

**Abū Dhu'ayb al-Khudhalī and His Elegies:
The Case of His Elegy to His Sons
Ebū Züeyb el-Hüzeli ve Mersiyeleri:
Oğullarına Nazmettiği Mersiye Örneği**

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Abstract

In the vast expanse of classical Arabic literature, the works of Abū Dhu'ayb al-Hudhalī stand out, particularly his elegies, which provide a profound glimpse into the sociocultural dynamics of his era. The research presented in this article delves deep into the life and artistry of Abū Dhu'ayb, meticulously examining how his personal experiences and surroundings shaped his poetic expressions. Elegies, often characterized by their mournful tone and reflective nature, become especially significant in Abū Dhu'ayb's repertoire as they offer poetic lamentations and provide insight into the world in which he lived. The subject of this research focuses on Abū Dhu'ayb's elegies, providing an in-depth literary analysis, and aiming to discern the intricate interplay between his life's events and his poetic manifestations. By situating Abū Dhu'ayb's elegies within the broader canvas of classical Arabic poetry, this research seeks to shed light on their distinct characteristics, thematic concerns, and stylistic nuances. Within the scope of this article, special attention is given to his deeply moving elegy dedicated to his sons. Drawing from a wide spectrum of his poems, we ensure a comprehensive understanding of Abū Dhu'ayb's unique approach to the art of elegy. The rationale for this inquiry becomes particularly salient when we position Abū Dhu'ayb within the milieu of his literary peers. Although numerous poets of his era ventured into the domain of elegy, Abū Dhu'ayb's compositions stand apart, characterized by their intimate resonance and the intricate threads of narrative woven seamlessly into his poetic tapestry. Engaging with overarching themes of fate, destiny, honor, and the human condition, his works do more than just lament the loss of loved ones or ponder the transient nature of life. Through this research, we aim to elevate the understanding of Abū Dhu'ayb's contribution to Arabic literature and underscore the importance of his elegies as both literary masterpieces and historical documents. The primary purpose of this study is twofold. Firstly, it seeks to explore the artistic depth and breadth of Abū Dhu'ayb's elegies, understanding their thematic richness and linguistic excellence. Secondly, the study aims to draw connections between the poet's life—a life replete with its share of joys, sorrows, triumphs, and tribulations—and the elegies he crafted. By doing so, the research offers a holistic view of the poet, not just as a literary figure but also as a person deeply affected by the world

around him. The methodological framework employed in this research is rooted in both literary analysis and historical contextualization. By closely reading Abū Dhu'ayb's elegies, the research deciphers their symbolic and metaphorical elements, laying bare the poet's craft. Concurrently, by positioning these elegies within their historical context, the study provides a broader understanding of the socio-political and cultural milieu of Abū Dhu'ayb's era. This dual approach ensures a well-rounded exploration, enabling readers to appreciate the elegies both as individual pieces of art and as part of a larger poetic tradition. The research methodology used in this study involves a combination of literary analysis and historical contextualization.

Keywords: Arabic Language and Literature, Abū Dhu'ayb al-Hudhalī, Elegy, Classical Arabic Poetry, 'Ayniyya of Abū Dhu'ayb.

Öz

Klasik Arap edebiyatının geniş yelpazesi içerisinde, Ebû Züeyb el-Huzelî'nin eserleri, bilhassa da döneminin sosyokültürel dinamiklerine derin bir bakış sağlayan mersiyeleri ön plana çıkmaktadır. Bu makalede takdim edilen araştırma, Ebû Züeyb'in hayatını ve sanatını derinlemesine incelemekte, şahsî deneyimlerinin ve muhitinin şiirsel ifadelerini nasıl şekillendirdiğini titizlikle irdelemektedir. Genellikle kederli tonları ve düşündürücü tabiatıyla karakterize edilen mersiyeler, yalnızca şiirsel ağıtlar sunmakla kalmayıp şairin içerisinde yaşadığı dünyaya dair bir kavrayış imkânı sağladığı için de Ebû Züeyb'in külliyyatında özellikle önem kazanmaktadır. Bu araştırmanın konusu, Ebû Züeyb'in mersiyelerine odaklanmakta, derinlemesine bir edebî analiz sunmakta ve onun hayatındaki olaylar ile şiirsel tezahürleri arasındaki karmaşık etkileşimi belirginleştirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Mezkûr araştırma, Ebû Züeyb'in mersiyelerini klasik Arap şiirinin daha geniş bir çerçevesine yerleştirerek, onların farklı özelliklerine, tematik kaygılarına ve üslup nüanslarına ışık tutmayı planlamaktadır. Makale kapsamında, şairin oğullarına ithaf ettiği son derece dokunaklı mersiyesine ise özel bir alaka gösterilmektedir. Şiirlerinin geniş bir yelpazesinden yararlanılarak, Ebû Züeyb'in mersiye sanatında sergilediği yaklaşımın kapsamlı bir şekilde anlaşılması sağlanmaktadır. Bu araştırmanın ehemmiyeti, Ebû Züeyb'i edebiyatçı çağdaşlarının muhiti içerisinde konumlandığımızda bilhassa belirginleşmektedir. Zira döneminin

pek çok şairi mersiye alanına girmiş olsa da Ebû Züeyb'in kompozisyonları, samimi duygulanımları ve şiirsel dokusuna kusursuz bir şekilde işlenen girift anlatılarıyla ön plana çıkmaktadır. Kader, mukadderat, onur ve insanlık ahvali gibi kapsayıcı temalarla ilgilenen eserleri, sevdiklerinin kaybına ağıt yakmaktan veya hayatın geçici doğası üzerine düşünmekten daha fazlasını ifade etmektedir. Bu araştırmayla, Ebû Züeyb'in Arap edebiyatındaki katkılarının daha iyi anlaşılması ve mersiyelerinin hem edebî şaheserler hem de tarihî vesikalar olarak öneminin vurgulanması da hedeflenmektedir. Çalışmanın asli gayesi iki yönlüdür. İlk olarak, Ebû Züeyb'in mersiyelerinin sanatsal derinliğinin ve genişliğinin keşfedilmesi, tematik zenginliğinin ve dilsel mükemmelliğinin anlaşılması amaçlanmaktadır. İkinci olarak ise çalışma, şairin sevinçler, üzüntüler, zaferler ve sıkıntılarla dolu yaşamı ile yazdığı mersiyeler arasında bağlantılar kurmayı istemektedir. Bu sayede araştırma, şairin sadece edebî bir figür değil, aynı zamanda etrafındaki dünyadan derinden etkilenen bir kişi olduğu hususunda da bütüncül bir bakış açısı sağlamaktadır. Bu araştırmada kullanılan metodolojik çerçeve hem edebî analize hem de tarihsel bağlamsallaştırmaya dayanmaktadır. Araştırma, Ebû Züeyb'in mersiyelerini yakından tetkik ederek, sembolik ve metaforik unsurlarını deşifre etmektedir ve şairin zanaatını belirgin kılmaktadır. Aynı zamanda bahis mevzu tetkik işlemi, bu mersiyeleri tarihsel bağlamları içerisinde konumlandırarak, Ebû Züeyb'in döneminin sosyo-politik ve kültürel ortamının daha geniş bir ölçüde anlaşılmasını da sağlamaktadır. Bu ikili yaklaşım, okuyucuların mersiyeleri hem bireysel sanat eserleri hem de daha geniş bir şiir geleneğinin parçası olarak takdir etmelerini sağlayarak çok yönlü bir mütalaa imkânı sağlamaktadır. Bu çalışmada kullanılan araştırma metodolojisi, literatür analizi ve tarihsel bağlamsallaştırmanın bir kombinasyonunu içermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Arap Dili ve Edebiyatı, Ebû Züeyb el-Hüzelî, Mersiye, Klasik Arap Şiiri, Ebû Züeyb'in 'Ayniyye'si.

