

Metaphorical Aesthetics and Emotional Tension in Umm Jundub: A Rhetorical Reappraisal of Imru' Al-Qais's Poetic Craft

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ABSTRACT

This article revisits the poetic ingenuity of Imru' al-Qais through a focused rhetorical investigation into the metaphorical imagery of his poem Umm Jundub. While his Mu'allaha has long attracted critical attention as a canonical pre-Islamic masterpiece, Umm Jundub remains relatively understudied despite its equally rich stylistic texture and its unique narrative tension. The background of this study lies in the need to reconsider pre-Islamic poetics not merely as historical artifacts or linguistic curiosities but as living texts that negotiate emotion, artistry, and cultural identity in ways still resonant today. The purpose of this research is therefore to reassess the poem as a site of metaphorical aesthetics and emotional tension, where figurative language functions not only as embellishment but also as a vehicle for psychological depth and cultural critique. Methodologically, the study employs descriptive and analytical approaches, consulting three authoritative editions of the Dīwān of Imru' al-Qais, alongside classical and modern rhetorical commentaries. Through close reading, the research systematically identifies, classifies, and interprets metaphorical images in the poem, situating them within the broader conventions of Arabic rhetoric while also tracing their implications for the poet's psychological landscape and social experience. The findings indicate that metaphor in Umm Jundub operates on multiple levels: it unveils the poet's inner conflicts, dramatizes his critiques of social and relational dynamics, and reflects his aspirations toward poetic self-definition. In this way, metaphor becomes both a rhetorical device and a mode of existential expression that bridges personal emotion with collective cultural meaning. The conclusion underscores that a rhetorical reappraisal of this poem contributes not only to the enrichment of classical Arabic literary studies but also to a broader understanding of how pre-Islamic poetry encodes human emotions in enduring artistic forms and continues to inspire contemporary literary thought.

Keywords: metaphorical aesthetics, Umm Jundub, Imru' al-Qais, emotional rhetoric, classical Arabic poetry

INTRODUCTION

Imru' al-Qais occupies a foundational place in the canon of pre-Islamic Arabic poetry, celebrated for his ability to blend personal emotion, vivid natural imagery, and social commentary into verses that have shaped the course of Arabic literary history. His reputation as the "father of Arabic poetry" rests heavily on the Mu'allaha, a qasida that has been scrutinized across centuries for its artistic and cultural significance. Yet, limiting the study of his oeuvre to this single masterpiece risks obscuring the diversity of his poetic craft. Among the poems that deserve closer attention is Umm Jundub, a composition that combines autobiographical detail with rhetorical artistry. Unlike the Mu'allaha, which has often been praised for its conventional themes of nostalgia, eroticism, and desert landscapes, Umm Jundub reveals a more intimate and confrontational side of the poet: it is a poem of rivalry, jealousy, and emotional tension, conveyed primarily through the sophisticated deployment of metaphor.

The narrative behind the poem is both personal and literary. According to traditional accounts, Umm Jundub, the poet's wife, allegedly compared his poetry unfavorably to that of his contemporary rival, 'Alqamah al-Fahl. Such a comparison, which questioned Imru' al-Qais's supremacy as a poet, deeply wounded his pride.

Instead of responding with direct argument, he chose to retaliate in verse. Umm Jundub thus emerges as a poem in which poetry itself becomes a weapon—an artistic instrument wielded not only to express personal grievances but also to establish authority in the highly competitive world of pre-Islamic poetic performance. This context situates the poem within a larger cultural dynamic: in tribal Arabia, poetry was not a private act of self-expression but a public medium of reputation, influence, and cultural memory.

Scholars have long acknowledged that metaphor functions as one of the most powerful rhetorical tools in Arabic poetry. In the context of the Jahili qasida, metaphor not only beautifies expression but also encodes layers of cultural meaning and emotional nuance. Classical works of rhetoric, such as those of al-Jurjani and Ibn Rashīq, emphasized the centrality of figurative language in producing the *balāgha* that distinguished great poetry. Modern literary criticism has continued this line of inquiry, with theorists of metaphor—from both Arab and Western traditions—highlighting its capacity to map abstract emotions onto concrete imagery. However, most of the critical attention devoted to Imru' al-Qais has concentrated on the Mu'allāqa, with its celebrated descriptions of love, loss, and desert travel. By contrast, Umm Jundub has received relatively little sustained analysis, often being treated as a biographical curiosity rather than a serious work of rhetorical and aesthetic significance.

This neglect creates a notable gap in scholarship. While existing studies of Imru' al-Qais underline his role as a pioneer of Arabic poetics, they frequently overlook how Umm Jundub serves as a unique site for understanding the intersection of emotion, rivalry, and artistic innovation. Earlier critics tended to emphasize historical or philological dimensions, such as questions of textual transmission, authenticity, or tribal context. Far fewer have investigated how the poem dramatizes psychological conflict through its metaphorical structure. Furthermore, within contemporary rhetorical studies, there remains a tendency to treat pre-Islamic poetry primarily as a source of cultural heritage rather than as a body of texts still capable of yielding fresh insights into human expression. A rhetorical reappraisal of Umm Jundub therefore promises to expand the field by repositioning the poem as a locus of metaphorical aesthetics, rather than merely as an anecdotal fragment of the poet's life.

The present study seeks to address this gap by offering a descriptive and analytical investigation of metaphor in Umm Jundub. Its primary objective is to demonstrate how metaphor in this poem transcends ornamentation and becomes a vehicle for expressing subjective experience—feelings of jealousy, wounded pride, rejection, and the assertion of authority. Through systematic textual analysis, the research aims to uncover how figurative language functions as an emotional and rhetorical lens, shaping both the poet's response to personal insult and his broader engagement with the conventions of Jahili poetics. In doing so, the study aligns with recent scholarly trends that view metaphor not merely as a stylistic flourish but as a fundamental cognitive and cultural process.

