

Received: October 2023 Accepted: December 2023

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.58262/ks.v12i1.042>

## The Journey of Al-Mutanabbi to Egypt and its Impact on Modern Arabic Poetry: Amal Dunqul and Mahmoud Darwish as Examples

Abdullah Mahmoud Ibrahim<sup>1</sup>, Ebtesam Abdulla Alshehhi<sup>2</sup>, Hussein Fatehi Adwan<sup>3</sup>, Ismail Suliman Almazaidah<sup>4</sup>, Faisal Faleh ALAsmar ALRuqban<sup>5</sup>

### Abstract

*This study attempts to address the issue of Al-Mutanabbi's journey by analysing a selection of his poems during his trip to Egypt. Subsequently, it examines two contemporary poems by Amal Dunqul and Mahmoud Darwish that also explore Al-Mutanabbi's journey to Egypt. The study begins with an introduction that distinguishes between the concepts of "poetic journey" and "journey in poetry." It clarifies the classification of Al-Mutanabbi's journey under the latter category. The study then emphasises the necessity of exploring the "vision" in his journey, which is revealed in the first chapter. The analysis uncovers Al-Mutanabbi's vision regarding power and authority through an examination of his experiences in Egypt. In the second chapter, the study observes how Dunqul and Darwish perceive Al-Mutanabbi's vision. The former focuses on attributing an Arab identity to Al-Mutanabbi while stripping him of hope in the power of poetry, while the latter imparts an Arab identity to Al-Mutanabbi while localising him in poetry and making it his ultimate refuge.*

**Keywords:** Journey, Al-Mutanabbi's Poetry, Amal Dunqul, Mahmoud Darwish, Vision.

### Introduction

Looking at "journey texts" as literary texts has not received sufficient attention from researchers. Despite their common use of the term "travel literature," their treatment of texts led to diverse fields of knowledge such as geography, history, and anthropological studies (Al-Mawafi, 1995). Despite the broad terminological meaning of the word "literature," granting it an apology for this usage, the problem of the fluid categorization of journey texts has been sufficient for several researchers to attempt to categorise journey texts and extract their artistic essence, making them texts with independent existence. In our pursuit of this conceptualization, we have encountered various frameworks for these texts based on different criteria. Some are historical, some are geographical, and some depend on the nature of the texts. These classifications are not without confusion and lack of precision (See Al-Mawafi, 1995, p. 22 for further discussion).

Regardless of these classifications, it is essential to note that they almost converge in their essence on a specific concept of journey, perceiving it as "essentially movement, and this movement has a purpose" (Al-Mawafi, p. 23). This common understanding has led us to encounter classifications that blur the distinction between the art of journey and independent

<sup>1</sup> Department of Arabic Language and Literature, Faculty of Arts, University of Jordan, Amman, Jordan, Department of Arabic Language and Literature, Faculty of Arts, Mohammed Bin Zayed University for Humanities, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

<sup>2</sup> Researcher, Mohammed Bin Zayed University for Humanities, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

<sup>3</sup> Master's in Arabic Language, Department of Arabic Language and Literature, Faculty of Arts, University of Jordan, Amman, Jordan

<sup>4</sup> Department of Arabic Language, School of Arts, The University of Jordan, Amman, Jordan

<sup>5</sup> Assistant Professor, Arabic Language Department, Isra University, Amman, Jordan

literary arts with distinct characteristics. For instance, Shauqi Dhaif sees journey texts as a form of narrative art (Hussein, 1990, p. 9), while Hussein Nassar believes that journey extends into both poetic and prose realms. In doing so, he considers the journey found in the works of pre-Islamic poets as a type of journey, juxtaposed with prose journeys akin to those of Ibn Battuta on the other side (Nassar, 1991, p. 97). Here, we assert that dividing travel into poetic and prose journeys is merely a conflation of two independent literary types based on a common element, namely the element of movement. Conversely, we determine that the separation between them is not straightforward and requires a more in-depth exploration of the nature of these two genres. Nevertheless, what matters to us here is to have a clear and precise understanding of the journey in Al-Mutanabbi's poetry. Therefore, we will distinguish between two concepts:

### Poetic Journey

A poetic journey is one that adopts the poetic text as a form of expression; the aim of the text is often spatial wandering. However, the documentation of this journey follows the poetic form. An example of this type is the maritime journey of Ibn Majid documented in "*Al-Arjuḥ al-Hijazīyyah*" (The Hijazi Rhymed Poem) (Nassar, 1991, p. 100). These journeys are often a form of "*nazm*" (metrical composition), as they only take the formal characteristics of poetry, relying on metre and rhyme from the poetic aspect.

### Journey in Poetry

This concept refers to a journey that is part of the poetic text without having a specific purpose. The poet employs it to construct a building block within the structure of the poem. An example of this is the journey in pre-Islamic poetry (see Rumiyaḥ, 1975), as well as the journey of Al-Buhturi to the palace of Khosrow, and other journeys within the poems of poets. Needless to say, the journey here appears as an artistic element that is present to serve the construction of the organic poem. The pre-Islamic poet, when talking about his camels or his journey on a camel, often does so in a section of the poem, usually the introduction. From this part, he transitions to another part without restricting the poem to the description of the journey alone.