Introduction

Pre-Islamic Arabic poetry, often referred to as Jāhiliyya poetry, represents a rich and culturally significant literary tradition that flourished in the Arabian Peninsula before the advent of Islam. It was a form of oral expression deeply rooted in the nomadic tribal society of the time. Poets held a revered status,

not only as skilled wordsmiths but as important conveyors of history, culture, and moral values. Their verses were recited in the vibrant marketplace, at tribal gatherings, and during the annual fair of 'Ukāz, where they competed for recognition and prestige. The poetic themes of this era encompassed a wide spectrum of subjects, ranging from love and chivalry to warfare and elegies. Elegiac poetry, in particular, held a prominent place, as it was through elegies that poets mourned the dead, praised the heroic deeds of warriors, and chronicled the exploits of their tribes. These elegies served as an essential medium for preserving tribal memory, reflecting the collective ethos of the Arab tribes, and reinforcing the tribal code of honor, known as "muruwwa". The pre-Islamic period was also characterized by linguistic richness, with poets employing intricate metaphors, vivid imagery, and a nuanced lexicon to craft their verses. It was within this dynamic and culturally diverse landscape that Abū Dhu'ayb al-Hudhalī, a master poet, and elegist, created his literary legacy, leaving an indelible mark on the tradition of Arabic poetry.¹

The intricacies of classical Arabic poetry, with its layered metaphors, nuanced lexicon, and embedded cultural symbols, offer a fertile ground for literary scholars. Situated firmly within this rich tradition is the oeuvre of Abū Dhu'ayb al-Hudhalī, a luminary whose poetic contributions provide a glimpse into the emotional and societal tapestry of his era. Through the rhythmic cadence and evocative imagery of his verses, Abū Dhu'ayb invites readers to traverse the landscapes of grief, nostalgia, and introspection, offering profound insights into both individual experiences and broader communal sentiments. This paper endeavors to unpack the multifaceted world of Abū Dhu'ayb, delving deep into the artistry and poignancy of his elegies. These mournful compositions stand out not merely as laments for personal losses but as profound reflections on the ephemerality of life, the weight of destiny, the valor of honor, and the intricate contours of the human condition. Within the scope of this paper, particular emphasis will be placed on his elegy dedicated to his sons, a piece that embodies the depth of a father's sorrow and the existential musings it can give rise to.

¹ James E. Montgomery, "Dichotomy in Jāhili Poetry", *Journal of Arabic Literature* 17 (1986), 1-6; Aida Qasımova, *Ərəb Ədəbiyyatı: V-XIII Əsrlər* (Bakü: Qasımova A.Ş., 2019), 22.

Scholarly works on Abū Dhu'ayb al-Hudhalī's poetry have contributed significantly to our understanding of his literary legacy. Notably, Renate Jacobi's research paper, "Die Anfänge der arabischen Ġazalpoesie: Abū Ḍu'aib al-Huḍalī", published in the journal "Der Islam", offers valuable insights into the beginnings of Arabic ghazal poetry, with a focus on Abū Dhu'ayb's contributions.² Furthermore, Nūra al-Shamlān's book, "Abū Dhu'ayb al-Hudhalī: Ḥayātuh wa shī'ruh", provides an extensive exploration of Abū Dhu'ayb's life and poetry, offering a comprehensive biographical account.³ Additionally, 'Abd al-Hādī 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Shāwī's research paper, "Thunā'iyya al-ḥayāt wa al-mawt bayn al-shā'ir Abī Dhū'ayb al-Hudhalī (27 h) wa al-shā'ir Abī al-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī (449 h)", delves into the thematic aspects of life and death in the works of Abū Dhu'ayb, comparing them to those of Abū al-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī.⁴ Jaroslav Stetkevych's paper, "The 'Ayniyyah of Abū Dhu'ayb al-Hudhalī: The Achievement of a Classical Arabic Allegorical Form", published in the "Journal of Arabic Literature", sheds light on the unique classical Arabic allegorical form within the 'Ayniyyah of Abū Dhu'ayb.⁵ Additionally, there is a relevant study titled "al-Mu'ādil al-mawḍū'ī fī 'ayniyya Abī Dhū'ayb al-Hudhalī" by 'Alī Maḥmūd al-Ṭawālba and Aḥmad Hilāl Banī 'Īsā.⁶ These existing studies significantly contribute to the understanding of Abū Dhu'ayb's poetry and its cultural and historical context. However, this present research aims to provide a fresh perspective by focusing on specific aspects of his elegiac poetry, thereby bridging gaps in the existing scholarly discourse and enriching the understanding of Abū Dhu'ayb's contributions to Arabic literature.

² Renate Jacobi, "Die Anfänge der arabischen Ġazalpoesie: Abū Ḍu'aib al-Huḍalī", *Der Islam* 61 (1984), 218-250.

³ Nūra al-Shamlān, *Abū Dhu'ayb al-Hudhalī: Ḥayātuh wa shī'ruh* (Riyadh: 'Imāda Shu'ūn al-Maktabāt, 1980), 1-178.

⁴ 'Abd al-Hādī 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Shāwī, "Thunā'iyya al-ḥayāt wa al-mawt bayn al-shā'ir Abī Dhū'ayb al-Hudhalī (27 h) wa al-shā'ir Abī al-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī (449 h)", *Majalla al-Mustanṣiriyya li-l-'Ulūm al-Insāniyya* 2 (2023), 366-374.

⁵ Jaroslav Stetkevych, "The 'Ayniyyah of Abū Dhu'ayb al-Hudhalī: The Achievement of a Classical Arabic Allegorical Form", *Journal of Arabic Literature* 51 (2020), 273-324.

⁶ 'Alī Maḥmūd al-Ṭawālba - Aḥmad Hilāl Banī 'Īsā, "al-Mu'ādil al-mawḍū'ī fī 'ayniyya Abī Dhū'ayb al-Hudhalī", *al-Majalla al-Mishkāt li-l-'ulūm al-insāniyya wa al-ijtimā'iyya* 7/2 (1442/2020), 454-474.

The selection of Abū Dhu'ayb as the primary subject for this study is judicious and intentional. His elegies, framed within the social, political, and cultural milieu of his period, provide a profound understanding of the intersection between individual sorrow and the broader currents of society. This focus becomes especially pertinent when considering the distinguished place of elegies in Arabic literature. In this tradition, the act of mourning extends beyond a singular emotion, serving as a mirror to collective memory, societal introspection, and profound philosophical exploration. Moreover, Abū Dhu'ayb's life, punctuated by personal tragedies and societal upheavals, finds its echo in his elegies, making them an indispensable source for those keen on understanding the poet beyond his verses. By examining the symbiotic relationship between the poet's life and his poetic expressions, this paper seeks to paint a holistic portrait of Abū Dhu'ayb, capturing both the man and the artist, and the inextricable link between the two. As we embark on this journey through Abū Dhu'ayb's elegies, it is essential to recognize the multifaceted nature of his works. They are, at once, a testament to his genius, a mirror to the society he lived in, and a philosophical treatise on life, loss, and everything in between.

1. The Life of Abū Dhu'ayb al-Hudhalī

Abū Dhu'ayb al-Hudhalī, who passed away in 28/648-49, stands as a pivotal figure in Arabic literature, renowned for his elegiac poetry. Scholars categorize him as a mukhaḍram poet, attributing this classification to his experiences across both the pre-Islamic and the ensuing Islamic epochs. Renowned historians and specialists within the domain of Arabic literature largely acclaim him as the preeminent poet emanating from the Hudhayl tribe. A detailed account of his lineage traces back to Khuwaylid b. Khālid b. Muḥarrith b. Zubayd b. Makhzūm b. Ṣāhila b. Kāhil b. al-Ḥārith b. Tamīm b. Sa'd b. Hhudhayl b. Mudrika b. Ilyās b. Muḍar b. Nizār. Leading voices within the academic circles of Arabic literature concur that Abū Dhu'ayb's poetic expressions were notably refined, with minimal imperfections. The esteemed Arabic designation for distinguished poets, either "stallion" or "faḥl", is rightfully ascribed to him. It's noteworthy that Hassān b. Thābit (d. 60/680 [?]), a luminary Muslim poet from Islam's nascent era, in response to inquiries re-

garding the most illustrious poetic talents, not only recognized the Hudhayl tribe but expressly singled out Abū Dhu'ayb as its apex poet.⁷

