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Müslim b. Velîd'in Lâmiyye Kasidesinde Figüratif Anlatım Figurative Expression in Muslim Ibn al-Walîd's Al-Qaşîdah Al-Lâmiyyah

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Müslim b. Velīd'in Lâmiyye Kasidesinde Figüratif Anlatım*

Öz: Bu çalışma, Müslim b. Velīd'in (d. 208/823) olgunluk dönemine ait Lâmiyye Kasidesini figüratif anlatım bağlamında incelemeyi hedeflemektedir. Figüratif anlatım, şiirde söze doğrudan değil dolaylı biçimde anlam kazandıran, kelimeleri kendi sözlük anlamlarının ötesine taşıyan bir ifade biçimidir. Bu bağlamda teşbih, istiâre, mecaz ve kinaye gibi sanatlar, şairin hayal gücünü ortaya koymasının yanı sıra okuyucuda estetik bir etki uyandıran temel unsurlar olarak ele alınmaktadır. Müslim b. Velīd, Lâmiyye'sinde özellikle kılıç, savaş, tabiat ve aşk gibi temaları zengin hayal örgülüleriyle işlemiş; soyut duyguları somut varlıklarla, maddi unsurları ise soyut kavramlarla kaynaştırarak çok katmanlı bir şiir dili kurmuştur. Çalışmanın önemi, söz konusu kasidenin yalnızca tarihî bağlamda değil, aynı zamanda figüratif dilin imkânlarını en geniş şekilde kullanan bir metin olarak klasik Arap şiirindeki estetik dönüşümü göstermesidir. Araştırmada metin analizi yöntemi uygulanmış; beyitler tek tek incelenerek benzetmelerin türleri, istiârelerin işlevleri ve mecazların anlam inşasına katkıları ortaya konulmuştur. Bulgular, Müslim b. Velīd'in Lâmiyye'sinde hayallerin sadece süs unsuru olarak değil, aynı zamanda duyguların yoğunlaştırıldığı, düşüncenin somutlaştığı ve estetik etkinin güçlendirildiği bir işlev gördüğünü ortaya koymaktadır. Bu yönüyle kaside, şairin sanatsal olgunluğunu yansıtan ve Arap şiirinde figüratif dilin yaratıcı kullanımına güçlü bir örnek teşkil eden metinlerden biridir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Arap Dili ve Belagati, Lâmiyye, Figüratif Anlatım, Müslim b. Velīd, Sarīfulgavānī.

Figurative Expression in Muslim Ibn al-Walīd's *Al-Qaṣīdah al-Lāmiyyah**

Abstract: This study aims to examine Muslim Ibn al-Walīd's *al-Qaṣīdah al-Lāmiyyah*, composed during his mature age, within the context of figurative expression: a mode of conveying meaning indirectly rather than literally in poetry, extending words beyond their dictionary definitions. In this framework, literary devices such as simile, metaphor, allegory, and innuendo are analyzed as fundamental elements that not only reveal the poet's imagination but also evoke an aesthetic impact on the reader. In the *Lāmiyyah*, Muslim ibn al-Walīd explores themes such as the sword, war, nature, and love through rich imaginative structures, merging abstract emotions with concrete entities and material elements with intangible concepts, thereby constructing a multi-layered poetic language. The significance of this study lies in the fact that the *qaṣīda at hand* demonstrates not only historical relevance but also the extensive use of figurative language, illustrating an aesthetic transformation within classical Arabic poetry. The research employs a text-analytic method, with individual lines examined to reveal the types of similes, the functions of metaphors, and the contributions of figurative devices to meaning construction. The findings indicate that in the *Lāmiyyah*, imaginings do not merely serve as ornamental elements but also intensify emotions, materialize thought, and enhance aesthetic effect. Accordingly, the *Qaṣīda* stands as a text reflecting the poet's artistic maturity and as a strong example of the creative use of figurative language in Arabic poetry.

Keywords: Arabic Language and Rhetoric, Lāmiyyah, Figurative Expression, Muslim Ibn al-Walīd, Šarī' al-Ghawānī.

* Bu çalışmanın hazırlık sürecinde, yazarlar tarafından üretken yapay zeka araçları (OpenAI ChatGPT, Google Gemini, DeepSeek) sınırlı ve yardımcı düzeyde kullanılmıştır. Bu araçlardan yalnızca (i) metnin dilbilgisel ve üslupsal açıdan gözden geçirilmesi, (ii) Türkçe-İngilizce çevirilerde akademik terminolojiye uygunluk denetimi, (iii) örnek şiir çözümlemelerinde alternatif yorumlama perspektiflerinin tespiti gibi teknik ve biçimsel süreçlerde faydalanılmıştır. Çalışmanın özgün araştırma sorusunun belirlenmesi, teorik çerçevenin oluşturulması, birincil kaynaklara (Ahmet Matar Divanı) dayalı okumalar, yorumlar ve ulaşılan sonuçlar tamamen yazarların akademik birikimi ve eleştirel muhakemesine aittir. Yapay zeka araçları, hiçbir şekilde doğrudan metin üretimi, akademik intihal veya yaratıcı içerik oluşturma amacıyla kullanılmamış; yalnızca yardımcı birer araç olarak başvurulmuştur. Yazar, bu beyanla Yükseköğretim Kurulu'nun (YÖK) üretken yapay zeka kullanımına ilişkin etik ilke ve düzenlemelerine tamamen uyduğunu beyan eder.