And no less important are the books that have explored "The Journey in the Poetry of Al-Mutanabbi." Among them, we mention *Abu al-Tayyib Al-Mutanabbi in Egypt and Iraq* (2000) by Mustafa Al-Shuka'a, *The Journey in the Poetry of Al-Mutanabbi* (2012) by Muntasir Al-Ghadanfari, and *Following in the Footsteps of Al-Mutanabbi in His Journeys and Poems* (2013) by Qasim Wahb. These works have taken the statements of Al-Mutanabbi in his poems about his journeys as a starting point for the research problem. In other words, the research on this issue has been driven by the intertwining of Al-Mutanabbi's poetic art with his real-life journeys. Thus, it has become difficult to "distinguish between the journey of Al-Mutanabbi and his biography" (Wahb, 2013, p. 7). Also, the concept of "Al-Mutanabbi's journey" has become synonymous with his actual movement between countries, emirates, and regions.

Despite Al-Ghadanfari's division of Al-Mutanabbi's journey into two dimensions, psychological and material, he made the presence of the material dimension a primary driver for investigating what lies behind it in terms of psychological and intellectual effects (Al-Ghadanfari, 2000, p. 24). Like Al-Ghadanfari, Al-Shuka'a also took a similar approach when he decided to study Al-Mutanabbi's poetry in Egypt and Iraq after being saturated with research in the courts of Saif al-Dawlah in Aleppo' (Al-Shuka'a, 2000, p. 15). The truth is that the travel-related poetry of Al-Mutanabbi was not meant to describe his journey in a manner similar to what we find in travel books. It "did not fulfil what the eye of the traveller could observe of

the conditions of countries and their characteristics" (Wahb, 2013, p. 9). Instead, the furthest he went in description was to allocate a part of the poem to the journey, using it to nourish the organic structure of the text. Therefore, most of his poems that addressed the theme of "journey" were either praise poems, satirical poems, or for other purposes.

Despite dedicating a significant portion of some poems to the journey and discussing it, it cannot be considered merely a "poetic journey" as much as it is a "journey in poetry." If we examine his poem that begins with a detailed description of "*Shibb Bawan*" (Bawan's valley), we are surprised, in the midst of our immersion in his precise description of the place, by his transition to his poetic purpose. This purpose is to praise 'Adud al-Dawla, an emir in the Buyid dynasty (See his purpose in: "So, I said: When I saw Abu Shuja', I inquired about the people and the place." (Al-Akbari, 1936, p. 255)). Even if we return to the initial verses describing the people, we do not find this description based on highlighting the beauty of the place, but we notice many indications that can be considered keys to the thoughts and philosophy of Al-Mutanabbi. For example:

"Yet, the Arab lad within it remains \*\* a foreigner in countenance, in hand, and in speech" (Al-Akbari, 1936, p. 251).

It is natural to find a connected discourse about the dimensions hidden within this verse, reflecting the philosophy and ideas of Al-Mutanabbi. Al-Ghadanfari (2012) utilises this verse to explore the sense of estrangement that pervades Al-Mutanabbi's psyche. For "these three limbs [referring to the face, hand, and tongue...] collectively express the reality of the estrangement experienced by this Arab youth" (Al-Ghadanfari, 2012, p. 52). On the other hand, Shaib (1964) employs it to affirm Al-Mutanabbi's Arab identity and his nationalistic sentiments. For "hardly can we find among the elite of poets in the Abbasid era a poet whose concern for Arab identity matches that of Al-Mutanabbi" (Shaib, 1964, p. 322).

If that is the case, then it is essential to affirm that the departure from the material context of Al-Mutanabbi's wanderings should not render the exploration oblivious to the visionary context that constitutes the partiality of the journey. In this context, "visionary" refers to the poet's connection with insight and perception, transcending mere visual observation. We adopt the distinction made by the magazine "*Shi'r*" (Poetry) between the two concepts of "vision" and "visionary insight," regardless of the ethical idea inherent in them. "vision" is defined as "poetry that relies on illustrative description or the narrative of events or occurrences," while "visionary insight" is when "the poet penetrates with his insight into what lies hidden behind visible things, capturing and unveiling the meanings and forms concealed within them" (Abu Saif, 2005, p. 57).

At a time when we see that the partiality of Al-Mutanabbi's journey in his poetry encompasses both "vision" and "visionary insight" equally, the research will naturally aim to unveil the presence of the latter concept. This means that we will focus on Al-Mutanabbi's journey as a unique method for understanding and interpreting the world and envisioning the image he intends to portray. This research direction is prompted by Al-Mutanabbi himself, as he recognizes that the journey is a crucial element within his poetry. He has not left this component untouched; rather, he philosophises about it, imparting a visionary character to it beyond mere physical transitions driven by superficial motives such as wealth, envy, gossip, war, and hunting. These material factors were mentioned in the chapter held by Al-Ghadanfari

in his book *The Journey in the Poetry of Al-Mutanabbi* (2012) about the motives of Al-Mutanabbi's journey. Despite his mention of estrangement and foresight, characterising them as catalysts for the journey, he dealt with them in a pragmatic manner, linking them to Al-Mutanabbi's family circumstances, the challenges of his life, and the absence of a true beloved. (See, for example, page 33).

Al-Mutanabbi often articulates the journey as an essence and an authentic idea, not merely a material transition with surface-level motivations:

"I desire from the days what only I covet, \*\* Unfolding secrets beyond others' whims or thoughts.

A companion in ambitions, a wayfarer by my side, \*\* Intent on crossing desolation or slicing through the age's tide" (Al-Bade'e'i, 2003, p. 107).

