articulates autonomy, austerity, and emotional distance.

The stanza also stages a psychological severance from Egypt-a movement away from social constraint toward poetic and existential vastness. The political and emotional tenor of this break resonates in Al-Mutanabbī's oft-cited lines:

إذا تَرَحّلْتَ عن قَوْمٍ وَقَد قَدَرُوا أنْ لا تُفارِقَهُمْ فالرّاحِلونَ هُمُ

Idhā tarahhalt ʿan qawmin wa-qad qadarū

an lā tufāriqahum fa-r-rāḥilūna humū

If you part from people who wish you to stay,

It is they who depart, though you took leave.

This formulation subverts conventional understandings of exile, recasting the poet's departure not as abandonment but as an assertion of agency, implying that those unable to hold him are, in effect, the ones who depart.

Al-Mutanabbī's self-fashioning in this stanza unfolds through deliberate allusion and emblematic imagery, each element reinforcing his crafted persona of dignified austerity. Through evocative phrasing, he casts himself as a stoic desert-traveller-an ascetic by temperament-estranged from courtly indulgences and indifferent to sensual allure. His rhetorical posture repudiates the comforts of palatial life, feminine beauty, and wine, positioning such luxuries as inimical to his poetic creed and existential resolve (ʿAbdū Badawī, 1992: Pt. 1, 206).

Stylistically, the passage weaves desert lexicons, demonstratives, and selfreferential pronouns into a semantic field where travel becomes a metaphor for principled solitude. The stanza thus becomes a mirror of inner conviction, where poetic voice and personal sentiment coalesce.

At the informative level, this opening sequence narrates the poet's physical and psychological departure from Egypt, grounding the poem in a concrete biographical tension. Persuasively, the elevated diction and declarative

tone invite the reader to interpret this departure as an act of principled autonomy rather than mere escape. Stylistically, the interplay of imagery and deixis shapes the reader's alignment with the poet's ethos of resilience and austerity.

(b) Stylistic Analysis: Conjunction, Deixis, and Poetic Irony

Al-Mutanabbī's stylistic choices in this passage reflect a calculated orchestration of linguistic devices that convey layered emotional states and implicit critique. Central to this is his repeated deployment of the coordinating conjunction "و" (wāw [=and]), classified in Arabic grammar as ḥarf al-ʿaṭf. Its use between paired expressions-such as (dhirānī wa al-falāh) and (wajhī wa al-hajīr) - signals semantic concomitance rather than mere syntactic continuity. These pairings evoke spatial and existential collocations, aligning the speaker with the desert elements that both challenge and define his autonomy.

In parallel, Al-Mutanabbī employs demonstrative constructions to index his affective environment. Through phrases such as bi-dhī and hādhā ("this," "that"), he evokes al-falāh (the wilderness) and al-hajīr (the scorching heat) without explicitly naming them, thereby mobilizing demonstratives as both spatial coordinates and psychological registers. This technique echoes observations by the early grammarian and phonologist Ibn Jinnī (c. 320–392 AH / 932–1002 CE), who identified Al-Mutanabbī's frequent use of demonstratives to signal self-regard and rhetorical detachment. The pronoun dhā ("this" or "that") often implies a performative gesture of superiority; it appears commonly in colloquial usage, where direct naming is eschewed in favour of implied recognition (ʿAbdū Badawī, 1992: Pt. 1, 196). Through this ironic deployment, the poet simultaneously enacts intimacy with, and emotional estrangement from, the Egyptian landscape and its inhabitants.

This emotional detachment is further amplified through Al-Mutanabbī's deployment of syntactic negation. Phrases such as bilā dalīl, bilā lithām, wa-lā umsī li-ahli al-bukhl, wa-laysa qirāʾ ("without a guide," "unmasked," "refusing hospitality from the miserly," "no proper reception") articulate not only spatial estrangement but also ideological dissent. These negations function as rhetorical exclusions, distancing the poet from Egypt's sociopolitical milieu while implicitly critiquing Kāfūr and his entourage through oblique allusion.

Further stylistic complexity arises through Al-Mutanabbī's strategic use of attached pronouns, especially yāʾ al-mutakallim (the first-person suffix, analogous to the English "me"), which appear across verbs and nouns to emphasize individual experience and narrative possession. The oscillation between the first-person pronoun and the second-person pronouns dramatizes the poet's unstable selfperception. The shifting deixis creates a dialogic field in which the speaker alternates between selfassertion and selfinterrogation. In tonal terms, this movement registers a divided consciousness-one that seeks validation while simultaneously retreating into solitude. Pronoun play becomes a structural symptom of emotional fragmentation, revealing the poet's struggle to reconcile pride with vulnerability.

Finally, antithesis-between fatigue amid luxury and relief amid hardship-crystallizes AlMutanabbī's defiance of normative expectations. The poet locates comfort in adversity and suffocation in ease, subverting conventional emotional logic. This inversion becomes a tonal device that exposes the paradoxical emotional economy governing the poem's dramatic voice. Through this inversion, the poet subverts the conventions of courtly comfort and repositions the desert not as a space of deprivation, but as one of authenticity and moral elevation. His poetic trajectory thus transcends pleasure-seeking, gesturing instead toward heroic ambition rooted in intellectual and existential sovereignty.

These stylistic devices collectively enact tone as both structure and symptom, revealing how linguistic form becomes a vehicle for emotional and philosophical tension.

Having examined the poem's stylistic scaffolding, we now turn to its opening gesture, where tone is first activated and structurally encoded.

4.1 The Protasis: Opening Structure and Tonal Activation

Early Arab poets typically refrained from titling their compositions according to their opening lines. Nonetheless, the crafting of a compelling Protasis-the poem's inaugural gesture-was regarded by classical critics as a hallmark of rhetorical mastery. As Badawī (1996: 297) notes, scholars of Arabic poetics were acutely aware of "the impact of the first impression on the soul, recognizing that an engaging and captivating opening draws the listener's attention, whereas a weak and uninspiring one repels it." This view highlights

both the psychological force and aesthetic function of the Protasis, positioning it as a vital element in the study of stylistics and performative tone.

Al-Mutanabbī begins his poem with the following line:

مَـلومُكُمـا يَجِـلُّ عَـنِ المَـلامِ وَوَقــعُ فَعَـالِـهِ فَـوقَ الكَـلامِ

It roughly means:

Your blame transcends mere words of shame,

His deeds outshine what speech can claim.

Or

Your blame is loftier than reproach or shame;

His deeds exceed what even praise can name.