* During the preparation of this study, the author made limited and auxiliary use of generative artificial intelligence tools (OpenAI ChatGPT, Google Gemini, DeepSeek). These tools were employed solely for (i) linguistic and stylistic proofreading of the text, (ii) ensuring the conformity of Turkish-English translations with academic terminology, and (iii) identifying alternative interpretive perspectives in the analysis of poetic examples. The identification of the original research question, the development of the theoretical framework, the close reading and interpretation of primary sources (the *Dīwān* of Aḥmad Maṭar), and the conclusions drawn are entirely the product of the author's academic expertise and critical reasoning. The AI tools were not used for direct text generation, academic plagiarism, or creative content production; they were consulted only as auxiliary instruments. By this statement, the author declares full compliance with the ethical principles and regulations regarding the use of generative artificial intelligence set forth by the Council of Higher Education (YÖK).

Introduction

Figurative language functions by extending words beyond their conventional and literal meanings, opening new avenues for interpretation. In doing so, it moves beyond mere communication and enriches a text's aesthetic, intellectual, and emotional dimensions. By expanding meaning, making abstract concepts tangible, and presenting thought from new perspectives, figurative expression reveals the creative potential of language, especially in literature. Through devices such as simile (*tashbīh*), metaphor (*isti'ārah*), and metonymy (*al-Majāz al-Mursal*), words are lifted from their ordinary contexts and employed in novel and compelling ways. Thus, figurative language serves as a fundamental expressive strategy that both enhances the density of discourse and transcends the limits of literal expression to construct a richer universe of meaning.²

The significance of figurative expression becomes particularly evident in poetry. Poetry does not leave meaning merely on the surface of words; rather, it intensifies, condenses, and layers meaning through metaphor and association. In this sense, it resembles visual communication, as both employ images that carry multiple interpretations and invite diverse readings. Metaphors and other figurative devices do not dictate a single correct meaning; instead, they generate plural interpretations shaped by the reader's background knowledge, personal experience, and worldview. Poetry, therefore, communicates even before it is fully read, influencing the reader's mind and inner world prior to conscious awareness. This demonstrates that figurative language in poetry is not simply an aesthetic embellishment, but a constitutive element of meaning, shaping both its construction and its emotional impact. Consequently, figurative language acts as a medium that evokes emotional intensity, engages intuitive and subconscious perception, and expands intellectual horizons. Through its figurative dimension, poetry emerges not as a purely rational discourse but as a multi-layered universe of meaning, revealing new possibilities with each reading.³ As a prominent feature of figurative expression, the simile enriches language by generating multiple layers of meaning. By transforming ordinary statements into compelling expressions that leave a lasting impression on the reader, it functions as an indispensable element of figurative language.⁴

In addition, other figurative devices, such as metaphor and metonymy, perform functions similar to those of similes. They enable words to transcend their conventional meanings, enriching both the cognitive and emotional layers of a text. Such figurative usage allows meaning to evolve, drawing on historical and cultural contexts, and renders ordinary expressions significant in unexpected ways. For example, the metaphorical connection between cognition and vision broadens the reader's understanding not only conceptually but also intuitively and through imagery. Thus, figurative language in poetry is not merely an aesthetic ornament; it reconstructs the building blocks of the text, creating a multi-layered universe of meaning in the reader's mind, where each reading reveals new associations and opens fresh interpretive possibilities.⁵

People employ figurative language not merely to convey information, but also to achieve specific communicative goals. These goals include emphasizing points, clarifying meaning, capturing attention, creating humor, expressing negative emotions, drawing comparisons, conveying politeness, and influencing others' behavior. Consequently, the use of figurative language allows individuals to make their messages more effective, engaging, and multi-layered; in certain contexts, it transcends everyday language, adding aesthetic and

² Anthony M. Paul, "Figurative Language", *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 3/4 (1970), 225-248.

³ Gloria Schultz Eastman, "Making Metaphor Visible: The Common Core, Poetry, and Visual Literacy", *The English Journal* 104/6 (2015), 40-46.

⁴ Louise Shabat Bethlehem, "Simile and Figurative Language", *Poetics Today* 17/2 (1996), 203-240.

⁵ Barbara Dancygier – Eve Sweetser, *Figurative Language* (United Kingdoms: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 3-4.

cognitive dimensions. Moreover, the functions of various figurative devices—such as metaphor, simile, irony, hyperbole, and idiom—may partially overlap or diverge, enabling speakers to select the most suitable form according to their communicative intentions. In this way, figurative language serves as a strategic tool that enriches meaning while reinforcing communicative objectives.⁶

Figurative language exhibits a bipolar nature, encompassing both positive and negative dimensions. On the one hand, it serves as a creative tool that enriches meaning and deepens cognitive and emotional layers in both literary texts and everyday communication. Poets and ordinary speakers alike can employ the same underlying figurative schemas to convey their messages more effectively, engagingly, and in a multi-layered way. Figurative language facilitates the intensification of meaning, the concretization of abstract concepts, and the activation of the reader's imaginative capacity; thus, communication becomes not merely the transmission of information, but also an aesthetic and cognitive experience. On the other hand, incorrect, excessive, or contextually inappropriate use of figurative language can obscure meaning, complicate communication, and create interpretive challenges for the reader. Overextended metaphors, faulty figurative expressions, or contextually incongruent usage may reduce clarity, hindering comprehension in both written and oral communication. Therefore, academic research and pedagogical studies emphasize that figurative language should be employed carefully and with contextual sensitivity, functioning as a strategic and effective communicative tool.⁷

