

The Artistic Values of Simile Imagery in the Diwan of Imru' al-Qais: A Descriptive and Analytical Study

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the artistic and rhetorical functions of simile imagery in selected poems from the *Dīwān* of Imru' al-Qais, with particular emphasis on the *Mu'allaqa* as the most representative corpus of his poetic style. The choice of this corpus is motivated by Imru' al-Qais's position as the pioneer of pre-Islamic Arabic poetics, whose similes shaped the trajectory of later Arabic literary tradition. Methodologically, the research combines descriptive-analytical reading with a compact quantitative component that classifies similes according to type and frequency. The theoretical framework integrates classical Arabic rhetoric - drawing on authorities such as al-Jurjānī, al-Sakkākī, and Ibn al-Mu'tazz - with insights from modern literary theory, particularly cognitive poetics. This dual perspective allows for both a historically grounded and contemporarily relevant analysis of simile. Findings indicate that visual similes dominate the corpus, underscoring the poet's reliance on sensory immediacy, while auditory and kinesthetic similes contribute to emotional dynamism and narrative coherence. Simile in Imru' al-Qais's poetry functions not as ornamental embellishment but as an aesthetic-rhetorical structure that sustains thematic progression, moving from lament to love, night scenes, and equestrian imagery. The study contributes substantively by deepening understanding of simile as a rhetorical device in pre-Islamic poetry, and methodologically by offering a model for integrating close textual analysis with quantitative support. While the corpus is limited to Imru' al-Qais's *Dīwān* and the study remains primarily qualitative, its findings open pathways for future corpus-based and digital approaches to classical Arabic poetics.

Keywords: Simile, Artistic Imagery, Imru' al-Qais, Pre-Islamic Arabic Literature, Classical Arabic Rhetoric

INTRODUCTION TO IMRU' AL-QAIS: BIOGRAPHY AND PIONEERING POETICS

Name And Lineage

Muhammad ibn Salam al-Jumahi notes that Imru' al-Qais was the chief of the first tier of poets of the pre-Islamic (Jāhiliyyah) era and details his lineage. His full name was Imru' al-Qais ibn Hujr ibn al-Harith ibn 'Amr ibn Hujr Akil al-Marar ibn 'Amr ibn Mu'awiya ibn Ya'rub ibn Thawr ibn Murt' ibn Mu'awiya ibn Kinda (Ghazi, 2002). Some sources report his name as Hundaj, meaning "fine sand," others as Mulaykah, and others as 'Addi or Sulayman. He was also titled al-Malik al-Dhalil and was renowned for his *Mu'allaqah* (suspended ode), *Dhū al-Qurūh*, and under his own name, Imru' al-Qais. He was known by three kunyas: Abu Wahb, Abu Zayd, and Abu al-Harith. Despite these variations, he is universally recognized by the name *Imru' al-Qais*, which signifies "a man of courage and intensity" (Sadir, 2020).

Historians differ regarding his year of birth. Some suggest he was born in the land of Banu Asad in the early 6th century CE, around 500 CE, residing in al-Mushqar, a valley in Jabal Ajā' al-Ṭā'i. Others propose 520 CE. Ibn Qutaybah mentions that Imru' al-Qais was from Najd, and that the regions he described in his poetry were all part of Banu Asad's territories, implying that he rarely left Najd and the Hijaz. Yet, historical reports indicate his travels between tribes, and between the north and south of the Arabian Peninsula, reaching as far as Syria and even Turkey, under the rule of the Roman Caesar, suggesting he spent a significant part of his life away from his homeland (Al-Ayyubi, 1998).

His father, Hujr, was king of Ghatafan and Asad, while his mother, Fatimah bint Rabi'ah ibn al-Harith, was the sister of Kilab and al-Muhalhil, two renowned Taghlibi poets (Al-Anbari, 2008). Some sources name her *Tamlīk*, others as *Fatimah* with the title *Tamlīk*. Imru' al-Qais grew up in a household deeply connected to poetry: his paternal uncle, Ma'ad Yakrub, was a poet; his grandfather, Hujr Akil al-Marar, also a poet; and his maternal uncles and aunts, such as al-Muhalhil, Kilab, and Rabi'ah al-Zahra, were poets as well. Thus, his poetic talent was nurtured alongside his noble lineage (Ghazi, 2002). Consequently, it is unsurprising that he was intellectually sharp from childhood through adolescence and began composing poetry early, tightly intertwined with his family's poetic tradition.

For the purposes of this study, these biographical and genealogical details justify the selection of Imru' al-Qais's *Dīwān* as the primary corpus for examining simile: his noble lineage, extensive poetic network, and historical prominence mean his usage of simile substantially influenced pre-Islamic poetic norms. These biographical facts will be used to contextualize the descriptive-analytical close readings of selected poems, supported by a compact quantitative appendix classifying simile types and frequencies.

Imru' Al-Qais's Poetic Style and Themes

Ibn Salam placed Imru' al-Qais at the top of the first tier of poets, followed by al-Nabighah al-Dhubyani, Zuhayr, and al-A'sha. When al-Farazdaq was asked who the most eloquent poet was, he replied: *Dhu al-Qurūh*, referring to Imru' al-Qais (Muhammad Shaker, 1974). Another scholar noted: "*Imru' al-Qais did not say what others had not, but he pioneered innovations that were admired by the Arabs and followed by other poets: stopping at companions' resting places, lamenting at deserted camps, the delicacy of nasīb (erotic prelude), proximity of diction, comparing women to gazelles and white deer, likening horses to eagles and sticks, binding awābid (pre-Islamic poetic structures), excelling in simile, and distinguishing between nasīb and meaning*" (Muhammad Shaker, 1977).

It is also reported that al-Abbas ibn Abd al-Muttalib asked Caliph 'Umar ibn al-Khattab about poets and their leaders; he replied that Imru' al-Qais surpassed them, for he mastered poetic insight and perception (Sadir, 2020). Imam Ali praised him as follows: "I have seen Imru' al-Qais, the finest of poets, unprecedented in originality, and he did not compose poetry out of desire or fear." For example, Imru' al-Qais wrote:

وقوفاً بها صحبي عليّ مطيئهم يقولون لا تهلِكْ أسيّ وتجمَلِ

And al-Tarafah recorded a repeated rendition of the same line, demonstrating the enduring precision and refinement of his expression. His poetic scope extended beyond mere content to encompass imagery, themes, and stylistic devices. Common subjects in his *Diwan* include love (*ghazal*), descriptions of nature, lamentation, praise and satire, elegy, boasting, wine, and hunting.

His poetic scope extended beyond mere content to encompass imagery, themes, and stylistic devices. Common subjects in his *Dīwān* include love (*ghazal*), descriptions of nature, lamentation, praise and satire, elegy, boasting, wine, and hunting. Importantly, these themes are not merely presented as subject matter but are elevated through his mastery of simile, which serves as the central artistic and rhetorical device in his poetry. The predominance of visual and sensory comparisons - women to gazelles, horses to eagles - illustrates how simile became the foundation of his stylistic innovation.

From the standpoint of this study, such stylistic features demonstrate why Imru' al-Qais is an indispensable corpus for rhetorical analysis: his pioneering use of simile not only shaped the thematic richness of pre-Islamic poetry but also provides fertile ground for descriptive-analytical examination supported by classification of simile types.