Or

Thy blame doth rise above all spoken shame,

His acts doth echo far beyond thy claim. (My Translations)

These translations, though varied, preserve the poem's declarative pride and its tonal insistence on moral elevation. The opening not only sets the emotional tenor of the poem but also echoes the formal conventions of classical Arabic verse. Al-Mutanabbī's invocation of two unnamed companions recalls the prototypical address in Imru' al-Qays's celebrated Muʿallaqa, in which he entreats: "Halt here, my friends. Allow me private pause alone to weep at the memory of my beloved" (قفا نبك من ذكرى حبيب ومنزل). Such rhetorical personification acts as a dramatic device, allowing the poet to articulate personal discontent through stylized dialogue. Within this frame, Al-Mutanabbī casts himself as the "blamable one," embedding both persona and tone into the architecture of the Protasis.

The first thing that becomes apparent is that alMutanabbī does not speak in the first person; rather, he refers to himself in the thirdperson mode, casting his presence as that of an absent figure. In doing so, he transforms the familiar tone of complaint that typically marks such openings into a note of pride-a tendency characteristic of his poetic preludes. As part of this tonal

reversal, he asserts that he is a man of action rather than a man of words, a claim he sustains over the following two lines, employing antithetical parallelism to reinforce the underlying meaning.

A striking feature of the opening is its internal or leonine rhyme. As Badawī (1996: 307) observes, the internal rhyme is the first sound to strike the ear and prepare it for the poem's external rhyme. AlMutanabbī's deliberate repetition of the Arabic consonants mīm (م) and lām (ل) saturates the line with sonic density. In the Arabic text, mīm appears six times and lām five, omitting the definite article al- (the=ال). In English translation, these sounds echo less frequently, yet their rhetorical intensity remains perceptible. These repeated phonemes subtly evoke the lexemes mall (مَلّ "to grow weary") and lāma ("to blame"=لامَ), reinforcing the poem's preoccupation with fatigue, reproach, and alienation.

Functionally, this dense phonetic clustering foregrounds the emotional strain embedded in the poem's inaugural gesture. The repetition of lām and mīm does not merely create sonic density; it registers the speaker's conflicted state as he negotiates blame, pride, and vulnerability. In tonal terms, the internal rhyme produces a circular acoustic motion that echoes the poet's sense of entrapment-caught between rejecting reproach and internalizing its sting. The opening thus becomes a tonal fulcrum: a site where structural precision and emotional turbulence converge, revealing tone as both an organizing principle and a symptomatic disclosure of the poet's fractured interiority.

This phonetic layering not only enhances tonal concordance but also serves as a vehicle for emotional emphasis, particularly when paired with the poem's rhyming scheme and metrical foundation. As ʿAbdū Badawī (1992: 203–204) notes, such repetition is common in Protases structured around leonine rhyme, where internal assonance reinforces poetic cohesion and primes the listener's engagement.

In sum, Al-Mutanabbī adheres to-and subtly reinvents-classical formal techniques in the composition of his opening. The Protasis, leonine rhyme, companion-addressee, verse-end consonance, and the al-Wāfir meter together enact a stylistic convergence of pride, exile, and internal conflict. By directly addressing his companions, the poet performs a rhetorical absolution, positioning himself as both subject and observer of blame. As Aḥmad

(1988: 37) suggests, this dialogic turn "fosters an intimate relationship through speech, operating as a compensatory mode akin to the motifs of love and lamentation over ruins typical of the traditional Protasis."

Furthermore, Al-Mutanabbī progresses swiftly through the opening, emphasizing the journey and his pride while omitting direct mention of the hardships, humiliations, and adversities he faced (ʿAbdū Badawī, 1992: pt. I, 191). This rhetorical economy sharpens the emotional register of the poem, making the Protasis not merely an introductory gesture but a tonal fulcrum upon which the entire poem turns.

4.2 The Second Stanza: Social Relationships and Tonal Perspicacity

This stanza unfolds as both a semantic and philosophical extension of the preceding section, distilling experiential insight into pithy reflections on the complexities of social relationships. Al-Mutanabbī adopts an aphoristic stance, drawing upon accumulated experience, particularly his fraught tenure in Egypt, to expose the tension between idealized companionship and the disappointments of lived interaction.His poetry frequently interlaces autonomous moral observations, each verse syntactically and semantically self-contained, yet collectively contributing to a coherent discourse on integrity, kinship, and moral discernment.

The stanza opens in a register of emotional disenchantment:

فَلَمّا صارَ وُدُّ النـاسِ خِبّاً جَزَيتُ عَلى اِبتِسامٍ بِاِبتِسامِ

When the love of men turned to deceit's grim.

I answered their smiles with my own trim.

Here, Al-Mutanabbī initiates a tonal shift from personal pride to communal skepticism. Through conditional syntax, most notably the adverbial use of lammalّمّا) (with its embedded causality and conditional resonance, he juxtaposes generosity against duplicity, signalling an emergent distrust of those once held close and trusted. This tonal shift is reinforced by ethical contrast: surface-level affection is depicted as morally hollow, giving way to a poetic ideal rooted in virtue, discernment, and emotional vigilance.

A key stylistic feature here is the poet's figurative use of the caus-

al (lām), a phenomenon only a few classical rhetoricians-such as Yaḥyā ibn Ḥamza alʿAlawī, author of alṬirāz-explicitly recognized as allowing figurative meaning to enter the realm of particles. For being human is not, in itself, a reasonable cause for doubting someone; yet the poet renders it so in order to express his absolute mistrust of human nature (ʿAyyād, 1988:134). This subtle grammatical inflection deepens the stanza's tonal skepticism, transforming a simple causal marker into a vehicle of philosophical critique.

As the stanza progresses, Al-Mutanabbī turns from general social disillusionment to a sharper critique of inherited status:

وَآنَـــفُ مِـن أَخـي لِأَبي وَأُمّـي إِذا مـا لَـم أَجِـــدهُ مِـنَ الـكِـرامِ

I shun my kin, though close they seem,

If their noble worth fails to gleam.

Here, genealogical pride is rejected in favour of ethical merit. The poet's use of the prepositional particle mā (ما) combined with negation particles such as lam, laysa, and lā=لا، ليس، لم underscores a tone of repudiation. These grammatical choices reflect a speaker disenchanted with the social structures surrounding him, yet resolved to define relationships through philosophical and moral criteria rather than inherited bonds.

Linguistically, the stanza is marked by accessible diction and syntactic clarity. Even polysemous expressions accrue semantic precision through contextual embedding and tonal inflection. Al-Mutanabbī's stylistic choices-particularly his manipulation of conditional constructions-reveal a deliberate modulation of tone. While the opening line aligns with classical syntactic sequencing ("conditional particle + verb clause + apodosis"), subsequent verses diverge from this pattern to introduce variation and rhetorical suspense. Such stylistic flexibility enriches the stanza's emotional texture and underscores the poet's technical mastery.

At the informative level, the stanza recounts the poet's accumulated experience with human duplicity and shifting loyalties, presenting social interaction as a field of moral testing. Persuasively, the aphoristic phrasing encourages the reader to adopt the poet's evaluative stance toward sincerity, generosity, and inherited status, transforming personal disappointment into broader ethical insight. Stylistically, the interplay of conditional clauses, ne-

gation, and concise moral formulations strengthens the stanza's persuasive force, allowing the poet to articulate principles of conduct through linguistic precision rather than overt didacticism. In this way, the stanza functions simultaneously as social commentary, ethical reflection, and a stylistic performance of tonal discernment.

