




Research Article

The Complexity of Relationships between Individuals, Society, and Power in the Literary Works of Al-Mutanabbi

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Abstract. Al-Mutanabbi ranks as one of the most renowned poets in the history of Arabic literature, with his poems reflecting his complex personality and ambitions. This research aims to explore the main themes in Al-Mutanabbi's works, such as identity, self-pride, praise, social critique, and commentary on societal dynamics. By employing textual analysis and historical study methods, this research examines how Al-Mutanabbi used poetry to express his thoughts, construct his self-image, and deliver critiques of social conditions and patronage relationships during his time. The findings reveal that Al-Mutanabbi consistently projected a strong sense of confidence and pride in his works, portraying himself as a great poet. He built relationships with rulers through laudatory poems but also expressed bold criticism of opponents and the societal conditions of his era. His immense ambition is evident in his works, which often highlight the conflict between personal aspirations and the socio-political challenges of the Abbasid era. This study provides new insights into the relationship between a poet's life and the literary works he produces. It also emphasizes how poetry serves as a tool for constructing self-identity and responding to the dynamics of power in the classical era.

Keywords: Al-Mutanabbi, Abbasid Era, Identity, Classical Arabic Literature

INTRODUCTION

The Arabic language and literature have undergone a long journey.¹ This journey began even before Islam spread across the Arabian Peninsula, which made Arabic literature rich in characteristics that reflect each historical period.²

One of the golden ages and pivotal milestones in the history of Arabic literary development was the Abbasid Dynasty.³ This dynasty not only marked the peak of Islamic civilization but also represented the golden age of Arabic literature.⁴ During this period, Arabic literature experienced rapid development in themes, linguistic style, and language characteristics. Writers, poets, and scholars of the time enriched Arabic literature with monumental works addressing diverse themes, including religion, philosophy, and socio-cultural issues. The language styles became increasingly complex and artistic, reflecting the intellectual and aesthetic advancements of the era.⁵

The excellence of Arabic literature during the Abbasid Dynasty demonstrates its adaptability to the dynamics of the times, creating a literary tradition that remains relevant and inspiring to this day.⁶ These literary works served not only as

¹ Ahmed Al-Muqaddam, "Abu Al-'Atahiyah: His Poetry and Influence in Abbasid Culture," *Journal of Arabic Literary History* 14, no. 3 (2019): 45–78.

² M A Abdur-Rahman et al., "Historical Review of Classical Hadith Literature in Malay Peninsula," *International Journal of Basic & Applied Sciences* 11 (2011): 1–6.

³ Shahida Shahida, "Abbasids," in *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Islamic Finance and Economics* (Springer, 2023), 1–5.

⁴ Firma Hafmi and Muhammad Hanafi, "History of the Early Establishment of the Abbasiyah Dynasty," *JUDIKIS: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 1, no. 2 (2024): 65–80.

⁵ Abdul Hamud Ghufroon, *Sastra Arab Di Masa Kemunduran Islam*, 2019.

⁶ Abdul Rofiq, "Analysis of The Causes of The Disintegration of The Government of The Abbasiyah Dynasty (1000 M-1250 M)," *Devotion: Journal of Research and Community Service* 3, no. 3 (2022): 196–203.

entertainment but also as a medium for conveying moral and social messages. In this context, people regarded poetry as the pinnacle of art and recognized many poets as significant figures in the history of Arabic literature.⁷

Poetry emerged as one of the most influential art forms in the history of Arab civilization, providing a primary avenue for expressing identity and social critique.⁸ Through the extensive journey of the Arabic language and literature, one can see how linguistic art bridges generations and cultures while offering insights into the values and beliefs of societies in every era. In this context, Abu al-Tayyib Ahmad bin al-Husayn al-Mutanabbi (915–965 CE), better known as Al-Mutanabbi, stands out as one of the greatest Arab poets of all time. His works are renowned for their depth, imbued with self-pride, praise for rulers, and reflections on the socio-political conditions of his era. His poems not only mirror his character but also provide rich insights into the dynamics of Arab society during the Abbasid rule.⁹