In Arabic rhetoric, figurative expression is not treated as a monolithic concept. Instead, it is categorized under specific sub-disciplines: the science of bayān (rhetorical clarity) encompasses devices such as simile (*tashbīh*), metaphor (*isti'ārah*), and metonymy (*al-majāz al-mursal*). Meanwhile, the science of *badī'* (rhetorical embellishment) deals with stylistic figures such as antithesis (*ṭibāq*), hyperbole (*mubālāghah*), and various other ornamental devices. Together, these elements constitute the broader framework of figurative and aesthetic expression in the Arabic literary tradition. Therefore, while figurative expression in Western literature represents a general overarching concept, it does not exist as such in Arabic rhetoric. Consequently, as noted above, any form of expression that transcends literal language, creating imagery in the audience's mind and rendering abstract concepts concrete and visual, can be considered figurative. From this perspective, the poet's relevant *qaṣīdah* will be examined not only with reference to classical figures but also by taking into account all figurative elements that render the expression perceptible. Before proceeding to the *qaṣīdah* under study, it is appropriate to provide a brief introduction to the poet. Before proceeding, it is necessary to provide brief information regarding the fundamental concepts that will be employed in this study.

1.1. Poetic imagination

One of the most highly valued elements in Arabic poetry is the faculty of imagery, known as *tahyīl* (imaginative representation). This aspect of poetry is not exclusive to any single literary tradition; rather, it stems from the innate human capacity for imagination and is therefore relevant to the literature of all nations. However, in Arabic poetry, this faculty is particularly prominent and highly developed. According to Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī (d. 471/1078-79), a foundational figure in Arabic rhetorical theory (*balāghah*), *tahyīl* consists of presenting, within poetry, a relationship or meaning that reason would not normally accept, in such a style that the listener — despite knowing it to be unreal — temporarily perceives it as true and is emotionally affected by it. In other words, al-Jurjānī defines *tahyīl* as "a bridge between negation (*nafy*) and affirmation (*ithbāt*)": the poet portrays a situation that does not

⁶ Richard M. Roberts - Roger J. Kreuz, "Why Do People Use Figurative Language?," *Psychological Science* 5/3 (1994), 159-163.

⁷ Raymond W. Gibbs, *the Poetics of Mind* (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 2-3.

exist in reality as if it actually did, employing such skillful language and imaginative construction that the listener's rational judgment is temporarily suspended, leading them to believe — at least for the moment — in the truth of that image.⁸

1.2. Similes

In the Arabic rhetorical tradition, the simile (*tashbīh*) is regarded as far more than a mere linguistic ornament; it is considered a hallmark of intellectual maturity, literary erudition, and refined discernment. Particularly, those similes characterized by subtlety and a need for interpretation possess a depth that eludes the grasp of the average listener. Such analogies can only be decoded through delicate thought, profound reflection, and superior intelligence. These sophisticated similes are found exclusively within "works of literature and wisdom, and among those of virtue and complete intellect"; they are not to be found in common parlance. In this respect, the simile functions as a metric for assessing one's level of knowledge and culture. Furthermore, the literary value of a simile increases in direct proportion to its complexity—that is, as its need for interpretation and its degree of obscurity rise. While the simplest similes (such as the fluidity of water or the sweetness of honey) are understood by everyone, the most intricate ones appeal only to an elite intellectual circle. Consequently, in Arabic rhetoric, the simile is not a mundane figure of speech, but a multi-layered bridge constructed between intellectual depth, aesthetic sensitivity, and social distinction.⁹ Without the simile, there can be no poetic imagination (*tahyīl*), and without imagination, aesthetic impact and literary pleasure in poetry remain unattainable. Thus, the simile stands as the fundamental cornerstone of poetic creativity and eloquence.

1.3. Metaphors

One of the most significant sources of figurative expression in Arabic literature is the art of metaphor (*isti'ārah*). Metaphor involves the transposition (*naql*) of a word from its original lexical root to another meaning, contingent upon a specific relationship of resemblance. This process is far from arbitrary; while metaphor is rooted in the purpose of comparison (*tashbīh*), it is not a mundane simile but represents the most sublime, complete, and hyperbolic form of comparison. Metaphor serves three primary objectives: to achieve hyperbolic comparison, to ensure conciseness and brevity (*ījāz* and *ikhtisār*), and to generate poetic imagination or aesthetic illusion (*tahyīl*). Through metaphor, a single word simultaneously conveys the object being described, the attribute, the comparison, and the hyperbole. Furthermore, metaphor contains an element of claim (*id'ā'*): when a poet or orator employs a metaphor, they claim that the transposed meaning inherently belongs to the object. In this respect, metaphor differs from the art of allegory or proverb (*tamthīl*); whereas in *tamthīl* words retain their original meanings, in metaphor, a word is uprooted from its original "nest," transposed to a new meaning, and acts as if it were the rightful inhabitant there. This act of transposition and claim elevates the metaphor from a mere comparison to an intellectual leap, a discovery, and a creation. Ultimately, metaphor is the soul that breathes life into the lifeless body of speech; it grants language depth, multi-layeredness, impact, and permanence. While speech without metaphor remains a flat and monotonous report, speech infused with metaphor transforms into a literary work of art that leaves a lasting impression on the listener's mind, provokes thought, and reveals new layers of meaning with every reading.¹⁰

2. Muslim Ibn al-Walīd: Life, Works, and Contributions to Classical Arabic Poetry

Muslim Ibn al-Walīd, known by Abū Walīd, belonged to the Ansār lineage and was a native of Kūfa. Historical sources note that he gained renown under the epithet Ṣarī' al-Ghawānī and was also referred to during his lifetime as al-Maddāh al-Muḥassinīn (The One

⁸ 'Abd al-Qāhir b. 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Jurjānī, *Asrār al-balāgha*, ed. Maḥmūd Muḥammad Shākir (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Madanī, n.d.), 267.

