

## Defective Speech Act

### Translation and Linguistic Analysis of al-'A'shā's Dāliya and Intention

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#### Abstract:

This paper translates and explores the language of a classical text composed by the pre-Islamic poet Maymūn ibn Qays ibn Jandal al-'A'shā (d. 7/629) when he was about to travel to the Prophet to praise him, to perform a transfer of faithfulness to him, and to convert to Islam. From a modern linguistic perspective, the paper explains how this text is an "unhappy/infelicity/void speech act" and "defective" by the linguist John Searle's terminology. It describes how the text is a defective speech act in which the poet fails the condition of completing the ritual performance of the poem before the addressee/the Prophet. It explains how the poem is void/defective due to the circumstance here not being in order and because the act is not performed. Even more critically, the addresser/poet composed the poem with a purpose different from his intention, which is recognizable from the language of the poetry and the anecdote surrounding the poem.

**Keywords:** Speech Act, Intention, Performative Language, Semantic features, Pragmatics.

## قانون الكلام الناقص

## ترجمة وتحليل لغوي لدالية ونية الأعشى

لبنى محمد الشنقيطي، أستاذ مساعد، اللغويات، جامعة الملك عبد العزيز، قسم المواد العامة، كلية الآداب والعلوم الإنسانية، جدة

## الملخص:

تترجم هذه الورقة وتستكشف لغة النص الكلاسيكي الذي ألفه الشاعر الجاهلي ميمون بن قيس بن جندل الأعشى (ت. 629/7) عندما كان على وشك السفر إلى النبي لمدحه، ولتأدية مراسم تغيير الولاء واعتناق الإسلام. وتشرح الورقة من منظور لغوي حديث كيف أن هذا النص "فعل كلامي غير سعيد/غير ملائم/ملغي" و "ناقص" بمصطلح اللغوي جون سيرل. وتصف الورقة كيف أن النص هو فعل كلام ناقص ينقصه شرط استكمال أداء طقوس القصيدة أمام المرسل إليه/النبي. وتشرح كيف أن القصيدة ملغية/ناقصة لأن السياقات غير مرتبة ولأن فعل الكلام لم يتم تنفيذه. والأهم من ذلك، أن المرسل/الشاعر قام بتأليف القصيدة لغرض مختلف عن نيته، والذي يمكن التعرف عليه من لغة الشعر والحكاية المحيطة بالقصيدة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: قانون الكلام، النية، اللغة الأدائية، السمات الدلالية، البراغماتية.

**Introduction:**

Recently there has been growing interest in studying Speech Act Theory, considering the semantic features of the syntactical structure of everyday verbal communication. John Austin and John Searle were among the most well-known 20th-century philosophers discussing the core issue of the theory of “Speech Acts” in pragmatic aspects. A performative utterance has three main elements: a locutionary act, illocutionary acts or force, and perlocutionary acts or consequences.

Austin says:

...we perform a locutionary act, which is roughly equivalent to uttering a certain sentence with a certain sense and reference, which again is roughly equivalent to 'meaning' in the traditional sense. Second, [...] we also perform illocutionary acts such as informing, ordering, warning, undertaking, &c., i.e. utterances which have a certain (conventional) force. Thirdly, we may also perform perlocutionary acts: what we bring about or achieve by saying something, such as convincing, persuading, deterring, and even, say, surprising or misleading.'

In Austin's theory, utterances "would only be considered 'legal,' 'valid,' or 'felicitous' speech acts if the words were uttered at the appropriate time, in the appropriate place and by, and to, the appropriate persons."<sup>1</sup> Rather, if the speaker does not meet these conditions needed<sup>2</sup> for its performance, an utterance will be unhappy. Austin argues if “something *goes wrong* and the act—marrying, betting, bequeathing, christening, or what not—is therefore at least to some extent a failure: the utterance is then, we may say, not false but in general *unhappy*. And for this reason we

<sup>1</sup> John Austin. *How to Do Things with Words*. Edited by J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 109.