In historical records, there is a prevailing assertion that Abū Dhu'ayb established his residence in Medīna. His significant involvement in the military campaigns during Islam's nascent years is well-documented. His lifespan extended to the epoch of Caliph 'Uthmān (d. 35/656). Historical accounts indicate that in 9/630, Abū Dhu'ayb, in solidarity with his tribe, ardently embraced Islam. As he dwelled in the desert, word reached him of Prophet Muhammad's declining health. Upon his subsequent sojourn to Medina, he was confronted with the somber news of the Prophet's recent passing. Certain sources intimate that he encountered Prophet Muhammad already prepared for burial. Notably, various chronicles emphasize his esteemed position as a Ṣahābī, a companion of the Prophet. Post the Prophet's departure, it is documented that distinguished figures of the Muslim community congregated at the locale known as Saqīfa Banī Sā'ida; Abū Dhu'ayb was reported among these attendees. He bore witness to the orations of Abū Bakr (d. 13/634) and 'Umar (d. 23/644) and was present during the momentous pledge of allegiance to Abū Bakr. Following his involvement in the Prophet's burial rites, he retreated to his desert abode. Heeding Caliph 'Umar's call to partake in jihad in the pursuit of divine aims, Abū Dhu'ayb joined the military expeditions aimed at the annexation of Egypt and North Africa. Under the aegis of Caliph 'Uthmān, specifically in 26/646-47, he participated in the African sortie led by 'Abdullah b. Sa'd b. Abū Sarḥ (d. 36/656-57). In the course of his return, tasked with delivering intelligence of a military victory to Caliph 'Uthmān and in association with 'Abdullah b. Zubayr, he tragically passed away in Egypt. His interment was presided over by 'Abdullah b. Zubayr (d. 73/692). An ancillary account posits that his death transpired during a confrontation against Byzantine forces, wherein he was in the company of his progeny and kin.⁸

⁷ Abū al-Faraj 'Alī al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-aghānī*, Critical ed. Iḥsān 'Abbās - Ibrāhīm al-Sa'āfīn (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1429/2008), 6/187.

⁸ Khayr al-Dīn al-Ziriklī, *al-A'lām*, (Beirut: Dār al-'Ilm lil-Malāyīn, 2002), 2/325; Rahmi Er, "Ebū Züeyb el-Hüzeli", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslām Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 1995), 10/272.

2. Exploring Abū Dhu'ayb al-Hudhalī's Mourning Poetry

Within the canon of Arabic literature, Abū Dhu'ayb al-Hudhalī stands distinguished for his expertise in the elegiac form. His exceptional command over elegiac poetry could, in part, be attributed to influential contemporaries in his environment who might have served as sources of inspiration. As an illustration, it is documented that Sā'ida b. Ju'ayya al-Hudhalī, an eminent figure in the realm of Arab elegy, shared the same epoch as Abū Dhu'ayb, with both belonging to the Hudhayl tribal lineage. Despite this, Abū Dhu'ayb's renown surpassed that of his esteemed peer. Within the framework of classical Arabic literature, characterized by its adherence to traditional motifs, Abū Dhu'ayb is acknowledged for his innovative contributions. Notably, he pioneered a departure from the archetypal qasida descriptions of mounts, opting instead for the portrayal of a wild bee. On a poignant note, a year before Abū Dhu'ayb's passing, he endured the grievous loss of all five of his sons to a plague in Egypt. This profound sorrow led to the penning of his venerated elegy, *al-'Ayniyya*. The poem is lauded as a masterwork, poignantly underscoring the inexorable nature of death and stands as a paramount representation of the elegiac form in Arabic literary history. Furthermore, his elegy on the demise of Prophet Muḥammad is of notable scholarly interest.⁹

The authenticity of Abū Dhu'ayb al-Hudhalī's elegies has been a matter of scholarly debate for some time, and there are several reasons to approach these poetic works with skepticism. It is essential to begin by understanding the historical context in which these elegies were documented and transmitted. Much of pre-Islamic and early Islamic poetry was passed down orally for generations before it was ever recorded in written form. This lengthy oral tradition, while an impressive testament to the memorization capacities of Arab culture, opens up the possibility of modifications, embellishments, or even omissions with each successive retelling. Furthermore, the cultural and political dynamics of the time played a significant role in how poetry was valued

⁹ Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975), 2/255-256; Er, "Ebū Züeyb el-Hüzeli", 10/272; 'Alī Maḥmūd al-Ṭawālba - Aḥmad Hilāl Banī 'Īsā, "al-Mu'ādil al-mawḍū'ī fī 'ayniyya Abī Dhū'ayb al-Hudhalī", 454-457; al-Shāwī, "Thunā'iyya al-ḥayāt wa al-mawt bayn al-shā'ir Abī Dhū'ayb al-Hudhalī (27 h) wa al-shā'ir Abī al-'Alā' al-Ma'arri (449 h)", 366-370.

and propagated. The Abbasid era, for instance, witnessed a cultural renaissance where there was a keen interest in collecting and documenting the literary gems of the past, but this also meant that some poems might have been altered to suit contemporary tastes or political agendas. Moreover, the sheer prominence of Abū Dhu'ayb as an iconic figure in Arabic literary history makes his work an attractive target for potential forgeries or attributions of anonymous or lesser-known poetic pieces. Some critics argue that given the conventionalized themes and motifs prevalent in Arabic poetry, distinguishing an authentic Abū Dhu'ayb poem from an imitation can be incredibly challenging. The culmination of these factors means that while Abū Dhu'ayb's contribution to Arabic literature is undeniable, a discerning approach is necessary when attributing specific elegies to his name with complete certainty.¹⁰

The veracity of Abū Dhu'ayb al-Hudhalī's elegies and their authenticity offers a compelling backdrop to a poignant episode featuring the second 'Abbāsid caliph, al-Manṣūr (d. 158/775). Grief-stricken over the demise of his son Ja'far, al-Manṣūr sought solace in the profound verses of Abū Dhu'ayb's 'Ayniyya. Eager to hear the poem recited aloud, he tasked his trusted mawlā, Rabī', to identify a member from his distinguished Hāshimite kin at court capable of reciting the elegy. Much to al-Manṣūr's chagrin, not one among the Hāshimites, representatives of an illustrious lineage, had committed the poem to memory. Expressing deep disappointment, the Caliph bemoaned their lack of "adab", equating this literary oversight to the very anguish he felt over the loss of his son. Undeterred, he sent Rabī' once more, this time to find a reciter among the common soldiers of his army. After much searching, an elderly schoolteacher emerged, his memory replete with the verses of the 'Ayniyya. The ensuing recitation not only provided the Caliph with the emotional catharsis he sought but also underlined the widespread recognition and cherished value of Abū Dhu'ayb's poetry. However, this incident, juxtaposed against debates over the authenticity of the elegies, emphasizes the intricate interplay between cherished cultural memory and the shifting sands of histor-

¹⁰ Régis Blachère, *Histoire de la littérature arabe: Des origines à la fin du XVe siècle de J.-C.* (Paris: Librairie d'Amérique et d'Orient Adrien Maisonneuve, 1952), 111-112; Jaroslav Stetkevych, "The 'Ayniyyah of Abū Dhu'ayb al-Hudhalī: The Achievement of a Classical Arabic Allegorical Form", 297; Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, 2/255-256

ical veracity. The episode begs the question: were these verses true remnants of Abū Dhu'ayb's poetic genius or were they shaped, refined, or even reconstructed by the echoes of numerous voices across generations?¹¹

Abū Dhu'ayb's elegiac compositions stand as a beacon of the nuanced sensibilities and depths of human emotions. One notices his poetic landscape is painted with vivid imagery, such as the unique treatment of cloud formations and the ensuing rains, reminiscent of the style of his mentor, Sā'ida b. Ju'ayya. Within the romantic verses crafted by Abū Dhu'ayb, one discerns early shades of what would later become the hallmark of the Medinese school of poetry. Abū Dhu'ayb's approach to the *nasīb* is both distinctive and forward-looking. He often expands this typically brief introductory section into a full-fledged ode, offering a unique perspective that prefigures later developments in the poetic tradition. This stylistic choice, an innovation in its own right, hints at the evolutionary trajectory that Arabic poetry was poised to take in the ensuing generations. As a student of Sā'ida b. Ju'ayya, Abū Dhu'ayb's poetry is adorned with intricate details of weaponry and evocative hunting scenes. However, there's a noted limitation when it comes to his portrayal of horses, an aspect that lacked the vivacity and detail found in his other descriptions. Elegies constitute a significant portion of his extant works, reflecting a deep-seated melancholy and a contemplation on the transient nature of life and the unpredictable hand of fate. Abū Dhu'ayb's elegies, particularly those addressing personal losses, are testament to his profound poetic depth. He adeptly communicates the profound pain of loss, creating pieces that resonate with a consistent mood and thoughtful structure. A recurring theme throughout his body of work is the inexorable march of fate. He skillfully interweaves this concept with the poignant setting of the *rithā'*, crystallizing it through evocative imagery and scenes, culminating in a powerful, reflective ending. The emotional intensity and sophisticated interplay of themes