⁹ Jurjānī, *Asrār al-balāgha*, 90-95.

¹⁰ Jurjānī, *Asrār al-balāgha*, 238-240.

Who Praises in the Most Beautiful Manner). In literary history, he is particularly recognized for his ghazal-style poetry. Ibn al-Walīd was also noted for his powerful madīḥ (panegyric) style. His qaṣīdas composed in praise of statesmen such as Yazīd b. Mazyad, Dāwūd b. Yazīd al-Muhallabī, the Barmakids, and their secretary (Kātib) Muḥammad b. Maṣṣūr b. Ziyād, contributed significantly to his fame. Moreover, he praised the caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd (d. 193/809) and prominent figures of the Abbasid period, thereby establishing close ties with the court. According to reports, the caliph conferred upon him the epithet Ṣarī' al-Ghawānī after he recited a line extolling the charms of youth and beauty in the caliph's presence, a title that subsequently became synonymous with his renown.¹¹ He also held a noteworthy position in political affairs. These appointments indicate that his prominence extended beyond his literary achievements to include significant administrative and political roles. Ibn al-Walīd lived in Jurjān until the end of his life, where he eventually passed away.¹²

Ibn al-Walīd built upon the badī' tradition initiated by the poet Bashshār b. Burd (d. 167/783–84) and further developed it in his own poetry, a tradition that Abū Tammām (d. 231/846) later took to extremes. The lines he recited in the presence of Hārūn al-Rashīd provide striking examples of both aesthetic refinement and semantic density; according to reports, the caliph had these poems transcribed in gold ink.¹³

Ibn al-Walīd, unlike contemporaries such as Abū Nuwās (d. 198/813 [?]) and Abū l-'Atāhiya (d. 210/825 [?]), who frequently employed colloquial and simple expressions, Ibn al-Walīd favored the majestic rhythm of long meters, emphasizing the grandeur and musicality of language. He never composed poetry spontaneously or solely by inspiration; rather, he regarded it as an art requiring painstaking craftsmanship, exhibiting scrupulous care in word choice, sound patterns of the verses, and the overall cohesion of his compositions. Consequently, although his dīwān is relatively small in volume, each qaṣīda stands out for its structural integrity and aesthetic power. His approach prevented Abbasid poetry from succumbing to the trend of colloquialization, reviving the grandeur of classical poetic style. However, in his view, the magnificence of this “grand structure” alone was insufficient; it needed to be complemented by ornamentation and aesthetic refinement. Indeed, he consciously incorporated this element of embellishment, which appeared sporadically in poetry without becoming a full-fledged school, thereby harmonizing the dignity of classical Arab poetry with the subtlety of new artistic explorations. As a result, he exerted a profound influence on both his contemporaries and subsequent poets; traces of the strong and artful style he pioneered are clearly visible in the works of poets such as Abū Tammām and al-Buhtūrī.¹⁴

3. Figurative Expression in Muslim Ibn al-Walīd

Upon entering the poetic world of Ibn al-Walīd, the masterful use of figurative expression becomes immediately striking to the reader. His language transcends mere words; it constructs the scene, immerses the audience in the heart of the event, and vividly renders each detail. The success of his similes extends beyond mere comparison: each image is meticulously positioned to create a living tableau in the reader's mind. The subtlety of his metaphors (isti'āra) unfolds like a cinematic strip in the imagination, intensifying the way the text is experienced. The careful selection of words and the layered relationships he establishes between meanings add considerable depth to his compositions. His use of exaggeration (mubālagha) is so compelling that it captivates the reader, with each hyperbole maximizing the dramatic and aesthetic impact of the scene. In such poetry, the poet offers not merely the act of reading but

¹¹ Abū Muḥammad 'Abd Allāh b. Muslim b. Kutayba al-Dīnawarī, *al-Shi'r wa al-Shu'arā'* (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1423/2002), 2/822.

¹² Ḥayruddīn al-Ziriklī, *al-A'lām* (Beirut: Dār al-'Ilm li'l-Malāyīn, 2002), 7/223.

¹³ Ibn al-Mu'tazz al-'Abbāsī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shu'arā'*, Critical ed. Abd al-Sattār Aḥmad Farāğ (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, n.d.), 235.

¹⁴ Shawqī Dayf, *al-Fann wa Mazāhibuhū* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, n.d.)183.

an experience of visualization and staging; the reader becomes mentally and emotionally engaged, navigating the event as if within it. Muslim b. Walid's figurative expression exemplifies some of the most striking dimensions of classical Arabic poetry, demonstrating unparalleled mastery in both visualization and semantic intensity.

4. An Overview of the Qasida

In this study, *al-Qaṣīdah al-Lāmiyyah*, which consists of 79 lines and stands as one of the poet's most distinguished works, will be examined. According to the Syrian scholar Sāmi ad-Dahhān (1912–1971), who critically annotated the poet's work, the qasida is among the poet's most celebrated compositions. This qasida has been attributed, either wholly or partially, to the poet in numerous poetry collections and biographical sources, including Ibn al-Mu'tazz's (d. 296/908) *Ṭabaqāt al-Shu'arā'*, Abū al-Faraj al-Isfahānī's (d. 356/967) *al-Aghānī*, and al-Marzubānī's (d. 384/994) *Mu'jam al-Shu'arā'*, and is regarded as one of his most valuable works.¹⁵