As Aḥmad (1988: 45) notes, Al-Mutanabbī's conditional style serves two primary rhetorical functions:

- **Expostulatory reasoning:** Using analogy and moral juxtaposition to persuade the reader of the poet's emotional and philosophical stance.
- **Investigatory probing:** Balancing linguistic structures and tonal registers to evoke a layered rhythm and conceptual coherence.

Negation emerges again as a stylistic signature. Articles and verbs such as lam, laysa, and lā recur throughout, underscoring the poet's mood of rejection and dissatisfaction with both individual and collective character. Verb choice oscillates between past (e.g., ṣāra, jazā, ṣirṭu, lam ajidhu, ʿajibtu) and present (ashukku, yuḥibbu, ānafu, taghlibu, uʿzā, yanbū, yajidu, yadharu), conveying a psychological tension between memory and immediacy. The poet dwells neither exclusively in retrospection nor in present certainty; rather, his voice inhabits a temporally elastic space that mirrors his internal oscillation.

While this stanza avoids overt metaphorical elaboration, it does employ subtle analogy:

عَـجِـبـتُ لِـمَـن لَــهُ قَــدٌّ وَحَــدّ وَيَـنـبـو نَـبـوَةَ الـقَـضِـمِ الـكَـهـامِ

Marvel I do at those with might and frame,

Yet falter like blunt swords, lacking the acclaim.

Here, Al-Mutanabbī likens men of apparent strength to worn or blunted swords-objects that possess form but fail in function. The image distills his judgment on performative masculinity and hollow grandeur, serving as a quiet commentary on his departure from Egypt and disengagement from its courtiers.

Ultimately, this stanza functions not merely as a critique of fractured relationships but as an ethical manifesto. Through tonal restraint, syntactic

dexterity, and moral candour, Al-Mutanabbī positions himself as both witness to duplicity and guardian of virtue. His rhetorical precision is inseparable from emotional gravitas, yielding a voice that transcends historical circumstance and enters the broader realm of philosophical poetics.

4.3 Fever as Tonal Descent: Personification and Psychological Register

The third stanza marks a decisive tonal descent, shifting from the moral aphorisms of the previous section into the somatic and psychological terrain of fever. Here, Al-Mutanabbī's voice contracts inward, abandoning the social field for the intimate drama of the afflicted body. He adopts a narrative mode, weaving a sequential account of his physical affliction, fever, through vivid imagery and poetic dramatization. He recounts the intimate and cyclical nature of suffering in Egypt, detailing the interplay between corporeal weakness and emotional alienation. The depiction is not merely clinical; it is metaphysical and symbolic, with fever personified as a reluctant yet haunting companion, visiting only at night, refusing comfort, and retreating in tears. This poetic rendering blurs the boundary between symptom and subject, voice and ailment. The opening lines articulate the poet's immobilization:

أَقَـمـتُ بِـأَرضِ مِـصـرَ فَلا وَرائي تَـخُـبُّ بِيَ الـمَـطِـيُّ وَلا أَمـامـي

Aqamtu bi-arḍ Miṣr fa-lā warāʾī

takhubbu bī al-maṭī wa-lā amāmī

I dwelt in Egypt, caught 'twixt rim and hem,

No steed could bear my journey's whims or stem.

Here, the past-tense verb aqamtu ("I stayed") initiates a narrative arc that anchors the stanza within a clearly defined temporal frame. The poet's declared inability to move either forward or backwards signals a state of profound paralysis-physical, poetic, and existential-that marks Al-Mutanabbī's experience in Egypt. This paralysis is further reinforced through the paired syntactic negations lā warāʾī, ("not behind me") and lā amāmī ("not ahead of me"), expressions that evoke both spatial confinement and psychological entrapment. These linguistic choices not only construct a suspended sub-

jectivity, as the poet dramatizes his alienation through the very grammar of motion denied, but also function as deliberate rhetorical acts rather than mere accommodations to metrical or rhyming demands.

The metaphor of fever as a nocturnal guest-shy, disruptive, and unrelenting-forms the centerpiece of the stanza. The poet's ailment is anthropomorphized with dramatic flair:

وَزائِرَتي كَـــأَنَّ بِـهـا حَـيـاءً فَـلـيـسَ تَـــزورُ إلاّ في الــظَلامِ

Zāʾiratī ka-anna bihā ḥiyāʾan

fa-laysa tazūru illā fī al-ẓalām

My guest (fever), as if with shyness, comes at dim,

She visits only in the dark's own realm.

At the informative level, the stanza narrates the poet's struggle with fever during his travels. Persuasively, it invites the reader to interpret the fever as both literal suffering and symbolic revelation - a moment where the heroic mask slips, revealing the human beneath. Stylistically, the interplay of negation, motion verbs, and somatic imagery constructs a tonal landscape of exhaustion, introspection, and existential exposure.

Al-Mutanabbī offers her fine bedding, yet she declines, choosing instead to inhabit his bones. The intimacy of the encounter-cast as an illicit union (ka-ʾannā ʿākifāni ʿalā ḥarām) - amplifies the invasive and violating nature of illness. Her departure at dawn, marked by tears flowing from his body, evokes temporary relief, but also signals the resumption of cyclical agony. This symbolic association between suffering and nocturnal visitation deepens the emotional palette of the stanza.

The semantic field of the stanza is primarily descriptive, but its structure also demonstrates significant rhetorical cohesion. The consistent use of past-tense verbs, such as "aqamtu," "mallanī," "sakima," and "ʿajibtu," reinforces a reflective tone. In contrast, present-tense verbs like "ʾurāqibu" and "yuṣaddiqu" evoke a sense of immediate emotional experience. This modulation of verb tense connects the temporal experience with psychological persistence.

Stylistically, the stanza is defined by organic cohesion, with each verse unfolding logically from the last, forming a self-contained narrative episode within the poem's broader arc. The recurrence of internal rhyme, deliberate assonantal patterning, and the strategic deployment of negation (lā, lam) function not merely as sonic embellishments but as articulated gestures of emotional resistance. The alignment between the poet's physical ailment and his compositional technique embodies what Badawī describes as "structural resonance," a mode in which theme and formal design are mutually reinforcing.

In conclusion, this stanza exemplifies Al-Mutanabbī's unique ability to transmute physical suffering into poetic performance. The fever becomes not only a condition to endure, but a metaphorical interlocutor-one that reflects the poet's alienation, defiance, and lyrical resilience. Its popularity within recitation circles is perhaps due not only to its visceral imagery but to its capacity to articulate the existential weight of dislocation with rhetorical precision and emotional depth.

