

The Endings of the Seven Mu‘allaqāt – A Descriptive and Analytical Study –

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Abstract:

This study aims to examine the endings of the Seven Mu‘allaqāt by investigating the extent to which they achieve the quality sought by classical critics and conform to the general pre-Islamic literary taste. To this end, the study identifies the dominant theme of each Mu‘allaqa and considers its formal aspects as well, in order to determine whether the ending is appropriate to the subject matter. It then evaluates these endings in terms of both form and content.

Keywords: Mu‘allaqāt – Critics – Ending – Form – Content.

Introduction

Poetry constituted the repository of Arab heritage. The Arabs left nothing that stirred the soul or fell within the realm of perception without expressing it in verse. Poetry thus became the record of their knowledge and wisdom, the register of their events and biographies, the witness to their successes and failures, and the medium of their conversations and evening gatherings. Among the masterpieces of pre-Islamic Arabic poetry are the “Seven Mu‘allaqāt”, whose authors are: Imru’ al-Qays, Zuhayr ibn Abī Sulmā, ‘Amr ibn Kulthūm, Ṭarafah ibn al-‘Abd, al-Nābighah al-Dhubaynī, ‘Antarah ibn Shaddād, and al-Ḥārith ibn Ḥillizah.

These Mu‘allaqāt are distinguished by their cohesive structure and by the diversity and interconnection of their constituent parts, among which is the “concluding structure.” Ibn Rashīq defines it by stating: “The ending is the foundation of the poem and the last part that remains in the ears.” Thus, Ibn Rashīq refers to the conclusion as (the ending)¹, which represents the foundation of the poem.(1) Other critics have designated this structure as the “maqṭa” (closing section). Among them is Ḥāzim al-Qarṭājannī, who emphasized the necessity of paying special attention to it, stating: “... Attention to this position is necessary because it is the point at which speech ends and reaches its conclusion².” In the view of the critics, the finest conclusion is that which signals to the listener that the discourse has come to an end.

Such endings usually consist of one or two verses and often contain maxims and proverbial sayings. The most effective of these endings are those that complement the general theme of the poem, allowing the reader to perceive coherence and unity among its parts in both wording and meaning. This stands in contrast to some endings that appear abrupt and incomplete, leaving

¹ Yūsuf Bakkār, *Binā’ al-Qaṣīda fī al-Naqd al-‘Arabī al-Qadīm fī Ḍaw’ al-Naqd al-Ḥadīth*, Dār al-Andalus, Beirut, 2nd ed., 1983, p. 229.

² Ḥāzim al-Qarṭājannī, *Minhāj al-Bulaghā’ wa Sirāj al-Udabā’*, Dār al-‘Arab al-Islāmī, Beirut, 2nd ed., 1981, p. 285.

the reader with a sense of deficiency in the poem and an expectation that something remains unfinished.

The Mu‘allaqāt

Linguistically, the concept of “al-Mu‘allaqāt” derives from the word “al-‘ilq”, which denotes “that which is precious and valuable among all things¹.” Terminologically, it refers to a group of pre-Islamic odes numbering seven or ten, in which the characteristics of pre-Islamic poetry are most clearly manifested². It is evident that both the linguistic and terminological meanings convey the same idea, namely, poems of great value and excellence that attained the highest levels of linguistic mastery, imagination, thought, musicality, maturity of experience, and authenticity of expression. For this reason, the Mu‘allaqāt have been regarded as the most important literary record illustrating the highest degrees of eloquence and poetic achievement in the pre-Islamic era. It is said that they were written in gold and hung upon the curtains of the Kaaba because of their magnificence. They are distinguished by their length and the diversity of their themes. They usually begin with a pause at the deserted dwellings, the remembrance of the beloved, and the description of journeys and riding animals, and conclude with tribal pride or wisdom.

In the present study, we rely on the seven well-known Mu‘allaqāt mentioned above in order to investigate the quality of their endings.

1. The Importance of the Conclusion in the Structure of the Poem

The conclusion, or (closing section), constitutes a fundamental pillar in the artistic structure of the poem. It is the final component crafted by the poet, and its significance lies in being the “crowning touch” and the last part to strike the listener’s ear, leaving the final impression that remains in the recipient’s mind.

Classical Arab critics devoted considerable attention to it, considering the quality of the conclusion no less important than that of the opening. To the extent that a poet succeeds in ending his poem effectively, the artistic creativity of the text reaches completion.

Al-Jurjānī drew attention to the value of the conclusion when he stated: “The skillful poet strives to perfect the opening, the transition, and thereafter the conclusion, for it is the position that appeals to the ears of the audience and inclines them to attentive listening.”³ He was followed by Abū Hilāl al-‘Askarī, who stated: “... I am committed to extolling the quality of the closing section and praising its author. The best speech is that which ends at its proper divisions and clearly indicates the place of its sections”.⁴

Ibn Rashīq followed the approach of his predecessors in emphasizing the importance of the conclusion and considered it an essential element in the excellence of a literary work. This is evident in his statement: “The conclusion of speech remains longer in the ear and clings more

¹ Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-‘Arab*, Dār Ihya’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, vol. 9, Beirut, 1st ed., 1988, p. 362.