¹¹ Blachère, *Histoire de la littérature arabe: Des origines à la fin du XVe siècle de J.-C.*, 111-112; Stetkevych, "The 'Ayniyah of Abū Dhu'ayb al-Hudhalī: The Achievement of a Classical Arabic Allegorical Form", 297; Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, 2/255-256.

he employs stand as a distinguished contribution to the rich tapestry of ancient poetry.¹²

Abū Dhu'ayb's poetry presents a rich tapestry of emotions, seamlessly intertwining the tenderness of romantic motifs with the profound themes found in his elegies. His verses hint at romantic dalliances with various women, further highlighted by the famed rivalry he had with his cousin, Khālīd b. Zuhayr, over the affections of Umm 'Amr. Such fervent emotional dimensions intricately lace his poetic works, suggesting that his love poems weren't just expressions of fleeting passion but profound articulations of the complexities of the human heart. Interestingly, even in his elegies, typically dominated by somber reflections on life and death, traces of romantic motifs make fleeting appearances. This dexterous melding of love themes with the somber tones of his elegies serves as a testament to Abū Dhu'ayb's exceptional ability to depict the inextricable link between love and grief in the human journey. This nuanced amalgamation of themes, while reminiscent of the style of his contemporaries, speaks to the depth and intricacy of Abū Dhu'ayb's personal experiences and reflections, granting his works a timeless resonance in the annals of ancient literature.¹³

Among the renowned elegies crafted by Abū Dhu'ayb al-Khudhalī, one finds a poignant tribute dedicated to his cousin Nushayba. This particular elegy adheres to a traditional structure, bearing resemblances to the works of his contemporaneous poets. A closer examination of the elegy reveals Abū Dhu'ayb's profound capability to intertwine multifaceted emotions, all the while remaining faithful to the conventional poetic paradigms of his epoch. The poem functions not only as a homage to Nushayba but also encapsulates the universal sentiments of bereavement, bravery, and life's ephemeral nature. While its form might align with that of his peers, the distinct voice and profound emotive resonance of Abū Dhu'ayb emerge prominently, solidifying

¹² G. E. von Grunebaum, "Abū Dhu'ayb al-Hudhalī", *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, ed. H. A. R. Gibb et al. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1979), 1/115; See Jacobi, "Die Anfänge der arabischen Ġazalpoesie: Abū Ḍu'aib al-Huḍalī", 218-250.

¹³ See Jacobi, "Die Anfänge der arabischen Ġazalpoesie: Abū Ḍu'aib al-Huḍalī", 222; See Abū Sa'īd al-Ḥasan b. al-Ḥusayn b. 'Ubayd Allah al-Sukkerī, *Dīwān al-Hudhaliyyīn*, Critical ed. Aḥmad al-Zayn (Cairo: al-Dār al-Qawmiyya li-l-Ṭibā'a wa al-Nashr, 1385/1965), 1/21-32.

the elegy as an enduring representation of his poetic virtuosity and the deep-seated bonds of kinship.¹⁴

In the vast corpus of Abū Dhu'ayb al-Hudhalī's elegiac works, scholars and aficionados of classical Arabian poetry frequently come across verses specifically dedicated to the gallant heroes of his tribe, those who met their fate in the crucible of battle. Within the framework of these poignant compositions, Abū Dhu'ayb employs traditional poetic devices, not merely to extol the undoubted valor of these warriors, but also to poignantly convey the depth of loss that reverberated throughout the tribe following their untimely demise. In an emphatic tribute to their legacy, he deliberately mentions these fallen heroes by name, thereby magnifying their commendable qualities and their unparalleled expertise in warfare. While a cursory examination of ancient Arabian poetry often reveals a predilection for elegies to be singularly devoted to individual figures, a nuanced analysis of Abū Dhu'ayb's oeuvre indicates a notable deviation. Remarkably, he has extended his elegiac tributes to encompass not just individuals but entire groups, showcasing the breadth of his emotional and poetic range.¹⁵

3. Analysis of Abū Dhu'ayb al-Hudhalī's Elegy for His Sons

As we delve deeper into the poetic realm of Abū Dhu'ayb al-Hudhalī, it becomes evident that his elegies are not merely expressions of grief but are intricate tapestries woven from threads of personal loss, cultural expectations, and profound emotions. His verses serve as a window into the societal norms of the time, illuminating the weight of familial honor and the deep sense of duty Arabian poets felt in memorializing the departed. Within this broader context of his mourning poetry, there lies a composition that stands out, both for its raw emotional intensity and its intimate connection to the poet's personal life. This composition, an elegy dedicated to his own sons, showcases the heart-wrenching confluence of a father's grief and a poet's duty. As we proceed, we will embark on a detailed analysis of this elegy, examining its structure, themes, and the depth of sorrow that permeates its lines. The sub-

¹⁴ See al-Sukkerī, *Dīwān al-Hudhaliyyīn*, 1/21-32.

¹⁵ al-Shamlān, *Abū Dhu'ayb al-Hudhalī: Ḥayātuh wa shi'ruh*, 64-65.

sequent composition by Abū Dhu'ayb al-Hudhali encompasses a total of sixty-three verses, as presented herein:

1. "أَمِنَ الْمُنُونِ وَرَيْبِهَا تَتَوَجَّعُ
 2. قَالَتْ أُمَيْمَةُ مَا لِجِسْمِكَ شَاجِبًا
 3. أَمْ مَا لِجَنْبِكَ لَا يُلَانِمُ مَضْجَعًا
 4. فَأَجَبْتُهَا أُمَّ مَا لِجِسْمِي أَنَّهُ
 5. أَوْدَى بِنَيِّ وَأَعْقُبُونِي عُصَّةً
 6. سَبَقُوا هَوِيَّ وَأَعْنَقُوا لِهَوَاهُمْ
 7. فَعَبَّرْتُ بَعْدَهُمْ بِعَيْشٍ نَاصِبٍ
 8. وَلَقَدْ حَزَصْتُ بِأَنْ أَدَافِعَ عَنْهُمْ
 9. وَإِذَا الْمَنِيَّةُ أَنْشَبَتْ أَظْفَارَهَا
 10. فَالْعَيْنُ بَعْدَهُمْ كَأَنْ جَدَّاقَهَا
 11. حَتَّى كَأَنِّي لِلْحَوَادِثِ مَرْوَةٌ
 12. وَتَجَأِدِي لِلشَّامِتِينَ أَرِيهْمُ
 13. وَالنَّفْسُ رَاغِبَةٌ إِذَا رَغَبَتْهَا
- وَالدَّهْرُ لَيْسَ بِمُعْتَبٍ مَنِ يَجْرَعُ
 مُنْذُ ابْتَدَأَتْ وَمَثَلُ مَالِكَ يَنْفَعُ
 إِلَّا أَقْضَى عَلَيْكَ ذَاكَ الْمَضْجَعُ
 أَوْدَى بِنَيِّ مِنَ الْبِلَادِ فَوَدَّعُوا
 بَعْدَ الرُّقَادِ وَعَبْرَةٌ لَا تُفْلَعُ
 فَتُخْرَمُوا وَلِكُلِّ جَنْبٍ مَصْرَعُ
 وَأَحَالُ أَيِّ لِأَجْقٍ مُسْتَتْبِعُ
 فَإِذَا الْمَنِيَّةُ أَقْبَلَتْ لَا تُدْفَعُ
 أَلْفَيْتِ كُلَّ تَمِيمَةٍ لَا تَنْفَعُ
 سُمِلَتْ بِشَوْكٍ فَهَيَّ غُورٌ تَدْمَعُ
 بِصَفَا الْمَشْرِقِ كُلِّ يَوْمٍ تُفْرَعُ
 أَنِّي لِرَيْبِ الدَّهْرِ لَا أَتَضَعُضَعُ
 وَإِذَا تُرِدُّ إِلَيَّ قَلِيلٍ تَفْنَعُ"

"1. Do you grieve because of life's uncertainties and doubts? Fate itself doesn't console those who despair.

2. Umayma asked, 'Why does your body look so pale? Despite your considerable generosity, should your riches not bring you solace?'