This descent into somatic vulnerability prepares the ground for the poem's next tonal pivot, where suppressed valor and fractured agency emerge through the knighthorse metaphor.

4.4 The Knight and the Horse: Conditional Structure and Tonal Reclamation

This stanza functions as a thematic extension of the preceding fever episode, broadening the poetic lens from corporeal affliction to suppressed valour. Al-Mutanabbī constructs a self-portrait of the warrior-poet in exile, a persona that contrasts sharply with his current state of physical confinement and emotional fatigue. The horse, emblematic of power, movement, and heroic agency, becomes an objective correlative for the poet himself. Through this lens, the poet's incapacitation parallels the restrained steed, once vibrant, now stilled by external constraint.

The horse motif, recurrent throughout Al-Mutanabbī's oeuvre, is deeply embedded in Arab poetic heritage. From Imru' al-Qaýs to later Bedouin verse, horses symbolize nobility, lineage, and poetic authority. In Al-Mutanabbī's hands, however, the image becomes layered: not only is the horse high-bred, adorned, and battle-tested-it is also broken, constrained, and wounded, much

like the poet under Kāfūr's patronage. The stallion, once accustomed to the dust of battle, now finds itself fettered, unable to graze or gallop freely. The syntax of the verse reflects this entrapment, dominated by passive constructions and negation, which reinforces thematic immobility. In tonal terms, the horse becomes a resonant extension of the poet's own constrained agency, embodying both thwarted movement and latent defiance.

Al-Mutanabbī imbues the stanza with optative longing, signalled by the exclamatory opening "ألا يا ليت شعري" ("Would that I knew!") - a plaintive appeal that encapsulates a yearning to reclaim lost agency. The subsequent shift from the optative particle (ليت) to the interrogative (هل) marks a transition from abstract desire to pointed introspection. This syntactic progression-from wishful imagining to rhetorical inquiry-introduces an emotional arc absent in prior stanzas. It registers a deepening resignation, edging toward an appeal for release, both existential and poetic.

Grammatically, Al-Mutanabbī structures successive hemistiches around a conditional formula:

fa-in + present verb + fa-mā + derived verb

Examples include:

- فإن أمرض فما مرض اصطباري
- وإن أحمم فما حمّ اعتزامي
- وإن أسلم فما أبقى

These clauses deploy negation (ما) and conjunctive particles (ف) to produce rhythmic symmetry and semantic escalation, each line asserting that while the body may falter, resolve remains intact. Notably, in the final clause (وإن أسلم فما أبقى), the apodosis departs from the pattern, gesturing toward the paradox of survival as deferred demise:

سَلِمتُ مِنَ الحِمامِ إِلى الحِمامِ

I have survived one death only to approach another.

Here, Al-Mutanabbī acknowledges the inevitability of mortality-escaping fever is merely a postponement of fate. The conditional structure thus enacts the poet's oscillation between resignation and resistance, rendering

grammar itself a vehicle of tonal instability.

Stylistically, the stanza is rich in lexical recursion and syntactic echo. Examples include:

- خلاص / خلصت
- وداع / ودعت
- مرض / أمرض
- حم / أُحمم
- سلم / أسلم

This repetition amplifies both musicality and emotional resonance, allowing the poem's sonic texture to mirror its thematic density. Phrases like من الحمام إلى الحمام and من قتام في قتام enact cyclical movement, reinforcing notions of entrapment and existential recurrence.

Al-Mutanabbī also employs passive constructions to depersonalize agency: أمسك ("is held"), أُحمم ("am fevered"), لا يُطال ("cannot be reached"). These choices convey a sense of external control and philosophical detachment, reflecting the poet's refusal to fully surrender to his circumstances even as he admits their force.

Negation-through لا and ما-appears with high frequency in this stanza, signalling both emotional rejection and political critique. Through the accumulation of denial, the poet renders Egypt not as home, but as a hindrance-an environment that stifles rather than sustains.

In sum, this stanza consolidates Al-Mutanabbī's rhetorical arc: from embodied suffering to defiant self-stylization, from lyrical passivity to metaphorical militancy. The knight and horse become twin figures of fractured autonomy, yet also of withheld glory. Through this equestrian metaphor, Al-Mutanabbī performs his resistance, not in physical rebellion but in poetic mastery.

The horse-knight image, with its galloping bravado and guarded vulnerability, anchors the tension between heroic self-fashioning and poetic estrangement. Rather than purely symbolic, it functions as a performative mask, at once declaring agency and shielding interior fracture. This stylized

persona echoes Al-Mutanabbī's complex negotiation between historical exile and lyrical control: a fugitive claiming space through rhetorical command. The oscillation of fever and gallop, lament and pride, crystallizes tone as mediating force, where poetic voice becomes both armour and mirror. From this threshold, the poem pivots toward polyphony, blurring the lines between historical figure and dramatic actor in a theatre of displacement.

At the informative level, the poet's reflections articulate a lived philosophy shaped by exile, illness, and disillusionment. Persuasively, the concise moral statements function as evaluative prompts, guiding the reader toward a critical reassessment of social bonds, loyalty, and inherited hierarchies. Stylistically, the reliance on parallelism, antithesis, and rhythmic balance amplifies the influential force of these reflections, allowing tone and structure to collaborate in producing a coherent ethical vision that extends beyond the immediate narrative context.

V. Structural and Stylistic Techniques: Rhetorical Density and Poetic Agency

Al-Mutanabbī's mastery of style in this stanza hinges upon a rich interplay of negation, personification, syntactic inversion, and antithetical pairings-each deployed not merely for ornamentation, but to reflect the fractured temporality and emotional gravity of illness.

One of the most striking devices is his use of negation, as in "فلا ورائي ولا أمامي" ("neither behind nor ahead of me"), where the spatial antithesis encapsulates paralysis. In translation, 'caught 'twixt rim and hem' retains this dual negation while introducing metaphorical resonance. This rhetorical mode is not just structural; it mirrors the existential impasse in which the poet finds himself, suspended between motion and stillness, progress and stasis.

Following this, personification emerges as a consistent stylistic choice. Feelings of ennui, weariness, and fever are expressed with striking intimacy. The bed (الفراش) grows weary of the poet, "mallanī," before transitioning into objecthood with the term "yamall." This shift from subject to predicate subtly reorganizes the notion of agency. This temporal slide-from past to present tense- mirrors the fluid boundary between memory and ongoing affliction. The use of the past tense evokes a fading moment of rejection, while the

present tense amplifies the continuity of suffering.

In his pairing of "قليل + كثير" ("few + many") and "سقيم + صعب" ("sick + difficult"), Al-Mutanabbī utilizes antithesis not to express contradiction, but to balance fragility with fortitude. The poet's body may be "few" in strength, yet he remains "many" in impact-"difficult" in ambition, though "sick" in condition. These binaries-never simplistically opposed-reveal the poet's self-conception as paradox: unyielding in vulnerability, sublime in suffering.