² Jabbūr ‘Abd al-Nūr, *al-Mu‘jam al-Adabī*, Dār al-‘Ilm lil-Malāyīn, p. 257.

³ al-Qāḍī ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Jurjānī, *al-Wasāta bayna al-Mutanabbī wa Khuṣūmih*, edited by Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm and ‘Alī Muḥammad al-Bajāwī, Maṭba‘at Bāb al-Ḥalabī, 2nd ed., 1951, p. 48.

⁴ Abū Hilāl al-‘Askarī, *Kitāb al-Ṣinā‘atayn: al-Kitāba wa al-Shi‘r*, edited by ‘Alī Muḥammad al-Bajāwī and Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, Dār Ihya’ al-Kutub al-‘Arabiyya, 1st ed., 1952, p. 442.

firmly to the soul because of its proximity. If it is good, the whole becomes good; if it is poor, the whole becomes poor. Deeds are judged by their endings, as the Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him¹, said.” Thus, the success of the conclusion signifies the success of the entire literary work, whereas failure in it diminishes the merit of the whole composition and undermines its artistic structure.

The term “conclusion” was referred to by classical critics under various designations. They mentioned it directly or substituted it with synonymous terms that they considered more capable of expressing its intended meaning, such as (ending), (closure), (concluding section), (good ending), and others. They also established criteria emphasizing the poet’s ability to conclude his artistic composition effectively and confirming his poetic skill. Among these criteria is what Ibn Rashīq stated: “It is the foundation of the poem and the last thing that remains in the ears. Its proper manner is to be so well-constructed that nothing can be added to it, nor can anything better follow it. If the beginning of poetry is its key, then its ending must be its lock.”² Thus, he regards the conclusion as the poem’s “lock” and final resting place. Its quality is measured by the degree of its precision and completeness, such that no subsequent wording could enhance its meaning, by the deep impression it leaves in the listener’s mind, and by its ability to compel reflection upon the meaning and the extraction of its lesson.

In the same context, Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah states: “The speaker should conclude his discourse with words that are well-crafted and remarkable in meaning ... therefore, he must strive for elegance and strength of expression.”³ Thus, the selection of appropriate words provided that they are eloquent, fluent, and free from any form of complexity constitutes a criterion for the quality of the conclusion in a poetic composition.

The Conclusion in the Seven Mu‘allaqāt

In examining the conclusions of the Seven Mu‘allaqāt, we begin with the one considered the finest in terms of conclusion according to the criteria established by the classical critics, which have been discussed above.

A. The Conclusion in the Mu‘allaqa of Zuhayr ibn Abī Sulmā

Zuhayr is known as the “Poet of Sobriety and Sound Judgment”, for he was a man of reason who placed intellect at the forefront of both his life and his poetry. His Mu‘allaqa was composed following the end of the war between the tribes of “Abs” and “Dhubyān”. Its principal purpose was to praise the two peacemakers, “al-Ḥārith ibn ‘Awf” and “Haram ibn Sinān”. Concerning them, Zuhayr says:⁴

By my oath, I have found you to be excellent leaders,

In every circumstance, whether simple or complex.

You reconciled ‘Abs and Dhubyān after they had nearly destroyed one another,

¹ Ibn Rashīq al-Qayrawānī, *al-‘Umda fī Maḥāsin al-Shi‘r wa Naqdih*, Dār al-Jīl, vol. 1, 5th ed., 1981, p. 355.

² Ibn Rashīq al-Qayrawānī, *al-‘Umda fī Maḥāsin al-Shi‘r wa Naqdih*, vol. 1, p. 355.

³ Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *al-Fawā'id al-Mushawwiq ilā 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān wa 'Ilm al-Bayān*, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, Beirut, p. 167.

⁴ bn al-Naḥḥās, *Sharḥ al-Qaṣā'id al-Mashhūrāt al-Musammāh bil-Mu‘allaqāt*, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, Beirut, pp. 108–109.

And had ground between them the perfume of Manshim.

And you said: "If we can attain a lasting peace,

Through wealth and noble deeds in this affair, we shall be secure."

The reader of these verses readily perceives the sincerity of their meanings and the strength of their impact upon the recipient. Every word possesses a distinctive pulse and rhythm that captures attention, such as: "by my oath", "excellent indeed", "you reconciled", "they perished", "they ground", "you said", "peace", "lasting", and others.

Moreover, these verses are complementary to one another in both form and content. Each word points to and reinforces what follows it, producing a meaning that resonates deeply in the ears and circulates widely among audiences. Added to this is the musical tone, which flows smoothly and harmoniously, enabling the recipient to engage fully with the verses. The expressions themselves are simple and accessible, requiring no elaborate interpretation, which helped the poet convey his message effectively. That message is the praise of this reconciliation and the call upon the two tribes to refrain from bloodshed, to silence the drums of war, and to work toward restoring unity.

With the same precision in expression and coherence in the weaving of meanings, the poet concludes his ode with a series of maxims in which he adopts the stance of a wise man, expressing weariness with life and reflecting upon death. He says:¹

A young man's worth is half his tongue and half his heart;

What remains is but the form of flesh and blood.

Indeed, when an old man behaves foolishly, no forbearance is expected thereafter;

But a youth, after foolishness, may yet attain wisdom.