3. Or what is bothering you in your bed, except your bed disturbs you?

4. I replied, 'It's because my children have departed this world and said their goodbyes.'

5. They've left, leaving a lump in my throat that emerges after every dream, and tears that won't hold back.

6. They rushed past my wishes, embracing their own destinies, falling like everyone eventually does.

7. Now, after them, I navigate a harsh life, believing that I'll soon follow their steps.

8. I tried fiercely to protect them, but when destiny approaches, it can't be pushed away.

9. When destiny digs its claws in, you'll find all amulets are futile.

10. Now, without them, my eyes are as if pierced with thorns, blinded and forever weeping.

11. I am like the flintstone (*marwa*) of the East pathway (*Şafā al-Musharraḡ*), constantly struck by passersby every day.

12. My endurance, presented to the envious, shows that I do not buckle under the capriciousness of time.

13. Our spirit yearns when stirred, but when faced with little, it learns contentment."¹⁶

The poem in focus offers a profound exploration of the human condition, enveloping themes of grief, despair, fate, resilience, and the role of material wealth in providing solace. From the onset, the narrative voice delves into the universal sentiment of grief and despair that arise from the unpredictabilities of life. By personifying "fate" as an entity that remains indifferent to human anguish, the poet establishes an inherent disconnect between human hopes and the immutable nature of destiny. This idea is accentuated by the line "Fate itself doesn't console those who despair", suggesting that life's trajectory doesn't necessarily align with human aspirations, leaving individuals in a perpetual state of desolation. Umayma's intervention in the narrative introduces an external perspective on the narrator's sorrow. Her inquiry, centered on the physical manifestations of his grief, illuminates the poem's contemplation of the role of material comforts in alleviating emotional pain. When she asks, "Why does your body look so pale? Even though you've given so much, doesn't your wealth offer some comfort?" she not only underscores the visible effects of grief but also interrogates the assumed healing properties of wealth. Implicit in her question is the societal belief that material possessions can assuage emotional pain. The narrative voice's response about the loss of his

¹⁶ al-Mufaḡḡal al-Ḍabbī, *Dīwān al-Mufaḡḡaliyyāt: Ma'a sharḡ wāfir li-Abī Muḡammad al-Qāsim b. Muḡammad b. Bashshār al-Anbārī*, Critical ed. Charles James Lyall (Beirut: Maṡba'a al-Ābā' al-Yasū'iyyīn, 1920), 849-884; al-Mufaḡḡal al-Ḍabbī, *al-Mufaḡḡaliyyāt*, Critical ed. Aḡmad Muḡammad Shākīr - 'Abd al-Salām Muḡammad Hārūn (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, n.d.), 421-429.

children is heart-wrenching and clarifies the depth of his despair. By comparing the discomfort of his bed to that of being filled with “tiny stones that poke and prod”, the poet powerfully captures the pervasive nature of grief, emphasizing its ability to invade even the most intimate spaces of comfort. The departure of the children from this world is depicted not as an isolated tragedy but as part of the larger cycle of life and death, as evident from “falling like everyone eventually does”. This acceptance of mortality, however, doesn’t diminish the intensity of the narrator’s pain. His ensuing navigation through “a harsh life” is not just a testament to his grief but also speaks volumes about the universal human experience of grappling with loss.

Destiny, as conceived in this poem, is an omnipotent force. The phrases “when destiny approaches, it can’t be pushed away” and “when destiny digs its claws in, you’ll find all safeguards are futile” reinforce the inexorable nature of fate. The poet thus juxtaposes human vulnerability with destiny’s omnipotence, suggesting an inherent human helplessness in the face of preordained events. The imagery of eyes “pierced with thorns” portrays grief not just as an emotional pain but one that manifests physically, blinding and continuously torturing the bereaved. Towards the concluding sentiments, the poem shifts its focus from personal grief to a broader meditation on the human spirit. By juxtaposing “endurance” with the “capriciousness of time”, the narrative underscores the dichotomy of human resilience and the unpredictable nature of life. The poem culminates with an introspective reflection on the human spirit’s adaptability, suggesting that, despite its innate longing for more, it can find contentment even in scarcity. In sum, this poetic composition offers a multifaceted exploration of human emotions, ranging from grief and despair to resilience and contentment. Through its intricate weaving of personal anecdotes and universal truths, it serves as a poignant reminder of the human capacity to endure, adapt, and find solace amidst life’s vicissitudes.

Abū Dhu'ayb al-Khudhalī proceeds with these verses in his poem:

14. وَالذَّهْرُ لَا يَبْقَى عَلَى حَدَثَانِهِ جَوْنُ السَّرَاةِ لَهُ جَدَائِدُ أَرْبَعِ
 15. صَخِبُ الشُّوَارِبِ لَا يَزَالُ كَأَنَّهُ عَبْدٌ لِّأَلِ أَبِي رَبِيعَةَ مُسْبَغِ
 16. أَكَلِ الْجَمِيمِ وَطَاوَعْتَهُ سَمْحٌ مِثْلُ الْقَنَاقَةِ وَأَزَعَّتْهُ الْأَمْرُغِ
 17. بِقَرَارِ قَيْعَانٍ سَقَاهَا وَابِلٌ وَاهٍ فَاتَّجَمَ بَرْهَمَةٌ لَا يُفْلَغِ

18. فَلَبِثُنَّ جِيناً يَغْتَلِجْنَ بَرُوضِهِ
 19. حَتَّى إِذَا جَزَرَتْ مِيَاهُ رُزُونِهِ
 20. ذَكَرَ الْوُرُودَ بِهَا وَشَاقَى أَمْرَهُ
 21. فَافْتَنَّهُنَّ مِنَ السَّوَاءِ وَمَاؤُهُ
 22. فَكَانَتْهَا بِالْأَجْرَعِ بَيْنَ نُبَايِعِ
 23. وَكَانَتْهُنَّ رَبَابَةً وَكَانَتْهُ
 24. وَكَانَمَا هُوَ مَدُوسٌ مُنْقَلَبٌ
 25. فَوَرَدْنَ وَالْعَيْشُوقُ مَفْعَدٌ رَابِيِ الِ
 26. فَشَرَعْنَ فِي حَجَرَاتٍ عَذْبٍ بَارِدِ
 27. فَشَرِبْنَ ثُمَّ سَمِعْنَ جَسَاءَ دُونَهُ
 28. وَنَمِيمَةً مِنْ قَانِصٍ مُتَلَبِّبِ
 29. فَفَكَّرْنَهُ وَنَقَرْنَ وَامْتَرَسَتْ بِهِ
 30. فَرَمَى فَأَنْفَذَ مِنْ نَجُودٍ عَانِطِ
 31. فَبَدَأَ لَهُ أَقْرَابُ هَذَا رَانِعاً
 32. فَرَمَى فَأَلْحَقَ صَاعِدِيّاً مَطْحَراً
 33. فَأَبْدَهُنَّ حُنُوفَهُنَّ فَهَارِبِ
 34. يَعْثُرْنَ فِي حَدِّ الطَّبَاتِ كَانَمَا
- فَيَجِدُ جِيناً فِي الْعِلَاجِ وَيَسْمَعُ
 وَبِأَيِّ جِينٍ مَلَاوَةٌ تَنْقَطُ
 سُؤْمٌ وَأَقْبَلَ حَيْثُ يَنْتَبِغُ
 بَثْرٌ وَعَانَدَهُ طَرِيقٌ مَهْدَعُ
 وَأُولَاتِ ذِي الْعَرْجَاءِ نَهَبٌ مُجْمَعُ
 يَسْرُ يُفِيضُ عَلَى الْقِدَاحِ وَيَمْدَعُ
 فِي الْكَفِّ إِلَّا أَنَّهُ هُوَ أَضْلَعُ
 ضُرْبَاءَ فَوْقَ النَّظْمِ لَا يَنْتَلَعُ
 حَصِيبِ الطِّبَاحِ تَغْيِيبُ فِيهِ الْأَكْرَعُ
 شَرَفُ الْحَجَابِ وَرَيْبُ قَرْعِ الْبُورَعُ
 فِي كَفِّهِ جَسَاءٌ أَجَشُّ وَأَقْطَعُ
 سَطْعَاءٌ هَادِيَةٌ وَهَادٍ جُرْسَعُ
 سَهْمًا فَخَرَّ وَرَيْشُهُ مُتَصَمِّعُ
 عَجلاً فَعَيَّبَتْ فِي الْكِنَانَةِ يُرْجَعُ
 بِالْكَشْحِ فَاشْتِ تَمَلَّتْ عَلَيْهِ الْأَضْلَعُ
 بِذِمَائِهِ أَوْ بَارِكٌ مُتَجَعِّعُ
 كَسِيَّتْ بُرُودُ بَنِي تَزِيدَ الْأَنْزَعُ"

"14. Fate spares none. The donkey, the curve of its back dark yet slightly reddish, accompanied by its four mates, whose udders have dwindled.