<sup>2</sup> Derek Bousfield "Stylistics, Speech Acts and im/politeness Theory," in *The Routledge Handbook of Stylistics*, edit. by Michael Burke (Routledge: New York, 2014), 121.

<sup>3</sup> As explained by Austin these conditions are:

A.1 There must exist an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect, that procedure to include the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances, and further,  
A.2 the particular persons and circumstances in a given case must be appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked.

B.1 The procedure must be executed by all participants both correctly and completely.

(y.1) Where, as often, the procedure is designed for use by persons having certain thoughts or feelings, or for the inauguration of certain consequential conduct on the part of the participant, then a person participating in and so invoking the procedure must in fact have those thoughts or feelings, and the participants must intend so to conduct themselves, and further,

(y.2) must actually so conduct themselves subsequently.

call the doctrine of the things that can be and go wrong on the occasion of such utterance, the doctrine of the *Infelicities*.<sup>4</sup> This notion is similar to what John Searle call "a defect in an illocutionary act" when he says, "in some cases, a condition may indeed be intrinsic to the notion of the act in question and not satisfied in a given case, and yet the act will have been performed nonetheless. In such cases, I say the act was "defective".<sup>5</sup>

For Searle, *illocutionary and propositional acts* are "uttering words in sentences in certain contexts, under certain conditions, and with certain intentions."<sup>6</sup> Perhaps the speaker's intention is the core principle of Searle's theory. In his book *Intentionality: an Essay in the Philosophy of Mind*, Searle discusses the relations between intentions and actions in the semantic parallels and syntactical parallels of the sentences reporting one belief, desire, and intention. He says,

Just as my belief is satisfied if the state of affairs represented by the content of the belief obtains, and my desire is satisfied if the state of affairs represented by the content of the desire comes to pass, so my intention is satisfied if the action represented by the content of the intention is actually performed. If I believe that I will vote for Jones, my belief will be true if I vote for Jones, if I desire to vote for Jones, my desire will be fulfilled if I vote for Jones, and if I intend to vote for Jones my intention will be carried out if I vote for Jones. Besides these 'semantic' parallels, there are also syntactical parallels in the sentences reporting Intentional states. Leaving out the problems of tense, the 'deep structure' of the three sentences reporting my belief, desire, and intention is, respectively,

I believe + I vote for Jones.

I want + I vote for Jones

I intend + I vote for Jones.<sup>7</sup>

Searle says, "an intentional action is simply the realization of the conditions of satisfaction of an intention."<sup>8</sup> For him, this account of "the fulfilled intentional action" only works if one performed specific actions which resulted in the fulfillment of their intentional act. Searle explains, "There are many states of affairs without corresponding beliefs and many states of affairs without

<sup>4</sup> Austin. *How to Do Things with Words*, 14.

<sup>5</sup> John Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 54.

<sup>6</sup> Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*, 25.

<sup>7</sup> Searle, *Intentionality: an Essay in the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 79.

<sup>8</sup> Searle, *Intentionality: an Essay in the Philosophy of Mind*, 80.

corresponding desires, but there are in general no actions without corresponding intentions."<sup>9</sup> It's possible that one can say something and mean it and succeed in communicating the meaning to an addressee without intending to produce a perlocutionary effect.

However, some scholars differentiate between ordinary statements that involve true or false judgment and statements in literature which cannot be judged true or false. For some scholars, the language of poetry is not considered serious but fiction, emotional, or mimicry of the real world. This group might agree with the ancient Greek philosopher Plato's (348/347 BC) critique of poets in his book *The Republic*, in which he accused them of telling lies.<sup>10</sup> However, the English poet and scholar Sir Philip Sidney (d. 1586), in his literary criticism book *Defense of Poesie*, says, "the poet, he nothing affirms and therefore never lieth."<sup>11</sup> Also, Austin, when talking about the literary use of language, says that "Language in such circumstances is in special ways—intelligibly—used not seriously, but in ways parasitic upon its normal use—ways which fall under the doctrine of the etiolations of language."<sup>12</sup> This major separation of poetry from truth is inherited from romanticism.<sup>13</sup> Richard Ohmann (d. 2021) looks at the illocutionary force of literature as mimetic. But he also defines literature with not all its illocutionary force being fictional. Ohmann says, "This is not to say that the works of literature in no way imply the truth of certain proposition; I think it plain, on the contrary, that literature does have cognitive content. But it does not carry that content as an argument does, sentence by sentence, and in fact does not assert its content at all."<sup>14</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, a modern languages and literature professor, regards literary discourse as similar to