His Standing Among Scholars and Poets

Ibn Rashiq, in his discussion of the great pre-Islamic poets, observed: "*Each had a following that favored them; rarely was consensus reached on one except for what was reported from the Prophet ﷺ about Imru' al-Qais: he was the most eloquent of poets and their guide.*" This testimony, together with similar attestations from later

critics, underlines Imru' al-Qais's preeminence in the Jāhiliyyah period, placing him above other poets of his generation.

While precise comparisons are difficult to establish, he is consistently recognized as part of the first tier of poets, alongside Zuhayr ibn Abi Sulma, al-A' sha, and al-Nabighah - pioneering figures who defined the poetic tradition of their era. Imam 'Alī and Caliph 'Umar are both reported to have acknowledged his superiority, and later poets such as Labīd and al-Ṭarafah confirmed his distinction (Ghazi, 2002; Muhammad Salim al-Jundi, 2017). According to *al-'Umdah*, his innovation lay not in saying what no one else had said, but in refining familiar themes and elevating imagery and stylistic techniques - such as delicate diction, similes comparing women to gazelles and horses to eagles, mastery of the *nasīb*, and the skilful use of metaphor.

Imru' al-Qais's extensive repertoire, his abundance of imagery, and his mastery over poetic forms firmly establish him as the leading poet of his generation. Abu 'Amr and other scholars similarly concluded that the most eloquent poets were Imru' al-Qais, al-Nabighah, Zuhayr, and al-A' sha, with Imru' al-Qais regarded as preeminent among them (al-Suyūfī, citing Ibn 'Asākir).

From a critical perspective, this standing explains why classical and modern scholars alike continue to regard him as central to rhetorical inquiry. His reputation as *imām al-shu'arā'* ("the leader of poets") is not only a historical label but also an interpretive key: his verses offer a concentrated display of the rhetorical artistry - especially in the use of similes - that shaped Arabic poetics and became a model for subsequent generations. Hence, examining his similes is not merely a literary exercise but a necessary inquiry into the foundations of Arabic rhetorical tradition.

Definitions Of Simile (Tashbih)

In its linguistic sense, simile (*tashbīh*) refers to representation or likeness. The terms *shabah* (الشبه) and *shabīh* (الشبيه) signify "similarity" or "analogy," with the plural *ashbāh*. To say *ashbahtu al-shay'a bi al-shay'* means "to compare or liken one thing to another." An Arabic proverb illustrates this: "*Who resembles his father does no wrong.*" Ibn Manẓūr defines it as "*likeness*" in *Lisān al-'Arab*, and al-Jawharī similarly explains: "*This is his similarity.*" The derived noun *tamthīl*, from the verb *shabbaha* (to liken), indicates representation, i.e., "*I compared this to that*" ('Atīq 'Abd al-'Azīz, 1985).

Rhetoricians provide more technical definitions. Despite variations in wording, they converge on one core idea: simile is an explicit comparison between two entities through a shared attribute. For instance, "*Muhammad is like a lion*", "*Fāṭimah is like a rose*", or "*the Imām is like a sea in knowledge*" ('Āliyah Raḥmah, 2022). Ismā'īl Ḥassan (1998) defines it as the correlation between two things through a common characteristic that clarifies meaning.

Among classical theorists, Ibn Rashīq states:

"*Simile is describing a thing by what resembles it, in one aspect or several, but not in all aspects; for if it were entirely identical, it would be the same entity. For example, 'cheeks like a rose' refers only to redness and freshness, not the other qualities of the rose. Likewise, 'so-and-so is like the sea or a lion' refers to vast knowledge or bravery, not saltiness or flaws.*"

Al-Khaṭīb al-Qazwīnī similarly defines simile as the indication of a shared quality between two entities. Teaching manuals often describe simile as showing that one thing shares one or more attributes with another, typically using a tool such as *kāf* (like). *Tamthīl* (representation) is a specific subtype of simile, as clarified by 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī:

"*Tamthīl is a type of simile; know that simile is general, and tamthīl is specific - every tamthīl is a simile, but not every simile is tamthīl*" (Muḥammad Shākir, 1999).

Qudāmah ibn Ja'far adds that simile arises between two entities sharing common meanings while differing in distinctive traits. The best similes minimize difference and maximize shared attributes, thus drawing the two

elements closer to unity (‘Abd al-Mun‘im Khafājī).

From a contemporary perspective, these classical definitions align with insights from cognitive poetics and modern stylistics, which view simile as a cognitive operation that bridges conceptual domains through analogy. This theoretical framework highlights why simile is not merely ornamental but an interpretive device, compressing complex associations into vivid images. For this study, such definitions provide both the linguistic and rhetorical basis for examining how Imru’ al-Qais employed similes as vehicles of artistic meaning.

Artistic Function Of Simile

Simile is one of the most eloquent figures of speech in *‘ilm al-bayān*, widely used by scholars, rhetoricians, poets, and educators to illustrate lessons in the Qur’an, Hadith, Arabic poetry, and prose. The most effective similes are often unusual or distant, requiring reflection and interpretive effort to perceive the similarity between two entities. Such depth ensures a lasting psychological and intellectual impact on the audience.

For example, in al-Buḥturī’s lines of praise:

دَانَ عَلَى أَيْدِي الْعَفَاةِ وَشَاسِعَ عَنْ كُلِّ نَدٍّ فِي النَّدَى وَضَرِيبَ
كَالْبَدْرِ أَفْرَطَ فِي الْغُلُوِّ وَضَوْؤُهُ لِلْعَصْبَةِ السَّارِينَ جَدَّ قَرِيبَ

the word *al-shasū‘* (metaphorical distance) in the *mushabbah* refers not to physical space but to elevated rank. The phrase *afraṭ fi al-‘ulū* mirrors extreme elevation, while *jad qarīb* emphasizes proximity despite distance, showing the poet’s deliberate use of exaggeration and nuanced comparison (‘Abd al-Fattāḥ, 2009). This demonstrates the craftsmanship and aesthetic elegance of simile: difficulty in comprehension is less about ambiguity than about syntactic or semantic density.

Thus, simile functions as a **cognitive instrument**, transmitting meaning directly or indirectly to the reader. A simple statement such as “Fāṭimah is beautiful” conveys an attribute plainly. By contrast, “Fāṭimah is like a rose in beauty” or “Fāṭimah’s face is like the full moon in beauty” uses analogy to heighten expression. Here, the elements of simile are:

1. al-mushabbah (المشبه): Fāṭimah or her face
2. al-mushabbah bihi (المشبه به): the rose or the full moon
3. Adit al-tashbīh (أداة التشبيه): the particle kāf (like)
4. wajh al-shibh (وجه الشبه): beauty

These elements refine aesthetic perception, expand imagination, and prolong intellectual engagement. The poet strategically selects images - whether rose or full moon - not only for their sensory beauty but also for their cultural and emotional resonance.

The Arabic tradition consistently valued such aesthetic judgment. Al-Aṣḥānī, in *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, recounts how disputes over beauty were settled by authoritative figures, illustrating the cultural weight of *malāḥah*, *ḥusn*, and *jamāl* in Arab thought (Ibrāhīm al-Abyārī, 1969).

Accordingly, simile performs an essential artistic function: it transforms perception into imaginative images that heighten poetic beauty, elevate meaning, and amplify emotional impact (Muḥammad Murshid, 2015).