Equally sophisticated is Al-Mutanabbī's use of epanodos-a mirrored repetition of phrase and structure across successive lines-that creates rhythmic tension and semantic mirroring. Likewise, the omission of the pronoun أنا ("I") achieves syntactic economy while allowing his attributes-"قليل، سقيم، كثير، صعب"-to emerge impersonally, almost universally. This technique renders the speaker's condition less as an autobiographical confession and more as an archetypal embodiment.

The stanza's syntax is frequently marked by anastrophe (or hyperbaton) -a deliberate inversion of standard word order. Al-Mutanabbī foregrounds adjectival modifiers before subjects in constructions such as: "قليل عائدي، سقيم فؤادي، كثير حاسدي، صعب مرامي" ("meagre my return," "ailing my heart," "numerous my enviers," "difficult my aims"). By positioning these descriptors at the line's outset, the poet amplifies emotional intensity before delivering syntactic closure. This stylistic choice draws the reader first into affective resonance before unfolding the analytical or narrative content. It exemplifies a poetics in which emotional tonality precedes discursive resolution-a compositional rhythm rooted in resonance before reflection.

Finally, the personification of fever, rendered as a feminine nocturnal visitor, grounds the stanza in narrative lyricism. She arrives bashfully, resides intimately, and departs tearfully. Her symbolic attributes include shyness, emotional turbulence, and even ritual purification, "washing" the poet in her tears. Such feminized representation of affliction lends psychological depth to the narrative, suggesting that the poet's torment is both eroticized and spiritualized-a companion in both agony and transcendence.

VI. Syntactic and Linguistic Techniques: Motion, Comparison, and Poetic Structure

Within the fever stanza, Al-Mutanabbī mobilizes a range of syntactic and linguistic devices to dramatize psychological fragmentation and poetic control. His opening phrase, "wa-zāʾiratī" (my guest/visitor), functions as an example of intentional omission, implying the complete form "wa-rabbu zāʾiratī" ("Perhaps my visitor") -a construction frequently employed in classical Arabic verse, notably by Imru' al-Qaýs, to heighten reverence or dramatic focus. Though the possessive suffix (yāʾ al-mutakallim) renders the noun definite, the rhetorical effect remains one of exalted indefiniteness- a form of poetic elevation.

Throughout the stanza, verbs dominate the syntactic rhythm, especially those denoting motion, transformation, or fluctuation. Appearing in both perfect and imperfect forms-tazūru, badhaltu, ʿāfat, bātat, yaḍīqu, tawsiʿu, fāraqatnī, ghasalatnī, ʿākifān, yaṭrud, tajrī, urāqibu, yuṣaddiqu, alqāk, waṣalt, jaraḥt, lam yabqa-these lexical choices mirror the fever's erratic presence and the speaker's oscillating emotional states. Notably, nearly every line contains at least one, often two, verbs, underscoring the dynamic tension between physical decline and metaphorical vitality.

A salient stylistic feature is Al-Mutanabbī's repeated use of the comparative particle "كأن" (ka-anna, "as if"), which recurs three times within the stanza: ka-ann bihā ḥiyāʾan, ka-annā ʿākifān, and ka-anna al-ṣubḥa كأن بها حياءً، كأنا عاكفان، كأن الصبح. This patterned recurrence accentuates the personification and dramatization of the fever, framing it not merely as a physiological disturbance but as a sentient, symbolic presence. The successive similes imbue the fever with narrative agency, expanding its resonance across emotional, erotic, and even theological registers. Through these figurative constructions, Al-Mutanabbī transforms embodied suffering into allegorical intimacy-a fever that blushes with modesty, evokes sacred devotion, and shimmers with the promise (or illusion) of dawn.

Stylistically, the stanza demonstrates what may be termed "Structural Units"-lexical pairings or derivational links that appear within or across lines, such as: mallanī + yamall, zāʾiratī + tazūru, urāqibu + murāqabat, yuṣaddiqu + al-ṣidq, abanta + bint + anta, and jaraḥta + mujarraḥan. Such pairings cre-

ate syntactic cohesion and rhythmic harmony, while occasionally introducing antithetical tension, as in warāʾī + amāmī ("behind + ahead") and kaṯīr + qalīl ("many + few"). These rhetorical devices reinforce tonal variation, animating the prosodic texture of the stanza.

Conditional expressions-already present throughout the poem-reappear here in subtly reframed structures. The phrase "ka-annā ʿākifān ʿalā ḥarām" paired with "idhā mā fāraqatnī ghasalatnī" exemplifies syntactic layering:

إِذا مـا فـارَقَـتـنـي غَسَّـلَـتـنـي كَـأَنّـا عـاكِـفـانِ عَلى حَـرامِ

idhā mā fāraqatnī ghasalatnī,

ka-annā ʿākifān ʿalā ḥarām.

When she departed me, she bathed me,

As if we were consecrated upon a forbidden act.

Or

When she (fever) leaves, she bathes me in her cream,

As if our bond gleamed, within an illicit realm.

Such pairings demonstrate Al-Mutanabbī's ability to fuse grammatical precision with metaphorical charge, casting illness not only as visitation but as sacrilegious intimacy.

In terms of rhetorical amplification, the stanza incorporates a direct interrogation that doubles as an exclamation:

أَبِـنـتَ الـدَهـرِ عِـنـدي كُـلُّ بِنـتٍ فَكَيفَ وَصَلتِ أَنـتِ مِـنَ الزِحامِ

abint al-dahr ʿindī kullu bintin?

fa-kayfa waṣaltī anti mina al-ziḥām

O daughter of time, to me, all daughters are known.

How did you reach me through such crowded distress?

Or

O daughter of time, all daughters seem,

How didst thou reach me from the crowded stream?

The phrase "daughter of time" (Arabic: bint al-dahr) functions as a cultural metaphor for adversity and suffering, akin to the plural form banāt al-dahr. Here, Al-Mutanabbī expresses astonishment that even after enduring multiple afflictions, fever finds him anew, rendering the rhetorical question a form of lament and philosophical query. His tone echoes a similar construction in the verse of Abū Nuwās:

فَلَم أَخلُص إِلَيهِ مِنَ الزِحامِ أَتَيتُ فُؤادَها أَشكو إِلَيهِ

Ataytu fuʾādhāhā ashkū ilayh

fa-lam akhlus ilayhi mina al-ziḥām

I approached her heart to voice my pain,

Yet could not reach it through the crowd.

Or

I approached her heart to voice my pain,

Yet, I could not reach it through the crowd's domain.

This intertextual gesture subtly affiliates Al-Mutanabbī's confrontation with fever to broader traditions of classical Arabic poetry, where physical affliction, emotional alienation, and metaphorical crowding converge in moments of lyrical protest.