<sup>9</sup> Searle, *Intentionality: an Essay in the Philosophy of Mind*, 82.

<sup>10</sup> Plato, *The Republic*, translated by Robin Waterfield (Oxford/New York, 1993)

<sup>11</sup> Philip Sidney, *The Defense of Poesie* (Oxford, 1974).

<sup>12</sup> Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 22.

<sup>13</sup> Alexander Dalzel, *The Criticism of Didactic Poetry: Essays on Lucretius, Virgil, and Ovid*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996) 16.

<sup>14</sup> Richard Ohmann, "Speech Acts and Definition of Literature." *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, Vol. 4, No.1 (1917):1-19, 17.

ordinary speech.<sup>١٥</sup> She says, "while we must be able to treat any single sentence as a single speech act, subject to a given set of appropriateness conditions, we must also be able to view appropriateness conditions as applying at the level of discourse."<sup>١٦</sup> Like this, linguistics, criticism, and stylistics researchers have used the Speech Act theory to analyze the literary text, its literal, implied meaning, and its verbal behavior.<sup>١٧</sup>

Some kinds of poetry interpret the actual event and could include the illocutionary force of declaring an apology, love, changing loyalty, etc. *Madīḥ nabawī* (Prophetic praise), as a distinct genre in Arabic and Islamic literature, is poetry composed to praise the praiseworthy qualities of the Prophet and the religious and historical aspects of his prophethood. This angle of *madīḥ nabawī* discourse accommodates the works of earlier researchers. However, some modern studies shed light on the successful performative *madīḥ nabawī*, which includes praising the Prophet in a ritual supplicatory structured poem in order to do something by it, whether religious, political or personal action, etc.). Modern scholars (such as Suzanne Stetkevych 2010, Al-Amein Alshareif, 2013, and Lubna al-Shanquitiy, 2019),<sup>١٨</sup> when applying speech act to this type of *madīḥ nabawī*, considered the whole poem as one performative utterance. Moreover, they explored that the poets of *madīḥ nabawī* have the poetic position to utter not merely propositional content in praise of the Prophet, but also to utter an illocutionary act of praise that has perlocutionary consequences, such as a conversion and changing of loyalty, achieving forgiveness and intercession in this life and the hereafter, etc.

<sup>١٥</sup> Mary Pratt, *Toward a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), 74.

<sup>١٦</sup> Pratt, *Toward a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse*, 85.

<sup>١٧</sup> See, *The Routledge Handbook of Stylistics*, edit. by Michael Burke (New York: Routledge, 2014)

<sup>١٨</sup> For more about applying speech acts to *madīḥ nabawī*, see Suzanne Stetkevych's *The Mantle Odes: Arabic Praise Poems to the Prophet Muḥammad* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), Al-Amein Alshareif, *Madīḥ Nabawī in al-Andalus: From Rituals to Politics*, Ph.D. diss. (Bloomington: Indiana University: Pro Quest/UMI, 2013), and Lubna al-Shanquitiy, *From the Poetic to the Performative: A Stylistic Analysis of the Language of the Poetic Praise to the Prophet*, Ph.D. diss. (Bloomington: Indiana University: Pro Quest/UMI, 2019).