I have grown weary of life's burdens; and whoever lives

Eighty years may you not lose your father will surely grow weary.

I have seen death strike blindly like a wandering she-camel: whomsoever it reaches, it kills;

And whomsoever it misses is granted a long life, only to grow old and frail.

I know the knowledge of today and of yesterday before it,

But I am blind to the knowledge of what tomorrow holds.

Here, the poet condenses a wealth of meanings into a small number of words. These expressions are clear and free from ambiguity; they are carefully selected and concise, distinguished by the strength of their structure and the sobriety of their style. In this regard, Butrus al-Bustānī says of Zuhayr: "A judge of reconciliation, who delivers his judgments in poetry without vagueness or obscurity."²

This simplicity enables the recipient to listen attentively and follow the poet's words closely, engaging with them and responding to their message. Such a response reflects the success of the discourse and its communicative effectiveness.

Zuhayr concludes his ode in its final verse by saying:³

¹ Abū Zayd Muḥammad ibn Abī al-Khaṭṭāb al-Qurashī, *Jamharat Ash'ār al-'Arab*, Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, Beirut, 4th ed., 1999, p. 147.

² Hannā al-Fākhūrī, *Tārīkh al-Adab al-'Arabī*, Dār al-Būlīsiyya, 2nd ed., 1953, p. 163.

³ Abū Zayd al-Qurashī, *Jamharat Ash'ār al-'Arab*, p. 148.

We asked, and you gave; and we returned, and you responded in kind.

Whoever increases his asking one day will be deprived.

This verse thus completes the subject matter, and the reader perceives the end of the poem; the soul becomes fully satisfied and no longer requires further speech. It is also appropriate to the theme, as it is formulated in the form of a maxim whose meanings are precise and clear, and whose expressions are delicate.

In this regard, Ḥāzim al-Qartājannī states: "... the conclusion in every thematic purpose should be what suits it, and the wording in it should be pleasant, and the composition should be strong and appropriate."¹

On this basis, the poet has succeeded in composing this verse both in form and meaning. From the formal perspective, the words are harmoniously arranged and closely connected, such that none of them can be placed before the other. They carry a musical rhythm that enhances their sweetness. They are also light on the tongue, easy to pronounce, free from complexity, and clearly indicative of their meanings.

As for the meaning, it is concise, precise, and easily understood; the poet intends to indicate the abundance and generosity of giving after having perfected praise, a generosity that is not tainted. Thus, whenever praise is offered, giving follows, but he advises against excessive asking or requesting, for whoever does so will one day be deprived.

This is a wisdom addressed to the recipient, who has no choice but to accept the poet's statement, since he expresses what is rational and well-established, concluding his poem with words that require little clarification or explanation. It is also strongly connected to the subject matter; therefore, it may be said that the poet has achieved a successful conclusion.

B. The Conclusion in the Mu'allāqa of Amr ibn Kulthūm

The Mu'allāqa of 'Amr ibn Kulthūm was composed in two stages. The first part was composed following the arbitration between the two tribes of Bakr and Taghlib before King 'Amr ibn Hind, and it was recited in his palace. The second part was composed after the uprising against this king, and it constitutes the larger portion of the poem. It is characterized by pride and boasting; therefore, the poem is marked by grandeur and eloquence. Through its diction, we sense that the poem is governed by a rapid rhythm, as the poet enumerates the virtues of his tribe and celebrates its glory. He says:²

We are called oppressors, yet we have not wronged anyone;

Rather, we are those who strike first against those who wrong us.

The world is ours, and so is whoever lives upon it;

And we strike whenever we are able to strike.

If a king imposes humiliation upon people,

We refuse to accept humiliation within us.

We have filled the land until it became too narrow for us,

And we would fill the sea as well with our ships.

¹ Ḥāzim al-Qartājannī, *Minhāj al-Bulaghā' wa Sirāj al-Udabā'*, p. 306.

² Ibn al-Naḥḥās, *Sharḥ al-Qaṣā'id al-Mashhūrāt al-Musammāh bil-Mu'allāqāt*, p. 124.

From these verses, we observe the intensity of pride expressed by the poet, as reflected in his use of terms such as: “ours”, “we strike”, “capable”, “we refused”, “we do not accept”, “in us”, “we are called”, “we shall begin”, “we filled”, “from us”, and others.

The poet strongly emphasizes the grandeur and status of his tribe to the extent that even kings, when they wrong people, would not dare to wrong them. He exaggerates in portraying their power and dominance, which extends to all members of their tribe, including their young children. This exaggerated depiction serves as a message to anyone who might consider transgressing against the tribe, making them think carefully and fear the consequences.

What helped the poet in conveying these images and meanings is his use of strong and precise expressions that carry within them an inner charge reflecting his intended purpose. He succeeded in selecting and arranging them effectively. Their juxtaposition and sequential order in this manner have given them greater semantic strength, demonstrating the poet’s skill in expressing his meanings.

This arrangement has also produced a musical rhythm appropriate to the subject matter. On the other hand, the recipient finds himself drawn to reading and following these verses, becoming emotionally affected by them, and sensing the pride and dignity that overwhelm the poet. Each word and meaning captures attention and leads the reader to move along the poet’s path, fully immersed in his emotions.