VII. Circular Structure and Tonal Return

Although the poem unfolds across distinct thematic movements, its architecture ultimately reveals a circular or spiral structure that continually returns to the central problem of blame, autonomy, and survival. The ordering of the stanzas-beginning with declarative pride, moving into social critique, descending into the feverridden body, and culminating in the knight/horse imagery-creates a tonal progression that mirrors the poet's psychological trajectory. Each stage appears to shift the emotional register, yet the poem repeatedly gravitates back toward the same unresolved tension: the speak-

er's struggle to assert agency in the face of vulnerability.

This circularity is reinforced by the recurrence of specific verbal elements across the poem. The persistent use of negation ("bilā dalīl," "walā umsī," "laysa...") functions as a linguistic marker of refusal and emotional distancing, while the conditional structures ("lamma...," "idhā...") introduce a logic of contingency that underscores the instability of social bonds and the precariousness of the poet's position. Likewise, the oscillation between firstperson and secondperson pronouns ("I/you") generates a shifting field of address that dramatizes the poet's divided consciousness-at once selfassertive and selfinterrogating. The interplay between motion and stasis, expressed through verbs of travel and images of physical depletion, further contributes to this spiral design: the poet moves outward across the desert only to find himself circling back to the same existential impasse.

Taken together, these structural and verbal patterns create a tonal loop in which the poem's emotional energy never fully resolves but continually reemerges in altered form. The poem thus enacts a return to its opening concern-blame and the refusal of blame-while simultaneously exposing the fragility of the autonomy the poet seeks to claim. In this sense, the poem's circular structure is not merely formal but deeply expressive, staging a dramatic oscillation between resilience and fracture that defines the speaker's inner world.

Conclusion:

Al-Mutanabbī's Stop Blaming Me! resounds not as an autobiographical lament, but as a polyphonic enactment of tonal complexity where persona, exile, and poetic voice intersect in dramatic counterpoint. This study affirms ʿAbd al-Ṣabūr's (1982) insight: that classical Arabic verse harbours performative dimensions too often eclipsed by thematic reduction. Viewed through Todorov's interpretive layers and Eliot's notion of the second voice, the poem emerges as a dramatic monologue rather than personal testimony, a crafted theatre of fractured identity cloaked in rhetorical guise.

Its formal scaffolding, meter, syntactic Protasis, and sonic texture support tonal gestures of rare intricacy. Fever and camel become symbolic surrogates, staging poetic burden within a mythic terrain. The oscillation between negation and affirmation, grandeur and fatigue, breathes life into a voice that both proclaims and dismantles itself.

This inquiry does not claim to be conclusive, but instead opens a space for further exploration: how tone, as a multidimensional medium, negotiates the relationship between lived history and symbolic invention. Future research may traverse tonal architectures across Arabic and English traditions, or reframe Al-Mutanabbī's persona as an aesthetic locus of resistance and self-staging beyond canonized boundaries.

To reclaim tone as interpretive key is to re-sound the rhythmic subtlety of the poem and recast the poet as dramatist of the self, a voice that echoes, retreats, and recomposes identity through layered cadence.

In this light, tone emerges not merely as an expressive feature but as the poem's organizing principle, the structural force through which AlMutanabbī composes, fractures, and ultimately reconstitutes his poetic self.

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Preface to the Translation:

This poetic translation was not crafted as a literal rendering, but as an interpretive reconstruction of Al-Mutanabbī's Malūmukumā Yajillu ʿan al-Malām. It seeks to reflect the rhythmic density, metaphorical charge, and tonal ambiguity of the original Arabic text, offering Anglophone readers an entry point into its layered affective terrain.

Throughout this study, the translation has served not merely as illustrative material but as a dialogic participant in critical inquiry. Its modulation of voice and cadence mirrors the speaker's defiant posture, the relational tension encoded in the dual address, and the sublime refusal of blame. These resonances invite an oscillating reading between the poem as an aesthetic artefact and the critical chapters that dissect its affective gestures.

Each enjambment, lexical flourish, and tonal shift within the translation reflects deliberate interpretive decisions. These choices are examined throughout the study to highlight moments of lyrical embodiment, performative contradiction, and interpretive reclamation.

In the following appendix, the complete translation appears uninterrupted, offered as a poetic companion to the analytical exploration that precedes it.

Appendix:

Appendix: Complete Poetic Translation of Al-Mutanabbī's "Malūmukumā Yajillu ʿan al-Malām"

The complete poetic translation presented here operates not merely as illustrative material but as a central interlocutor within the analytical methodology of this study. Through its deliberate modulation of tone, rhythm, and voice, it becomes an active site of negotiation, where tonal defiance, rhetorical elevation, and stylistic mirroring intersect.

Selected lines from the translated poem are referenced throughout the study to highlight moments of conceptual tension, lyrical embodiment, and interpretive resonance. This appendix offers readers an unmediated aesthetic encounter with the poem, free of critical interpolation, inviting an oscillation between totality and fragment, artefact and interpretation.

Appendix A: Original Arabic Text of Al-Mutanabbī's Malūmukumā Yajillu ʿan al-Malām and its Interpretive English Translation:

مَـلومُكُمـا يَجِـلُّ عَـنِ المَـلامِ	وَوَقـعُ فَعَـالِـهِ فَـوقَ الكَـلامِ
ذَرانـي وَالفَـلاةُ بِـلا دَليـلٍ	وَوَجـهي وَالهَجـيرَ بِـلا لِثـام
فَإِنّي أَسـتَريحُ بِـذي وَهَـذا	وَأَتعَـبُ بِـالإِناخَـةِ وَالمُقـامِ
عُيونُ رَواحِلي إِن حُـرتُ عَيني	وَكُـلُّ بُغـامِ رازِحَـةٍ بُغـامي
فَقَد أَرِدُ المِيـاهَ بِغَـيرِ هــاد	سِـوى عَـدّي لَها بَرقَ الغَمـامِ
يُـذِمُّ لِمُهجَتي رَبّـي وَسَـيفـي	إِذا اِحتـاجَ الوَحـيدُ إِلى الذِمـامِ
وَلا أُمسـي لِأَهـلِ البُخـلِ ضَيفاً	وَلَيسَ قِـرىً سِـوى مُخِّ النِعـام