In her book *The Mantle Odes: Arabic Praise Poems to the Prophet Muḥammad*, S. Stetkevych studies different types of performative *madīḥ nabawī* poems: First, a *madīḥ nabawī* poem by the pre-Islamic Ka‘b Ibn Zuhayr's (d. 26/646) (Su‘ād Has Departed) performed directly before the Prophet— and the poem is a successful performative supplicatory utterance in interior structure, usage, and performance. As a result, the Prophet bestowed to Ka‘b his actual *burda* (mantle) as a symbol of forgiveness and acceptance of his conversion to Islam. Then, she examines two *madīḥ nabawī* poems composed after the death of the addressee/the Prophet, which includes the supplicatory pattern as Ka‘b Ibn Zuhayr poem, al-Burda (the Mantle Ode) by the Mamlūk-period poet Sharaf al-Dīn al-Būṣīrī's (d. 694/1294) and Nahj al-Burda (The Way of the Mantle) by the Egyptian new classical poet Aḥmad Shawqī's (d. 1351/1932). The two poets hope that the poem has a perlocutionary consequence, as an effective communication with the Prophet, and results in a reply in this life or the hereafter, “the Prophet’s intersection on Judgment Day.” Almost no studies have focused on discussing a third type of *madīḥ nabawī* composed during the life of the Prophet, and a poem with some performative features in interior structure but not in usage. The poet did not perform it before the addressee, or the intention of his performative utterance was insincere. As a result, the performative aspects of the poem and its performance are defective illocutionary acts.<sup>19</sup>

With these points in mind, this paper translates and analyzes a *madīḥ nabawī* poem (24 lines) by the pre-Islamic poet Maymūn ibn Qays ibn Jandal al-‘A‘shā (d. 7/629) written during the lifetime of the Prophet. He composed the praise to the Prophet when he was about to travel to the Prophet and convert to Islam. I will argue that the language of this poem is different from other

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<sup>19</sup> A defective speech act is "an illocutionary act, whether successful or unsuccessful, in which one or more of the preparatory or sincerity conditions for the act are not met." For example, "A lie or insincere promise, in which the act itself is defective even if the statement or promise is successfully made". *Glossary of Linguistic Terms*. Retrieved from: <https://glossary.sil.org/term/defective-illocutionary-act>

performative *madīh nabawī* poems for two reasons: (1) it is a defective speech act or incomplete speech act because the poet could not complete the ritual performance of the poem before the addressee/the Prophet; (2) The speaker/the poet composed the poem with an intention different from his intention in action, which is recognizable from the language of the poem. The argument will show that although the poem includes some elements of the ritual performance and spiritual communication features of the successful performative *madīh nabawī* poems, the poet could almost have succeeded and had an impact on the addressee/the Prophet to recognize his intention and communication. Still, he failed to produce the desired perlocutionary consequence of "pardon and accept his conversion and change in loyalty." In other words, the analysis of the following poem by al-'A'shā will explore that this poem, on the surface, is performative prophetic praise composed with the desire to express a change in the poet's loyalty and belief. However, on a deeper level, it is defective illocutionary act because the conditions for satisfaction of the poet's intention are not fulfilled, so his action of performing the poem is incomplete. Thus, the poem, to use Austin and Searle's theory, is a defective speech act or unsuccessful performance of a speech act.

**Al-'A'shā's "Have Your Bleary Eyes Not Closed in a Dirty (dark) Night":**

- 1) Have your bleary eyes not closed on a (dark) night?  
And have you not passed that night sleepless, suffering the pain of a snake-bit man?
- 2) And that was not because of adoring women  
but trying to forget the companions of Mahdada!
- 3) But I see Time as the one who is a traitor,  
whatever my hands build, it comes to ruin it
- 4) youth and age, poorness and wealthiness  
Oh, for Allāh, how this Time is wavering?!
- 5) And I have not ceased seeking money since I was a young man,  
[as] a child, and [in] maturity when I became white-haired and [when I was] hairless.