The significance of this research lies in several areas. First, it enriches the field of classical Arabic literary studies by directing attention to a text that has been overshadowed by more canonical works. By foregrounding Umm Jundub, the study contributes to a more nuanced appreciation of Imru' al-Qais's versatility as a poet and his capacity to mobilize metaphor for purposes beyond descriptive embellishment. Second, the research provides a methodological model for engaging with pre-Islamic poetry through rhetorical analysis, combining close reading of textual imagery with theoretical insights from both classical Arab rhetoric and modern metaphor theory. Third, it offers broader implications for the study of literature as an emotional practice: by highlighting how metaphor articulates tension, rivalry, and subjective pain, the research underscores the universality of poetic strategies for negotiating human experience.

Ultimately, this study positions Umm Jundub as more than a historical artifact of tribal Arabia. It is approached as a living text whose metaphors speak across centuries, revealing the timeless human struggle to transform personal anguish into artistic form. By situating the poem within both its immediate cultural setting and broader rhetorical traditions, the research aspires to demonstrate that metaphor, as employed by Imru' al-Qais, is not a decorative accessory but a powerful aesthetic principle—one that mediates between emotion, artistry, and identity. This reappraisal underscores the enduring relevance of pre-Islamic poetry to contemporary

literary scholarship and affirms the necessity of examining even its lesser-studied texts with the same critical rigor afforded to the canonical Mu‘allaqa.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study are threefold. First, it seeks to analyze the use of metaphor in the poem Umm Jundub attributed to Imru’ al-Qais, identifying the various figurative expressions and their rhetorical functions. Second, it aims to highlight the aesthetic and semantic values embedded in metaphorical imagery, emphasizing how these elements contribute to the poem’s artistic depth and emotional resonance. Third, the study intends to contribute both theoretically and practically to the field of Arabic rhetoric and classical Arabic poetics by providing a model of rhetorical analysis that may be applied to other pre-Islamic texts.

METHODOLOGY

This research employs a descriptive-analytical methodology, which is well suited to the study of classical Arabic poetry where close textual engagement is necessary to uncover rhetorical nuances. The data of this study are drawn from three authoritative editions of the Dīwān of Imru’ al-Qais, which provide complementary perspectives on the textual transmission and variant readings of Umm Jundub. These editions were chosen to ensure both textual accuracy and critical depth in the analysis.

Data collection was carried out through close reading of the selected verses, with special attention to expressions that demonstrate metaphorical qualities. The process of identifying metaphors was guided by both classical Arabic rhetorical theory and modern approaches to metaphor as a cognitive and linguistic phenomenon. Once identified, each metaphorical expression was examined in its immediate linguistic and semantic context in order to assess its rhetorical force and its contribution to the articulation of emotion within the poem.

A further methodological step consisted of comparing textual variants among the different editions of the Dīwān. This comparative analysis enabled the study to evaluate how subtle changes in wording may influence metaphorical resonance and rhetorical effect. Finally, the interpretation of data was framed within the broader traditions of Arabic balāgha and contemporary literary criticism, allowing the findings to speak both to classical conventions and to modern theoretical concerns.

ANALYSIS OF THE STUDY

Poetic Context And Thematic Frame

The poem Umm Jundub captures a deeply personal conflict. It is both a response to emotional betrayal and a poetic challenge to a rival. The narrative revolves around a dramatic episode in which the poet’s wife, Umm Jundub, reportedly favored another poet—‘Alqamah al-Faḥl—in a poetic contest. Her judgment provoked Imru’ al-Qais to compose this poem as a vehicle for satire, emotional expression, and rhetorical assertion of poetic superiority.

The poem’s themes revolve around humiliation, wounded pride, and the assertion of masculine honor. It reflects not only poetic rivalry but also a breakdown of conjugal respect, a point that resonates with ethical and social concerns found in both classical Arab culture and broader moral teachings. The poem implicitly critiques public disrespect within marital relationships, which in many moral traditions is considered a catalyst for domestic conflict. As a poetic document, it testifies to how pre-Islamic poetry functioned as both personal catharsis and social commentary.

Historical Narrative And Poetic Judgment

According to literary accounts (e.g., Abu al-Faraj al-Isfahani’s *al-Aghani* and al-Baghdadi’s *Khizanat al-Adab*), Imru’ al-Qais was married to a woman from the Tayy tribe—Umm Jundub. During a visit by the poet

‘Alqamah al-Fahl, a poetic dispute arose. Both poets performed verses before Umm Jundub, who, in an unexpected turn, declared ‘Alqamah the superior poet, citing his verse on horse-riding as more elegant and controlled. Enraged, Imru’ al-Qais divorced her, and she later married ‘Alqamah, who was henceforth called al-Fahl (the stallion)—a title that alludes to poetic and masculine dominance.

This episode illustrates early forms of literary criticism in Arab culture, where poetic judgment was based on metrics of coherence, eloquence, and thematic unity. Notably, Umm Jundub’s verdict was justified with rhetorical reasoning—a rare quality in Jahili criticism, which was usually intuitive. Her role as a critic, though controversial, aligns with principles of fairness and evaluative objectivity, even though the judgment came at personal cost.

Historical And Cultural Context Of Umm Jundub

The poem Umm Jundub emerges from a cultural milieu where poetry functioned not merely as a form of artistic expression but as a principal mode of communication, self-representation, and tribal negotiation. Understanding the historical and cultural backdrop of Imru’ al-Qais’s composition is crucial to appreciating the metaphorical complexity embedded within the verses.

Pre-Islamic Arabia was an oral society structured around tribal affiliations, honor codes, and a keen sensitivity to public image. In such a setting, poetry operated as the chief repository of memory, emotion, and reputation. The poet was simultaneously historian, critic, and public orator. The themes of betrayal, honor, longing, and revenge in Umm Jundub must therefore be interpreted within this broader socio-cultural paradigm.