Al-Mutanabbi lived in a time when the Abbasid Dynasty faced political fragmentation, with the emergence of local dynasties such as the Buyid and Hamdanid dynasties. In this context, poets often became political tools, serving rulers to strengthen their legitimacy. However, Al-Mutanabbi used poetry to express his identity and ambitions, positioning himself not merely as a patronized poet but also as a reflection of independent Arab pride.¹⁰

By examining themes such as self-identity, praise for rulers, social critique, and commentary on societal dynamics, this study aims to provide broader insights into the relevance of Al-Mutanabbi's works in understanding the relationships between individuals, society, and rulers within the context of classical Arabic literature. Additionally, this study seeks to identify how Al-Mutanabbi's poetry remains pertinent in addressing social and political issues within a broader context.¹¹

Previous studies on Arabic literature have explored various dimensions of its historical and cultural significance. Maryam¹² examined the historicity of neo-classical movements in Arabic literature, highlighting the influence of historical periods on the themes and styles of Arabic poetry. Similarly, Karima and Anwari¹³ focused on how classical schools shaped the literary framework of Arabic literature,

⁷ Ibnu Rusydi, Didin Saepudin, and Murodi Murodi, "The Golden Age of Islamic Intellectuals and The Development of Science During The Abbasid Dynasty," *Tafkir: Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Education* 4, no. 4 (2023): 599–609.

⁸ Nadiya Zulfa and Kholid Mawardi, "Architecture and Islamic Arts during the Abbasiyah Dynasty," *Innovative: Journal Of Social Science Research* 3, no. 2 (2023): 8026–37.

⁹ Abdul Hadi W.M, *Antologi Puisi Arab: Dari Zaman Pra-Islam Hingga Zaman Modern* (Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 2016), 56.

¹⁰ Suryadi, "Sastra Arab Klasik Dan Pengaruhnya Terhadap Dunia Islam," *Jurnal Sastra Islam Indonesia* 4, no. 1 (2018): 23.

¹¹ Muhammad Nabhan, *Sejarah Dan Budaya Islam Dalam Perspektif Sastra* (Bandung: Pustaka Setia, 2015).

¹² Sitti Maryam, "Historisitas Aliran Neo-Klasik Dalam Kesusastraan Arab," *Al-Irfan: Journal of Arabic Literature and Islamic Studies* 2, no. 1 (2019): 121–41.

¹³ Dewi Sofiyatul Karima and Moh Kanif Anwari, "The The Influence of the Emergence of the Madzhab of Classicism in Arabic Literature," *Journal Intellectual Sufism Research (JISR)* 5, no. 2 (2023).

emphasizing their enduring relevance. Harb¹⁴ provided insights into Arabic literary theory, discussing its evolution and contribution to global literary discourse.

While these studies contribute to understanding the broad trajectory of Arabic literature, they often treat individual poets as representatives of larger movements without delving into the nuances of their contributions. For example, Gunduz¹⁵ emphasized Ottoman-era Arabic literature but lacked a focused examination of individual poets like Al-Mutanabbi. Drory¹⁶ explored Arabic literature's impact on medieval Jewish culture, which underscores its cross-cultural influence, but does not specifically address the poet's role in shaping socio-political commentary.

Fakhreddine¹⁷ and Bakalla¹⁸ discussed modern interpretations and translations of Arabic poetry, connecting it to contemporary contexts. However, these studies primarily analyze modern Arabic poetry's multilingualism and cross-cultural dynamics, leaving a gap in the contextual analysis of classical poets like Al-Mutanabbi.

This study addresses the gap by focusing on Al-Mutanabbi's unique voice and contributions, particularly how his poetry reflects and critiques the socio-political landscape of the Abbasid era. Unlike previous studies, this research emphasizes the interplay between Al-Mutanabbi's ambitions and the broader societal structures, offering a novel perspective on his role as both an artist and a commentator. By doing so, it highlights the poet's ability to bridge individual expression with collective cultural narratives, filling a critical gap in the existing literature.