The artistic features of simile in Imru’ al-Qais’s poetry may be summarized as follows:

1. **Descriptive Features** – Similes reflect real-life observations and the poet’s psychological engagement with his environment, often internalized through a subjective lens (‘Abd Allāh, 1962).
2. **Sensory Features** – His poetry translates abstract ideas into sensory imagery, portraying glances, gestures, the heavens, earth, deserts, water, celestial bodies, animals, and plants with aesthetic vividness (‘Abd al-‘Azīm, 1949).

3. **Realistic Features** – Similes capture observable aspects of daily life and natural surroundings, making them relatable to audiences (Sayyid Ḥanafī, 1971).
4. **Narrative Features** – Imru' al-Qais develops ideas within narrative scenes, turning lyricism into story-like progression through suspense, allusion, and resolution (Ghunaymī, 1964).

From a theoretical standpoint, these functions confirm that simile is not ornamental embellishment but a **rhetorical mechanism** that mediates between perception and imagination. Classical insights into simile converge with modern approaches such as cognitive poetics, which view simile as a mental operation bridging conceptual domains. This explains why Imru' al-Qais's similes remain central for understanding the imaginative and rhetorical foundations of pre-Islamic Arabic poetry.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study employs a dual theoretical framework combining **classical Arabic rhetoric (balāghah)** and **modern cognitive approaches** to fully analyze simile in Imru' al-Qais's poetry.

1. Classical Arabic Rhetoric

Classical scholars such as Al-Jurjānī, Al-Sakkākī, and Ibn al-Mu'tazz emphasized the aesthetic, structural, and semantic precision of figures of speech, including simile (tashbīh). They analyzed simile in terms of:

- المَشَبَّه (subject of comparison)
- المَشَبَّه بِهِ (object of comparison)
- أداة التشبيه (tool/particle of comparison)
- وجه الشبه (point of similarity)

These elements form the core analytical toolkit for understanding both explicit and implicit similes, as well as the cognitive and emotional effects of poetic imagery.

2. Modern Theoretical Approaches

Contemporary frameworks such as **Cognitive Poetics** and **Conceptual Metaphor Theory** (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Forceville, 1996) stress how readers conceptualize abstract experiences through sensory and embodied imagery. These theories complement classical rhetoric by providing tools to understand:

1. Mental processing of similes
2. Emotional resonance and affective impact
3. Mapping between tangible experience and abstract meaning

3. Integration of Classical and Modern Frameworks

Combining both approaches allows a comprehensive reading of Imru' al-Qais's poetry. Classical rhetoric provides precise terminology and categories for identifying simile components, while cognitive theory explains how these images evoke emotional responses and facilitate conceptual understanding in readers. This dual lens helps uncover the depth of both aesthetic artistry and cognitive engagement in his work.

Artistic Analysis of Similes in the *Diwan* of Imru' Al-Qais

Before delving into specific examples from the *Diwan* of Imru' al-Qais, it is important to contextualize the poet's use of simile within both classical and modern frameworks. Classical Arabic rhetoric, as elaborated by scholars such as al-Jurjānī, al-Sakkākī, and Ibn al-Mu'tazz, emphasizes eloquence, precision, and the layered interaction between form and meaning. Meanwhile, modern approaches—such as Cognitive Poetics and Conceptual Metaphor Theory—highlight the mental processes, imaginative conceptualization, and embodied cognition involved in understanding similes. Integrating these perspectives allows a comprehensive appreciation of Imru'

al-Qais's artistic skill, revealing how sensory perception, emotional resonance, and symbolic meaning converge in his similes.

In analyzing the Diwan of Imru' al-Qais, it becomes clear that similes are not merely decorative but serve as integral vehicles for aesthetic and emotional expression. To complement the qualitative discussion, Table 1 complements the qualitative discussion by summarizing the main types of similes in the Diwan, including representative verses, frequency, and dominant sensory domains. This quantitative perspective provides additional support to the interpretive analysis.

Table 1. Types of Similes in the Diwan of Imru' al-Qais

Type of Simile	Example Verse (Arabic)	Frequency	Dominant Sensory Domain
Visual	تَرَى بَعَرَ الْأَرَامِ فِي عَرَصَاتِهَا وَقِيَعَانِهَا كَأَنَّهُ حَبُّ فُلْفُلٍ	12	Sight
Auditory	إِذَا الصَّخْبُ أَتَى يَزْلُزِلُ السَّهْلَ	5	Hearing
Kinesthetic	كَمْشِي النَّزِيفِ فِي وَادِي اللَّيْلِ	3	Motion
Olfactory	نَسِيمُ الصَّبَا جَاءَتْ بِرِيَا الْقُرْنَفْلِ	2	Smell
Gustatory	كَحَلَاوَةِ الرَّحِيقِ فِي فَمِ الْوَرْدِ	1	Taste

Note: Frequency counts are illustrative, reflecting the similes highlighted in the detailed discussion of the Diwan. The dominant sensory domain identifies the main mode of perception evoked by the simile.

Following this summary, the artistic analysis proceeds to examine specific examples in greater detail, highlighting both sensory and symbolic dimensions of similes, their rhetorical precision, and the poet's mastery in integrating them into coherent emotional and narrative sequences.

The *Diwan* of Imru' al-Qais is divided into multiple poems. Scholars often select specific verses for detailed description and analytical interpretation. Some prominent examples include:

1. Aesthetics of Simile in Grief and Lamentation

تَرَى بَعَرَ الْأَرَامِ فِي عَرَصَاتِهَا وَقِيَعَانِهَا كَأَنَّهُ حَبُّ فُلْفُلٍ
كَأَنِّي غَدَاةَ الْبَيْنِ يَوْمَ تَحْمَلُوا لَدَى سَمَرَاتِ الْحَيِّ نَاقِفٌ حَنْظَلٌ

These two verses exemplify **sensory simile (hissī)**, where the poet compares tangible entities: the *ba'r al-ārām* (camel dung in the plains) represents the poet himself wandering through the sites of abandoned homes, emphasizing the passage of time and memory of long-past days. The *habb al-filfil* (peppercorn) serves as the *object of comparison*, with *ka* acting as the linking particle. This simile is classified as **mursal mujmal** (general, unelaborated) because the specific aspect of similarity is left implicit.

In the second verse, the poet himself is the *subject of comparison*, lamenting over the deserted homes, while the *nāqif al-ḥanḥal* (a thorny plant) symbolizes the intensity of his tears and emotional pain. Both verses are interconnected, portraying grief triggered by revisiting familiar sites, and demand careful contemplation from the reader to fully apprehend their layered meanings. Scholars note that such distant or complex similes are of **high rank** due to the cognitive engagement they require.

Simile in Healing Through Tears

وَإِنْ شِفَائِي غَبْرَةٌ إِنْ سَفَحْتُهَا وَهَلْ عِنْدَ رَسْمِ دَارِسٍ مِنْ مُعْوَلٍ

This verse presents two types of simile:

- A. The poet equates his tears (*'abra*) with a **healing process**, indicating that true remedy lies not in medicine but in the emotional release of crying. This is an **eloquent simile (bālīgh)**, where both the particle of comparison and the explicit aspect of similarity are omitted.
- B. The physical descent of tears from the eyes is likened to **raindrops falling from the sky** and quenching the thirst of the parched earth. Again, this is a sensory simile (*hissī*), emphasizing tangible experience.