The poet thus manages to establish a strong communicative bond with the recipient, implanting his feelings within him. This is also evident in the conclusion of the poem, which comes in a verse that appears fully consistent with the subject and complementary to it, as the poet says:¹

Beware that no one should act ignorantly against us,

lest we respond with a greater ignorance than that of the ignorant.

The words of this verse likewise carry a tone charged with tribal fervor and an impulsive tendency toward violent retaliation. What further intensifies and reinforces the meaning is the repetition of terms such as: “they act ignorantly”, “we act ignorantly”, and “the ignorant”. This repetition indicates the peak of intimidation and an extreme form of vengeance, as the poet shows no mercy toward anyone who transgresses against them; rather, the response will be multiplied many times over.

Here, the meaning serves as a continuation of what was previously stated. This repetition also produces a musical rhythm that evokes the beating of war drums, instilling fear in souls and terrifying the enemy. Thus, the conclusion is closely connected to the subject matter in both wording and meaning; indeed, it may be considered the finest part of the poem.

In this regard, Ḥāzim al-Qarṭājannī states: “... as for what is required regarding the endings, which are the final parts of poems, it should be ensured that what appears in them is among the best speech inserted within the body of the poem.”² Al-‘Askarī also states: “The last verse of your poem should be the finest verse in it and the most closely aligned with the intended meaning of its composition.”³

¹ Ibn al-Naḥḥās, *Sharḥ al-Qaṣā’id al-Mashhūrāt*, p. 125.

² Ḥāzim al-Qarṭājannī, *Minḥāj al-Bulaghā’ wa Sirāj al-Udabā’*, p. 285.

³ Abū Hilāl al-‘Askarī, *Kitāb al-Ṣinā’atayn*, p. 505.

Thus, the conclusion should include the finest meanings and the most eloquent expressions. This criterion is clearly fulfilled in the conclusion of Amr ibn Kulthūm, which is why it can be said that it represents an excellent ending.

C. The Conclusion in the Mu‘allaqa of Ṭarafah ibn al-‘Abd

It appears that Ṭarafah made his poem a means of expressing his anger toward his cousin. As a result, a large portion of it carries reproach and complaint concerning the excessive injustice of close relatives, and he responds to this through self-pride and boasting.

After the poet’s traditional pause at the ruins and his description of the beauty of his beloved and the purity of her face, likened to the sun, he says:¹

“A face as though the sun had cast its veil upon it,
of pure complexion, unblemished and not marked by lines.”

This is a simile that conveys a wide imaginative space enjoyed by the poet. It is a precise, concise, and clear expression an approach he also employs in describing the she-camel.

After this obligatory pause commonly found in pre-Islamic poetry, Ṭarafah moves on to speak about himself and his philosophy of life. He says:²

“Were it not for three things that belong to a young man’s life by your life I would not care when my visitors rise against me.

Among them is my outpacing of reproachers with a drink of dark wine; whenever it is diluted with water, it foams.”

By “the three things,” he means wine, women, and courage, which represent his ultimate goals in life. It appears that he finds pleasure in these pleasures; however, we sense a bitterness filling his heart and a constriction weighing upon his chest. This becomes evident through his use of expressions that introduce doubt in the reader’s mind and make one suspect that the poet does not truly enjoy the happiness he claims. These expressions include: “were it not for”, “I would not care”, and “my visitors rise”.

Moreover, his diction creates a sorrowful musical rhythm that suggests the poet’s suffering. Thus, these three pleasures appear to function as a refuge to which the poet turns in order to forget his worries and the bitterness of injustice inflicted upon him, thereby alleviating his condition.

He then proceeds to express reproach toward his cousin, who treated him harshly. He says:³

Why do I see myself and my cousin Mālik in such a state that whenever I draw near to him, he moves away and distances himself from me?

He blames me, while I do not know what he blames me for, just as Qurṭ ibn Ma‘bad blamed me among the tribe.

He has made me despair of every good I have sought, as though we had laid it down at the grave of a buried dead man.

Without any wrongdoing on my part, except that I asked and did not neglect the household of Ma‘bad.

¹ Ibn al-Naḥḥās, *Sharḥ al-Qaṣā’id al-Mashhūrāt*, p. 59.

² *Ibid.*, p. 81.

³ Previous source, pp. 84–85.

The poet complains of the injustice of his cousin Mālik, who has become like a dead person from whom nothing is to be expected; this is because his cousin has deprived him of generosity and has begun to find excuses in order to blame him without any fault on his part. The poet is therefore saddened by this harsh treatment, and this is clearly indicated by the expressions he employs to highlight the severity of his cousin's cruelty, such as: "I do not know what he blames me for", "he has made me despair", and "without any wrongdoing". These expressions carry their meanings within themselves and do not require further explanation or simplification for the reader's understanding.

In addition to these expressions, there is also the use of simile in his saying: "as though we had laid it down at the grave of a buried dead man." The poet resorts to this simile to illustrate the severity of his cousin's estrangement; it is as though he is like a grave, from which no return is expected, just as one loses hope in the return of the dead.

However, this complaint does not diminish the poet's determination; rather, he continues to express self-pride and boastfulness, saying:¹

I am the striking man whom you know well,
as fierce as the head of a coiled, alert serpent.