The story of the *al-Qaṣīda* is particularly noteworthy, according to Usāma b. al-Munqidh (d. 584/1188), who transmits it from Abū al-Faraj al-Isfahānī's *al-Aghānī*. According to the account, Muslim, while experiencing financial hardship, is forced to sell his shoes to provide food when an unexpected guest arrives at his home. At that very moment, a messenger of Yazīd b. Mazyad al-Shaybānī arrives, bringing a generous gift: ten thousand dirhams are left at his house, with an additional three thousand dirhams for travel expenses. Muslim later travels to Raqqa and presents himself before Yazid, who receives him warmly and requests that he recite a qasida. The origin of the close relationship between Yazid and Muslim is also noteworthy. According to the narrative, Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd once cited verses praising Yazīd during a gathering and inquired about their author. Yazid initially claimed not to know who had composed them. Subsequent investigation revealed that the poem had been written by Ibn al-Walīd, and Yazīd learned this information directly from the caliph, subsequently inviting the poet and placing him under his patronage. In this way, Muslim's connection with Yazid was established through the recognition of his panegyric by Hārūn al-Rashīd, which in turn laid the groundwork for the composition of the *al-Qaṣīda*.¹⁶

The opening line (matla') of the 79-verse qasida is as follows:

أَجْرَتْ حَبْلَ خَلِيعٍ فِي الصَّبَا غَزَلٍ وَشَمَّرَتْ هَمَمُ الْعُدَالِ فِي الْعَدَلِ

Ujrirtu ḥabla khalī'in fi 's-ṣibā ḡazilin Wa-shammarat himamu'l-'uḍḍālī fi'l-'aḍali
In the bloom of youth, I was swept away by the passions of love and the delights of
indulgence;

yet the zeal of my critics in reproach only grew, reaching its fullest measure.¹⁷

Beginning with the traditional nasīb/tashbīb prelude characteristic of Abbasid-era Arabic poetry, this qasida, as noted above, has drawn significant attention from Arab literary critics and historians. The poet's literary performance within the qasida has been praised by numerous scholars. According to Ibn al-Mu'tazz, the *al-Qaṣīda* is composed entirely of distinguished and exemplary lines.¹⁸ Some have claimed that he was the first to disrupt poetry by introducing the art known as *badī'*. However, Abū Hilāl al-'Askarī (d. after 400/1009) completely rejected these assertions, arguing—citing the qasida under study in our research as evidence—that it is impossible to claim that the author “spoiled poetry,” given the remarkable

¹⁵ Muslim Ibn al-Walīd al-Ansārī, *Sharḥ Dīwān Sārī al-Gawānī*, Critical ed. Sāmī al-Dahhān (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 2009), 1.

¹⁶ 'Usāma b. Munqidh, *Kitāb al-Lubābī al-Ādāb (Kitāb al-Lāmiyyat al-Ādāb)*, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākīr (Cairo: Maktabat al-Sunna, 1407/1987), 141.

¹⁷ The qasida is located on pages 1–23 of the poet's dīwān. Accordingly, in the subsequent sections of this study, individual footnote references for each citation have not been provided in order to avoid unnecessary repetition. Muslim b. Walīd, *Sharḥ Dīwān Sārī al-Gawānī*, 1–23.

¹⁸ Ibn al-Mu'tazz al-'Abbāsī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shu'arā'*, 236.

strength and artistry of such a composition.¹⁹ According to the Sudanese contemporary Arab literary scholar ‘Abdullāh Ṭayyib al-Majzūb (1921–2003), although the poet aimed at political propaganda in this qasida, he nevertheless exhibited genuine admiration for its addressee, thereby reflecting emotional sincerity in his expressions.²⁰

The general structure of the qasida can be summarized as follows: The work stands out as an exemplary model encompassing all elements of the classical qasida form. The poem begins with the *nasīb/tashbīb* section, where the poet evokes emotions of love and separation, creating a poignant and emotional atmosphere. This is followed by an extended and intense transition into the main epic section, which forms the body of the composition. In this part, battle scenes, depictions of heroism, and tributes to the tribe are rendered with powerful rhetoric. Toward the conclusion of the qasida, themes of generosity, nobility, and virtue come to the forefront, with closing lines reflecting a tone of wisdom reminiscent of moral instruction. Overall, the poem consists of approximately eighty lines and exhibits a cohesive structure that can be read in three main sections. In terms of literary artistry, the qasida is distinguished by the prominence of simile and exaggeration. The destructive effects of war and scenes of heroism are often reinforced through metaphor and allusion, with frequent use of stark contrasts heightening emotional tension. Occasional wordplay and puns are also employed, though they occupy a secondary role. In particular, the epic section makes extensive use of metaphor, allegory, and personification, enhancing the dramatic tone of the poem. Elements of wisdom are also evident: in some lines, the poet links lineage with virtue, developing a moral perspective, so that praise is based not only on military and social achievements but also on ethical legitimacy.

Linguistically, the qasida adheres to the “elevated” style of classical Arabic poetry. The syntax frequently employs parallelism, repetition, and rhetorical embellishment, while the addressive style lends vitality to the poem. Vocabulary is generally clear and comprehensible, though occasional unusual or archaic expressions appear; these usages do not diminish the rhetorical power of the qasida but rather highlight the richness of the classical lexicon. With all these characteristics, the qasida can be regarded as a work that both continues the classical qasida tradition and stands out for its artistic strength. Its architecture, style, and density of literary devices reflect not only the poetics of its period but also the poet’s individual mastery.

4.1. Similes

The poet’s most accomplished skill, the art of simile, is exemplified in the following line, which presents an extraordinary richness of meaning.