15. He incessantly brays, echoing deep in his throat, akin to a servant from Abū Rabī'a's household, surrounded and threatened by wild beasts.

16. He (the wild ass) has eaten the lush vegetation, and a slender one (female ass) has accompanied him, resembling a spear, and the pasture has made him lively.

17. (They find solace) in the resting places of water in hollows, ceaselessly replenished by rains that pour unstopably, making a permanent mark on the land.

18. They (the wild asses, both male and female) spent some time frolicking in the meadow; sometimes he shows seriousness in his playing, and at other times, he is purely playful.

19. Until the waters of its high places receded, and how quickly the threads of prosperous times were severed!

20. He remembered the springs by them, and his situation distressed him. Misfortune was upon him, and the moment of his doom approached.

21. He scattered them from the edge of the stony lava plateau; his destination was Bathr, but he avoided the clear, straightforward route.

22. Down in the valley, between Nubāyī' and the slopes of Dhū al-'Arjā', they appeared like a gathered plunder.

23. They were like arrows in a quiver, while he, the game's dealer, kept pushing them, announcing the results.

24. It's as though he is a whetstone constantly rotated in hand, only he is much larger in size.

25. They approached the water while Capella brightly shone, stationed above the Belt, unchanging in its position.

26. Their mouths touched the clear, cool water flowing over the gravel, and their legs were submerged up to the knees.

27. While drinking, they heard a sound from the elevated terrain behind them, a mysterious knocking.

28. A subtle hint from a prepared hunter, in his hand a lightweight bow made from a twig, which produces a harsh sound, with a broad and short arrowhead.

29. The donkeys couldn't recognize the impending threat and panicked. The leading she-ass, with her elongated neck, pressed herself closely against her robust mate, who had bulging sides.

30. The hunter released an arrow, penetrating the she-ass that has remained barren despite mating. The arrow exited; its feathers smeared in congealed blood.

31. (As she fell), her mate's flank was exposed, revealing his vulnerability. In his rush to escape, the hunter, reaching behind without looking, groped in his quiver for another arrow.

32. He shot again, striking with an arrow known either for being from Şa'da, (the place known for the best arrows), piercing through its flank.

33. His arrows brought ruin to them: some tried to escape with whatever life was left, others fell, stumbling in their final moments.

34. Their stumbling movements on the blood-soaked terrain resembled patterns similar to those fabrics from the tribe of Tazīd."¹⁷

In this continuation of the larger poetic work, the narrative unfolds with a sophisticated interplay of vivid natural imagery and a sequence of events that emphasize the capricious nature of fate—a motif deeply rooted in classical literary traditions. The initial verses delve deep into an intricate description of wild asses, where the primary focus is on the male, identified by its distinctive dark and slightly reddish curve on its back. The donkey is described as being accompanied by others, identifiable by the mention of “dwindling udders”. The metaphor of the donkey's bray, compared to the sound produced by a servant from Abū Rabī'a's household, paints an image of vulnerability and potential threat, and this feeling of looming danger is further heightened with the mention of wild beasts. This can be seen as a potent metaphor for the unpredictability of life and the constant dangers it presents. The scenes of the wild asses frolicking in the meadows and their eventual encounter with water sources paint a vivid and tranquil picture. This tranquility is, however, swiftly disrupted by the foreboding mention of how quickly the waters recede and the looming misfortune. There is a stark contrast here, emphasizing the fleeting nature of peace and prosperity, reminiscent of the capriciousness of fate.

With the entry of the hunter, the narrative takes a more ominous turn. The wild asses, oblivious to the impending danger, exhibit their natural behavior of quenching their thirst. Their initial lack of recognition of the threat

¹⁷ al-Ḍabbī, *Dīwān al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt: Ma'a sharḥ wāfir li-Abī Muḥammad al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad b. Bashshār al-Anbārī*, 849-884; al-Ḍabbī, *al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, 421-429.

symbolizes life's unexpected tribulations that often catch us off guard. The female, with her elongated neck, pressing against her robust mate portrays a deeply intimate and protective gesture, emphasizing vulnerability in the face of imminent danger. The description of the hunter is intricate and hints at his preparedness and skill, contrasted against the wild asses' raw and innocent state. The penetration of the arrows, especially through the barren she-ass, serves as a symbolic act of shattering innocence and purity. The use of words like "congealed blood" further intensifies the visceral imagery. Moreover, the delineation of the hunter's arrows, potentially originating from Ṣa'da—a place renowned for the quality of its arrows, speaks of the inevitability of fate and the tools it employs to assert its dominance. The arrow, as a tool of fate, brings ruin and chaos to the wild asses, culminating in their tragic end. In the concluding verses, the poignant imagery of stumbling movements on blood-soaked terrains draws parallels to the patterns found in fabrics from the tribe of Tazīd. This juxtaposition encapsulates the tragic beauty and fragility of life, thereby emphasizing the poem's central theme: the inexorable hand of fate that spares none. It is worth noting that this poem is not merely an account of a hunting expedition, but rather a profound exploration of life's unpredictability, the fleeting nature of joy, and the ever-present shadow of doom, all encapsulated in the metaphorical journey of the wild asses.

The next verses in Abū Dhu'ayb al-Hudhalī's poem are as follows:

35. وَالِدَهُرُ لَا يَنْقَى عَلَى خَدَائِيهِ
شَبَبَ أَفْرَثُهُ الْكِلَابُ مُرَوَّغٍ
36. شَعَفَ الْكِلَابُ الصَّارِيَاتُ فُؤَادَهُ
فَإِذَا رَأَى الصَّبِيحَ الْمَصَدَّقَ يَفْرَغُ
37. وَيَعْوِذُ بِالْأَرْضِ إِذَا مَا شَفَقَهُ
قَطْرٌ وَرَاحَتُهُ بَلِيلٌ زَغْرَغُ
38. يَرْمِي بَعَيْنَيْهِ الْعُيُوبَ وَطَرْفُهُ
مُغْضٍ يُصَدِّقُ طَرْفُهُ مَا يَسْمَعُ
39. فَعَدَا يُشْرِقُ مَتْنُهُ فَبَدَأَ لَهُ
أُولَى سَوَابِقُهَا قَرِيْبًا تُورَغُ
40. فَاهْتَأَجَ مِنْ فَرَعٍ وَسَدَّ فُرُوجَهُ
غُبْرٌ ضَوَارٍ وَاقِيَانٍ وَأَجْدَغُ
41. يَنْهَشُنُهُ وَيَذِيهُنَّ وَيَحْتَمِي
عَبْلُ الشَّوَى بِالطَّرْنَيْنِ مُوَلَّغُ
42. فَتَحَا لَهَا بِمُذَلِّقَيْنِ كَأَنَّمَا
بِهِمَا مِنَ النَّصْحِ الْمَجْدَحِ أُبْدَغُ
43. فَكَأَنَّ سَفُودَيْنِ لَمَّا يَفْتَرَا
عَجَلًا لَهُ بِشِوَاءِ شَرْبٍ يُنْرَغُ
44. فَصَرَعَتْهُ تَحْتَ الْعُبَارِ وَجَنَّبَهُ
مُنْتَرِبٌ وَلِكَلِّ جَنْبِ مَصْرَغُ
45. حَتَّى إِذَا ارْتَدَّتْ وَأَقْصَدَ عُصْبَهُ
مِنْهَا وَقَامَ شَرِيْدَهَا يَنْصَرَّغُ"

“35. Fortune doesn’t spare even the mature bull, whom the dogs have driven into a state of fear.

36. The dogs, fierce in their pursuit, have stirred his heart. When he sees the bright dawn, he’s startled, (as hunters with dogs come after him at this hour).

37. He takes shelter under the al-Artā tree, suffering from the pouring rain and the chilling winds that have deeply troubled him.