He is a brave man known among people, distinguished by toughness, firmness, strength, and swift movement. In this respect, he resembles the alert and perceptive head of a serpent. The poet here employs strong and lofty expressions that indicate a powerful sense of self-confidence, while also conveying meaning without any complexity. This reflects the poet's skill in choosing, for every context, what is appropriate in terms of both meaning and diction. In addition, there is a musical rhythm that harmonizes with the meaning and plays a significant role in expressing the tone of the poet. The skillfulness of his imagery in the expression "like the head of an alert serpent" brings the image closer to the recipient and enables him to visualize the courage of this man more clearly.

However, what his cousin did had a strong impact on the poet's psyche, leading him to conclude his poem with the aforementioned lessons in order to strengthen his resolve. Thus, he ends his poem with two lines that contain advice, saying:²

By your life, days are nothing but a borrowed thing;
so take from them whatever good you are able to provision yourself with.
Do not ask about a person rather observe his companion,
for every companion is influenced by the one he accompanies.

The poet considers these days, or human life, to be something borrowed. Whether it is long or short, it will eventually return to its owner. For this reason, he advises a person to increase virtuous deeds and acts of kindness, because everything is transient, and what remains of a person is his righteous action. He also indicates that a person is known through his companion, and it was said long ago: "Tell me who you associate with, and I will tell you who you are."³

¹ Ibn al-Nahhas, *Sharh al-Qasa'id al-Mashhurat*, p. 89.

² *Ibid.*, p. 95.

³ Abu Zayd al-Qurashi, *Jamhara Ash'ar al-'Arab*, p. 210.

This advice has an effect on the recipient, as it leads him to reflect on the realities of life, since it moves away from imagination and expresses a truth that human beings may neglect. The poet employs precise and suggestive expressions, producing eloquent speech that strongly impacts the recipient. This mastery is not foreign to the poet; rather, it is observed throughout his earlier verses, as he assigns to each context what is appropriate to it. However, he has excelled particularly in the conclusion, where all its meanings and expressions appear of high quality, being mutually harmonious, coherent, interconnected, and complementary. Moreover, each word or meaning suggests what follows, producing a beautiful musical resonance that delights the ear.

This corresponds to the view of al-‘Askarī, who considers that one of the qualities of a good conclusion is that “speech should be cut off on a meaningful idea and a refined expression and noble.”¹ On this basis, it may be said that Ṭarafah ibn al-‘Abd achieved an excellent conclusion.

D. The Conclusion in the Mu‘allaqa of ‘Antarah ibn Shaddād

The life of ‘Antarah had a major impact on his poetry, particularly in relation to his lineage and his affiliation with the tribe of ‘Abs. He would not remain calm whenever he heard someone speak about his honor or insult him, which caused him great pain. He responded to this through self-pride and boasting. For this reason, the central theme of his Mu‘allaqa is pride, as he boasts of his generosity, noble character, and liberality, saying:²

When I drink, I am indeed one who spends lavishly,
my wealth and my honor being abundant and unblemished.
And when I am sober, I do not fall short in generosity and bounty,
as you well know my nature and my nobility.

The poet employs grand expressions with a strong phonetic resonance in order to express his generosity and the inviolability of his honor, which cannot be tarnished. Even when he is in a state of drinking, he remains protected in his dignity. This is conveyed through meanings that captivate the recipient and confront him with a single truth that does not admit alteration, namely that ‘Antarah is generous and noble in character.

The poet then follows this act of boasting with another form of praise in which he highlights his courage and his valor in battles. He says:³

They call upon ‘Antarah while the spears seem as though
they are the ropes of a well upon the chest of a dark horse.

He celebrates his heroic deeds and his intense bravery through an image that depicts the abundance of spears raining down upon him, until they appear like ropes suspended from a well used to draw water.

What is striking in this imagery is its musical rhythm, which captures attention, as well as the poet’s skill in constructing this image through a careful selection of words and meanings that make the recipient amazed at the valor of this man.

¹ Abu al-Hilal al-‘Askari, *Kitab al-Sina‘atayn*, p. 304.

² Ibn al-Nahhas, *Sharh al-Qasa’id al-Mashhurat*, pp. 28–29.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

All of this boasting becomes a defensive weapon with which the poet repels those who attempt to wound his pride or diminish his worth. He does not stop there; rather, he goes on to threaten those who insult him in two verses with which he concludes his poem. He says:¹

Those who insult my honor while I do not insult them in return,
and those who vow if they do not meet me to shed my blood.
If they do so, I have indeed left their father,
as prey for wild beasts and every powerful eagle.

What distinguishes these two verses is the strong tone employed by the poet in issuing threats, which is the first element that captures the recipient's attention, especially in his saying: "... I have left their father as prey for wild beasts...". The reader perceives in them an overwhelming anger filling the poet's chest, as well as intense resentment resulting from a deep wound caused by those who insulted him. One also senses the extent of the psychological pressure exerted on 'Antarah, which led to his explosion of anger and his threatening to inflict severe harm.