مَوْفٍ عَلَى مُهْجٍ فِي يَوْمٍ ذِي رَهَجٍ كَأَنَّهُ أَجَلٌ يَسْعَى إِلَى أَمَلٍ
Mūfin ‘alā muhajin fī yawmi dī rahajin Ka’annahū ajalun yas ‘ā ilā amali
It advanced toward lives, on a day thick with dust and smoke,
as if it were a death walking steadily toward a glimmer of hope.

In the line describing the addressee’s sudden assault on the enemy amidst dust and smoke during battle, the striking quality of the simile lies in its ability to establish unexpected semantic connections between seemingly contrasting phenomena. On the one hand, the event depicted is the surprise attack on enemy soldiers in the midst of swirling dust and dirt during combat. On the other hand, the verse alludes to the human experience of pursuing hopes and dreams only to be overtaken by death. At first glance, these two events appear entirely unrelated; yet the poet masterfully reconciles them within the verse, producing a profound meaning: while the enemy harbored great hope of victory in battle, you delivered their deaths from an unexpected quarter. Clearly, this is a simile worthy of high praise.

¹⁹ Abū Hilāl al-Ḥasan b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Sahl al-‘Askarī, *al-Awā’il* (Tanta: Dār al-Bashīr, 1408), 439.

²⁰ ‘Abd Allāh Ṭayyib Majzūb, *al-Murshid ilā Fahmi al-Shi‘ārī al-‘Arab* (Kuwait: Dār al-Āsār al-Islāmiyya, 1409/1989), 4/ 776.

In another line, while extolling the fighting warriors for both their generosity and courage, the poet employs the following simile:

يَقْرِي الْمَيِّتَةَ أَرْوَاحُ الْكُمَاةِ كَمَا يَقْرِي الضُّيُوفَ شُحُومُ الْكُومِ وَالْبُزُلِ

Yaqri 'l-maniyyata arwāhu 'l-kumāti kamā Yaqri 'd-ḍuyūfa shuḥūma 'l-kūmi wa 'l-buzuli
The spirits of the heroes offer death as a gift,
just as they serve rich camel meat to their guests.

Here, an ironic expression is employed. The juxtaposition of unexpected meanings creates aesthetic value through contrast. Specifically, the poet depicts the heroes of the praised tribe as offering death to their enemies in battle, just as they would serve rich camel meat to their guests—a strikingly unusual comparison. The intent behind portraying such a horrific scene of conflict and death through the lens of a seemingly unrelated act, such as serving food during a feast, is likely to convey the following: the valiant warriors are so skilled in combat that slaying their enemies appears as natural and noble to them as personally serving a meal to friends at a banquet. Through this simile, dominated by irony, the poet unites the awe-inspiring courage that evokes fear with the generosity that inspires admiration and affection, presenting both qualities in a balanced and harmonious manner.

In another line, the poet likens the enemy army to ostriches, vividly portraying their flight and dispersal on the battlefield:

مَا كَانَ جَمْعُهُمْ لَمَّا لَقِيَتْهُمْ إِلَّا كَمِثْلِ نُعَامٍ رِيعٍ مُنْجَفِلٍ

Mā kāna jam 'uhumu lammā laqītahumu illā ka-mithli nu 'āmin rī'a munjafili
When faced with them, the opposing troops scatter,
like ostriches startled upon a high plain.

Ostriches are naturally timid and skittish animals. They are highly sensitive to even the slightest unexpected movement or sound, making them prone to flee. Unlike predatory animals, which may gain courage and aggressiveness through group cohesion, ostriches lack such collective boldness. When faced with a threat, they prefer to scatter immediately rather than confront it or exhibit perseverance. The poet, drawing on these animals that inhabit regions close to the subjects of his praise and share a familiar environment, uses them in his encomium. When the praised figure enters the battlefield, the poet likens the state of his enemies to that of ostriches: just as ostriches scatter in all directions at the slightest alarm, so too do the enemy soldiers disperse in panic.

Another example in which metaphor and simile harmoniously converge to produce a perfect depiction is found in the poet's presentation of one of the finest specimens of epic poetry, which he introduces as follows:

يَكْسُو السُّيُوفَ دِمَاءَ النَّاكِثِينَ بِهِ وَيَجْعَلُ الْهَامَ تِجَانًا الْقَنَا الذُّبُلِ

Yaksu 's-suyūfa dimā 'a 'n-nākithīna bi-hī Wa-yaj 'alu 'l-hāma tījāna 'l-kanā 'd-dubuli
He clothes the swords with the blood of those who break their pledges and fashions from
severed heads the crowns of withered lances.

Elucidating the nature of the extraordinary power of imagery in this verse, and thereby unveiling its figurative dimension, is by no means an easy task. The poet begins here with metaphor. In the expression 'to clothe the swords with blood,' there are elements that prevent the words from being taken in their literal sense. First, the verb *yaksū* ('to clothe') cannot be employed literally, for blood (*dimā'*) cannot be made into a garment. Thus, the verse contains an implied metaphor (*isti'āra makniyya*), in which the swords are likened to a human being upon whom garments are placed, thereby also realizing the figure of personification (*tashkhīṣ*). At the same time, the word *dimā'* ('blood') is contextually used in the place of garments. The swords are thus clothed not with garments but with blood. Consequently, the verse also features an explicit metaphor (*isti'āra taṣrīhiyya*), since the garments to which the blood is likened have been elided.