It is worth mentioning that the previous verses are not found in Al-Mutanabbi's collection, and Al-Bade'e'i indicates that Al-Tha'labi mentioned that they were discovered in his belongings after his death. However, he does not cast doubt on the authenticity of the verses in what we have reviewed.

Indeed, Al-Mutanabbi leaves us with a puzzle in interpreting the motive behind his wandering. He contentedly clarifies the will in comparison to others without explaining its nature. Others do not possess his will, yet with certainty, we do not know the essence of this will! Al-Mutanabbi elucidates the essence of will through a single aspect, which is addition, and overlooks the aspect of how, in truth, this meaning is frequently reiterated in the collection of Al-Mutanabbi's poems (See: Al-Jurjani, p.27); he states in another verse:

"I am consumed by a thing, and the nights, as if \*\* They relentlessly pursue me away from its existence, and I, in pursuit, follow" (Al-Akbari, 1936, p. 27).

Perhaps this verse signifies what we aim to explore here. Al-Mutanabbi employs the word "thing" to express the significance of his wanderings. Linguists argue that "thing" is a negation of negations, implying that he propels the nature of his will into the utmost realms of the unknown and inquiry for us. It urges us to unveil this mystery.

## Chapter One: Al-Mutanabbi's Journey to Egypt

The journey of Al-Mutanabbi to Egypt holds a significant place in his biography. His stay there extended for four and a half years, a relatively long period. He had not stayed longer in a single place under one ruler except in Aleppo, where he spent nine years (See Wahb, 2013). Additionally, the geographical and cultural transition he underwent was substantial. It involved moving between two distant and politically opposed regions, governed by the rivals Saif al-Dawla and Kafur al-Ikhshidi. Kafur al-Ikhshidi subdued Saif al-Dawla in Ramla, Damascus, and Aleppo before they reconciled, agreeing that Aleppo would be under Saif al-Dawla, while Damascus and its surroundings would be under Kafur (Wahb, 2013, p. 244). Therefore, the material importance of the journey undoubtedly left a significant impact on the poetry of Al-Mutanabbi, even though the verses he composed there constitute only a quarter of what he composed in Aleppo (Azzam, 2013, p. 138).

Various scholars have discussed the influence of Egypt and Al-Mutanabbi's journey there on his poetic construction. Some argued that his poetry became less eloquent in Egypt because he presented himself as a prominent poet in a new environment, where its intellectuals and

scholars were not as familiar with the *Shamite* environment (The environment of the Levant.). Additionally, they suggested that occasion-based poems and improvised verses in Egypt were fewer than those in Aleppo (Hussein, 1997, p. 288). Moreover, the development of the art of satire in Al-Mutanabbi's later years in Egypt allowed a new type of poetry that facilitated the interpretation of praise into satire, as seen in the *Kafuriyyat* (Shaib, 1964, p. 348). However, another group of researchers perceived that Al-Mutanabbi's poetry in Egypt became less potent. It no longer focused on refining meanings or exaggerating description (Shaib, 1964, p. 349). Additionally, it lacked the passionate emotion—regardless of the research's ability to precisely define the meaning of emotion—that characterised his earlier works. This was evident in his apparent lack of admiration for the personality of Kafur, in contrast to Saif al-Dawla (Hussein, 1997, p. 299).

Regardless of our agreement or disagreement with these diverse opinions among researchers of Al-Mutanabbi, we propose that we study Al-Mutanabbi's journey to Egypt—as it constitutes a part of the construction of his artistic poem—according to the elements that we believe reveal his poetry's perspective on one hand, and the elements received by poets of the modern era on the other hand. Here, we will discuss two elements related to the concept of authority that Al-Mutanabbi expressed through his journey to Egypt and his perceptions of it:

### 1- Praising Kafur and Criticising Him:

Hussein mentions that the poems of Al-Mutanabbi praising Kafur were shared by two other individuals, namely Saif al-Dawla and Al-Mutanabbi himself (Hussein, 1997, p. 299). Indeed, we can start from Hussein's account to assert that these three personalities harmonise in the panegyric poem to construct Al-Mutanabbi's vision of power. He begins the section dedicated to the journey in his poetic composition with the following lines:

"Enough for you as a cure is to see death as healing, \*\* And it suffices that aspirations be merely dreams."

We have observed that we can divide it into three sections: the wisdom-filled introduction (1-5), followed by the journey (6-20), and then the praise (20-47). In this poem, which is the first on in praising Kafur, Al-Mutanabbi states:

"I loved you before your love, from a distance, \*\* For it was treacherous, so be faithful."

To make Saif al-Dawla a departing leader, not one to be dismissed, contrary to what the material context requires; he reshapes the relationship between the poet and authority in a way that anticipates it being subordinate to him, not the other way around. Al-Mutanabbi expressed this philosophy, addressing Saif al-Dawla:

"If you depart from a people who have valued that \*\* You do not part from them, for the ones departing are they."

And because he lacked the authority that follows poetry, he threw his heart and emotions, indifferent, stating:

"Less yearning, O heart, perhaps \*\* I saw you purifying affection from one who is not deserving."

He enters into a profound dialogue with the contradictions of himself, saying:

"I was created gentle, yet if I went to youth \*\* I would part with my grey hair, the heart's lover, weeping."