Thus, the poet does not depart from the general theme of the poem; rather, the conclusion remains strongly and fully connected to it in terms of meaning, to the extent that no additional meaning can be added beyond it. The poet's threat is so intense that it becomes terrifying to all. In this way, he fulfills one of the conditions considered essential by critics for a successful conclusion, among them Ibn Rashīq, who states: "Its proper way is that it be firmly constructed, so that nothing can be added to it, and nothing better can come after it; and if the beginning of poetry is its key, then its end must be its lock."² He thus considers that the conclusion must be fully and strongly connected to the subject, such that nothing can be added to it.

From the perspective of diction, the poet employs strong words that evoke severity and violence, such as: "butchering", beasts, eagle, and powerful eagle. These words also carry a musical rhythm that conveys intimidation, and thus the vocabulary aligns with the meanings to produce a single, clear effect on the recipient.

For this reason, it may be said that the poet achieved an excellent conclusion.

The impact of the war between "Taghlib" and "Bakr" played a central role in shaping al-Ḥārith's composition of his Mu'allāqa, through which he sought to win the king's support in favor of his tribe, Bakr, and to have judgment issued in its favor. Consequently, he had to include elements of praise and boasting that would serve this purpose, including what the poet said about his tribe:³

"We then turned against Tamīm and we swore vows, while among us are the daughters of Murr as captives."

"The noble does not remain in a settled land, nor does escape benefit the humiliated."

The reader of these verses notices that the poet has employed words characterized by phonetic harmony, such as: "milnā," "marr," and "imā'." These expressions clearly convey their meanings, as in his statement: "the noble does not remain..." which indicates a strong sense of

¹ Ibid., pp. 46–47.

² Ahmad Yazan, *Al-Naqd al-Adabi fi al-Qayrawan fi al-'Ahd al-Sanhaji*, Maqtabat al-Ma'arif lil-Nashr wa al-Tawzi', Fes, 1977, p. 184.

³ Ibid., pp. 69–70.

pride and self-assertion. This feature gives the two verses an aesthetic and artistic value that reflects the poet's skill in selecting both vocabulary and meaning.

The poet also, in service of his purpose, relies on the flaws of his opponent as a basis to diminish his value. Among these is his reference to the breaking of the alliance previously established by the king, as he says:¹

“Remember the alliance of Dhū al-Majāz and
what was established therein of covenants and guarantees,
in fear of betrayal and transgression;
and do desires not break what is written in the parchments?”

The tribe of “Taghlib” yielded to its own desires and broke the alliance, whereas the tribe of “Bakr” remained faithful to its covenant. This, in turn, elevated its status before the king and diminished the standing of the other tribe.

From the perspective of diction, the poet resorts to concise, suggestive, and easily comprehensible expressions, enabling the recipient to clearly grasp his intended meaning.

To reinforce the status of his tribe before the king, the poet proceeds to recall the friendship that connects them, praising the king in his verses:²

“Indeed, for us with ‘Amr are virtues with him, in all of them there is no doubt of trial.

A just king, the most complete of those who walk, and beneath him lies praise.”

The poet thus boasts of his friendship with the king, describing him with qualities commonly used by poets in their praise of rulers, such as: “a just king” and “worthy of praise.” These expressions are appropriate to this context, as they are marked by grandeur and dignity, in line with what Ḥāzīm al-Qartājannī called for when he said: ³“The words of praise and their meanings must be forceful, carried in the manner of grandeur in the places where this is suitable, and the composition must be solid and also possess sweetness.” Accordingly, Ḥāzīm calls for a firm structure characterized by elegance, as this has a stronger impact on the recipient and spreads more quickly among people. Thus, the poet has successfully conveyed his message.

In the same manner, and with the same level of lexical quality and precision of meaning, the poet concludes his poem with two verses:⁴

“We gave birth to ‘Amr ibn Umm Unās, from a close connection when the gift came to us.

Like it brings out advice for people, a desert without which there are no deserts.”

Here, he highlights the kinship that binds the king to his tribe, considering it a factor that facilitates the acceptance of advice. Indeed, a careful reader may infer a moral idea: true advice comes only from someone close and dear.

Thus, the conclusion is closely connected to the overall theme winning the king's favor. Its vocabulary is characterized by clarity and good meaning, in accordance with what al-‘Askarī

¹ Ibn al-Nahhas, *Sharh al-Qasa'id al-Mashhurat*, vol. 2, pp. 71–72.

² Previous source, pp. 80–81.

³ Ḥazim al-Qartajanni, *Minhaj al-Bulagha' wa Siraj al-Udaba'*, p. 351.

⁴ Ibn al-Nahhas, *Sharh al-Qasa'id al-Mashhurat*, p. 86.

stated, when he said: “The conclusion should be distinguished by clarity of wording and the beauty of its ending.”¹

On this basis, it may be concluded that the poet has achieved a successful ending.

E. The Conclusion in the Mu‘allaqa of al-Nābigha al-Dhubyānī:

Al-Nābigha intended, through his poem, to apologize to King al-Nu‘mān al-Ḥīrahī. He therefore adopted praise as a means to achieve this, and proceeded to highlight the king’s virtues and noble qualities. He says: ²

“That conveys to me news of al-Nu‘mān, for he has excellence over people, both near and far. I do not see among people anyone who resembles him, nor do I exempt any of the people from this.”