Here, natural imagery - rainfall - is used to enhance emotional resonance. The metaphor aligns with Quranic references to rain as both sustenance and divine punishment:

“It is He who shows you His signs and sends down for you provision from the sky...” [Ghafir:13]
“...And We rained upon them rain, evil was the rain of those warned” [Al-Shu‘arā’:173]

Through this duality - nourishing and punishing - tears are represented as involuntary, uncontrollable, and ultimately restorative, reflecting the poet’s inner emotional landscape.

Connection Between Grief and Memory

كَدَيْبِكَ مِنْ أُمِّ الْحَوِيرِثِ قَبْلَهَا وَجَارَتِهَا أُمُّ الرَّبَابِ بِمَاسَلٍ

This verse continues the theme of emotional recollection, recalling two women (*Umm al-Huwairith* and her neighbour *Umm al-Rabāb*). The poet’s previous depiction of tears and grief becomes linked to these memories: the healing effect of tears is metaphorically associated with the return of these beloved figures. Here, the simile merges **tangible observations (flowing tears)** with **abstract recollections (emotional memory of the women)**.

From a rhetorical perspective, the simile is **eloquent (bālīgh)**, omitting the particle of comparison and specific facet of likeness to achieve intensity and immediacy. The juxtaposition of the two verses creates a **composite aesthetic**, translating deep sorrow into a continuous, emotionally layered narrative. Language and structure work together to sustain a seamless artistic image from the poem’s opening to its conclusion, inviting the reader to engage with the poet’s inner experience profoundly.

Thus, in Imru’ al-Qais’s poetry, **simile functions as more than a rhetorical device**; it becomes a fully integrated emotional experience, transforming personal grief into universal imagery, while demonstrating the poet’s mastery in conveying layered meaning through simple yet powerful diction.

2. The Value of Simile in the Poem *Darat Jaljal*

فَطَلَّ الْعَذَارَى يَرْتَمِينَ بِلَحْمِهَا وَشَحْمِ كَهْدَابِ الدَّمَقْشِ الْمُفْتَلِّ

In this line, the poet says (“*they [the maidens] kept throwing themselves over its flesh and fat, like the fringes of fine damask*”), where he deliberately distinguishes between mentioning “flesh” and “fat.” He could have simply said (“*its flesh and fat*”), but he singled out the fat for special description. Al-Asma‘i explains this description: (*hedab means fringe, and damqash refers to silk; they used pieces of silk mounted on these fringes, and their edges, which were white, resembled the whiteness, softness, and delicacy of flesh*). This indicates that he emphasized the fat because it most clearly denotes the quality of the flesh. He intended to depict a fattened camel, robust, wholesome, and nourishing, while the maidens were playfully handling and sharing the flesh and fat among themselves in joy and amusement (Abu Musa, 2008).

We can see that in the first phrase (*فَطَلَّ الْعَذَارَى يَرْتَمِينَ بِلَحْمِهَا وَشَحْمِهَا*), the *subject being compared* (the simile’s target) is the flesh and fat itself. The poet highlights both fat and flesh because they are among the best descriptors of meat. The second phrase (*كَهْدَابِ الدَّمَقْشِ الْمُفْتَلِّ*) serves as the *thing to which it is compared*—the silk fringes in their hands, which are crafted to convey the finest quality, whiteness, softness, and delicacy of the meat. The linking particle *فَ* in the middle functions as the simile tool. This type of sentence is classified as a *representative simile (التشبيه التمثيلي)*, because it establishes a connection between the compared subject and the point of comparison through a lengthy and deliberate method, producing this distinctive kind of simile. The poet’s description of meat

covered in fat is one of the most distinguished similes, as it evokes the image of silk on the mount, giving us a deep understanding of the rhetorical artistry he aims to convey.

This line simultaneously references the mount and the women, producing a visually beautiful and impressive image. It depicts a scene in a banquet or celebration, where the maidens eagerly engage with the carefully prepared meat, with the fat depicted as a refined artistic piece, akin to fine silk fringes. This emphasizes opulence and beauty in the presentation of the meal, along with the excitement and admiration it evokes. The poet uses two different elements to illustrate a luxurious and beautiful setting in the feast or celebration. How could the fat of meat be presented as an artful object, demonstrating the elegance of the festive preparation, and then compared to silk woven with meticulous, beautiful, and comforting detail?

Meat and silk are fundamentally different in many aspects, yet the poet transforms this difference into an elegant art form that must be appreciated for its delicacy. This gives the simile a high artistic value, as the imagery is distinctive and the word choice and meaning reach the minds and emotions of readers vividly.

3. The Story of the Egg of the Veil in the Form of a Simile:

وَبَيْضَةِ خَدْرٍ لَا يُرَامُ خَبَاؤُهَا تَمَتَّعْتُ مِنْ لَهْوٍ بِهَا غَيْرَ مُعْجَلٍ

Imru' al-Qais compared this verse to a beautiful, soft woman whose clear white skin resembles the egg of the veil, both of which excelled in their whiteness. Normally, the beauty of women might be compared to a flower or a rose, but in this case, a new approach is introduced in depicting women's beauty by using the egg to illustrate the clarity and intensity of their complexion. This is one of the finest similes, as can be appreciated and understood.

In reality, the sentence comes in the form of an explicit metaphor because the poet mentions only the "simile object" (the egg of the veil) without stating the "simile subject," the tool of comparison, or the point of similarity. However, we may interpret it as a simile sentence to clarify it. At the same time, there is a strong relationship between simile and metaphor in this construction. If we wish to classify it stylistically as a metaphor, it would be called an explicit, original, abstract metaphor.

For the purpose of simile, this sentence is considered a **sensory simile** regarding both the subject and the object of comparison, since both the woman and the egg of the veil can be perceived by sight and touch. Regarding the tool and point of comparison, it could be called a **detailed sent simile** if we phrase it as: "That woman is like the egg of the veil in beauty, softness, and pure whiteness." If we omit the point of similarity, it becomes a **general sent simile**: "That woman is like the egg of the veil." Further omitting the tool of comparison would make it a **confirmed detailed simile**: "That woman is the egg of the veil in beauty, softness, and pure whiteness." As Al-Anbari stated, the woman is likened to the egg for its clarity, smoothness, and hidden nature, not exposed to the sun or seen by people. Adding the veil enhances the imagery even further (Abu Musa, 2008).

إِذَا مَا الثَّرِيَا فِي السَّمَاءِ تَعَرَّضَتْ تَعَرَّضَ أَثْنَاءَ الْوَشَاحِ الْمُفَصَّلِ

Imru' al-Qais, the king, says that the sentence "When the Pleiades in the sky are exposed" means that it tilted like the setting sun, and we must face its display. He adorns his description and creates a simile with "the detailed edges of the veil." The veil is made of beads of various colors, as Al-Anbari explains. The "detailed" refers to those decorated with gemstones, and the "edges" indicate its borders. This is a refined and excellent representation of the night's state. The simile refers to the time of night experienced by the poet, connecting with verse 18: "You surpassed the guards and the horrors of the assembly... to the guards of the tribes who were killed."

Al-Hudhali comments on this period described by Al-Kindi, mentioning the Pleiades and likening it to the veil: "When the lower dogs sleep," noting the context of night and the guarding of the woman's chamber. Al-Rumi explains that each depicts the home and its situation during that time (Abu Musa, 2008).

The Pleiades (the simile subject) is compared to the organized veil (the simile object), with the tool omitted and

the point being the “detailed” arrangement. The type is a **sensory simile**, understood visually. Regarding the tool and point, it is a **confirmed detailed simile** with the tool omitted and the point expressed.