Perhaps this verse is a criticism of Kafur, as grey hair symbolises Saif al-Dawla's wisdom and youth symbolises Kafur's recklessness. The poem concludes with the journey to Kafur:

"Yet, in Fustat, a sea I navigated, \*\* my life and advice, passion, and verses,

And stretched naked between its ears, \*\* the breeze whispered gently, following lofty heights."

Al-Mutanabbi distances himself from being a mere visitor to Kafur before confirming his genuine presence in power, despite being a poet. He reproaches Kafur, attributing his restless life to him, stating:

"Upon anxiety, as if the wind beneath me \*\* Turning me southward or northward."

He also expresses his heartfelt desire, saying:

"I conceal the renewal of passion, mentioning what has passed \*\* Even if the solid rock does not remain for it."

And his verses, which have long been seen as parallel to the wilderness and the high places, saying:

"I am the son of valleys, I am the son of elevated places \*\* I am the son of ascents, I am the son of challenges."

The Mutanabbi does not hesitate to describe the horses that set out for Kafur with a contrasting description; they are not the exhausted, fatigued horses of the panegyric poets, but rather strong horses with spears placed on their ears. He says:

"Walking gracefully, with every step, as the stone approached, \*\* engraving the chests of the elite with its edges,"

And the horses see distant things in the darkness in their own form, as he says:

"And they look from blackness, sincere in the darkness, \*\* seeing the distant figures of people as they truly are."

They even hear the talk of the consciences! As he says:

"And they set up for the hidden bell lofty minarets, \*\* echoing the communion of conscience, calling out."

This means that Al- Mutanabbi employed horses and spears in the structure of the journey to establish his strength against the strength of Kafur from the beginning and to make poetry parallel to authority, with the poet being a counterpart to the ruler. And this is what he explicitly stated to Kafur in the following poem praising Kafur, saying:

"Congratulations are indeed for the competent, \*\* for the one who brings close those who are distant."

In its conclusion, he boldly declares:

"And my heart is among the kings, \*\* even if my tongue is seen among the poets."

With this interpretation, we can understand the attempt by Al-Mutanabbi to present the reasons for Kafur's ascent to the throne in the first poem praising him. He presents the reasons that make a person deserving of kingship, not necessarily the reasons that actually made Kafur



a king. He says:

"And you were not among those who attain kingship through wishful thinking,\*\* but rather through days that have grown sharp in their adversities."

No matter what, it does not seem that Al-Mutanabbi is harshly criticising Kafur in the form of praise, as some researchers have suggested (See Al-Rumi, 1413). However, it is clear that he uses it in praise to construct the image he envisions for authority. This image is veiled with the turban of power and poetry combined. This became evident in his satire of Kafur when he left him. Let us look at the section of the journey from his poem that he recited in Kufa, and its beginning: "O every walk of Khazal (slow walk), I sacrifice everything to every walk of Haydabi.(fast walk)" Here, Al-Mutanabbi regains what he gave to Kafur in his poetic lines about horses and spears. The poem begins with praising his camels, horses, and spears, which he sees as the 'ropes of life,' saying: "But they are the ropes of life and the trap of enemies and the tool of harm," favouring them over women. In doing so, he uses the camel as a symbol of the journey and the woman as a symbol of staying, solidifying the former's merit as a means to reach the goal.

This introductory part of the journey seems to be a good setup for his satire of Kafur:

"I praised with a poem the Karakandani (rhinoceros),\*\* Between the gravel and the elevations.

It was not praise for him, But rather,\*\* it was the satire of an enemy."

This reveals that Al-Mutanabbi's earlier praise of Kafur was not for his personal qualities, but rather an expression of his views on authority, which he sought in its entirety to the extent that Kafur, who did not deserve it, became the most deserving. He uses poetry here as a tool to indicate this flaw. It is essential to note that Al-Mutanabbi distorted the image of Kafur as established by historical records, which have highlighted his competence and elevated status (See Al-Shuka'a, 2012, p. 418 ).

## 2- Describing the People of Egypt

If the journey to and from Kafur serves as a good introduction to understanding Al-Mutanabbi's approach to the idea of authority, his departure from Kafur also provides a good prelude to understanding his attitude toward the concept of the people. In the conclusion of his ya'iiya poem (ending with a *ya* sound), as mentioned earlier, he indicates that Kafur reached the heights of power because he responded to his own ambitions at a time when people fell short of doing so (See his verses: "It called him, and he responded to her call, reaching glory and greatness,\*\* while people contradicted the compelling motives").

Al-Mutanabbi justified Kafur's ascent to power by highlighting people's failure to act during that time, using this as the basis for his satirical departure from Kafur:

"The guards of Egypt's, and its foxes have become secure,\*\* as they have smelled [the scent of danger], and the grapevines do not perish."

Indeed, authority is nothing more than submission to those who deserve the authority (the guards) by those who do not deserve it (the foxes). This immersed Al- Mutanabbi in a condescending view, to say the least, containing a racial distinction. One of his major criticisms of Kafur was that he was a black eunuch! (See the verse: "He who taught the black scrotum

honour \*\* Its foundation is the egg, or is it his fathers, the prey").

This biological satire provoked the displeasure of some critics to the extent that they regarded Al-Mutanabbi as superficial, passing judgement on things (See: Hussein, 1997, p. 328). As for his criticisms of the people of Egypt, it is that they degraded themselves to the point of having a eunuch as their leader! He expressed this by saying:

"The eunuch has become the leader of the free in it \*\* So the free is excluded, and the slave is worshipped."