The poet thus considers that this king has no equal in his generosity, which reaches both the distant and the near. He selects for this meaning simple and clear vocabulary so that any recipient can understand it, thereby recognizing the generosity of this king, whom he also compares to the Euphrates. He says: ³

“Is not the Euphrates, when the winds rise upon it, casting its waves with foam across the two banks?”

This simile carries two meanings: the first is that the generosity of this king resembles the Euphrates River when it overflows with foam; the second is that his anger is uncontrollable, like the flooding of the Euphrates, which spreads over both dry and green land. That is, the king is gentle and compassionate in delicate situations, and strong and severe when determination is required.

Therefore, we observe that the poet succeeded in choosing his vocabulary precisely, as it expressed his inner thoughts accurately. It also played a role in attracting the recipient’s attention through the simile, which stimulated the imagination and made the reader engage with the poet’s ideas in a coherent progression.

When the poet’s aim was to please the king, who had hastily judged him on the basis of a false report, he inserted within the lines of praise a subtle allusion to whoever is wise in discerning the truth, hoping thereby to prompt a reconsideration of the judgment and to secure acceptance of his apology. Among these allusions is “the judgment of the girl of the tribe,” where the poet says:⁴

“Judge as the judgment of the girl of the tribe when she looked at the flock of doves coming to a watering place in the dry land.”

The poet thus seeks from the king a reconsideration of his mistaken judgment through the use of the imperative verb “judge,” asking him to judge justly. However, it would have been more appropriate for him to refer to the girl’s wisdom without employing the imperative form, since kings are not commanded; rather, they are entreated and implored so that their hearts may soften

¹ Abu al-Hilal al-‘Askari, *Kitab al-Sina‘atayn*, p. 303.

² Ibn al-Nahhas, *Sharh al-Qasa’id al-Mashhurat*, p. 173.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 174.

⁴ Ibn al-Nahhas, *Sharh al-Qasa’id al-Mashhurat*, p. 168.

and they may grant pardon willingly rather than under compulsion, as the poet al-Ḥuṭay'a did when he sought the pardon of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, saying:¹

“What shall you say to fledglings in Marakh,
with downy crops, neither water nor trees for them?”

This image penetrates the heart and takes from it what it wants; its concise and precise wording sketches, in an instant, a sensory image that stirs human emotions. Thus, “the poet” succeeded in his choice, and it had a strong effect on the recipient's psyche, thereby achieving his aim and obtaining pardon.

What al-Nābigha did in this verse was repeated in the conclusion as well, where he was not successful in choosing his words, as he said:²

“This praise if you hear it as good
I did not present, ‘May you be unharmed,’ in exchange for a gift.
Indeed, this is an excuse; if it is of no benefit,
then its author is a partner in distress.”

The reader of this conclusion finds that its wording is not appropriate for this rhetorical context, which critics urge should be carefully treated through the selection of noble meaning and refined expression. Al-Hāzim says: “It is necessary to give special care to this position because it is the point where speech ends and concludes.” Meanwhile, al-Nābigha employs expressions that repel the soul, such as “curse” and “gift,” which are unsuitable for the closing of discourse. Al-Hāzim also warns against ending speech with unpleasant wording or meanings that repel the soul from what it is intended to be inclined toward.

In terms of meaning as well, al-Nābigha was not successful in choosing an appropriate and precise idea directly connected to the subject, since it is customary that praise is followed by a supplication for the praised person or a concluding word of wisdom. This is what critics, especially Hāzim al-Qartājannī, have recommended, as he holds that after praising the virtues of the praised person and mentioning his merits, the poet “should conclude with a wish or a prayer for him for happiness, the continuity of blessings, victory over enemies, and whatever is appropriate to that effect.”³ Had al-Nābigha ended with a prayer or a piece of wisdom, the conclusion would have been better and more eloquent, as in the saying of al-Laḳīṭ at the end of his poem:⁴

“I have bestowed upon you my sincere love without deceit,
so awaken for knowledge is that which benefits.”

Al-Laḳīṭ succeeded in choosing both his words and meanings, producing a profound piece of wisdom with strong impact, thereby excelling in his conclusion.

¹ Diwan al-Khaṭī'a, narrated and explained by Ibn al-Sikkī, Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, Beirut, 3rd ed., 2003, p. 11.

² Ibn al-Nahhas, Sharh al-Qasa'id al-Mashhurat, pp. 175–176.

³ Hāzim al-Qartājannī, Minhaj al-Bulagha' wa Siraj al-Udaba', p. 285.

⁴ Ibid., p. 285.

Thus, al-Nābigha's conclusion, based on the above, did not meet the standard of quality either in form or in content, nor in its relevance to the subject; therefore, he did not succeed in concluding his poem.

I/ The Conclusion in the Mu'allāqa of Imru' al-Qays:

Behind the composition of this poem lie the events of "Dār Juljul." This poem is characterized by the multiplicity of its themes, which are predominantly descriptive in nature. The poet described living nature, including horses and camels, as well as inanimate nature such as lightning, night, and flowing water. Among what he said in describing the night is:¹

"And a night like the waves of the sea let down its curtains,
weighed down with various kinds of sorrow to test me."