This study aims to analyze the complexity of relationships between individuals, society, and power as reflected in the literary works of Al-Mutanabbi. It seeks to explore the central themes of identity, self-pride, praise, social critique, and commentary on societal dynamics within his poetry. By conducting textual analysis and employing historical approaches, the research intends to uncover how Al-Mutanabbi utilized his poetry to construct his self-image, express his ambitions, and critique the socio-political conditions of his era. Furthermore, the study aspires to illuminate how his works exemplify the interplay between personal aspirations and the broader challenges of the Abbasid period, offering fresh perspectives on the enduring relevance of his contributions to classical Arabic literature.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research adopts a qualitative approach,¹⁹ utilizing secondary data obtained from various literary works, journal articles, and historical records related to Al-

¹⁴ Lara Harb, "Arabic Literary Theory," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Literature*, 2020.

¹⁵ Hacı Osman Gündüz, "Ottoman-Era Arabic Literature: Overview of Select Secondary Scholarship," *Al-Abhath* 69, no. 1 (2021): 107–22.

¹⁶ Rina Drory, *Models and Contacts: Arabic Literature and Its Impact on Medieval Jewish Culture*, vol. 25 (Brill, 2021).

¹⁷ Huda J Fakhreddine, "Arabic Poetry in the Twenty-First Century: Translation and Multilingualism," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 52, no. 1–2 (2021): 147–69.

¹⁸ Muhammad Hasan Bakalla, *Arabic Culture: Through Its Language and Literature* (Taylor & Francis, 2023).

¹⁹ Howard Lune and Bruce L Berg, "Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences" (Boston: Pearson, 2017).

Mutanabbi's poetry and the Abbasid era. The primary focus is on textual data extracted from Al-Mutanabbi's poems, complemented by historical context from secondary sources, including critical essays and historical studies on classical Arabic literature.²⁰

The research process involved several stages.²¹ *First*, the study identified and collected Al-Mutanabbi's selected poems that are relevant to the themes of identity, self-pride, praise, social critique, and socio-political dynamics. *Second*, the researchers gathered historical and cultural background information related to the Abbasid period. The authors critically evaluated each source for its relevance and reliability using document analysis techniques.

The analysis followed a systematic approach.²² The authors processed the data by organizing the collected materials into thematic categories such as identity, power dynamics, and social critique. Next, the data underwent reduction to focus on the most relevant and significant aspects of Al-Mutanabbi's works. Finally, the study applied interpretative analysis to uncover the symbolic meanings and thematic implications of his poems, linking them to the socio-political context of the Abbasid era. This process allowed the research to draw valid conclusions and provide a nuanced understanding of the relationships between individuals, society, and power in Al-Mutanabbi's poetry.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Biography and Career of Al-Mutanabbi

Abu al-Tayyib Ahmad bin Husain, later known as Al-Mutanabbi, was born in Kufa, Iraq, in 915 CE. At that time, Kufa was a center of Islamic culture and intellectualism, profoundly influencing his interest in literature. Al-Mutanabbi exhibited exceptional intelligence and a strong passion for learning from an early age.²³ This environment, rich in poetic and rhetorical traditions, laid the foundation for his development as a distinguished poet. He came from a modest family, but his remarkable talent in Arabic language and literature stood out among his peers.²⁴

The name "Al-Mutanabbi," meaning "the false prophet," refers to his claim of prophethood in his youth. Around the age of 20, he declared himself a prophet in the Syrian region, leading to conflict with local authorities. As a result, he was imprisoned

²⁰ Rizzaldy Satria Wiwaha et al., "SYAM STATE MADRASAH HADITH IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF REGIONAL HADITH STUDIES," *Al-Shafi'i International Journal of Islamic Contemporary Studies* 3, no. 1 (2023): 90–107.

²¹ Engkos Kosasih, Mohammad Rindu Fajar Islamy, and Rizzaldy Satria Wiwaha, "Artificial Intelligence in the Era of Society 5.0: Compromising Technological Innovation Through TheWasathiyah Approach within the Framework of Islamic Law," *Al-Istinbath: Jurnal Hukum Islam* 9, no. 2 November (2024): 519–40.

²² G S Sucato, "Reviewing Manuscripts: A Systematic Approach," *Journal of Pediatric and Adolescent Gynecology*, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpag.2018.06.005>; Matthew B Miles and A Michael Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook* (London and New Delhi: Sage Publications, Inc, 2013).

²³ Abdul Hadi W.M, *Antologi Puisi Arab: Dari Zaman Pra-Islam Hingga Zaman Modern*.