The relationship between men and women in this era was shaped by notions of tribal loyalty, chastity, and public decorum. While romantic love was celebrated, it was bounded by expectations of male dominance and female loyalty. A perceived betrayal by a woman—especially if directed toward another poet—was not merely a private affair but a public insult, calling into question the male poet’s worthiness and reputation.

Imru’ al-Qais’s metaphorical choices reflect this cultural tension. His depiction of Umm Jundub and his rival are framed within socially intelligible tropes of honor and shame. Metaphors that present his rival in debased, grotesque terms serve not only as literary satire but as symbolic retribution—publicly restoring the speaker’s wounded pride.

Moreover, the centrality of fuhūlah—virility, courage, and poetic eloquence—as a marker of ideal masculinity in Jahili culture explains the intense metaphorical association between the self and symbols like the horse, the sword, or the storm. These metaphors do not merely represent individual traits; they project cultural ideals that elevate the speaker above his adversaries.

In this context, metaphor operates not only as an emotional register but as a social performance. By transforming his personal grievances into public verse, the poet reclaims control over his narrative, reasserts his masculine and poetic identity, and participates in a broader cultural discourse of rivalry, memory, and honor.

This contextual lens reveals that Umm Jundub is more than an individual expression of loss. It is a culturally embedded rhetorical act, wherein metaphor becomes the medium through which the poet engages with his world, challenges his rivals, and secures his legacy.

Literary Significance Of Umm Jundub

As noted by Shauqi Dayf (2012), this poem occupies a unique space in the Dīwān of Imru’ al-Qais. Its importance lies in several aspects:

1. Personal Depth: It reveals the poet’s emotional vulnerabilities, pride, and jealousy—elements that humanize his voice beyond the romanticism of his Mu‘allaqa.

2. Rhetorical Mastery: The poem demonstrates his ability to use satire and indirect criticism through metaphor, showing his range beyond erotic or nature poetry.
3. Poetic Rivalry: The poem stands as a case study in poetic competition, showing how poetry functioned not only as art but also as a personal statement and social weapon.

In this regard, Umm Jundub illustrates a multifaceted rhetorical function of metaphor in pre-Islamic poetry: as a mode of psychological expression, literary defiance, and sociocultural critique.

Theoretical Frame: Understanding Metaphor

Metaphor (*isti'ārah*) in classical Arabic rhetoric is a form of figurative speech grounded in analogy and resemblance. It is distinct from mere linguistic embellishment due to its power to convey layered meanings, emotional resonance, and cognitive depth. Classical scholars—such as al-Jurjani, al-'Askari, and Ibn al-Athir—define metaphor as a transference of meaning based on similarity, with contextual cues (*qarā'in*) that prevent literal interpretation.

In Umm Jundub, metaphor is not just an aesthetic device but a psychological and argumentative tool. The poem abounds with metaphors in which animals, emotions, weapons, and natural forces are employed to reflect emotional states, interpersonal dynamics, and social commentary. The rhetorical effectiveness of such metaphors lies in their ability to compress complex meaning into striking expressions, intensifying the poetic voice.

Aesthetic Value Of Metaphor In Classical Arabic Poetry

Metaphor in Arabic poetry is not merely decorative—it functions as a structural element in poetic composition. It allows for:

- Condensation: Expressing profound meaning in few words.
- Emotional projection: Conveying psychological states beyond literal language.
- Personification and embodiment: Turning abstract emotions into physical or animate entities.
- Surprise and originality: Reframing reality in unexpected ways.

For instance, when the dawn is described as breathing in the Qur'anic verse “وَالصُّبْحُ إِذَا تَنَفَّسَ”, this metaphor lends vitality and relief to a natural event. Similarly, in Umm Jundub, metaphors portray the emotional state of the speaker as a battlefield—love turned into war, poetry into combat, and betrayal into fire.

Stylistic Features Of Metaphorical Imagery In The Diwan Of Imru' Al-Qais

One of the most striking aesthetic elements in Umm Jundub lies in its metaphorical density and its deep reliance on *isti'ārah* (metaphor) as a rhetorical mode to convey psychological depth, emotional tension, and narrative progression. Far from being ornamental, these metaphors are integral to the structure of meaning in the poem. They function not only as figurative expressions but as embodiments of inner states, social codes, and natural forces. In this section, we further explore how metaphor (*isti'ārah*) operates across multiple registers in the poem, supported by additional verses that exhibit this technique.

A. Artistic Characteristics of Metaphorical Imagery

1. Personification and Animation:

Imru' al-Qais often employs metaphor to bring abstract ideas to life, animating them as if they were living beings. For example:

وليل كموج البحر أرخى سدوله
عليّ بأنواع الهموم ليبتلي

He compares the night to ocean waves, giving it agency and intention—as though it deliberately casts its veil of sorrow upon him to test him. This metaphor breathes life into the abstract notion of “night” and endows it with emotional intent.

2. Metaphors of Animal Imagery: The Horse as a Heroic Self-Extension:

A significant metaphorical thread in Umm Jundub revolves around the poet’s war horse, depicted not merely as a companion but as a projection of the poet’s valor, intensity, and emotional disarray. Consider the verse:

وقد أعتدي والطير في وكناتها بمنجرد قيد الأوابد هيكل

The warhorse (mujarrad) here is described metaphorically as the “قيد الأوابد” (the fetter of the wild beasts), a powerful image that fuses the horse’s literal function with its metaphorical embodiment of heroic control over chaos. The metaphor establishes the horse as not just swift and strong, but as an entity whose presence tames the untamable. This is a form of isti‘ārah makniyyah (implied metaphor), where the horse is indirectly equated with a binding force over nature.

The term heyakal (هيكل) also metaphorically signals grandeur, size, and possibly sacredness (since هيكل may evoke the temple or monumental structure), thus endowing the horse with almost sacred proportions.