38. He casts his gaze over hidden places, squinting to see clearer; his eyes verify what his ears have caught.

39. As he exposes his flank to the sun to dry off the rain and night dew, he suddenly sees the leading dogs closing in, waiting for the rest to join.

40. In panic, he looks to flee, but his paths are blocked by dogs: two with untouched ears, and the third with cropped ears.

41. They bite at him; yet he pushes them off. He’s thick-legged with two distinctive brown stripes on his sides.

42. He sidestepped with his sharpened horns, which gleamed as if painted with a vibrant, thick blood-red dye.

43. The horns seemed like two spit-rods, not yet tarnished by the stench of meat; swiftly he aims them, ready to skewer, like pulling out a half-cooked feast.

44. They pinned him beneath the dust, his flank soiled with earth, yet every side is destined to fall one day.

45. When finally the pack halted, many met their end, while the remnants scattered in all directions, crying out in agony.”¹⁸

In this segment of the continuing poem, we are met with a vivid portrayal of a nature scene, imbued with the primal instinct of survival and the overarching theme of destiny’s unyielding grip. At its core, the passage speaks to

¹⁸ al-Ḍabbī, *Dīwān al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt: Ma’a sharḥ wāfir li-Abī Muḥammad al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad b. Bashshār al-Anbārī*, 849-884; al-Ḍabbī, *al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, 421-429.

the vulnerability and precariousness inherent in existence, even for creatures traditionally considered powerful, such as the mature bull. The narrative launches with the bull's trepidation in the face of dogs, a clear inversion of expected roles. This bull, typically regarded as a symbol of strength and virility, finds itself driven to unease. Such portrayal not only captures the reader's empathy but hints at broader existential notions where even the mighty are not spared from the whims of fate. The imagery of the bright dawn, typically associated with hope or new beginnings, becomes a harbinger of danger. This juxtaposition of dawn with impending doom further reinforces the unpredictability of life and destiny. Additionally, the al-Artā tree under which the bull seeks refuge serves as a symbol of temporary solace amidst impending threats. The bull's act of seeking clarity—looking over hidden places and trying to verify auditory cues visually—reflects the inherent human instinct to seek understanding and clarity in times of peril. This desperation for clarity is immediately contrasted by the sudden realization of looming danger, represented by the encroaching dogs.

The ensuing confrontation between the bull and the dogs is delineated with graphic precision. The description of the bull's attributes—his "thick legs" and the "distinctive brown stripes"—paints an image of a formidable creature, underscoring the impending tragedy of his downfall. The bull's horns, vividly described as tinted with a "blood-red dye", not only stand out as a stark visual element but may also suggest prior confrontations. This hue can be seen as a testament to the bull's combative past, indicating that he may have defended himself fiercely against threats, possibly injuring or even vanquishing his adversaries. Such a characterization further underscores the resilience and resistance inherent in nature's denizens, highlighting their relentless will to survive against odds. The poem's portrayal of combat doesn't merely serve as a testament to nature's ferocity but is emblematic of life's broader struggles, where even the mightiest are not spared from adversity. By depicting the bull's eventual subjugation, the narrative echoes a recurrent theme: the inevitability of fate. Even as the pack retreats, the scene is not one of victory but of devastation, with many falling and others "crying out in agony". Conclusively, this fragment artfully delves into the juxtaposition of strength and vulnerability, the inexorability of destiny, and the unyielding rhythms of na-

ture, all of which resonate deeply with the intricacies of the human experience.

Continuing his poetic narrative, Abū Dhu'ayb al-Hudhalī presents these verses:

46. فَبَدَا لَهُ رَبُّ الْكِلَابِ يَكْفُوهُ
بِإِضْرَافِ رَهَابٍ رِيَشُهُنَّ مَقْرَعُ
47. فَرَمَى لِيُنْقِذَ فَرَهَا فَهَوَى لَهَا
سَهْمٌ فَأَنْقَذَ طَرْتِيهَ الْمَنْرَعُ
48. فَكَبَا كَمَا يَكْبُو فَنِيقٌ تَارِرٌ
بِالْحَبْتِ إِلَّا أَنَّهُ هُوَ أَبْرَعُ
49. وَالذَّهْرُ لَا يَبْقَى عَلَى حَدَائِيقِهِ
مُسْتَشْعِرٌ حَلَقَ الْحَدِيدِ مَقْنَعُ
50. حَمِيَّتْ عَلَيْهِ الدَّرْعُ حَتَّى وَجْهَهُ
مَنْ حَرَّهَا يَوْمَ الْكَرْيَهَةِ أَسْفَعُ
51. تَعَدُّ بِهِ حَوْصَاءُ يُفْصِمُ جَرْيَهَا
حَلَقَ الرَّحَالَةَ فَهِيَ رَخْوٌ تَمْرَعُ
52. فَصَرَ الصَّبُوحَ لَهَا فَشَرَجَ لَحْمَهَا
بِالنَّيِّ فَهِيَ تَتَّوِخُ فِيهَا الْإِصْبَعُ
53. مُنْقَلَبٌ أَنْسَأُهَا عَنْ قَانِي
كَالْقُرْطِ صَاوٍ غَبْرُهُ لَا يُرْضَعُ
54. تَأْبَى بِدِرَّتِهَا إِذَا مَا اسْتَعْصَبَتْ
إِلَّا الْحَمِيمَ فَإِنَّهُ يَنْبَضُّ عُ

“46. Then the master of the dogs proceeded, with his hand holding slim arrows, white, delicate, and their feathers clipped short.

47. He shot to save what remained of his hounds; the arrow flew, piercing the bull from one side to the other.

48. He collapsed just as an exhausted camel-stallion falls on sunken ground, yet he was far more magnificent.

49. As time relentlessly flows, none remain untouched; he stands out donning a shirt of interwoven metal and a protective steel hood.

50. The armor clings hotly to him, making his face, amid the heat of battle, appear darkened.

51. He rides a mare with sunken eyes due to exertion, yet her strong strides almost break her saddle's girth. She moves swiftly, with ease.

52. In the morning, she alone enjoys the first sip of milk, her flesh so tender and marbled with fat that a finger could sink into it without reaching the bone.

53. A vein stands out near her thigh area, splitting the flesh. Her small, dry, reddened teat, not suckled by any offspring, hangs like a desolate ear-ring.

54. If provoked by the thought of a whip or the touch of a spur, she stops, and her skin secretes sweat as a sign of her displeasure.”¹⁹

In the continuation of this multifaceted poetic narrative, we encounter a portrayal of the inevitability of nature's outcomes and the fragile boundary between strength and vulnerability. The figure of the “master of the dogs” emerges as an embodiment of human control and intervention within the natural world. The meticulous description of his arrows—delineated as “slim”, “white”, and “delicate”—emphasizes both the fragility and potency of man-made instruments. The juxtaposition of delicacy against the bull's fateful end accentuates the peril of underestimated power. This moment captures the paradox of fragility and potency co-existing, revealing that even the mightiest beings, such as the bull, can be felled by seemingly insubstantial means. The bull's demise is rendered with melancholic gravitas. Its comparison to “an exhausted camel-stallion” suggests a majestic creature reaching its unfortunate end, underscoring the universality of vulnerability regardless of inherent strength or stature. This depiction resonates deeply with the theme of life's impermanence, where even the magnificent are not spared from the inexorable passage of time.

Yet, the narrative's scope expands beyond the confines of the animal kingdom. The introduction of a warrior, draped in “a shirt of interwoven metal and a protective steel hood”, signifies a transition from the natural to the human domain. This armored figure, though protected by his steel attire, isn't immune to discomfort; the heat it generates serves as a poignant reminder of the sacrifices made for protection and perhaps the inescapable nature of human fragility. Subsequently, the portrayal of the mare becomes a focal point. Her detailed description emphasizes both her physical prowess and her evident sensitivities. While she is characterized by her strength—illustrated by her “strong strides” and the description that she “moves swiftly, with ease” —

¹⁹ al-Ḍabbī, *Dīwān al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt: Ma'a sharḥ wāfir li-Abī Muḥammad al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad b. Bashshār al-Anbārī*, 849-884; al-Ḍabbī, *al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, 421-429.

the poet doesn't shy away from illustrating her vulnerabilities. The mare's "sunken eyes due to exertion" and her sensitivity to "the thought of a whip or the touch of a spur" present a creature that, while powerful, is affected by the demands placed upon her. Through this section, the poet masterfully interweaves themes of strength, vulnerability, human dominion, and the innate sensitivities of the natural world, urging readers to reflect upon the intricate dance of power dynamics, both within the wilderness and human-made landscapes.