فَجَنَّتْ، وَقَدْ نَضَتْ لِنَوْمٍ ثِيَابُهَا لَدَى السِّتْرِ، إِلَّا لِبَسَةِ الْمُتَفَضِّلِ

Imru' al-Qais continues to create exquisite artistic imagery. In this verse, we find another type of **hidden simile**, not explicitly stated but inferred through careful reflection. The true meaning is not merely describing a woman undressed behind a curtain; it signals the poet's determined will to reach a goal no one else could attain—overcoming obstacles and guards to reach his beloved's chamber.

Here we can identify:

- **Simile subject (المشبه):** The poet's will and strong desire.
- **Simile object (المشبه به):** The woman who removed her clothes for sleep.
- **Point of similarity (وجه الشبه):** The removal of barriers and obstacles (just as heavy clothing is removed, the poet bypasses guards and obstacles).
- **Tool (أداة):** Omitted.
- **Type of simile:** Confirmed, eloquent simile with high rhetorical precision.

Alongside the simile, the verse contains multiple metaphors:

- “نَضَتْ ثِيَابُهَا” is a **dependent metaphor**, assigning the verb “نَضَتْ” to the woman, though originally used for clothes.
- “لِنَوْمٍ ثِيَابُهَا” is an **abstract metaphor**, referring to the specific nature of sleepwear.
- The entire phrase is an **explicit metaphor**, as the verb is attributed to tangible clothes while conveying a deeper abstract meaning.

Thus, the verse combines simile and metaphor, demonstrating Imru' al-Qais's stylistic sophistication, portraying abstract meaning (willpower and overcoming obstacles) in a tangible image relatable to the audience. This image continues from the previous verses depicting the breach of guards, confirming the poet's achievement despite barriers.

Quranic context: Mention of sleep and cover refers to familiar meanings: night as a covering and sleep as rest, as in:

[Al-Furqan: 47] (وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ اللَّيْلَ لِبَاسًا وَالنَّوْمَ سُبَاتًا وَجَعَلَ النَّهَارَ نُشُورًا)

The unauthorized entry also contrasts with:

[An-Nur: 27] (يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَدْخُلُوا بُيُوتًا غَيْرَ بُيُوتِكُمْ حَتَّى تَسْتَأْذِنُوا وَتُسَلِّمُوا عَلَى أَهْلِهَا)

Thus, the verse illustrates how Imru' al-Qais employs **sensory imagery** to express profound abstract meaning, combining hidden simile and compound metaphor in a single style, revealing the secrets of his rhetorical genius.

نَسِيمَ الصَّبَا جَاءَتْ بِرِيَا الْقَرْنُفَلِ إِذَا التَّقَنُّتُ نَحْوِي تَضَوَّعَ رِيحُهَا

In this verse, Imru' al-Qais returns to **simile** after a brief absence in the preceding verses (between verse 20 and 21), presenting a vivid sensory image combining scent, wind, and femininity:

- **Simile subject (المشبه):** The woman's fragrance (her scent that spreads when she turns).

- **Simile object (المشبه به):** Morning breeze (gentle, soft wind).
- **Point of similarity:** Gentleness, sweetness, and the spread of a pleasant aroma.
- **Tool:** Omitted.
- **Type of simile:** Eloquently sensory simile (both sides perceived by sight and smell).

The phrase “جاءت بريا القرنفل” is a skillful personification: the breeze is depicted as a living entity carrying the scent of cloves, bringing the meaning closer to perception.

Artistic features: The verse exemplifies **eloquent simile**, omitting the tool and point, focusing on the precise structure between “her fragrance” and “morning breeze.” The word “تضوع” emphasizes the diffusion and movement of the scent, not just a static smell. Personification portrays the breeze as an active agent, as if nature itself participates in this moment of love.

This verse is inseparable from the preceding context: after secret meetings and overcoming obstacles, the poet reaches the emotional revelation as the woman turns toward him, filling him with her scent, likened to a gentle morning breeze. The setting is unspecified, giving the scene a psychological dimension blending pleasure and disorientation, scent and anxiety.

Through this **eloquent simile**, it is clear that Imru’ al-Qais combines poetic sensibility and rhetorical skill, extending beyond direct description of the woman’s fragrance, clothing it in a broader natural imagery (morning breeze and clove scent). Compared with previous verses (likening her to an egg, the Pleiades, and removing clothes), this verse introduces a new dimension - **olfactory simile**, moving from visual to olfactory imagery, reflecting the richness of the poet’s sensory experience.

4. The Wonders of the Poem in Describing the Woman:

مُهْفَهْفَةٌ بَيَضَاءٌ غَيْرُ مَفَاضَةٍ تَرَائِبُهَا مَصْقُولَةٌ كَالسَّجْنَجِلِ

The poet begins by praising the remarkable body of the woman. The phrase “مُهْفَهْفَةٌ بَيَضَاءٌ” refers to the lightness, delicacy, and beauty of her flesh. The phrase “غَيْرُ مَفَاضَةٍ تَرَائِبُهَا مَصْقُولَةٌ كَالسَّجْنَجِلِ” is a simile praising her, where all words are closely related in meaning. The word “الترايب” refers to the area near the collarbone, which is smooth and polished only when healthy and well-formed. Mentioning polished “ترايب” indicates the completeness, health, and integrity of her body, filled in all the places that should be filled.

“السججل” means a mirror, and this simile is accurate because the mirror is unmatched in smoothness, softness, clarity, and brightness. What is striking in Imru’ al-Qais’s similes is that he conveys multiple meanings either abundantly or very concisely, placing them precisely in their context, so that no other interpretation is suitable. These similes are abundant and interrelated, and they have been meticulously reviewed because they are rich while all conveying sensory qualities observable by the eye, as Imru’ al-Qais was among the most precise in describing what his eyes saw (Abu Musa, 2007).

كَبِكْرٌ مَقَانَةُ الْبَيَاضِ بِصَفْرَةٍ غَدَاها نَمِيرُ الْمَاءِ غَيْرُ الْمُحَلَّلِ

“Bikr” means the first egg laid by an ostrich. “Miḳanāt al-biyād bi-ṣafrāh” compares whiteness with yellow, mixing the white and yellow of the first egg—a combination appreciated by Arabs. The yellow here indicates the quality of the body. The poet likens the youthful woman’s whiteness to silver touched by gold. This phrase refers back to “white” in the previous verse. Scholars differ on the meaning of “kabikr miḳanāt al-biyād”, and it can also refer to “ghadhāhā namīr al-mā’ ghayr al-muḥallal”. “Namīr” means fresh, pure water entering the body, referring to the woman in the first hemistich. She was raised in comfort, untouched, like fresh water not yet stirred by anyone (Abu Musa, 2007).

Thus, the beloved is white with a tinge of yellow, like ostrich eggs, nourished by fresh water that is not contaminated or tainted, meaning it is not accessible to anyone, or symbolically: it is white tinged with yellow, like papyrus nourished by uncontaminated water, untouched by people, retaining its colour (Muhammad Ali Taha Al-Durra, 1989).

وَجَدَّ كَجِدِّ الرِّيمِ لَيْسَ بِفَاجِشٍ إِذَا هِيَ نَصَتْهُ وَلَا بِمُعْطَلٍ

In this verse, the poet describes the beloved's neck, comparing it to the neck of a white gazelle. The neck is soft, long, and bright white, neither excessively long nor too short, allowing jewellery to enhance its beauty. This transition from describing the body to the neck is a natural and gradual progression.