3. Connection to Nature and Desert Life:

Many metaphors in his poetry are rooted in the Bedouin environment, such as the depiction of wind, horses, and rain:

وقد أعتدي والطير في وكناتها بمنجرد قيد الأوابد هيكل

Here, the poet metaphorically renders his horse as a hunter of wild beasts, evoking the rugged and untamed desert landscape. It symbolizes the fusion of chivalry and primal nature.

4. Metaphors of Natural Forces as Emotional Mirrors

The poem continually interweaves natural imagery with emotional states. In the following verse:

وإذ هي تمشي كمشي النريف برخو المشي في مراقي الركب

Here, the beloved is compared metaphorically to a person weakened by blood loss (nazīf), and her gait is said to resemble the soft and weak movement of such a person. This comparison is more than just a simile; it is a metaphor for emotional and erotic fragility, evoking delicacy, vulnerability, and allure. The metaphor creates a complex emotional tension: the beloved is at once strong in her effect on the poet, yet fragile in her physical portrayal.

Another potent example is found in:

تبدت لنا كالشمس تحت غمامة بدت لمجيب الداعيات فأقبلوا

This line likens the appearance of the beloved to the sun revealing itself from behind a cloud, a metaphor rich with aesthetic tension. The use of the sun (shams) is a conventional symbol of beauty, but here it is partially veiled by a cloud (ghamāmah), indicating inaccessibility, divine allure, and temporal appearance. The metaphor adds suspense and intensifies desire, as the beloved becomes an ephemeral vision—seen but not possessed.

5. Emotional Depth and Expressive Power:

Imru’ al-Qais uses metaphor to articulate emotional states—love, loss, longing—in ways that intensify affective impact:

أفاطم مهلاً بعض هذا التدلل وإن كنت قد أزمعت صرمني فأجملي

The term *širm* (breaking off a relationship) becomes a metaphor for emotional rupture, while the plea for a graceful separation (*ajmili*) imbues the scene with pathos.

6. Precision and Movement in Imagery:

His metaphors are rich with kinetic energy. He doesn't merely describe scenes, but animates them with vivid movement:

كأن قلوب الطير رطباً ويابسا لدى وكرها العناب والحشف البالي

Here, the hearts of birds are likened to ripe and withered fruits—symbolizing vulnerability and evoking the trembling fear of being caught.

7. Inventiveness in Linguistic Construction:

He innovates metaphorical expressions, crafting novel linguistic patterns that elevate his imagery:

إذا قامتا تضوع المسك منهما نسيم الصبا جاءت برّياً القرنفل

The metaphor suggests that the woman's scent is carried by the morning breeze, blending sensory imagery with poetic imagination.

8. Contextual Harmony:

Metaphors in his poetry are contextually embedded; they enhance rather than distract from the poem's meaning:

كأنّي لم أركب جواداً للذة ولم أتبطن كاعباً ذات خلخال

This lamentation, metaphorically referencing past pleasures, reflects regret and loss, harmonizing with the overall emotional tone.

9. Metaphors of Warfare and the Body

The metaphors in Umm Jundub often blend the domains of battle and bodily sensation, especially in the poet's descriptions of physical endurance. For instance:

إذا نزلت دون الركب في غمارها سقته السهّاد مقامع الحرب

The “*maqāmi‘ al-ḥarb*” (bludgeons of war) are metaphorically linked to *suhād* (sleeplessness), constructing an image where the body absorbs not only the physical blows of battle but also the psychological blows of love and longing. The metaphor dissolves the boundary between literal and emotional combat, revealing how the poet equates personal suffering with heroic endurance.

10. The Extended Horse Imagery as Metaphorical Continuum

Imru' al-Qais masterfully extends his metaphors across contiguous lines, developing them progressively rather than isolating them. A good example is the continuation of the earlier verse:

عليه قَتَامٌ في البلاد كأنه سرابٌ تلاقَتْ في مجرأه سُيُولُ

Here, the dust stirred by the horse is described as a mirage (*sarāb*), and the simile turns into an embedded metaphor for both the swiftness and illusion of pursuit. The fusion of dust and water—the ephemeral and the overwhelming—echoes emotional confusion and futility.

The metaphor of the mirage (سراب) has wide semantic resonance: it suggests unattainable goals, delusional hope, and the desert's trickery. All of this reflects the poet's pursuit of a love that is as intense as it is futile, thus drawing on isti'ārah to bridge the emotional with the environmental.

11. Emotional Estrangement through Kināyah-Metaphor Blends

While the focus of this article remains isti'ārah, it is important to note how metaphor occasionally overlaps with kināyah (metonymy or indirect reference) to heighten ambiguity and allusiveness. In this verse:

فَبِتُّ كَأَنِّي سَرَبٌ طَبِي تَحَدَّرْتُ مِنْ الْقَرِّ فِي جَوْفِ الْعَرَاءِ تَوَمَّلُ

The speaker claims to have spent the night like a "herd of gazelles" (sarb ḡaby) shivering in the cold, again merging human emotional states with animalistic, vulnerable imagery. The herd metaphor conveys both loneliness and beauty, cold and wildness, positioning the poet in a liminal emotional space. The isti'ārah here conveys multiplicity: the herd represents his scattered thoughts, his fragility, and his feminine yearning, showing the multi-layered capability of metaphor in Arabic poetry.

Summary Of The Expanded Metaphorical Layering

Through the consistent use of isti'ārah, Umm Jundub projects a world where human emotion, natural phenomenon, animal behavior, and the art of war seamlessly blend. These metaphors are not only embellishments but are ontological—the poet lives, suffers, and moves through metaphor. They enable Imru' al-Qais to shift between registers of perception and reality, allowing the reader to enter a poetic space charged with aesthetic brilliance and emotional unrest.