²⁴ Ahmad Abdul Fattah, "Eksplorasi Kepribadian Al-Mutanabbi Melalui Puisinya," *Jurnal Sastra Islam* 5, no. 1 (2020): 12.

and eventually renounced his claim. Although this episode ended with his incarceration, it symbolized his boundless ambition to achieve greatness and leave a lasting legacy in the history of Arabic literature.²⁵

One of the most significant moments in Al-Mutanabbi's career was his relationship with Sayf al-Dawlah al-Hamdani, the ruler of the Hamdanid dynasty in Aleppo. In 948 CE, Al-Mutanabbi became part of *Sayf al-Dawlah's* court, where he received patronage that allowed him to refine his poetry. Under *Sayf al-Dawlah's* patronage, he composed numerous poems praising the ruler's courage, justice, and grandeur. This relationship was not only professional but also emotionally charged. However, conflicts among court poets and his criticism of rivals eventually strained this relationship.²⁶

In his panegyrics, Al-Mutanabbi not only celebrated *Sayf al-Dawlah's* valor and leadership but also showcased his linguistic prowess and affirmed his values, such as pride and ambition. However, the relationship faced challenges due to internal court dynamics and competition with other poets.²⁷ Ultimately, Al-Mutanabbi left the Hamdanid court and embarked on travels in search of other patrons. During these journeys, he continued to produce significant works, including eulogies, social critiques, and self-reflective poems. His poetry symbolized the genius of Arabic literature, reflecting the social and political dynamics of his time.²⁸

His life was fraught with threats and controversies. Fatik bin Abu Jahal killed him in 965 CE during a confrontation while he was traveling near Baghdad. This tragic event ended the life of a poet characterized by ambition, pride, and dedication to art.²⁹

B. The Social and Political Context of the Abbasid Era

During the Abbasid Dynasty's golden age (750–1258 CE), the Islamic world reached its zenith of cultural and intellectual grandeur. During this period, Baghdad emerged as a center of civilization and knowledge, attracting scholars from across the globe. Known as the “*Golden Age of Islam*”, this era witnessed the peak of achievements in science, art, and literature.³⁰ However, the Abbasid rule also began to fragment during this time. The Abbasid caliphs, based in Baghdad, gradually lost control over certain territories, which were subsequently dominated by local dynasties such as the Buyids, Hamdanids, and Fatimids.³¹

²⁵ Zainal Arifin, “Klaim Kenabian Dalam Sejarah: Kasus Al-Mutanabbi,” *Jurnal Ilmu Budaya* 8, no. 2 (2018): 45.

²⁶ Suryani Hidayat, “Hubungan Penyair Dan Patron Dalam Sastra Arab Klasik,” *Jurnal Sejarah Dan Sastra Arab* 4, no. 1 (2021): 21.

²⁷ Hadi Kusuma, *Kritik Sastra Arab* (Yogyakarta: Penerbit Ilmu Sastra, 2018).

²⁸ Hasmiati Rosmala Dewi et al., “Perkembangan Sastra Arab Pada Masa Umayyah Hingga Abbasiyah,” *El-Afaq; Prosiding FAI*, no. 1 (2021): 29–41.

²⁹ Nurhayati, “Tragedi Kehidupan Al-Mutanabbi Dan Warisannya Dalam Sastra,” *Jurnal Kesenian Dan Budaya Islam* 3, no. 2 (2020): 57.

³⁰ Abdul Hadi W.M, *Antologi Puisi Arab: Dari Zaman Pra-Islam Hingga Zaman Modern*.

³¹ Husen Akbar Sarifudin et al., “Transformasi Peradaban Dinasti Abbasiyah Perspektif Sejarah Kebudayaan Islam,” *AKHLAQUL KARIMAH: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 3, no. 2 (2024): 98–112.