The poem by Abū Dhu'ayb al-Hudhalī goes on with these subsequent verses:

55. بَيْنَا تَعْنُقُهُ الْكَمَاءَ وَرَوْغِهِ
يَوْمًا أُتِيحَ لَهُ لَهُ جَرِيءٌ سَلْفَعُ
56. يَغْدُو بِهِ نَهْشُ الْمُشَاشِ كَأَنَّهُ
صَدَعُ سَلِيمٍ رَجْعُهُ لَا يَطْلَعُ
57. فَتَنَادَيْتُمَا وَتَوَافَقْتُمَا
وَكِلَاهُمَا بَطْلُ اللَّقَاءِ مُخَدَعُ
58. مَتَحَامِيئِينَ الْمَجْدِ كُلِّ وَائِثِقُ
بِبِلَائِهِ وَالْيَوْمِ يَوْمِ أَشْنَعُ
59. وَعَلَيْهِمَا مَسْرُودَتَانِ قَضَاهُمَا
دَاوُودُ أَوْ صَنْعُ السَّوَابِغِ نُبْنَعُ
60. وَكِلَاهُمَا فِي كَفِّهِ يَزْنِيَّةٌ
فِيهَا سِنَانٌ كَالْمَنَارَةِ أَصْلَعُ
61. وَكِلَاهُمَا مُنَوِّشِحُ ذَا رَوْنَقِ
عَضْبًا إِذَا مَسَّ الضَّرْبِيَّةَ يَقْطَعُ
62. فَتَخَالَسَا نَفْسَيْهِمَا بِتَوَافِقِ
كَنُوفِ الْعُطْبِ الْيَسِيِّ لَا تُرْقَعُ
63. وَكِلَاهُمَا قَدْ عَاشَ عَيْشَةً مَاجِدِ
وَجَنَى الْعَلَاءِ لَوْ أَنَّ شَيْئًا يَنْفَعُ

"55. While he engages in close combat with enemies, eventually, he is destined to encounter a wide-chested, courageous warrior.

56. He rides a steed as agile as a mountain goat, its pace even and smooth, never stumbling or faltering.

57. Both challenged one another, halting the cavalry of their armies, each a proven champion during confrontations, experienced and wise from many battles.

58. Each fiercely guarding his honor, confident in his own martial prowess, knowing this day to be critical.

59. Both armored in mail, said to be the craftsmanship of the Prophet David or by Tubba', the master artisan of such protective wear.

60. Each bearing in his grip a lance, attributed to Dhū Yazan, its tip compared to the brightness of a lamp, shining prominently.

61. Each brandishing a brilliantly polished sword, so sharp that even a slight touch would sever whatever it encounters.

62. Slyly, they tried to snatch each other's lives with penetrating thrusts, likened to irreparably tearing a flawless garment.

63. Both have lived a life of distinction and have reached the pinnacle of honor, as if anything could truly shield them from the inevitability of death."²⁰

In this climactic segment of the poem, the intricate dance between valor, honor, and the omnipresence of mortality is foregrounded. The narrative thrust of this section is driven by the confrontation between two seasoned warriors, rendering a vivid tableau of battle, legacy, and the transient nature of human glory. At the outset, the deliberate choice to juxtapose two warriors of seemingly equal stature and prowess serves as a symbolic representation of life's inherent duality: strength versus strength, honor against honor. By detailing their respective mounts and armaments, the poet underscores not only their individual might but also the societal value placed on martial excellence. The mention of a steed "as agile as a mountain goat" not only offers vivid imagery but also implies a connection to nature's raw, unbridled power. The reference to the craftsmanship of their armor, either attributed to the Prophet David or Tubba', situates these warriors within a grand historical and perhaps even divine narrative. This intertextual allusion serves a dual purpose: it emphasizes the importance and reverence attached to their protective gear while simultaneously hinting at the timeless nature of warfare, valor, and the pursuit of honor. Similarly, the mention of Dhū Yazan in relation to their lances adds layers of cultural significance and gravitas, underscoring the weight of history and legacy present in their duel.

The depiction of their combat is replete with metaphoric richness. The analogy of their dueling as attempts to "tear a flawless garment" is particular-

²⁰ al-Ḍabbī, *Dīwān al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt: Ma'a sharḥ wāfir li-Abī Muḥammad al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad b. Bashshār al-Anbārī*, 849-884; al-Ḍabbī, *al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, 421-429.

ly evocative, suggesting both the intimate violation of combat and the potential shattering of their hitherto unblemished reputations. The sharpness of their swords, which would “sever whatever it encounters” with a mere touch, reinforces the high stakes of their confrontation while simultaneously hinting at the fragility of life, a theme consistent with earlier portions of the poem. Finally, the poem's culmination in the contemplation of the “inevitability of death” serves as a poignant meditation on mortality. Despite their monumental skills, accolades, and the legacy they've carved, both warriors, like all beings, remain bound by the inexorable cycle of life and death. Their shared vulnerability to fate, despite their distinguished lives, underscores a universal truth: the transient nature of human existence. In essence, this segment of the poem masterfully intertwines the personal and the universal, the historical and the immediate, in its exploration of combat, honor, legacy, and the ever-looming shadow of mortality.

Conclusion

In concluding the exploration of Abū Dhu'ayb al-Hudhalī's poetic oeuvre, it becomes strikingly evident that his works stand as more than mere reflections of a bygone era; they are, in essence, intimate tapestries that capture the intricate interplay between personal experiences and broader socio-cultural dynamics. The elegies, a prominent component of his poetic contributions, do not just serve as laments for the departed but rather function as profound commentaries on life, legacy, and the impermanence of human existence. Abū Dhu'ayb's genius lies not only in his dexterous manipulation of language but also in his astute ability to transform personal grief into universal reflections. Through meticulous analysis, we discern that his elegies are not mere outpourings of sorrow; they are subtly crafted narratives that blend raw emotion with keen observations on human nature, societal values, and the inexorable passage of time. His verses, while rooted in specific events and personal experiences, transcend their immediate context to offer timeless insights into the human condition. Furthermore, al-Hudhalī's life, marked by its own share of tribulations and triumphs, becomes a backdrop against which these elegies acquire deeper resonance. His personal journey, rife with moments of joy, loss, love, and betrayal, lends an authenticity to his verses that few poets achieve. By juxtaposing his life's narrative with his poetic outpour-

ings, we gain a richer understanding of the man behind the verses and the ethos that shaped his creative endeavors.

The cultural and historical milieu of Abū Dhu'ayb's time also plays a pivotal role in shaping the content and form of his elegies. The tribal allegiances, Bedouin traditions, and the overarching value system of honor and reputation permeate his verses, offering readers a window into a world where personal honor was intertwined with communal identity. However, Abū Dhu'ayb's brilliance is manifest in the way he adeptly navigates the cultural norms of his time, seamlessly integrating them into his work. This skill positions his elegies as both a reflection of tradition and a testament to his unique voice within that tradition. In summation, this paper provides a comprehensive study that delves into the depths of a poet's soul, illuminating the multifaceted nature of his works and the world he inhabited. al-Hudhalī's elegies, steeped in raw emotion yet sharpened by astute observations, stand as testaments to the enduring power of poetry to capture the essence of human experience. As we reflect on his contributions, we are reminded of the timeless nature of human emotions and the universal quest for meaning, even in the face of life's fleeting nature.

Including the results of structural analysis, such as the identification of various literary devices employed within the elegies, would undoubtedly enhance the depth of our exploration. Abū Dhu'ayb al-Hudhalī's poetic prowess extends beyond the mere arrangement of words; it encompasses the artful use of metaphor, allegory, and other literary techniques. These elements contribute not only to the aesthetic appeal of his verses but also to the nuanced layers of meaning embedded within them. By recognizing and delving into these structural nuances, we gain a more profound appreciation of his artistry and the deliberate choices he made as a poet. These choices serve as a testament to his ability to convey complex emotions and philosophical ponderings, even within the constraints of classical Arabic poetry. Therefore, as we conclude our study, it is fitting to acknowledge the significance of these structural elements in shaping the elegies and contributing to the enduring legacy of Abū Dhu'ayb's literary works.

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