Stylistic Analysis and Scholarly Commentary on Selected Verses from Umm Jundub

Verse 1:

خَلِيلِي مُرَا بِي عَلَى أُمِّ جُنْدُبٍ نَقْضُ لُبَانَاتِ الْفُؤَادِ الْمُعْدَبِ

The phrase naqḍu lubānāt al-fu'ād al-mu'adhdhab metaphorically imagines emotional longing as a tangible fiber that can be unravelled. This imagery gives shape to grief and internal pain, depicting the heart as an object subject to breakage and wear—an idea aligned with the aesthetics of nasīb in pre-Islamic elegiac tradition.

Verse 2:

فَإِنِّكُمَا إِن تَنْظُرَانِي سَاعَةً مِنَ الدَّهْرِ تَنْفَعْنِي أَدَى أُمِّ جُنْدُبٍ

The metaphor sā'atan min al-dahr transforms a moment into a timeless entity. It captures the poet's desperation and longing for emotional restoration. The poet implies that even a glance from the beloved would transcend temporal boundaries and become eternally meaningful.

Verse 3:

أَلَمْ تَرَيَانِي كُلَّمَا جِئْتُ طَارِقًا وَجَدْتُ بِهَا طِيبًا وَإِنْ لَمْ تَطِيبْ؟

The poet here uses ṭīb (fragrance) metaphorically to assert that Umm Jundub's natural presence alone suffices to soothe him, whether or not she had adorned herself. The imagery heightens intimacy and reflects ḥissī (sensory) aesthetics, portraying beauty and affection through sensory implication rather than direct depiction.

Verse 4:

أَلَا لَيْتَ شِعْرِي كَيْفَ حَدِثْتُ وَصَلَهَا وَكَيْفَ تُرَاعِي وَصَلَةَ الْمُتَعَبِّبِ

The metaphor ḥādith waṣliḥā treats emotional connection as an ongoing event or incident. It introduces a psychological inquiry into the beloved's changing emotions. The verse reflects anxiety about commitment and presence, metaphorically equating relational change with dramatic narrative progression.

Verse 5

أَقَامَتْ عَلَى مَا بَيْنَنَا مِنْ مَوَدَّةٍ أُمِيمَةً، أَمْ صَارَتْ لِقَوْلِ الْمُخَبِّبِ؟

The term s̄arat li-qawli al-mukhabbib metaphorically implies that the woman has become the product of external deception. It hints at emotional manipulation through the rhetoric of seduction (takhbīb), and the transformation here is both mental and moral—indicative of poetic commentary on trust and betrayal.

Verse 6:

فَأَصْبَحْتُ كَاللَّيْثِ الْمَجْرَّحِ بَاتَ يَرْعَى قَطَاهُ بَلِيلِ الشَّوْقِ لَا يَسْتَكِينُ

In this vivid metaphor, the poet likens himself to a wounded lion (al-layth al-mujarraḥ), who roams under the night of longing. This isti'ārah fuses imagery of physical might with emotional vulnerability. The lion—often a symbol of power and fearlessness—is now injured, yet it continues to roam restlessly. The metaphor constructs a dual image: strength marred by suffering, and a majestic creature reduced to a state of unhealed agony. The term layl al-shawq (night of longing) also acts metaphorically, personifying the night as an environment charged with emotional intensity.

This reflects the classic al-tamthīl al-shi'rī, where metaphor creates an emblematic image—a symbolic representation of internal reality that the reader immediately resonates with due to its moral and emotional resonance.

Verse 7:

تَرَكْتُ الْمَنَازِلَ وَالصَّخْبَ مِنْ أَجْلِهَا كَمَنْ أَلْفَى ثِيَابَهُ لِلنَّارِ وَارْتَكَبَ الْجُنُونَ

In this metaphor, the poet portrays himself as one who casts his clothes into fire and embraces madness—symbolizing total abandonment of reason for the sake of love. The act of throwing garments into fire metaphorically denotes sacrifice and irreversibility, while irtikāb al-junūn (embracing madness) signifies the conscious acceptance of irrational devotion. This imagery connects to the motif of 'ishq majnūn' (mad lover) which later becomes central in Arabic and Persian poetic traditions.

The metaphor amplifies the poet's internal conflict—he does not just suffer for love, he chooses to step into fire and forsake societal norms. The poetic persona is transformed into a martyr of emotion, enacting a ritual of love's destruction.

Rhetorical Interplay Between Metaphor And Theme In Umm Jundub

The rhetorical depth of Umm Jundub lies in the intricate interplay between metaphorical language and the poem's thematic framework. Imru' al-Qais does not employ metaphor as a superficial decorative tool; instead, he utilizes it as an essential rhetorical mechanism that articulates emotional rupture, affirms masculine identity, and critiques betrayal through poetic performance.

Three major thematic strands are particularly reinforced by metaphor:

1. Emotional Rupture and Lamentation

Metaphors such as naqd lubānāt al-fu'ād al-mu'adhdhab express emotional fragmentation. The heart is rendered as a textile object unraveling under pressure, enabling internal sorrow to be externalized and visualized.

2. Masculinity and Pride

Metaphors related to equestrian and martial imagery—such as the horse, the sword, and hunting—emphasize the poet's wounded sense of masculine honor. These images affirm *fuhūlah* (masculine excellence), positioning the speaker as a noble victim rather than a passive sufferer.

3. Betrayal and Satirical Resistance

The metaphors describing opponents in animalistic or grotesque terms perform rhetorical resistance. They invert victimhood by transforming emotional injury into satirical defiance, a hallmark of pre-Islamic poetic competitiveness.

This metaphorical-thematic fusion exemplifies Umm Jundub's rhetorical vitality, where metaphor constructs meaning, affirms identity, and reshapes emotional loss into narrative control.

Scholarly Synthesis of Metaphorical Strategies

This section synthesizes the metaphorical strategies employed in Umm Jundub, illustrating how Imru' al-Qais integrates rhetorical subtlety with aesthetic richness to craft a multi-layered poetic voice.