Transliteration	English Translation
Malūmukumā yajillu ʿani al-malām	*Your blame transcends mere words of shame;*
Wa-waqaʿu fiʿālihi fawqa al-kalām	*His deeds outshine what speech can claim.*
Dharānī wa-al-falātu bilā dalīl	*Abandon me (without a guide) in deserts broad and grim,*
Wa-wajhī wa-al-hajīra bilā lithām	*Unmasked, beneath the scorching day's bright whim.*
Fa-innī astarīḥu bi-dhī wa-hādhā	*For in this wild, I find my restful aim,*
Wa-aʿtabu bi-al-inākha wa-al-muqām	*Yet tire in that ease and comfort's dame.*
Uyūnu rawāḥilī in ḥurtu ʿaynī	*My camel's eyes, my guides, when sight doth dim,*
Wa-kullu bughāmi rāziḥatin bughāmī	*Each bellowing beast doth lead my limb.*
Faqad aridu al-miyāha bighayri hād	*I seek the waters without a guiding beam,*
Siwā ʿaddī lahā barqa al-ghamām	*Tracing the lightning in a silver gleam.*
Yudhimmu li-muhjatī rabbī wa-sayfī	*My spirit and my sword do not condemn,*
Idhā iḥtāja al-waḥīdu ilā al-dhimām	*When solitude's embrace doth hymn.*
Wa-lā ʾumsī li-ʾahli al-bukhli ḍayfan	*I shun the miser's hall and acclaim,*
Wa-laysa qirāʾan siwā mukhkh al-niʿām	*For ostriches, brains are the choicest victuals to claim.*

فَلَمّا صارَ وُدُّ الناسِ خِبّاً	جَزَيتُ عَلى اِبتِسامٍ بِابتِسامِ
وَصِرتُ أَشُكُّ فيمَن أَصطَفيهِ	لِعِلمي أَنَّهُ بَعضُ الأَنامِ
يُحِبُّ العاقِلونَ عَلى التَصافي	وَحُبُّ الجاهِلينَ عَلى الوَسامِ
وَآنَفُ مِن أَخي لِأَبي وَأُمّي	إِذا ما لَم أَجِدهُ مِنَ الكِرامِ
أَرى الأَجدادَ تَغلِبُها كَثيراً	عَلى الأَولادِ أَخلاقُ اللِئامِ
وَلَستُ بِقانِعٍ مِن كُلِّ فَضلٍ	بِأَن أُعزى إِلى جَدٍّ هُمامِ
عَجِبتُ لِمَن لَهُ قَدٌّ وَحَدٌّ	وَيَنبو نَبوَةَ القَضِمِ الكَهامِ
وَمَن يَجِدُ الطَريقَ إِلى المَعالي	فَلا يَذَرُ المَطِيَّ بِلا سَنامِ
وَلَم أَرَ في عُيوبِ الناسِ شَيئاً	كَنَقصِ القادِرينَ عَلى التَمامِ

Transliteration	English Translation
Fa-lammā ṣāra wuddu al-nāsi khibbā	*When the love of men turned to deceit's grim,*
Jazaytu ʿalā ibtisāmin bi-ibtisām	*I answered their smiles with my own trim.*
Wa-ṣirtu ashukku fīman aṣṭafīhi	*I grew to doubt those whom I esteemed them,*
Li-ʿilmī annahu baʿḍu al-anām	*Knowing they're mere mortals, not as they hymn.*
Yuḥibbu al-ʿāqilūna ʿalā al-taṣāfī	*The wise love truly, respecting their gem,*
Wa-ḥubbu al-jāhilīna ʿalā al-wisām	*The fools love shallowly, on whims they stem.*
Wa-ānafu min akhī li-abī wa-ummī	*I shun my kin, though close they seem,*
Idhā mā lam ajidhu mina al-kirām	*If their noble worth fails to gleam.*
Arā al-ajdāda taghlibuhā kathīrā	*Ancestors' nobility outshines the scheme,*
ʿAlā al-awlādi akhlāqu al-liʾām	*Progeny act with less virtue, few redeem.*
Wa-lastu bi-qāniʿin min kulli faḍl	*Content am I not with virtues they dream,*
Bi-an uʿzā ilā jaddin humām	*If only linked to an ancestor's esteem.*
ʿAjibtu liman lahu qaddun wa-ḥadd	*Marvel I do at those with might and frame,*

Wa-yanbū nabwata al-qaḍimi al-kahām	*Yet falter like blunt swords, lacking the acclaim.*
Wa-man yajidu al-ṭarīqa ilā al-maʿālī	*He who the path to greatness doth claim,*
Fa-lā yadharu al-maṭiyya bilā sanām	*Never leaves his steed without its flame.*
Wa-lam ara fī ʿuyūbi al-nāsi shayʾan	*Of all the flaws in humankind's aim,*
Ka-naqṣi al-qādirīna ʿalā al-tamām	*None surpasses those who fail their name.*

أَقَمتُ بِأَرضِ مِصرَ فَلا وَرائي	تَخُبُّ بِيَ المَطِيُّ وَلا أَمامي
وَمَلَّنِيَ الفِراشُ وَكانَ جَنبي	يملُّ لقاءه في كل عـام
قَليلٌ عائِدي سَقِمٌ فُؤادي	كَثيرٌ حاسِدي صَعبٌ مَرامي
عَليلُ الجِسمِ مُمتَنِعُ القِيامِ	شَديدُ السُكرِ مِن غَيرِ المُدامِ
وَزائِرَتي كَأَنَّ بِها حَياءً	فَليسَ تَزورُ إلاّ في الظَلامِ
بِذَلتُ لَها المَطارِفَ وَالحَشايا	فَعافَتها وَباتَت في عِظامي
يَضيقُ الجِلدُ عَن نَفسي وَعَنها	فَتوسِعُهُ بِأَنواعِ السِقامِ
إِذا ما فارَقَتني غَسَّلَتني	كَأَنّا عاكِفانِ عَلى حَرامِ
كَأَنَّ الصُبحَ يَطرُدُها فَتَجري	مَدامِعُها بِأَربَعَةٍ سِجامِ
أُراقِبُ وَقتَها مِن غَيرِ شَوقٍ	مُراقَبَةَ المَشوقِ المُستَهامِ
وَيَصدُقُ وَعدُها وَالصِدقُ شَرٌّ	إِذا أَلقاكَ في الكُرَبِ العِظامِ
أَبِنتَ الدَهرِ عِندي كُلُّ بِنتٍ	فَكَيفَ وَصَلتِ أَنتِ مِنَ الزِحامِ
جَرَحتِ مُجَرَّحاً لَم يَبقَ فيهِ	مَكانٌ لِلسُيوفِ وَلا السِهامِ

Transliteration	English Translation
Aqamtu bi-arḍi Miṣra fa-lā warāʾī	*I dwelt in Egypt, caught 'twixt rim and hem,*
Takhubbu bīya al-maṭīyu wa-lā amāmī	*No steed could bear my journey's whims or stem.*
Wa-mallanīya al-firāshu wa-kāna janbī	*My bed grew weary of my limbs, each gem,*
Yamullu liqāʾahu fī kulli ʿām	*My side grew tired; our meetings turned into a whim.*