Thus, the interpretation of Al-Mutanabbi's satire on the people of Egypt leads to the idea that the ruler is a reflection of the condition of the governed. We find this concept in religious tradition as well, as expressed in the prophetic saying: "As you are, so will your leaders be."

Here, we recall the poem in which he praised the victory of Saif al-Dawla over those who rebelled against him from the tribe of "Kilab," saying in his poem:

"Without you, the shepherd would be a prey to wolves, \*\* and without you, the striker would be ineffective against the target."

Thus, when Al-Mutanabbi reproaches the the tribe of Kilab for their actions, we find him interceding for them with Saif al-Dawla because he felt pain in his heart for their killing, as he says:

"How can your hardship be inflicted on people whom\*\*, when harmed, would cause you pain?"

Then he asks them to have their punishment be forgiveness for them! In his words:

"Show mercy, O Lord, upon them, for indeed,\*\* showing kindness to the wrongdoer is a form of punishment."

He says all of this because he sought in them an agreement with Saif al-Dawla, despite their passing mistake of rebelling against him, as in his words:

"And under his banner, they struck down enemies,\*\* and hardships became subservient to them from the Arab tribes."

Strangely enough, Al-Mutanabbi did not call in his poetry for the people of Egypt to revolt. Instead, he contented himself with making their submission to Kafur a characteristic of their unchanging nature. However, when he called for his killing, he foresaw this happening from a "young man" and not from a rebellious nation! Saying: "Oh, the young man who exhibits his head to the sword, \*\* Dispelling the doubts and accusations of the people."

What is stranger than Al-Mutanabbi's opinion is Hussein's agreement with him on that; for Al-Mutanabbi has "the best portrayal of a trait among the manners of the Egyptians" (Hussein, 1997, p. 329).

What we have strongly discerned in the structure of Al-Mutanabbi's poem about his journey to Egypt is that it managed to articulate some of his visions of authority. It manifested in a blend of material power represented by horses and spears, and moral power represented by poetry and opinion. Often, Al-Mutanabbi connected the two powers in his poetry, though we can sense an underlying desire revealing psychological constraints on his poetry and questions probing his ability to be an alternative to the sword or even its partner. (See his statement about



Egypt: "Until I returned and my pens became fierce for me, \*\* Glory is for the sword, not for the pen.") These questions have cast their shadows on modern poetry, as we will see in the second chapter.

## **Chapter Two: Al-Mutanabbi's Journey to Egypt in Modern Arabic Poetry**

The discussion about the influence of heritage on modern poets is extensive. We can identify two major models of the presence of poetic heritage in contemporary poetry. The first model is represented by poetry that expresses heritage, while the second model is represented by poetry that expresses with heritage. In the second model, heritage becomes an objective equivalent for the poet, allowing him to integrate it into his contemporary experience, explore it, and express it. This is in contrast to the first model, where heritage is merely presented or commented upon as an ancient experience (Zaid, 1997, p. 27).

In discussing modern poetry's engagement with Al-Mutanabbi as a poet and a poetic figure, we find both models strongly present (See Zain al-Din, 1999). The reasons for the intensive presence of Al-Mutanabbi in the works of poets are diverse, encompassing discussions about the controversial personality of Al-Mutanabbi both in ancient and contemporary contexts, his dominant Arab identity, the similarities between the conditions of the fourth century and contemporary times, and more. However, one compelling reason that draws attention is the assertion that "in Al-Mutanabbi's poetry, there is a level of vision that surpasses any other poet in Arabic literature" ( Zain al-Din, 1999, p. 11). Having explored some aspects of his vision regarding power in the context of the journey to Egypt in the previous chapter, we will now examine how Amal Dunqul and Mahmoud Darwish addressed this theme in their works.

### **Amal Dunqul "From the Memoirs of Al-Mutanabbi in Egypt"**

Perhaps Amal Dunqul, one of the most famous poets of the modern era, turned to heritage and employed it in his poetry. Regardless of the reasons for that, we can say that his poem "From the Memoirs of Al-Mutanabbi in Egypt" (Dunqul, 1969, p. 121) addressed Al-Mutanabbi's journey through the strategy of masquerade (See Zaid, 1997, p. 212). In the poem, Al-Mutanabbi returns, expressing himself indirectly through the use of the first-person pronoun. Note that Dunqul considered the psychological embodiment of Al-Mutanabbi by selecting words that extravagantly showcase him as regretful and desperate. Additionally, he constructed dialogues between Al-Mutanabbi and his maid, and between Al-Mutanabbi and Kafur, as well as introspective dialogues. However, the focal point of Al-Mutanabbi's psychological feelings in the poem originated from a nationalist sentiment and a strong sense of Arab identity that Dunqul sought to impart to Al-Mutanabbi's persona. This implies that the psychological treatment in the poem relied on a historical framework. For some reason, the image of Al-Mutanabbi became associated with Arab identity, even though a thorough examination is needed to assess the accuracy of this prevalent information, which seems to influence Amal Dunqul here.