This fragmentation introduced new dynamics into the political and cultural spheres, where patronage of the arts, including poetry, became a crucial tool for local rulers to bolster their legitimacy. Arabic literature had undergone a long evolution by this point, marked by significant transformations during the Abbasid period and in modern times. Within this context, the patronage relationship between poets and rulers became a common practice. Poets received protection and financial support from their patrons, who were typically rulers or political elites. In return, poets praised their patrons in their works, extolling their courage, strength, and wisdom. However, these relationships were not always harmonious. Poets often faced a dilemma between artistic honesty and the political demands imposed on them.³²

The Abbasid era is also celebrated as a golden age of Arabic literature, characterized by remarkable advancements in various fields, including literature, philosophy, and science. During this time, literary criticism flourished. The government actively promoted the translation of texts from foreign languages into Arabic, significantly influencing the development of literary criticism. Patronage of the arts and literature formed an integral part of court culture during this period. Caliphs and local rulers not only provided financial support but also fostered an environment conducive to creativity and innovation in poetry, prose, and intellectual works.³³

Poetry during this period played a vital role as a medium of communication and propaganda.³⁴ In addition to praising their patrons, poets used their works to deliver social critiques and portray the realities of societal life. Many poets, including Al-Mutanabbi, leveraged this opportunity to explore their identities and express their views on the political and social conditions around them. Poetry became an effective tool for shaping the image of rulers, crafting narratives about their wisdom and bravery while also serving as a platform for poets to voice their aspirations.³⁵

C. Analysis of Al-Mutanabbi's Works

1. Themes of Identity and Self-Pride

Al-Mutanabbi's poems are filled with expressions of self-pride that affirm his identity as a great poet. In one of his famous verses, he writes:³⁶

وَإِذَا غَامَرْتِ فِي شَرْفِ مَرُومٍ

³² Saeed Hamidi and Mahboub Mahdavian, "The Political Requirements of the Caliphs of the First Abbasid Era Regarding Paying Attention to the Scientific Community," *Historical Researches* 12, no. 1 (2020): 41–58.

³³ Emel Topçu and Ibrahim Halil Menek, "A Challenge to the Contemporary Multiculturalism from a Historical Perspective: The Early Abbasid Era," *Epiphany* 14, no. 2 (2022): 140–63.

³⁴ Firdaus Firdaus et al., "Islamic Political Theory during the Abbasid Government and Its Implications Toward Education," in *Proceedings of the 2nd Borobudur International Symposium on Humanities and Social Sciences, BIS-HSS 2020, 18 November 2020, Magelang, Central Java, Indonesia, 2021*.

³⁵ Hadi Khajavi, "Sociological Analysis of Hassani Movements in the Abbasid Era With Emphasis on Economic Factors," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 14, no. 2 (2023): 159–92.

³⁶ Margaret Larkin, *Al-Mutanabbi* (Simon and Schuster, 2012).

فَلَا تَفْنَعْ بِمَا دُونَ النُّجُومِ"

*If you wager for a lofty honor,
Do not settle for anything less than the stars.*

This verse illustrates his belief that the highest achievements are the only goals worth pursuing, reflecting his boundless ambition.³⁷ Furthermore, Al-Mutanabbi's pride and individualism shine through in another verse:

أَنَا الَّذِي نَظَرَ الْأَعْمَى إِلَى أَدْبِي
وَأَسْمَعَتْ كَلِمَاتِي مَنْ بِهِ صَمَمٌ

*I am the one whose literary works the blind can see,
And whose words the deaf can hear.*

This verse highlights his confidence that his poetry transcends all limitations, showcasing his belief in the unparalleled excellence of his art.

2. Themes of Praise and Social Critique

One prominent aspect of Al-Mutanabbi's works is his poetry in praise of his patrons. In one of his verses dedicated to *Sayf al-Dawlah*,³⁸ he writes:

وَقَفْتَ وَمَا فِي الْمَوْتِ شَكٌّ لِيُؤَاقِفِ
كَأَنَّكَ فِي جَفْنِ الرَّدَى وَهُوَ نَائِمٌ

*You stood, and there was no doubt about death for those who stood.
As if you were in the eyelid of death while it was asleep.*

Here, Al-Mutanabbi praises *Sayf al-Dawlah's* bravery, likening the ruler to a heroic figure unafraid of danger.³⁹

However, Al-Mutanabbi is also known for his sharp social critique, especially against his rivals and the society of his time. In one of his poems, he condemns those envious of him:

وَكَمْ مِنْ عَائِبٍ قَوْلًا صَحِيحًا
وَأَفْتُهُ مِنَ الْفَهْمِ السَّقِيمِ

*How many criticize truthful words,
Simply because their minds are flawed.*

This verse serves not only as a critique of specific individuals but also as a commentary on a society that often rejects truth due to ignorance or misunderstanding.⁴⁰

3. Reflections of Ambition in His Works

³⁷ Julie Scott Meisami, "Al-Mutanabbi and the Critics," *Arabic & Middle Eastern Literature* 2, no. 1 (1999): 21–41.