In the second hemistich, however, the poet replaces the intricate metaphor with an eloquent simile (*tashbīh balīgh*). By declaring that he fashions crowns out of skulls, he likens the severed heads of his enemies to crowns. The beauty of this simile—where both the comparative particle and the ground of resemblance are omitted—lies in the subtlety embedded in the phrase *tījān al-qanā al-dhubl*. In what respect do skulls resemble crowns? To answer this, the descriptive phrase *al-qanā al-dhubl* must first be unpacked. The adjective *dhubl* is originally used of flowers and plants when, after withering and losing their vitality, they droop downwards. A flower that has lost its moisture and turned yellow cannot stand upright; its head inevitably bends. To describe spears with this epithet is, at first glance, an unexpected characterization. Yet it is precisely here that the beauty of the verse emerges. In battle, the warriors' spears are wielded with such intensity that they cause the death of countless enemies. The bronze spearheads, repeatedly thrust into human bodies, eventually become bent and misshapen. This allusion to distorted spear-points serves as a highly indirect yet hyperbolic way of conveying the brutality of the carnage. But what, then, is meant by the *tījān* ('crowns') at the tips of these bent spears? Clearly, the poet seeks to render the horror of war in its most extreme figurative form. For after relentlessly thrusting their spears into the enemy and severing heads from bodies, the warriors mount those skulls upon their spear-tips. Thus, the heads become like crowns adorning the spears, just as kings wear crowns as symbols of sovereignty and power. In this way, the imagery of warriors crowning their weapons with enemy skulls contributes profoundly to the aesthetics of war.

4.2. Metaphors

The following line constitutes a highly striking example in terms of demonstrating the richness of meaning that figurative expression imparts to poetic discourse:

يَغْشَى الْوَعْيَ وَشِهَابُ الْمَوْتِ فِي يَدِهِ يَرْمِي الْفَوَارِسَ وَالْأَبْطَالَ بِالشَّعْلِ
Yagsha 'l-waḡā wa-shihābu 'l-mawti fī yadi-hī Yarmī 'l-fawārisa wa 'l-abṭāla bi 'sh-shu 'al
He plunges into battle with death's lightning bolts in his hand;
Upon horsemen and warriors he scatters sparks like flashes of lightning.

In this line, the poet, through his masterful use of figurative language, evokes a vivid image in the reader's mind. According to his depiction, the sword in the hand of the praised figure appears like a flash of lightning in its brilliance and movement; this radiance and speed instill fear and bewilderment in the enemy. The comparison of the sword to lightning conveys not only a visual association but also the psychological impact it exerts on the battlefield, where enemy soldiers are struck with dread at such dazzling and rapid assaults. In this way, the line strikingly demonstrates both the power of figurative expression and the poet's linguistic virtuosity.

In another line, he states as follows:

لَا يُلْقِي الْحَرْبَ إِلَّا رَيْثَ يُنْتِجُهَا مِنْ هَالِكٍ وَأَسِيرٍ غَيْرِ مُخْتَلِلٍ
Lā yulqīhu 'l-ḥarba illā raytha yuntijuhā Min hālikin wa-asīri ḡayri mukhtatali
He does not touch the battle except that it gives birth — to the slain and the captive, without exception..

A rather peculiar mode of expression is found in this verse. Here, Muslim b. al-Walīd presents the battlefield through a striking and highly unconventional figurative image. When the praised hero enters the fray, battle itself is portrayed as a woman who, as it were, 'conceives' by his action; the resulting 'offspring' are the slain enemies and the captives. This metaphor dramatically exposes both the destructive and merciless nature of war and the poet's mastery of vivid description. Muslim's choice of diction and employment of simile enable the reader to visualize the intensity of the scene with remarkable clarity, almost to the point of experiencing its physical and psychological impact. This example demonstrates that the poet's use of

figurative language is not merely ornamental but functions as a device to heighten the intensity and effect of the event being depicted.

In another line that demonstrates the poet's mastery of figurative expression, the events of battle are conveyed in all their horror as follows:

قَدْ عَوَّدَ الطَّيْرَ عَادَاتٍ وَثِقْنَ بِهَا فَهَنْ يَتَّبِعْنَهُ فِي كُلِّ مَرْتَحَلٍ

Qad 'awwada 't-ṭayra 'ādātin wathiqna bihā Fa-hunna yatba 'nahū fī kulli murtaḥali

*He instilled certain habits in the birds, and they came to trust him;
so much so that the birds would follow him wherever he went.*

With this scene he constructs around the birds, the poet does not merely offer a verbal description but virtually stages a cinematic tableau. Predatory birds such as vultures and eagles have grown so accustomed to and so trusting of the praised commander's army that, wherever its shadow falls, they anticipate a feast to satisfy their hunger. For these birds, any region toward which the army advances already appears as a bloody banquet, an irresistible table of delights. When the battle is over and the field is strewn with corpses, the sight of the birds voraciously tearing apart and devouring the bodies assumes a horrifying reality in the imagination. Their bellies become so gorged that they no longer even deign to glance at the blood-soaked remains. Yet what is most striking in this scene is the birds' absolute confidence in the army's victory, so much so that they follow the warriors like a shadow, accompanying them wherever they go. This description transcends mere depiction; the details it evokes in the mind resemble a painting wrought by an artist's brush or a scene brought to the screen by a director. In his use of language, the poet does not simply narrate—he sketches, paints, and stages. In this respect, his style becomes one of the most vivid exemplifications of figurative expression.