Al-Mutanabbi, Kafur, Saif al-Dawla, Khawlah, Egypt, and Aleppo are historical anchors on which Dunqul based his poem. We observe that he dealt with these anchors through the utilisation of two discourses. By discourse, we refer to what Robert de Beaugrande

defined as "a set of related texts; that is, a sequence of interconnected text uses that can be referred back to later" (See De Beaugrande, 1998, p. 6.):

**1. The Poetic Discourse of Al-Mutanabbi:** By this, we mean that Dunqul, in certain sections of the poem, directly reconfigures a set of meanings and ideas from Al-Mutanabbi. His displeasure with the colour of wine and his lack of enjoyment of it in the first section serves as the opening of a famous poem by Al-Mutanabbi (See, "I am a rock, unmoved by this \*\* These cups and those songs"), and the image of Kafur with the black face and pierced lips is the very image that Al-Mutanabbi himself depicted. The subdued people of Egypt are the ones subjected to Al-Mutanabbi's poetry. Moreover, we can discern artistic images inspired by Al-Mutanabbi's satire, such as the image of the captive bird that neither leaves its cage nor flies, symbolising Kafur the eunuch. This discourse continues until the end of the poem, where Dunqul employs two verses from Al-Mutanabbi with a modification that emphasises its significance in terms of vision, as we will discuss in the second section.

**2. Al-Mutanabbi's Psychological Discourse:** Naturally, Dunqul's retrieval of Al-Mutanabbi's discourse was an external retrieval that reintroduced Al-Mutanabbi without adding anything substantial to express a contemporary vision for Dunqul. Therefore, he had to introduce new elements to this external discourse. These elements were anchored in the high national sentiment of Al-Mutanabbi, and Dunqul initiated them from the phrase: "I cry for Arabism."

Dunqul has loaded a dimension of the contemporary Arab experience onto Al-Mutanabbi, transcending the historical confusion surrounding the mystery of Al-Mutanabbi's revolt against Kafur and the historical reality of Kafur's persona. Dunqul turned him into a symbol opposing Arabism and a negative substitute for it, causing Al-Mutanabbi to lament. This is indeed an exploration of Al-Mutanabbi's psychological discourse, often unexpressed in his poetry. It reached its peak in the second segment of the poem, creating a dialogical scene between Al-Mutanabbi and his servant from Aleppo, a figure absent historically from Al-Mutanabbi's biography. This dialogue shows Al-Mutanabbi as a captive of Kafur, seemingly loyal to Saif al-Dawla. This implies that the poem has taken on two opposing dimensions: Kafur, representing the compromised Arabism, and Saif al-Dawla, representing the true Arabism, with Al-Mutanabbi caught in between. We do not lean towards criticising Amal Dunqul for following Al-Mutanabbi in distorting Kafur's image because here he deals with a poetic symbol rather than a historical one. He takes it as it has settled in poetic tradition, leaving it to historians to expose the falseness of the poetry later.

In the third segment, Dunqul introduces a historical figure into the biography of Al-Mutanabbi, a figure that has been more present in the critics' discussions than in Al-Mutanabbi's poetry, namely the character "Khawla," the sister of Saif al-Dawla. Mahmoud Shaker addressed this character, attempting to suggest that Al-Mutanabbi was in love with her. Dunqul invokes her from contemporary critical tradition, dropping a non-historical, modern image on her. He portrays her as fighting with her sword after her brother and father were killed, concluding the scene with her enslavement:

"They abducted her while the neighbours peeked from their homes,  
Trembling in body and soul,  
Daring not to aid her wounded sword."

Thus, Dunqul delves into the psyche of Al-Mutanabbi to make him create a contemporary scene through a symbolic representation of the Arab reality embodied by the defeated Khawla.

Then, he wastes no time completing the picture by bringing in Kafur, describing him as a counterpart to betrayal, servility, and the concoction of ludicrous solutions. He presents Kafur by highlighting a comparison between him and Saif al-Dawla at times and between him and Al-Mu'tasim al-Abbasid at other times.

In our study of Al-Mutanabbi's vision, we have seen that he perceives power as a combination of material strength along with the power of poetry. Amal Dunqul adds a function to this vision, portraying it as a force harnessed for Arabism. However, he soon strips Al-Mutanabbi of his strength in his own words, concluding his poem by highlighting Al-Mutanabbi's despair of having any material strength, whether in terms of civilization or personal power. This leads him to disdain his poetic strength by entering Al-Mutanabbi's text and transforming it. Thus, Dunqul has metaphorically killed both the poet and the knight in Al-Mutanabbi, pushing us into the dilemma of "Kafur," the symbol of betrayal in the text. Kafur is the symbol that he imposes on Arab reality, turning Al-Mutanabbi into an objective equivalent expressing the contemporary Arab experience of defeat, despair, and standing futilely before swords and words:

"I do not need the famous sword  
As long as I have lived alongside Kafur  
O Eid, in what state have you returned, O Eid?  
Has the past made you lean towards appeasement?  
The drums of Egypt have slept, abandoning its soldiers  
And instead, anthems have fought in their place."

### **Mahmoud Darwish "The Journey of Al-Mutanabbi to Egypt"**

If Dunqul dealt with Al-Mutanabbi's journey starting from his residence in Egypt, Mahmoud Darwish, in his poem "The Journey of Al-Mutanabbi to Egypt" (Darwish, 1994, p. 107), chose to begin with the journey itself. It is clear that Al-Mutanabbi's journey to Egypt had a significant impact on Mahmoud Darwish's poetry. He evokes it broadly in another poem (See his poem "I See My Phantom Coming from Afar") before addressing it in this specific one. Regardless, Darwish employs the strategy of the mask in the poem, adopting a poetic necessity repeated six times by Al-Mutanabbi at the beginning and end of the text:

"To the Nile, there are customs,  
And I am departing."