³⁸ Carole Hillenbrand, *Sayf Al-Dawla, Al-Mutanabbi and Byzantium: The Evidence of a Textile* (Edinburgh University Press, 2022).

³⁹ Ewald Wagner, "Poems from the Diwan of Abu Tayyib Ahmad Ibn Husain Al Mutanabbi" (JSTOR, 1972).

⁴⁰ Arthur John Arberry, *Poems of Al-Mutanabbi: A Selection with Introduction, Translations and Notes* (Cambridge UP, 1967).

Ambition emerges as a central theme in Al-Mutanabbi's works.⁴¹ Through his poetry, he frequently expresses his desire to achieve immortality through his words. For instance, he writes:

إِذَا غَدَرَتْ حَسَنَاءُ وَفَتْ بِعَهْدِهَا
فَلَا عَزَّ أَنْ الْفُضْلَ لِلْحُسْنِ عَادِرُ

*If a beautiful woman breaks her promise,
It is no surprise, for virtue lies in fleeting beauty.*

This poem reflects Al-Mutanabbi's acceptance of change while continuing to pursue glory and immortality.

However, Al-Mutanabbi's ambition often clashed with socio-political pressures. He had to balance his desire for freedom of expression with the demands of his patrons.⁴² This tension is evident in some of his poems, where he appears to offer praise while subtly embedding criticism, showcasing his extraordinary rhetorical skills.

4. Societal Values

أَعْطَى وَمَنْ عَلَى الْمُلُوكِ بِعَفْوِهِ * حَتَّى تَسَاوَى النَّاسُ فِي إِفْضَالِهِ
وَإِذَا غَنَنُوا بِعَطَائِهِ عَنْ هَزِهِ * وَلِيَفْأَعْنَى أَنْ يَقُولَ وَالِهِ
وَكَمَا جُدَّوَاهُ مِنْ إِكْتَارِهِ * حَسَدٌ لِسَائِلِهِ عَلَى إِقَالِهِ

*He granted forgiveness and pardon to those under his power,
Until everyone became equal in his generosity.
If they felt fulfilled by his gifts, he accompanied them with more,
Leaving no one to say, "Grant more!"
His generosity, in its abundance, appeared like envy of the beggar's need.*

The profound values embedded in these verses emphasize boundless kindness towards others.⁴³ This poem portrays an extraordinary benefactor who benefits society indiscriminately. Through poetic and hyperbolic language, Al-Mutanabbi underscores the idea that generosity can transcend social boundaries and create balance within society. However, abundant generosity also brings another dimension, such as jealousy from those who did not directly benefit. These verses reflect the classical Arab cultural admiration for generosity as a symbol of noble character and leadership.

D. Analysis of Findings Based on Relevant Theories

The themes of identity and self-pride in Al-Mutanabbi's poetry align closely with existentialist literary theory, which emphasizes individual agency and self-definition. Al-Mutanabbi's assertion of his identity as an extraordinary poet exemplifies Jean-

⁴¹ Hassan Al-Hasan, "The Poem Introduction in Al-Mutanabbi's Poetry," *Tishreen University Journal-Arts and Humanities Sciences Series* 38, no. 4 (2016).

⁴² Ali Zaeryvand, "Qazi Al-Jurjani's Method to Defend Al-Mutanabbi," *Studies on Arabic Language and Literature* 1, no. 3 (2010): 43-54.

⁴³ Nurain, "NILAI-NILAI KEHIDUPAN DALAM PUISI AL-MUTANABBI," *Adabiyat Jurnal Bahasa Dan Sastra* 13, no. 2 (2014).