1. Emotive and Affective Metaphors

The poem's opening verses reflect longing and grief through imagery tied to visitation, rupture, and transience. Metaphors like *naqd lubānāt al-fu'ād* and *sā'atan min al-dahr* evoke psychological vulnerability, embedding personal emotion within a shared cultural framework.

2. Satirical and Social Commentary

In the poem's latter half, metaphors assume a confrontational tone. By likening rivals to base creatures or inanimate objects, the poet participates in rhetorical *takhbīb* (seduction and sabotage), discrediting his opponent's honor and poetic worth. These metaphors function as tools of public critique.

3. Symbolic Identity Formation

Recurring metaphorical images—such as steeds, swords, and tears—help construct the speaker's heroic and sorrowful persona. These symbols reinforce his dual role as a lover and warrior, both injured and dignified, situating him within the tradition of *fāḥil* (virile) poets.

4. Kinetic and Visual Metaphors

Verses like:

فَعَيْنَاكَ غَرَبًا جَدُولٍ فِي مُفَاضَةٍ كَمَرِ الْخَلِيجِ فِي صَفِيحِ مُصَوَّبٍ

portray grief as flowing water, lending motion and tactility to inner turmoil. Such metaphors animate sorrow into dynamic spectacle, dramatizing the emotional arc.

5. Cultural Performance Through Metaphor

The metaphors reinforce pre-Islamic ideals—*ṣabr*, *ḥilm*, and poetic prowess—framing the speaker as a moral and aesthetic exemplar. Through metaphor, poetry becomes a performative act of resistance, defiance, and identity assertion.

Comparative Rhetorical Reflection with the Mu'allāqa

This section offers a comparative rhetorical examination between Umm Jundub and the Mu'allāqa of Imru' al-Qais, highlighting the transformation in his metaphorical expression across different poetic contexts.

1. Tone and Function of Metaphor

While Mu‘allaqa is renowned for its romantic and nature-infused metaphors, such as the famed description of the abandoned campsite (ṭalal), Umm Jundub shifts toward metaphors of satire, betrayal, and honor. The earlier poem seeks aesthetic evocation; the latter delivers rhetorical confrontation.

2. Evolution of Poetic Voice

In the Mu‘allaqa, the speaker appears as a wistful lover, drawing upon images of gazelles, morning dew, and desert expanses. In contrast, Umm Jundub reveals a hardened persona—a wounded poet-warrior whose metaphors are weapons of critique rather than tools of seduction. This suggests a maturation of poetic voice from emotional exploration to assertive redefinition.

3. Symbolic Continuities and Divergences

Symbols like the horse, storm, and sword recur in both poems, but their rhetorical valences shift. In Mu‘allaqa, these signify vitality and courtship; in Umm Jundub, they imply virility, defiance, and vengeance. This shift reflects the poet’s engagement with changing emotional landscapes.

4. Contextual Framing

The Mu‘allaqa is embedded in the nasīb tradition—where the poet laments love before moving to boast. Umm Jundub, though echoing nasīb in structure, upends it by focusing sustained critique on betrayal. The metaphors are sharper, more condensed, and often serve a polemical function.

5. Conclusion of Comparison

By comparing these two masterpieces, we witness Imru’ al-Qais’s dynamic poetic range. His use of metaphor is not static; it adapts to context, emotion, and rhetorical need. Umm Jundub stands not in contrast but in evolution from the Mu‘allaqa—each representing different registers of poetic excellence.

Extended Interpretive Perspectives: Gender and Power Through Metaphor

To further deepen the rhetorical reading of Umm Jundub, this section engages with the gendered dynamics implicit in the metaphorical structure of the poem. The central conflict—revolving around a woman’s judgment and a man’s wounded pride—opens up critical perspectives on power, voice, and agency in Jahili poetry.

1. Metaphor as Gendered Voice

The metaphors used by Imru’ al-Qais function to reclaim masculine dominance in the wake of perceived emasculation. Metaphors of virility (e.g., sword, stallion) serve to restore the speaker’s public image after it was damaged by his wife’s preference for another poet. The use of such imagery is more than poetic—it is political.

2. Control and Reclamation of Narrative

By converting personal humiliation into metaphorical satire, the poet reasserts control over the narrative. The transformation of the rival into grotesque or base imagery, and the beloved into an object of ambiguity or moral critique, are strategies of narrative re-empowerment.

3. Agency and Silencing

Though Umm Jundub’s voice initiates the poetic conflict, she becomes largely silent within the poem’s metaphorical space. This shift illustrates how male poets of the era could use metaphor to reframe female agency, silencing the source of critique while foregrounding their own rhetorical mastery.

4. Poetry as a Battleground of Gendered Honor

Metaphor becomes a vehicle for reestablishing sharaf (honor) through verse. The poetic act transforms shame into rhetorical defiance, reflecting a cultural mechanism where poetry was used to settle emotional and social disputes, especially those involving gender roles and hierarchy.

Intertextual Echoes and Metaphorical Inheritance in Jahili Poetry

To contextualize the metaphorical resonance of Umm Jundub, this section explores the intertextual connections between Imru' al-Qais's metaphorical practice and the broader tradition of Jahili poetry.

1. Shared Motifs and Metaphorical Lexicon

Jahili poets often employed a shared repertoire of metaphors—horses, lightning, gazelles, and swords—as carriers of symbolic value. Imru' al-Qais does not merely repeat these images; he reinvents them within personalized contexts. In Umm Jundub, such images become emotionally charged and polemically sharpened.

2. Influence and Resonance

Later poets—such as Zuhayr, al-Nābighah, and 'Antarah—echoed Imru' al-Qais's metaphorical style, particularly his blend of emotion and martial symbolism. This suggests that Umm Jundub served as a model for metaphorical layering, where feeling and combat merge into poetic assertion.