- 6) I used to [voyage with] the swift she-camels closing  
the distance between al-Njēr and Sarqada.
- 7) No doubt! O, who asks where she is heading?  
Indeed, she has an appointment with the people of Yathrib.<sup>٢٠</sup>
- 8) But if you ask about me, O perhaps an inquirer  
gracious to al-'A 'shā's [from] wherever he leaves.
- 9) She runs on two feet over the highland and holds back,  
then flaps her front hooves smoothly with no anger,
- 10) And she, whenever she goes [at] mid-day, is speedily running,  
so you would think she is a chameleon with a slashed neck at noon.
- 11) I swore I would not care about her tiredness  
nor her hoof-soreness until she meets with Muḥammad.
- 12) When she arrives at the door of ibn Hāshim,  
she will rest and receive the generosity of his virtue.
- 13) A Prophet who can see what you cannot see and whose fame,  
by my life, [prevails] in the nation's valleys and plateaus.
- 14) He has charities and favor comes every other day,  
and the giving of today is not stopping that of tomorrow.
- 15) By your grandfather, did you not hear the word of Muḥammad,  
the Prophet of God, where he preaches and attests that:

<sup>٢٠</sup> Ismā'īl ibn kathīr says regarding this line,

Ibn Hisham, May God have mercy on him, criticized [Ibn Ishāq's narration], saying that the intoxicants had been forbidden in Madīna after Ibn al-Nazīr's event, as we will narrate later, but it is obvious that when al-'A 'shā'a determined he would come to the Prophet to announce his conversion to Islam was after the Hijra. In his poetry it is evident when he says,

No doubt! O, who asks where she is heading?

Indeed, she has an appointment with the people of Yathrib.

Al-Suhailī said: This is an inattention of Ibn Hisham and those who followed him. It was more appropriate for Ibn Hisham to postpone this story until after the Hijra and shouldn't have brought it here, and God knows the best. The people unanimously agreed that intoxicants had not been revealed as prohibited except in Madīna after 'Uhud [battle].

Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāya wa-al-Nihāya fī al-Tarīkh*. (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1986), 3:102.

- 16) If you did not travel with the provision of piety  
and you find out after death who received provisions,
- 17) you will regret not being like him,  
preparing for what he had prepared.
- 18) So, avoid going near the lies,  
and do not take an iron arrow for bloodletting,
- 19) and [when you are at] the installed altars, do not worship them,  
and do not worship the idols but worship God.
- 20) Do not approach a neighbor woman forbidden for you.  
Get married or forsake women forever.
- 21) And do not cut off the relationship with your kin for [any] end,  
and do not cut off ties with] the captive one.
- 22) Glorify [God] in the evening and the morn,  
and do not thank evil, but thank God.
- 23) Do not ridicule the miserable one who is afflicted,  
and do not think that money will abide forever.<sup>١١</sup>

It is essential to introduce the anecdotal and historical context of the al-'A'shā poem as given in Islamic historical sources to gain a better understanding of the direct performative and performance aspects of the language of a *madīḥ nabawī* in this poem. The authentic Arabic historical and literary sources, including *the Sīra* (biography of the Prophet), recount the story of al-'A'shā's poem as one of the prophetic praises composed during the life of the Prophet.

Moreover, the story of the poem has a devoted chapter in biographer and historian Abū Muḥammad 'Abd al-Malik ibn Hisham's (d. 218/833) *al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya, The Life of The*

<sup>١١</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa-al-Nihāya fī al-Tarīkh*, 3:102. The translations of the Arabic texts are mine unless otherwise noted. The whole poem reached us through the four prominent narrators: Tha'lab (d. 291H/?), Ibn Hisham in *al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya*, (d. 218/833), Muḥammad Ibn Ḥabīb (d. 245H/?), and Abū 'Amr al-Shaibanī in *Jamharat Al-Islām* (206H/?).