Paul Sartre's idea that individuals define themselves through their actions and creations.⁴⁴ His self-referential verses, such as "*I am the one whose literary works the blind can see*", illustrate his quest to transcend physical and societal limitations, situating his work as a medium for asserting individuality and crafting a legacy that defies mortality. This approach not only solidifies his self-image but also elevates his artistic contributions to timeless expressions of human ambition.

In his praise for rulers and social critique, Al-Mutanabbi embodies the duality of patronage poetry, a genre that historically navigates between glorifying authority figures and subtly critiquing societal flaws. New Historicists argue that readers must understand literary works within their historical and cultural contexts. He reflected the norms of patronage in his praises of *Sayf al-Dawlah*, amplifying the virtues of his patron as poets were expected to do.⁴⁵ However, Al-Mutanabbi's sharp critiques of envy and ignorance within society reveal a deeper engagement with the socio-political dynamics of his era. These elements resonate with Antonio Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony, as his poetry simultaneously upholds the power structures of his patrons while challenging societal values that hinder intellectual progress.⁴⁶

Al-Mutanabbi's ambition and desire for immortality through his poetry align with Aristotle's concept of magnanimity or greatness of the soul. Aristotle⁴⁷ posited that individuals of high ambition seek excellence and recognition not out of vanity but as an expression of their inherent worth and potential. Al-Mutanabbi's acceptance of worldly changes, as seen in his verse on fleeting beauty, illustrates his philosophical acknowledgment of impermanence while striving for permanence through art. This tension between worldly limitations and eternal aspirations places his work within the framework of Romanticism, emphasizing the creative spirit's pursuit of transcendence amidst societal constraints.

The societal values expressed in Al-Mutanabbi's works highlight the intersection of individual ethics and communal dynamics, as explored in classical Arab-Islamic literary theory.⁴⁸ His portrayal of boundless generosity and its socio-political implications reflects the cultural ideal of *karam* (generosity), a central virtue in Arab culture. Al-Mutanabbi uses poetic hyperbole to elevate the benefactor's role to near-divine status, fostering a vision of leadership grounded in equitable distribution and moral responsibility. This aligns with Ibn Khaldun's sociological perspectives on leadership, which emphasize the importance of *asabiyyah* (social solidarity) and the leader's ability to foster unity and fairness within society.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Gallimard, 1943).

⁴⁵ Roger Allen, *An Introduction to Arabic Literature* (Cambridge University Press, 2000).

⁴⁶ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (International Publishers, 1971).

⁴⁷ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, trans. W Rhys Roberts, n.d., <https://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/rhetoric.html>.

⁴⁸ M H Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (Oxford University Press, 1971).

⁴⁹ Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (University of Chicago Press, 1980).

Finally, Al-Mutanabbi's use of poetic forms to balance praise and critique demonstrates his mastery of rhetorical strategies, resonating with Aristotelian rhetoric's principles of *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*.⁵⁰ By appealing to the ethical character of his patrons (*ethos*), stirring emotions (*pathos*), and employing logical arguments (*logos*), he crafts verses that both appease and challenge his audience. This rhetorical duality positions him as a poet who not only served as a voice for his patrons but also acted as a cultural critic, navigating the intricate power dynamics of his time with linguistic dexterity and philosophical depth.

CONCLUSION

Al-Mutanabbi is recognized not only for the greatness of his poetry but also for his contribution to depicting the complexity of relationships between individuals, society, and power through literature. His works demonstrate how he constructed his identity through extraordinary pride and ambition. This pride is evident not only in his language, rich with metaphors and hyperbole, but also in his confidence in the immortality of his poetry. Al-Mutanabbi's ambition not only motivated him to achieve excellence as a poet but also reflected the collective aspirations of his era, marked by social and political challenges.

Al-Mutanabbi's poetry serves as a primary tool for understanding the complexities of his soul. Through his verses, he not only expressed pride and social criticism but also created a narrative about himself that illustrated the relationships between individuals, society, and patronage. These poems provide insights into how he positioned himself within the cultural and political context of the Abbasid era.

This study shows how Al-Mutanabbi's personal life, including his ambitions and the challenges he faced, directly influenced the content and style of his poetry. It highlights that literary works cannot be separated from the social and political contexts surrounding them, illustrating the poet's role as a significant cultural figure.

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