"I said to it, when it stretched out its back,
and brought forward and drew back its ends and became heavy in its entirety:

'O long night, will you not clear away?

With dawn for dawn is no better than you."

Contemplating this imagery reveals that it is filled with meanings of sadness and loneliness experienced by the poet, burdened with worries that reach their peak at night. This is reflected in his depiction of the night's wildness, likened to sea waves in the expression "a night like the waves of the sea." This simile indicates the poet's anxiety and turmoil. His solitude at night led him to think and sink into worries, as if the stillness of night triggered within him a charge of painful memories that constricted his chest, turning the night's curtains into curtains of grief. He had no choice but to address it, as shown in his saying "I said to it," personifying the night and making it the second party in a dialogue, asking it to allow the dawn to emerge so that his worries may be relieved and his state may calm.

What made this image clearer to the reader are the words employed by the poet to express his inner feelings, such as: (to test), "night (implying darkness)," "let down," "stretched its back (implying heaviness)," and "long," in addition to the vocative particle for closeness "O," which suggests the poet's pleading with the night to pass quickly so that morning may appear.

These words also carry a resonant musical rhythm expressing the poet's psychological state. Alongside this, simile plays an important role in conveying meaning, as it expresses the most subtle ideas. Thus, the image becomes complete and impactful for the recipient, who is inevitably drawn into the poet's imagination.

In a remarkable stylistic manner, the poet also describes his horse and makes it legendary in his saying:²

"Attacking, retreating, advancing, withdrawing together
like a massive rock hurled by a torrent from above."

He depicted the speed of his horse in a brilliant image, making it like a restraining chain for wild beasts when they run in the desert, unable to escape it, as if it were a chain seizing their legs. Due to its extreme speed, it appears as if it attacks and retreats at the same time, and

¹ Hazim al-Qartajanni, *Minhaj al-Bulagha' wa Siraj al-Udaba'*, p. 302.

² Abu al-Hilal al-'Askari, *Kitab al-Sina'atayn*, p. 302.

advances and withdraws simultaneously, like a boulder of rock thrown down by a flood from the top of a high mountain.

The elegance and strength of the wording draw in the recipient's imagination, presenting a fantastical horse that astonishes and confuses the mind, to the point where the reader wonders whether it is a real horse or an illusion. Here, the poet succeeds in engaging the recipient.

However, the poet's use of imagery in the conclusion, which came in two verses, was not of a high level, which weakened it and removed it from the realm of quality, as he says:¹

“As if the desert birds, in the morning,
had become intoxicated with pure wine mixed with peppered nectar.
As if the beasts within it were drowned in the evening,
in its farthest regions, like roots of wild onions.”

He speaks of a flowing flood, describing the chirping of desert birds around it as if they were delighted like those who drink pure wine, then describes the drowning of beasts in it until their heads appear like wild onion roots (both being muddled by clay).²

However, the reader of this image feels that there is fragmentation and ambiguity in meaning; it requires further clarification and explanation. Thus, the poet's speech does not feel complete, and the reader expects more description to fully grasp the poet's emotions toward this scene. Hence, “he did not establish a clear framework as other authors of the Mu‘allaqāt did.”³ Therefore, it may be said that the poet failed in the conclusion, as it cuts off the reader's anticipation for more.⁴

It would have been better for the poet to conclude with a complete and well-formed simile, such as what al-Hudhali said at the end of his poem:⁵

“Your relatives opposed you in their affair,
so separate yourself in your matter or mix with them.”

He concluded with a graceful simile and a fine example, because a conclusion should be well-structured, leaving no room for addition.⁶

In conclusion, the Mu‘allaqāt differ in their endings from one poet to another: some end with description, such as Imru’ al-Qays; some with wisdom, such as Zuhayr ibn Abī Sulmā and Ṭarafa ibn al-‘Abd; some with the finest verse in terms of wording and meaning, such as ‘Amr ibn Kulthūm; some with an ending rich in hidden meanings, such as ‘Antara ibn Shaddād; and some with a simple concluding verse, such as al-Nābigha.

These conclusions vary in quality: some achieve excellence, while others fall short. The best of them are those that end in wisdom, due to the poet's careful choice of concise and precise wording. Next come those whose wording and meaning are well-structured in a form that attracts the recipient's attention, stirs emotions, and becomes firmly fixed in memory. In

¹ Ibn al-Nahhas, *Sharh al-Qasa'id al-Mashhurat*, p. 31.

² *Ibid.*, p. 34.

³ Ibn al-Nahhas, *Sharh al-Qasa'id al-Mashhurat*, pp. 49–50.

⁴ Ahmad Yazan, *Al-Naqd al-Adabi fi al-Qayrawan*, p. 184.

⁵ Abu al-Hilal al-‘Askari, *Kitab al-Sina'atayn*, pp. 303–304.

⁶ Ahmad Yazan, *Al-Naqd al-Adabi fi al-Qayrawan*, p. 184.

contrast, other conclusions fail to achieve the required standard, either because the poet cuts off the meaning prematurely, as in the conclusion of Imru' al-Qays, or because he fails to choose appropriate wording and meaning, as in al-Nābigha.

Thus, it may be said that the Mu'allaqāt do not all reach the same level of poetic mastery in terms of the quality of their conclusions.

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