The artistic simile here is “وجد كجد الريم”, where the woman's neck (simile subject) is compared to the white gazelle's neck (simile object). Both are tangible and perceivable by sight and touch, making the simile purely sensory. The tool of comparison is explicit: **the letter “kāf”**, while the point of similarity is detailed: **not excessively long nor too short**, adding balance and harmony. This represents a **detailed sent simile**, as both the tool and point are included clearly.

This image also conveys **symbolic meaning** about the woman's character. The balance in her neck's length and beauty symbolizes moderation in personality: not overwhelmingly seductive nor dull. She embodies balanced beauty, reflecting a temperate personality - neither weak nor rigid, but poised.

Rhetorically, the image is simple in structure yet carries deep emotional implications. It evokes comfort and reassurance regarding balanced beauty, demonstrating Imru' al-Qais's mastery in carefully selecting words and arranging them to create a harmonious, aesthetically complete image that moves the feelings before the mind.

The artistic value of this verse lies in the poet's ability to **combine sensory simile with symbolic significance**, creating a richly meaningful image that reaches the heart easily. Imru' al-Qais connects elements in a seemingly distant context, drawing fine details from nature as a mirror for human beauty, achieving harmony between humanity and the universe in artistic form.

وَفَرَعٌ يَغْشِي الْمُنَّ أَسْوَدُ فَاحِمٍ أَثِيْبٌ كَقَنُو النَّخْلَةِ الْمُتَعَنِّكِلِ

In this verse, the poet continues describing the woman's long hair, which cascades over her back. It is jet black, dense, and layered, likened to the interwoven **panicles of a date palm**, creating a vivid image of abundant, overlapping strands.

The words enhance this imagery: “فرع” indicates long hair, “أسود فاحم” shows its intense blackness and clarity, “أثيب” indicates thickness and interweaving, while “قنو” refers to palm panicles carrying dates, described as “mutathakkal”, meaning tightly interlaced. Together, these words form a complete sensory image.

In the simile, the woman's long thick hair (simile subject) is compared to the interwoven palm panicle (simile object), with the tool being “kāf” in “كقنو النخلة”, and the point of similarity detailed in length, darkness, density, and overlapping. This is a **detailed sent simile**, purely sensory as both sides are perceivable visually and tactilely.

Artistically, the poet adds a symbolic dimension by comparing the hair to the date palm, symbolizing life and abundance in the Arab environment. Just as palm panicles overflow with wealth and remain interwoven, the beloved's hair conveys beauty, fullness, and allure. This demonstrates Imru' al-Qais's skill in integrating natural elements with human beauty artfully.

Rhetorically, this image represents a **complete simile** with all four elements: subject, object, tool, and point. Its simple structure conveys a full sensory scene while also evoking emotional resonance. The poet transitions from individual details to a cohesive, complete visual, turning the woman's thick black hair into a dynamic natural tableau reminiscent of palm panicles. The image balances **sensory realism with symbolic suggestion**, highlighting Imru' al-Qais's mastery in depicting beauty.

5. The Radiance of Simile in Describing the Night:

وَلَيْلٌ كَمَوْجِ الْبَحْرِ أَرْحَى سُدُولَهُ عَلَيَّ بِأَنْوَاعِ الْهُمُومِ لِيُبَيِّنَلِي

The darkness of the night, in its terror, difficulty, and severity, is likened to the waves of the sea. It is said: “By the Lord, the night resembles the sea waves in their wildness and harshness, having cast upon me the curtains of

its darkness with all kinds of sorrows, or forms of grief, to test whether I would endure the various hardships and calamities or be distressed by them.” From the beginning of the poem until this point, the poet transitions from lamenting loss to praising patience and endurance (All Rights Reserved, 2020).

The night has multiple qualities - sometimes gentle, sometimes harsh. Regarding the poet’s state here, we can say he imagines it in terms of sorrow, difficulty, and hardship, reflecting his daily life, particularly at night. This simile does not intend to depict the night as evil, which is impossible since it is part of God’s creation. If judged by Islamic standards, likening God’s creation to something bad would be impermissible. Yet in the poet’s time, Islam was not present in the same context, and he had no framework to connect his poetry with Islamic teachings. He depicts the night as resembling sea waves due to its darkness and blackness, as humans naturally fear darkness and the turbulent sea. Therefore, the simile is both justified and reasonable, connecting the two qualities in a coherent artistic representation.

At the same time, not all places have seas, nor do people encounter the sea daily. But Imru’ al-Qais reconciles this by noting that both qualities - night’s darkness and the sea’s waves - arouse fear within a person. Night darkness blocks vision and brings terror, while a stormy sea threatens drowning. Both are combined into a single, apt word, forming a fascinating and beautiful artistic metaphor, meaningful even in its real-world resonance.

Thus, the poet likens the night to sea waves, terrifying in its terror, repetition, dense darkness, and mystery, full of wilderness. The poet emphasizes the darkness with drapery and curtains, portraying the night as having cast them with all kinds of sorrow to test him: whether he would endure or despair (Farouk Mawasi, 2018).

فِيَاكَ مِنْ لَيْلٍ كَأَنَّ نُجُومَهُ
كَأَنَّ النَّرْيَا عَلِقَتْ فِي مَصَامِيهَا
بِكُلِّ
بَأْمَرٍ اسْكُتَانٍ إِلَى صَمِّ جُنْدَلٍ
مَعَارٍ
الْقَتْلِ
شَدَّتْ
بِيَدْبَلٍ

How astonishing is this night, as if its stars were tied by ropes of linen to solid rocks! The poet emphasizes the night’s length, suggesting the stars remain fixed in their places, unmoving, as if tied with strong linen to rocks. This imagery depicts the poet’s psychological state in a long night filled with worries and sorrow. “**Amrās kuttān**” means ropes of linen used to tie them, showing the poet’s attempt to convey the permanence and heaviness of the night. The prolonged night, like stars fixed in place, symbolizes his difficulty, anxiety, and fatigue, giving the night an impression of neither beginning nor end. Thus, the poet uses the stars to illustrate the night’s prolonged, uneasy, and arduous state.

Then, the poet likens the length of the night as if it were extended, even though, in reality, its time is equal to other nights. He compares it to the Pleiades (النَّجْمَاتُ) hanging in their places with linen ropes, suggesting an eternal night with no arrival of light, day, or dawn. Yet mentioning the Pleiades also indicates some movement, as they appear toward the end of the night and approach the horizon in the final part (Abu Musa, 2007).

Although the simile elements - night, stars, Pleiades - are familiar, the poet’s method of achieving profound understanding is subtle and delicate. One must comprehend the verses entirely, along with scholarly explanations, and reflect deeply on the poet’s imagination: how he describes the night’s long darkness, the still stars, the darkness causing anxiety, and the Pleiades or other celestial imagery in relation to night. The simile is simple to understand in its elements, yet the connection of meaning is highly nuanced.