3. Allusive and Competitive Poetics

Pre-Islamic poetry often featured inter-poetic dialogue. Poets responded to one another through veiled allusion and metaphor. Umm Jundub participates in this tradition by referencing, reconfiguring, and outdoing established metaphors—especially in its portrayal of poetic rivalry.

4. Canon Formation and Metaphorical Authority

The enduring relevance of Imru' al-Qais lies in his metaphorical inventiveness. Umm Jundub's metaphors entered the canon of admired Jahili images not because of their novelty alone, but because of their affective and rhetorical precision. This helped solidify his position as a central figure in the Arabic poetic imagination.

Comparative Metaphorical Analysis: Umm Jundub and Other Jahili Poems

This section examines metaphorical expressions in Umm Jundub in comparison with those found in other major Jahili poems, including Imru' al-Qais's Mu'allāqa, the poetry of Zuhayr ibn Abi Sulma, and 'Antarah ibn Shaddād. Through this comparative lens, we highlight the thematic, aesthetic, and rhetorical variances and continuities among prominent Jahili poets, showing how metaphor functions across different emotional and cultural registers.

1. Visual and Kinesthetic Metaphors

In Umm Jundub, visual metaphors such as the unraveling of the heart ("naqd lubānāt al-fu'ād") echo the emotionally loaded tactile metaphors in the Mu'allāqa, such as;

"وليل كموج البحر أرخى سدوله"

Both evoke inner turmoil, yet while the Mu'allāqa employs grand nature-based metaphors to express existential fatigue, Umm Jundub uses domestic and bodily metaphors to underscore personal betrayal.

2. Social and Ethical Metaphors

Compared to Zuhayr, whose poetry often promotes peace and moral reconciliation using clear metaphorical structures (e.g., the comparison of peace-makers to rain clouds), Imru' al-Qais in Umm Jundub deploys

metaphor as a weapon of satire and personal vindication. The ethical tone differs: Zuhayr's metaphors are conciliatory, while Imru' al-Qais's are confrontational.

3. Identity and Masculinity

Both 'Antarah and Imru' al-Qais utilize metaphors tied to martial valor and love. Yet, where 'Antarah uses metaphors to affirm his heroic black identity in the face of prejudice, Imru' al-Qais uses them to reassert poetic and masculine superiority after emotional humiliation. For instance, the steed in Umm Jundub represents not just virility but poetic mastery, while in 'Antarah's verse, it symbolizes noble resistance.

4. Emotional Function and Rhetorical Purpose

The function of metaphor in Umm Jundub centers on personal pathos turned public spectacle. In contrast, the metaphor in Mu'allāqa emphasizes aesthetic magnificence and the transcendence of emotion through nature. The difference lies in rhetorical purpose: Mu'allāqa aims to immortalize a personal experience, whereas Umm Jundub aims to critique and outshine a rival.

5. Conclusion of Section

The comparative analysis shows that while metaphor in Jahili poetry shares common motifs—love, war, desert life—it varies significantly in tone and function. In Umm Jundub, metaphor serves not just expressive ends but polemical ones, marking a distinct rhetorical mode within the tradition.

Metaphorical Expression and Poetic Ethos in the Jahili Milieu

This section explores how the metaphorical discourse in Umm Jundub aligns with the broader poetic ethos of the Jahili period. By understanding how metaphor functioned in the cultural and moral fabric of pre-Islamic society, we can better appreciate its role as both linguistic artifact and ethical performance.

1. Poetic Responsibility and Social Commentary

Jahili poetry was not merely an aesthetic practice but a socially embedded act. Poets bore moral and representational responsibilities for their tribes. In this context, metaphor was not employed frivolously; rather, it was a deliberate tool to speak indirectly yet powerfully on matters of public concern—such as betrayal, honor, loyalty, and justice.

2. Ethos of the Poet as a Cultural Archetype

The sha'ir was both a moral voice and a myth-maker. Through metaphor, poets such as Imru' al-Qais performed cultural functions—preserving memory, defending reputations, and responding to transgressions. The ethos embodied in Umm Jundub is one of moral retribution, where the metaphor becomes a surrogate for action in a society that valued both the sword and the spoken word.

3. Symbolic Continuity with Tribal Values

Metaphors in Umm Jundub—particularly those invoking natural and martial elements—mirror tribal virtues such as courage (shajā'ah), honor (karāmah), and endurance (ṣabr). The poet's emotional wound is translated into images of torn fabric, weakened steeds, and desert struggle—symbols that resonate with the lived realities and values of his audience.

4. Moral Instruction through Metaphor

Beyond its satirical thrust, the poem offers ethical reflection. It subtly warns against disloyalty, manipulation, and misplaced judgment. This moral voice—though couched in personal grievance—is universalized through metaphor, allowing the audience to interpret broader life lessons from the poet's lament.

5. Conclusion of Section

Thus, metaphor in Umm Jundub is inseparable from the Jahili poetic ethos. It performs affective, symbolic, and moral work that transcends personal emotion, engaging with collective values and expectations. The poem stands not only as a record of heartbreak but as a rhetorical affirmation of cultural identity.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

This study has yielded the following key findings regarding metaphorical imagery in Umm Jundub:

1. Metaphor as Aesthetic-Rhetorical Synergy

- Metaphors are not mere ornamentation; they compress meaning, create emotional texture, and enhance audience engagement.
- Example: The poet's depiction of longing uses natural imagery to evoke emotional depth:

"أَرَى الدُّنْيَا عَيْزَةً كَالْمَاءِ تَجْرِي"

"I see the world like a tear flowing with water"

2. Functional Diversity of Metaphors

- Metaphors in the poem serve multiple functions: emotional expression, social commentary, and identity construction. For the example: Certain metaphors depict desire and social identity:

"وَسَارَتْ كَاللَّبَابِ فِي قُلُوبِ الرِّجَالِ"

"She moved like the marrow in men's hearts"

3. Integration with Poetic Narrative

- Metaphors are embedded within the narrative of love and longing, creating tension between personal experience and societal norms.