Darwish creates irony from the very beginning, offering a general explanation for Al-Mutanabbi's journey. The customs of the river, with their renewal and flow, were the motivation for Al-Mutanabbi to depart to it in the introduction of the poem. However, these very customs transformed into stillness and stagnation, becoming the impetus for leaving it at the end of the poem. We can say that Darwish divided the poem into five sections through this necessity:

**The first section:** It relies on Al-Mutanabbi's biography to describe himself, expressing his despair from Iraq, Aleppo, and the Levant, finding hope only in the Nile as a last resort. In this section, the phrase "I do not see" is repeated several times, reflecting Al-Mutanabbi's concern about places and people until departure becomes his fate:

"How many times did I hasten to the neighing,  
But I found neither horse nor knights.  
And departure surrendered me to departure."

**The second section:** It is the longest in the poem, featuring a psychological exploration of Al-Mutanabbi's journey and relying on making the poem a counterpart to the homeland. Al-Mutanabbi repeats the necessity: "My homeland, my new poem," amidst an explanation that his soul is leading him out of Egypt and another narrative detailing the conditions of the Arab regions around him, with their states and conflicts. Here, he loses the hope built in the first section about the Nile and Egypt, entering into a dialogue that delves deeper into his self-love to the extent that it approaches it with a physical proximity, evoking the dialogue between Joseph and the Aziz's wife:

"Is my homeland my new poem?  
Cheer up!  
How beautiful you are!  
The night is my night, and this heart is yours."

The underlying cause of this drowning for Al-Mutanabbi within himself is the loss of hope in the flowing Nile and the rejuvenating fertility of Egypt. Thus, the second section concludes by adding Egypt to the list of Al-Mutanabbi's sorrow for the regions, uniting them artistically with Babylon as they merge together:

"There is no Egypt in the Egypt to which I walk, towards its prisons,  
For I see emptiness, and whenever I shake hands with it,  
My hands are torn by Babylon.  
In Egypt, there is Kafur... and in me, earthquakes."

**The third section:** Darwish engages Al-Mutanabbi in a direct dialogue using Al-Mutanabbi's poetry. Indeed, this discourse represents a reiteration of Al-Mutanabbi's discourse on Egypt with a more profound revolutionary tone and an expanded exploration of questions regarding the historical nature of the place. There is a drowning in revolutionary spirit and an amplification of inquiries about the history of the location, submerging it in an intensity dating back to ancient times, in a way that makes us read through the voice of Al-Mutanabbi the current state of Egypt and its perennial condition.

"And you remain silent so that the distinction  
Between the clay and the farmer is lost  
In the distant countryside.  
And in your blood, the nightingales and grains dry up,  
And the ephemeral lengthens within you."

**The fourth section:** Al-Mutanabbi embarks away from Egypt, recalling his distress in all lands, even in Aleppo, which seems to be more suitable to him. Amidst all this, he emphasises the efficacy of the poem and its suitability as a worthy alternative for all lands, including Egypt:

"I forgot that my steps  
Multiply in all directions  
And the complexities of the journey  
Towards the poem and the flame  
O Egypt, I will not come to you again...  
And whoever leaves Aleppo

Forgets the way to Aleppo."

**The fifth section:** In this section, Al-Mutanabbi's vision becomes clearer. He is trapped by Arabism in the first place, and here he summarises the reality he lives in. The poem concludes with his final task, which is to continue questioning and to remain a poet with a relationship to power characterised by confrontation:

"I am the Qarmati  
I sell the palace as a song  
And demolish it with a song."

This sensitive relationship with the palace/power is reiterated by Darwish to conclude his poem with the famous poetic paradox of Al-Mutanabbi: "And I am the slain and the slayer." (See the verse by Al-Mutanabbi: "And I am the one who has drawn death's edge \*\* So who is the one demanded and who is the slain slayer?").

### **A Comparison of the Poems of Amal Dunqul and Mahmoud Darwish**

In Mahmoud Darwish's previous poem, we saw how it intersects with Amal Dunqul in affirming that the vision of Al-Mutanabbi is Arab identity. However, the poem did not go to great lengths to directly clarify this aspect of Al-Mutanabbi's personality, as Dunqul did. Instead, Al-Mutanabbi's character appeared psychologically troubled and confined to the entire world. In this regard, we can say that Darwish's poem was more of a psychological projection of Al-Mutanabbi rather than a reflection on Arab reality as Dunqul did. Additionally, Darwish did not create two opposing traditional models for authority, like Dunqul did with Kafur and Saif al-Dawlah. Instead, he made both models a source of confinement for the poet. Finally, Darwish did not strip Al-Mutanabbi of poetry, homeland, song, and authority as Dunqul did; rather, poetry was the only homeland: "Now I declare all my questions,

And I ask: How do I ask?"

### **Conclusion**

The study examined Al-Mutanabbi's journey to Egypt, focusing on two recent poems by Amal Dunqul and Mahmoud Darwish that addressed that journey as a model. It delved into the concepts of "poetic journey" and "journey in poetry," clarifying the affiliation of Al-Mutanabbi's journey to the latter category. The study then emphasised the necessity of exploring the "vision" in his journey, revealing his vision regarding power and authority through an analysis of his experiences in Egypt. It became apparent, upon observing the poets Dunqul and Darwish, that their focus on Al-Mutanabbi's vision highlighted, firstly, the imparting of an Arab identity to Al-Mutanabbi's vision while stripping it of hope in the power of poetry. Darwish, on the other hand, added the Arab identity to Al-Mutanabbi while localising him in poetry, making it his ultimate refuge.