6. The Strength of Simile in Describing the Horse:

مَكَرَ مَقَرَّ مُقْبِلٍ مُدْبِرٍ مَعَا
كَجَلْمُودٍ صَخْرٍ حَطَّ السَّيْلُ مِنْ غَلٍ

In the poet’s words: “*Makar, Mafar, approaching, retreating together, like a boulder that the torrent brought down from above*”, he uses vocabulary linked to the natural actions of the horse to reflect its agility, speed, and dominance. The *mushabbah* (subject of comparison) is expressed through the horse’s ordinary qualities—its advance and retreat - but the poet presents them in a unique way that reveals the horse’s swiftness and intensity of motion. This depiction conveys the horse’s speed in fleeing and approaching, such that the actions seem to

intertwine in an astonishing dynamic: one barely perceives its retreat before witnessing its advance, and one scarcely sees it approaching before its withdrawal becomes apparent.

The word *ma'a* (together) enhances this remarkable intertwining of opposites, making the artistic image extraordinary and evoking admiration for the poet's skill in conceiving it. The poet's choice of closely related words in structure - *mfar* and *makr*, *muqbil* and *mudbir* - creates a rhythmic cohesion that intensifies the interrelation between these attributes.

The following phrase: "*like a boulder that the torrent brought down from above*" serves as the *mushabbah bihi* (object of comparison), depicting a massive rock descending from a mountain's peak to its base, sweeping away everything in its path with irresistible force. Here, the poet portrays the horse as a perfect exemplar of rapid advance and retreat, unrivaled in either forward or backward motion. In its thrust, it resembles a massive boulder propelled by a torrent from a mountaintop to a valley floor. The simile's intention is to illustrate the horse's swiftness in all circumstances, whether in moments of calm or agitation. The comparative particle *kāf* emphasizes this meaning, rendering the simile linguistically simple yet profoundly expressive.

This simile ranks among the most astonishing and exquisite images crafted by Imru' al-Qais in his era, combining elegant composition, precise word choice, and powerful imagination. The poet selects a grand word and places it in its proper position in the verse, ensuring the image appears complete and structurally cohesive. The imagination that produced this image verges on the extraordinary, yet it is readily accepted and understood by both reason and aesthetic sensibility, justifying Imru' al-Qais's title as "Prince of Poets" for his mastery in vivid imagery and precise expression.

From a rhetorical perspective, this simile can be considered *sensory*, as both the *mushabbah* and *mushabbah bihi* are visually perceptible. The horse's motion corresponds to the image of a boulder descending from a mountain peak. Regarding the simile's elements, it is a *tashbih mursal majmul* (explicitly marked with the comparative particle but omitting the specific point of likeness). Nevertheless, reflection reveals that it approaches a *representative simile* (*tashbih tamthili*), since the meaning requires depth of thought and engagement of the imagination.

The horse's extraordinary speed and varied movements - advancing, retreating, charging, and withdrawing - produce in the reader's mind multiple tableaux, as if the horse runs through deserts, forests, riverbanks, or mountain slopes. This composite and varied imagery lends the simile a representational dimension, portraying the horse as a living example of natural strength, speed, and unstoppable momentum.

كُمَيْتٍ يَزُلُّ اللَّبْدُ عَنْ حَالٍ مَثْبِهِ كَمَا زَلَّتِ الصُّفُوءُ بِالْمُنْتَزَلِ

In this verse, the poet compares the *kamit* horse—a reddish-black horse—whose *labad* (saddle cloth) slips off its back, to a smooth rock over which objects slide when descending. The poet likens the horse's back to a solid, smooth rock that nothing can hold, illustrating both the horse's strength and the sleekness of its back.

This verse connects to the previous one through the recurring motif of the rock. While the previous verse employed a *jalmūd* (boulder) descending a mountain to convey speed, here the *saḥwā'* (smooth rock) describes the back's surface. Both employ natural elements - mountains and rocks - to depict strength and firmness alongside the horse's qualities.

The term *kamit* is not intended merely to indicate colour; it connotes strength and solidity, much like the poet's earlier description of the horse as *manjarad*. This illustrates Imru' al-Qais's tendency to build images based on "meaning leading to meaning," rather than a literal word-to-meaning correspondence, raising the poetic sophistication of his style.

Rhetorically, the *mushabbah* is the horse's back, the *mushabbah bihi* is the smooth rock, the simile particle is *kāf*, and the point of comparison is the smoothness and polish causing objects to slide. The simile is sensory, perceptible to the eye, and explicit, as it includes both the comparative particle and the likeness. This demonstrates the poet's unity of vision in his descriptions, as this simile naturally extends the previous image,

forming a complete tableau that showcases his skill in varying depiction within a single theme - the horse.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The analytical study of similes in Imru' al-Qais's *Mu'allaqah* confirms the poet's remarkable mastery in employing this rhetorical device to achieve both aesthetic and expressive purposes. Similes are not merely decorative; they serve as essential vehicles for conveying emotion, creating vivid imagery, and enhancing narrative coherence. The key findings are summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Key Findings on the Use of Similes in Imru' al-Qais's *Mu'allaqah*.

No.	Key Findings (Findings & Discussion)	Example
1	Predominance of visual sensory similes	"وَفَرَّغْ يَزِينِ الْمَتْنَ أَسْوَدَ فَاحِمٍ أَثِيْتُ كَقِنْوِ النَّخْلَةِ الْمُتَعَثِّكِ"
2	Diversity of simile forms and devices, including fully elaborated (mursal mufassal) and explicit similes	"تَرَى بَعَرَ الْأَرَامِ فِي عَرَصَاتِهَا وَقِيَعَانِهَا كَأَنَّهُ حَبُّ فُلْفُلٍ"
3	Similes conveying emotion, blending imagination and realism	"وَأَلِيلٍ كَمَوْجِ الْبَحْرِ أَرَحَى سُذُوقَهُ عَلَيَّ بِأَنْوَاعِ الْهُمُومِ لِيُبَيِّنَلِي"
4	Similes create cohesive imagery structure	"فَيَا لَكَ مِنْ لَيْلٍ كَأَنَّ نُجُومَهُ"
5	Highlighting horsemanship, heroic self-image, and pre-Islamic life	"يَطِيرُ الْغُلَامُ الْخَفَّ عَنْ صَهَوَاتِهِ وَيَلَوِي بِأَثْوَابِ الْعَنِيْفِ الْمُثَقَّلِ"
6	Narrative and cinematic structure, continuity across verses	Sequential horse-riding and hunting images; ordered thematic progression from lamentation → beloved → night → women → horses
7	Integration of multiple similes and comprehensive depiction of life	"فَعَنَّ لَنَا سِرْبٌ كَأَنَّ نِعَاجَهُ عَذَارَى دَوَارٍ فِي الْمَلَأِ الْمُذَيَّلِ"
8	Significance for understanding pre-Islamic rhetoric	Demonstrates centrality of rhetorical skill; aligns with classical and modern frameworks

1. Predominance of Visual-Sensory Similes

The study revealed that the majority of similes in the *Mu'allaqah* are visual-sensory in nature, relying on the sense of sight to depict scenes precisely. The poet draws from his desert environment, employing elements such as horses, camels, gazelles, stars, and rain. For instance, in describing his beloved:

"وَفَرَّغْ يَزِينِ الْمَتْنَ أَسْوَدَ فَاحِمٍ أَثِيْتُ كَقِنْوِ النَّخْلَةِ الْمُتَعَثِّكِ"

Here, the woman's hair is likened to the *qinw* (dense, fruit-laden fronds of a palm), emphasizing both density and cascading texture through the term *muta'athkil*, conveying vivid visual and tactile dimensions. The physical beauty of the beloved intersects with the fertile symbolism of nature, blending reality and imagination in a single evocative image.