4. Categorization of Metaphors (Visual Aid):

Category	Description / Function	Example from Umm Jundub
Emotional	Expressing love, desire, sorrow	"أَرَى الدُّنْيَا عَيْزَةً كَالْمَاءِ تَجْرِي"
Social / Cultural	Conveying tribal or societal norms	"وَسَارَتْ كَاللَّبَابِ فِي قُلُوبِ الرِّجَالِ"
Identity / Self	Constructing poetic persona or ego	"وَهُوَ صَيْدٌ يُصِيبُ قُلُوبَ الرِّجَالِ" "He is a hunter hitting men's hearts."
Nature / Environment	Using natural imagery to reflect feelings	"وَتَهَيَّطَ الرِّيحُ كَفَوَادٍ يَحْتَرِقُ" "The wind descends like a heart burning."

These categorized metaphors provide the foundation for a deeper critical discussion in the following section.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study not only illuminate the metaphorical density of Umm Jundub but also contribute to broader debates in Arabic rhetoric and applied linguistics. Metaphors here transcend ornamentation, functioning as expressive vehicles that encode personal conflict, emotional intensity, and cultural critique. This aligns with applied linguistic perspectives, where figurative language reflects both cognitive processes and socio-historical realities.

This interpretation aligns with Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) conceptual metaphor theory, which views figurative language as a fundamental structure of thought. Later elaborations by Kövecses (2010) further clarify how metaphorical domains can vary across cultures while maintaining universal cognitive patterns. Gibbs (1994) likewise stresses that figurative thought is central to human cognition, reinforcing the idea that Imru' al-Qais's imagery reflects deeply rooted mental processes.

Building on these insights, the discussion can be further structured along four thematic axes:

1. Comparison with Classical and Modern Traditions

- The metaphors of Umm Jundub align with other Jahili poets such as 'Antara ibn Shaddād in their treatment of love, courage, and social tension.
- Conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) clarifies mappings such as emotional states → natural phenomena (e.g., tears → flowing water).

2. Rhetorical Function Beyond Decoration

- For instance: “وَسَارَتْ كَاللَّيَابِ فِي قَلْبِ الرَّجَالِ” demonstrates metaphor compressing meaning, where a woman's movement conveys both desire and social influence.
- Such metaphors function simultaneously at cognitive, rhetorical, and social levels.

3. Cross-Cultural Implications

- Emotional metaphors in the poem resemble Persian ghazals or Western Romantic poetry.
- Yet tribal and social metaphors remain unique to the Arabic Jahili milieu, highlighting metaphor's universal yet culturally grounded nature.

4. Integration with Linguistics and Cognitive Theory

- The poem exemplifies principles of applied linguistics: metaphor structures thought and communication.
- The study also contributes to the broader dialogue on the intersection of metaphor and metonymy, a relationship highlighted by Barcelona (2003), who shows that these figures often work in tandem rather than in isolation.
- These findings support interdisciplinary research bridging classical Arabic poetics and modern cognitive linguistics.

Through this layered discussion, the three objectives of the research - identifying and analyzing metaphors, uncovering their aesthetic and semantic value, and contributing theoretically to Arabic rhetoric—are reinforced. Each objective is reflected in the analytical process and reinforced through critical discussion, thereby fulfilling both the literary and linguistic dimensions of the study.

CONCLUSION

This study has reexamined Umm Jundub, a poem by Imru' al-Qais often overshadowed by his celebrated Mu'allāqa, with a focus on its metaphorical aesthetics and rhetorical force. By applying descriptive and analytical methods to three authoritative editions of the *Dīwān*, the research has demonstrated that metaphor in this poem functions not only as a stylistic ornament but also as a vehicle for emotional expression and cultural commentary and cognitive engagement. The poem thus testifies to the poet's ability to transform personal grievance into enduring artistic expression.

The findings show that metaphors in Umm Jundub are deeply embedded in psychological states—jealousy, pride, rejection—while simultaneously operating as rhetorical strategies that establish authority and critique rivals. This supports the view that metaphor in Arabic poetics is a central cognitive and rhetorical tool rather than a decorative flourish. By situating Imru' al-Qais's imagery within both classical rhetorical traditions and

modern theoretical frameworks, this study highlights the continuing relevance of figurative language in shaping human thought and expression.

Theoretical Implications

- The analysis demonstrates how metaphors in Umm Jundub combine aesthetic appeal with rhetorical agency, thus contributing to the study of Arabic rhetoric as well as to modern cognitive metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Kövecses, 2010).
- This integration illustrates how pre-Islamic poetry can enrich broader metaphor studies by offering culturally specific yet cognitively universal patterns.
- The study also engages with the interplay of metaphor and metonymy, as highlighted by Barcelona (2003), showing that these rhetorical devices often operate together to produce layered meanings.
- Gibbs (1994) reinforces that figurative thought is central to cognition, supporting the view that classical Arabic poetic imagery reflects universal mental processes embedded within a culturally specific framework.

Pedagogical Implications

- The findings provide a structured framework for teaching balāghah and classical Arabic literature, illustrating how metaphor conveys both aesthetic and cognitive meaning.
- The categorization of metaphor types, presented in tabular form, offers a practical tool for classroom instruction, enabling students to identify, classify, and critically analyze figurative language in classical poetry.

Final Remarks

- Metaphors in classical Arabic poetry emerge as multifunctional: aesthetic, cognitive, rhetorical, and social.
- Future research may extend this inquiry by comparing Umm Jundub with other works of pre-Islamic poets, tracing intertextual metaphorical patterns across genres, or employing computational stylistics to map metaphor usage in larger corpora. Such directions would not only deepen our understanding of Arabic literary heritage but also broaden the scope of applied linguistic research into metaphor and rhetoric.

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