Moreover, the study confirmed, in addition to what preceded, that the vision of Al-Mutanabbi is Arab identity. However, Darwish did not exaggerate in emphasising this aspect of Al-Mutanabbi's personality as Dunqul did. Thus, Al-Mutanabbi appeared psychologically troubled to Darwish, while Dunqul projected that personality onto the Arab reality. In the same context,

the study concluded that Darwish did not juxtapose Kafur and the sword of the state as two opposing heritage models of power. Instead, he confined them to a narrow space, illustrating Dunqul's abstraction of Al-Mutanabbi from poetry as a homeland, song, and authority, whereas poetry, for Darwish, was a singular homeland.

## References

- Abu Saif, Sandy Salem. (2005). *Issues of Criticism and Modernity: A Study in the Critical Experience of the Lebanese Magazine 'Shi'r'*. Beirut: The Arab Institute for Studies and Publishing. (1st ed.).
- Al-Akbari, A. al-Baqā'. (1936). *Al-Tabyān fī Sharḥ al-Diwan* [Clarification in Explaining the Collection.] (Mustafa al-Saqqā, Ibrahim al-Abyari, & Abd al-Hafeez Shalabi, Eds.). Cairo: Mustafa al-Halabi Printing Press.
- Al-Badee'i, Youssef. (2003). *Al-Subh Al-Munabbi 'An Haythiyyat Al-Mutanabbi* [The Munabbi Dawn on the Individuality of Al-Mutanabbi.] (Eds. Mustafa al-Saqqā, Muhammad Shatta). Cairo: Dar Al-Maaref. (3rd ed.).
- Al-Ghadanfari, M. (2012). *The Journey in the Poetry of Al-Mutanabbi* (1st ed.). Amman: Dar Majdalawi for Publishing and Distribution.
- Al-Jurjani, Ali ibn Muhammad. *Mu'jam al-Ta'rifat*. [Lexicon of Definitions.] Edited and studied by Muhammad Sadiq al-Manshawi. Cairo: Dar Al-Fadila. (1st ed.).
- Al-Mawafi, Nasser. (1995). *Al-Rihla fī Al-Adab Al-Arabi until the End of the Fourth Hijri Century* [The Journey in Arabic Literature until the End of the Fourth Hijri Century]. Cairo: Dar Al-Nashr Lil-Jami'at Al-Masriyya. Vol. 1.
- Al-Rumi, H. Z. (1413 AH). *Risālah fī Qalb Kafūriyyāt al-Mutanabbi min al-Madhḥ ilā al-Hijā'* [A Letter on the Heart of Kafouriyyat al-Mutanabbi: From Panegyric to Satire]. Edited by M. Y. Najm. Beirut: Dār Sādir.
- Al-Shukaa, M. (2000). *Abu al-Tayyib Al-Mutanabbi in Egypt and Iraq* (2nd ed.). Cairo: Al-Dar Al-Masriyya Al-Lubnaniyya.
- Azzam, Abdelwahab. (2013). *Thikrayat Abi Al-Tayyib Baada 'Alf' Aam* [The Memory of Abi Al-Tayyib After a Thousand Years]. Cairo: Sharikat Nawaabigh Al-Fikr. (1st ed.).
- Darwish, M. (1994). *Early Works: Volume Two: Siege Divan for the Praises of the Sea*. Beirut: Dar Al-Awda.
- De Beaugrande, R. (1998). *Al-Nass wa al-Khitab al-Ijra'i* [Text and Procedural Discourse]. Translated by Tamam Hassan. Alam al-Kutub, 1st ed.
- Dunqul, A. (1969). *Weeping in the Presence of the Azure Dove*. Beirut: Dār al-Ādāb. (1st ed.).
- Hussein, H. M. (1990). *Adab Al-Rihla 'Inda Al-Arab* [Travel Literature in Arabic]. Cairo: Dar Al-Andalus. Vol. 2.
- Hussein, Taha. (1997). *Ma'a Al-Mutanabbi* [With Al-Mutanabbi]. Cairo: Dar Al-Maaref. (13th ed.).
- Nassar, H. (1991). *Adab Al-Rihla* [Travel Literature]. Cairo: Al-Sharika Al-Masriyya Al-'Alamiyya Lil-Nashr. Vol. 1.
- Shaib, M. A. R. (1964). *Al-Mutanabbi between his critics (in the ancient and modern times)*. Cairo: Dar Al-Maaref. (1st ed.).
- Wahb, Q. (2013). *Following in the Footsteps of Al-Mutanabbi in His Journeys and Poems: A Journey in History, Geography, and Poetry* (1st ed.). Damascus: Syrian General Authority for Books.
- Zaid, A. A. (1997). *Invoking Heritage Characters in Contemporary Arabic Poetry*. Cairo: Dar Al-Fikr Al-Arabi. (1st ed.).
- Zain al-Din, T. (1999). *Abu al-Tayyib Al-Mutanabbi in Contemporary Arabic Poetry*. Damascus: Arab Writers Union.