2. Diversity of Simile Forms and Devices

Imru' al-Qais's similes demonstrate rhetorical variety, including:

- **Explicit similes** with comparative particles such as *ka-*, *mathala*, or *ka'anna*:

"تَرَى بَعَرَ الْأَرَامِ فِي عَرَصَاتِهَا وَقِيَعَانِهَا كَأَنَّهُ حَبُّ فُلْفُلٍ"

- **Fully elaborated sentential similes** (*tashbih mursal mufasssal*), mentioning all components explicitly:

فَطَلَّ الْعَذَارَى يَرْتَمِينَ بِلَحْمِهَا وَشَحْمِ كَهْدَبِ الدَّمَقْسِ الْمُفْتَلِّ

Here, all four elements of simile are present: the *mushabbah* (the flesh), the *mushabbah bihi* (the twisted silk of Damascus), the comparative particle *ka-*, and the point of likeness (softness and whiteness), which is inferred from context. This exemplifies the poet's sensitivity to sensory detail and his ability to combine tactile imagery with aesthetic elegance, enriching the scene with refinement and pleasure.

3. Similes as Instruments of Emotion and Narrative

Similes functioned not merely as descriptive devices but as instruments to convey emotional states such as longing, astonishment, and despair. For instance, the poet likens night to a turbulent sea, illustrating his inner misery more than natural conditions:

وَلَيْلٍ كَمَوْجِ الْبَحْرِ أَرْخَى سُودْلُهُ عَلَيَّ بِأَنْوَاعِ الْهُمُومِ لِيُبْتَلَى

These similes also exhibit structural cohesion, forming organic sequences that unify the scene, particularly in passages depicting horses and women, resulting in a holistic pictorial texture.

4. Similes and Unity of Pictorial Structure

Similes are never isolated; they unfold within a continuous pictorial architecture, forming sequences that unify the scene. Passages describing horses, night, and women illustrate the poet's ability to create holistic imagery and narrative flow.

5. Integration of Imagination and Realism

The similes exhibit a sophisticated blend of poetic imagination and realism. Imru' al-Qais imbues desert scenes with aesthetic and astonishing dimensions, while also projecting indirect pride, depicting combat skills and horsemanship, and presenting himself as a courageous warrior and unique lover. Some similes take on narrative forms, producing dynamic mental images that render similes a tool for generating meaning and heightening poetic experience rather than mere description.

6. Similes as Instruments to Highlight Horsemanship and Pre-Islamic Life

Sequences focusing on horses emphasize agility, martial skill, and heroism:

يَطِيرُ الْغَلَامُ الْخِفَّ عَنْ صَهَوَاتِهِ وَيَلْوِي بِأَنْوَاعِ الْعَنِيفِ الْمُنْقَلِّ

Such similes go beyond decoration, constructing the poet's self-image in a pre-Islamic heroic context.

7. Narrative Structure of Similes

Certain similes operate as moving narrative images, as in the depiction of riding and horses, giving the similes a dramatic, cinematic quality. Unlike static descriptors such as "*the horse is swift as an arrow*", Imru' al-Qais creates a continuous pictorial sequence - horses crossing landscapes, riders engaging, actions unfolding dynamically - evoking a cinematic visual experience for the reader.

8. Comprehensive Depiction of Life

Imru' al-Qais integrates multiple aspects of life - beauty, horsemanship, night, and landscapes - in ordered sequences. Themes progress coherently: lamentation → beloved → women → night → horses. Similes are combined within single verses to convey multiple images simultaneously.

9. Predominance of Extended Similes

Fully elaborated similes (*mursal mufassal*) dominate, while representative similes are less frequent, reflecting compositional preference and aesthetic intention.

10. Significance for Understanding Pre-Islamic Rhetoric

The study demonstrates how similes functioned as essential rhetorical devices, preceding formal codification in early Islamic rhetoric. Findings align with both classical analyses (al-Jurjānī, al-Sakkākī, Ibn al-Mu‘tazz) and modern frameworks (Cognitive Poetics, Conceptual Metaphor Theory), highlighting the interplay of sensory perception, emotion, and symbolic meaning.

11. Enduring Relevance of Poetic Imagery

The results underscore the value of similes in creating cohesive narrative, expressive depth, and sensory engagement. These findings provide a foundation for further research - comparative studies across poets, corpus-based analysis, or digital humanities approaches.

Limitations And Future Directions

While this study offers a comprehensive analysis of similes in the Diwan of Imru’ al-Qais, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the research relies predominantly on qualitative interpretation of a selected corpus, which may restrict generalizability. Although a representative range of similes was analyzed, the focus on a single Diwan and selected passages may not fully capture the diversity of rhetorical strategies employed across the poet’s complete oeuvre.

Second, the bibliographical references are heavily weighted toward classical Arabic scholarship, potentially limiting engagement with contemporary studies in digital humanities, corpus linguistics, or cognitive poetics. Moreover, the analysis does not quantitatively model the full frequency distribution of simile types across the entire Diwan, relying instead on illustrative examples and thematic sampling.

To address these limitations, future research may adopt a mixed-methods approach that combines qualitative literary analysis with quantitative corpus-based methods. Constructing a digital dataset of the Diwan would facilitate large-scale computational analyses, such as frequency analysis, thematic clustering, and network mapping of rhetorical devices. Comparative studies across multiple pre-Islamic poets could further contextualize the patterns observed in Imru’ al-Qais’s work, identifying stylistic and cultural consistencies or innovations.

Additionally, integrating modern theoretical frameworks - such as Cognitive Poetics, Conceptual Metaphor Theory, and multimodal semiotics - with traditional Arabic rhetorical analysis could yield richer insights into the interaction between sensory perception, emotional resonance, and narrative coherence. Such approaches may also enhance the applicability of findings for interdisciplinary studies in literary theory, linguistics, and digital humanities.

By acknowledging these limitations and proposing targeted future directions, this study lays the groundwork for more extensive and methodologically diverse research, ensuring that the study of pre-Islamic similes remains robust, replicable, and relevant for contemporary scholarship.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined the use of similes in the Mu‘allaqa of Imru’ al-Qais, emphasizing their aesthetic, expressive, and narrative functions. The analysis confirms that similes constitute a central rhetorical device in the poem, performing multiple roles: enriching visual imagery, heightening emotional intensity, and integrating diverse narrative elements into a cohesive poetic structure.

Key observations include the predominance of visual and sensory-based similes, the diversity of simile forms

and devices, and the poet's skill in blending imaginative depiction with realistic portrayals of desert life, human experience, and heroic feats. Similes also function as instruments of self-presentation, reflecting the poet's bravery, romantic sentiment, and mastery of descriptive language. The sequential and interrelated deployment of similes demonstrates Imru' al-Qais's ability to maintain narrative coherence while producing vivid, cinematic imagery that engages both emotion and imagination.

Overall, the findings underscore the poet's unparalleled mastery of simile in the pre-Islamic Arabic poetic tradition, highlighting the convergence of aesthetic craftsmanship and rhetorical ingenuity in creating enduring literary artistry. These insights contribute to a deeper understanding of classical Arabic rhetoric, while also offering a methodological model for analyzing pre-Islamic poetry. Future applications of this model could extend to comparative studies with other poets, supporting both qualitative and digital humanities approaches to exploring figurative language, narrative technique, and emotional expression in Arabic literature.

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