Qalīlun ʿāʾidī saqīmun fuʾādī	*Few visit me; my heart is weak and slim,*
Kathīrun ḥāsidī ṣaʿbun marāmī	*Many envy me; my aims are hard to stem.*
ʿAlīlu al-jismi mumtaniʿu al-qiyām	*My body frail, unable to rise, thus grim,*
Shadīdu al-sukri min ghayri al-mudām	*Intoxicated, yet no drink to brim.*
Wa-zāʾiratī ka-anna bihā ḥayāʾ	*My guest (fever), as if with shyness, comes at dim,*
Fa-laysa tazūru illā fī al-ẓalām	*She visits only in the dark's own realm.*
Badhaltu lahā al-maṭārifa wa-al-ḥashāyā	*I offered cushions, bedding as her gem,*
Fa-ʿāfat-hā wa-bātat fī ʿiẓāmī	*She spurned them all, and in my bones did stem.*
Yaḍīqu al-jildu ʿan nafsī wa-ʿanhā	*My skin too tight for both my soul and gem,*
Fa-tawassiʿuhu bi-anwāʿi al-siqām	*She fills it with diseases as her realm.*
Idhā mā fāraqatnī ghasṣalatnī	*When she (fever) leaves, she bathes me in her cream,*
Ka-ʾannā ʿākifāni ʿalā ḥarām	*As if our bond gleamed, within an illicit realm.*
Ka-anna al-ṣubḥa yaṭruduhā fa-tajrī	*At dawn's approach, she flees with teary gem,*
Madāmiʿuhā bi-arbaʿatin sijām	*Her tears in torrents flow, unending prim.*
ʾUrāqibu waqtahā min ghayri shawq	*I watch her leave, unthrill'd by her own gem,*
Murāqabata al-mashūqi al-mustahām	*As one who waits, but wishes not to stem.*
Wa-yaṣduqu waʿduhā wa-al-ṣidqu sharr	*Her promises, yet truthful, turn to grim,*
Idhā alqāka fī al-kurabi al-ʿiẓām	*When they lead thee to troubles so extreme.*
ʾAbinta al-dahri ʿindī kullu bint	*O daughter of time, all daughters seem,*
Fa-kayfa waṣaltī anti mina al-ziḥām	*How didst thou reach me from the crowded stream?*
Jaraḥti mujarraḥan lam yabqa fīh	*Thou wounded one already scarred and slim,*
Makānun li-al-suyūfi wa-lā al-sihām	*No place for swords or arrows left to trim.*

أَلا يا لَيتَ شَعرَ يَدي أَتُمسي	تَصَرَّفُ في عِنانٍ أَو زِمامِ
وَهَل أَرمي هَوايَ بِراقِصاتٍ	مُحَلّاةِ المَقاوِدِ بِاللُغامِ
فَرُبَّما شَفَيتُ غَليلَ صَدري	بِسَيرٍ أَو قَناةٍ أَو حُسامِ
وَضاقَت خُطَّةٌ فَخَلَصتُ مِنها	خَلاصَ الخَمرِ مِن نَسجِ الفِدامِ
وَفارَقتُ الحَبيبَ بِلا وَداعٍ	وَوَدَّعتُ البِلادَ بِلا سَلامِ
يَقولُ لي الطَبيبُ أَكَلتَ شَيئاً	وَداؤُكَ في شَرابِكَ وَالطَعامِ
وَما في طِبِّهِ أَنّي جَوادٌ	أَضَرَّ بِجِسمِهِ طولُ الجِمامِ
تَعَوَّدَ أَن يُغَبِّرَ في السَرايا	وَيَدخُلَ مِن قَتامٍ في قَتامِ
فَأُمسِكَ لا يُطالُ لَهُ فَيَرعى	وَلا هُوَ في العَليقِ وَلا اللِجامِ
فَإِن أَمرَض فَما مَرِضَ اِصطِباري	وَإِن أُحمَم فَما حُمَّ اِعتِزامي
وَإِن أَسلَم فَما أَبقى وَلَكِن	سَلِمتُ مِنَ الحِمامِ إِلى الحِمامِ
تَمَتَّع مِن سُهادٍ أَو رُقادٍ	وَلا تَأمُل كَرىً تَحتَ الرِجامِ
فَإِنَّ لِثالِثِ الحالَينِ مَعنىً	سِوى مَعنى اِنتِباهِكَ وَالمَنامِ

Transliteration	English Translation
ʾAlā yā layta shaʿra yadī atumsī	*Oh, if only my hands could freely wield their helm,*
Taṣarrafu fī ʿinānin aw zimām	*To guide the reins, unbound by any realm.*
Wa-hal armī hawāya bi-rāqiṣātin	*And might I cast my ardor, swift and trim,*
Muḥallāt al-maqāwidi bi-al-lughām	*On steeds adorned with frothy bits that brim.*
Fa-rubbamā shafaytu ghalīla ṣadrī	*Oft have I quenched my breast's fierce burning flame,*
Bi-sayrin aw qanātin aw ḥusām	*With journey, spear, or sword's relentless claim.*
Wa-ḍāqat khuṭṭatun fa-khalaṣtu minhā	*When plans grow tight, I find a path to stem,*
Khalāṣ al-khamri min nasj al-fidām	*Like wine escaping from the woven hem.*
Wa-fāraqt al-ḥabība bilā wadāʿ	*I left my love without a parting grim,*

Wa-waddaʿtu al-bilāda bilā salām	*Departed lands with naught but silence dim.*
Yaqūlu lī al-ṭabību akalta shayʾan	*The doctor tells me that I ate a gem,*
Wa-dāʾuka fī sharābika wa-al-ṭaʿām	*And that my ills from food's false charm do stem.*
Wa-mā fī ṭibbihi annī jawād	*Yet in his practice, he knows not my aim,*
Aḍarra bi-jismihi ṭūlu al-jimām	*A steed undone by an endless idler's frame.*
Taʿawwada an yughabbira fī al-sarāyā	*Used to the dust of battle's fierce acclaim,*
Wa-yadkhulu min qatāmin fī qatām	*Entering haze from haze without a qualm.*
Fa-ʾumsika lā yuṭālu lahu fa-yarʿā	*Now held, unreachably, in fields so calm,*
Wa-lā huwa fī al-ʿalīqi wa-lā al-lijām	*Neither in feed nor yet in reins' tight realm.*
Fa-in ʾamraḍ fa-mā maraḍ al-iṣṭibārī	*Though ill, my patience never grows too slim,*
Wa-in ʾuḥmam fa-mā ḥumma al-iʿtizāmī	*Though fevered, still my purpose keeps its trim.*
Wa-in aslam fa-mā abqā wa-lākin	*If I should yield, it's not from weakness' frame,*
Salimtu mina al-ḥimāmi ilā al-ḥimām	*Survived from death to death, yet life's harsh claim.*
Tamattāʿ min suhādin aw ruqād	*Enjoy your sleepless nights or restful calm,*
Wa-lā taʾmulu karan taḥta al-rijām	*Do not expect sweet dreams beneath the palm.*
Fa-inna li-thālith al-ḥālayni maʿnā	*For there's a third state, neither wake nor dream,*
Siwā maʿnā intibāhika wa-al-manām	*A meaning past your wake and sleep's mere realm.*