In another line, the poet displays his skill in imagery as follows:

مَاتُوا وَأَنْتَ غَلِيلٌ فِي صُدُورِهِمْ وَكَانَ سَيْفُكَ يُسْتَشْفَى مِنَ الْعُلَلِ

Mātū wa-anta ḡalīlun fī ṣudūrihimu Wa-kāna sayfuka yustashfā mina 'l-ḡulali

*Though they perished while harboring a thirst for you,
Your sword is, in any case, a cure for all thirsts.*

In this line, the poet employs a highly striking metaphor by expressing the enemy's deep rancor and fury through the word *ḡalīl*—literally meaning 'thirst.' Just as thirst consumes a person until it is quenched, so too does anger gnaw at one from within until it is appeased. Yet the poet's artistry does not end with this metaphor: he also personifies the sword, portraying it as a physician or a healing remedy. The sword thus becomes the sole cure, the only treatment capable of eliminating the thirst of rage accumulated in the hearts of the enemy. Moreover, the word *ḡalīl*, which evokes both 'thirst' and 'wrath,' constitutes a case of *tawrīya* (double entendre), lending the expression a multilayered quality. Consequently, the verse presents the death of the enemies before the praised hero not merely as defeat but as a form of 'healing process': being slain delivers them from their burning thirst of rage. Death, therefore, is depicted not as ruin, but as the ultimate remedy for rancor and hatred.

One of the most masterful examples of metaphor woven by the poet is found in the following line:

نَابُ الْإِمَامِ الَّذِي يَفْتَرُّ عَنْهُ إِذَا مَا افْتَرَّتِ الْحَرْبُ عَنْ أَنْيَابِهَا الْعُضُلِ

Nābu 'l-imāmi 'llaḍī yaftarru 'anhu idā Mā 'ftarrati 'l-ḥarbu 'an anyābiha 'l-'uṣuli
(The hero's) teeth resemble the smiling incisor when the sharp teeth of battle are laid bare;
just as the battlefield opens up, revealing its hard and pointed fangs.

Due to its density of meaning, we must admit that in rendering the above line into English we could not remain fully faithful to the text. In this verse, the poet constructs a striking simile by juxtaposing the hero's smiling incisor with the teeth of battle. The *nāb al-imām* (the front incisor) is likened to the tooth of a lion displayed when it launches its attack upon an enemy. The verse then speaks of the 'opened teeth of battle,' thereby bringing together the

dread of war and the majesty of the hero's smile on a single plane. The epithet *al-ʿuṣul*, which describes teeth slightly curved and bent by virtue of their sharpness, further accentuates the destructive power of war. In this way, the poet emphasizes that even an ordinary smile becomes identified with the might of battle. The simile and metaphor in this line elevate the hero's grandeur to an extraordinary level: even his smile is transformed into a source of power that strikes terror into the enemy.

4.3. Hyperboles

In figurative expression, which renders emotions and thoughts visible and tangible, hyperbole is a frequently employed device. In the following line, the poet, while portraying the physical beauty of the praised figure, creates a striking image in the reader's imagination through an exaggerated depiction that deliberately transcends the bounds of measure:

لَا يَبْقَى الطِّيبُ حَدَّيْهِ وَمَفْرَقَهُ وَلَا يُمَسِّحُ عَيْنَيْهِ مِنَ الْكُحْلِ

Lā ya 'baqu' ṭ-ṭību khaddayhi wa-mafriqahū Wa-lā yumassihu 'aynayhi mina' l-kuḥuli

No fragrant perfume can scent her cheeks and hair;

nor does any kohl need to be applied to her eyes

Here, the poet's intention is as follows: her skin and hair are so naturally fragrant that any applied essence or musk exerts no effect, for the natural scent of her body so overwhelms external fragrances that they are rendered negligible. Similarly, kohl is traditionally applied to the eyes to enhance their beauty and, by extension, the face. Yet the beauty of the praised figure's eyes and face is so consummate that the application of kohl becomes a superfluous effort. The following line also bears clear traces of hyperbole:

وَإِنْ خَلَّتْ بِحَدِيثِ النَّفْسِ فِكْرَتُهُ حَيَّى الرَّجَاءَ وَمَاتَ الْخَوْفُ مِنْ وَجَلِ

Wa-in khalat bi-ḥadīthi 'n-naḥsi fikratuhū Hayeya 'r-rajā' u wa-māta 'l-khawfu min wajali

When the mind is left alone with itself,

hope is revived and fear perishes

The hyperbole in the line depicts the praised individual's generosity as exceeding ordinary bounds. The poet elevates his generosity to such a degree that even the mere thought of bestowing upon another from his heart is sufficient; before any actual act of giving takes place, this intention alone revives hope in the recipient and causes the fear born of poverty to vanish, as if it were dead. In this way, the poet employs hyperbole as an effective instrument of figurative expression, rendering the individual's generosity strikingly perceptible at an extraordinary scale.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the aesthetic shift in 9th-century Arabic poetry was not merely a formal embellishment but a fundamental reconstruction of thought and imagination within a new linguistic universe. As the movement's most distinguished representative, Muslim ibn al-Walīd transcended linguistic banality, equipping his language with captivating aesthetic power. His *al-Qaṣīdah al-Lāmiyyah* is a masterful product of this endeavor, challenging the limits of figurative language to establish a profound atmosphere from the opening lines. The poet's similes, metaphors, and allegories function beyond conventional comparison; they open new intellectual horizons, intensify emotion, and materialize abstract thought, confirming that figurative expression in his art is an act of construction, not mere ornamentation. The *Qaṣīda* line serves as a laboratory that showcases the full potential of figurative narrative, offering the reader not just semantic resolution but a journey through a multi-layered world where words become luminous entities accompanying the ascension of thought on the wings of imagination. Consequently, Muslim ibn al-Walīd's work, by reflecting both the splendor of expression and the depth of meaning, establishes a definitive statement on the essence of poetry. His *al-Qaṣīdah al-Lāmiyyah* stands as a rare and magnificent example of the power of language, securing its unforgettable contribution to literary history and linguistic aesthetics.

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