*Prophet*, (The Matter of al-'A'shā Ibn Qayys ibn Tha'laba, "His poetry praising the Prophet and his arrival to him"). Ibn Hishām recounts:

Khallād bin Qurra ibn Khālid Alsaddūsī narrated to me and others of Bakr bin Wā'il's sheiks from the scholars that A'shā bin Qaīs bin Tha'laba bin 'Uqāba bin Sa'b bin 'Alī bin Bakr bin Wā'il took a journey to the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, and wanted Islam. He said for that, a praise to the Prophet, peace be upon him.

Then ibn Hishām narrates the 24 lines of al-'A'sha's poem.

Ibn Kathīr in *al-Bidāya wa-al-Nihāya fī al-Tarīkh* has narrated ibn Hishām's narration as follows:

When he [al-'A'shā] was in Mecca— or close to it— some polytheists from Quraysh objected to him. No one asked him about his master, and he [al-'A'shā] told them that he came to want the Messenger of God, peace be upon him, and announce Islam.

He [polytheist from Quraysh] said to him: O Abū Basir, he [the Prophet] forbids adultery.

Al-'A'shā said: By God, that is a matter I do not desire.

He said [polytheist from Quraysh]: O Abū Basir, he [the Prophet] forbids intoxicants.

Al-'A'shā said: As for this, I swear by God, my soul desires additional drinks from it, but I'm leaving [now] to quench my thirst from it in this year, then I will come [next year] to him [the Prophet] to announce Islam.

So, [Ibn Hisham further narrated] he left, died in his year, and did not return to the Prophet.<sup>11</sup>

The details of this story are narrated in the Kitāb al-Aghānī (Book of Song) by the celebrated Abū al-Farag Iṣbahānī (d. 356 H./967 C.E), saying,

Hāishim ibn al-Qāsim al-Ghannawī said, and he was a great scholar, that al-'Ashā came to the Messenger and praised him with the poem that started with

(Have your bleary eyes not closed on a (dark) night?  
and have you not passed that night sleepless, suffering the pain of a snake-bit man?)  
(And that was not because of adoring women  
but trying to forget the companions of Mahdada!)

and from it when he said to his she-camel:

(I swore I would not care about her tiredness  
nor her hoof-soreness until she meets with Muhammed.)  
(When she arrives at the door of Ibn Hāshim,  
she will rest and receive the generosity of his virtue.)

So, his story reached Quraysh. Then they watched him on his way and said, "That is Sanājat al-'Arab (the best poet of the Arabs), and he never praised anyone before but raised his value." When he [al-'A'shā's] came to them, they said to him, "Where are you heading, O father of Basir?" He replied, "I meant this friend of yours to be a Muslim." They said, "he [the Prophet] warns you from some merits and forbids you to do them. All of which are useful for you and are compatible with you." He said,

<sup>11</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāya wa-al-Nihāya fī al-Tarīkh*, 3:102.

“What are they?” Abū Sufyān ibn Ḥarb said, “Adultery”; he [al-ʿAʿshāʿs] replied, “Adultery left me, and I did not leave it. Then what?” [said al-ʿAʿshāʿs]; “Gambling,” [replied Abū Sufyān]. “Perhaps when I meet him, I will gain from him something better than gambling,” [answered al-ʿAʿshāʿs]. “Then what?” [said al-ʿAʿshāʿs]; they said, “Usury”; “I never asked for a loan nor lent anyone,” [a replied l-ʿAʿshā]. “Then what?”; they said, “Alcohol”; “Oh, I will go back to drink a shot that I left in al-Mihrās,” [A place in the Yamamma from the houses of al-ʿAʿshāʿs] [replied al-ʿAʿshāʿs]. Then Abū Sufyān said to him, “Do you have anything better than what you are interested in?” He [al-ʿAʿshāʿs] said, “What is it?” “We and him are now in a truce, so you take a hundred camels and return to your country this year and see what will happen to our matter. If we triumph over him, you come back; if he triumphs over us, you can go to him.” [Abū Sufyān] “I do not dislike that,” [said al-ʿAʿshāʿs]. Then Abū Sufyān said, “O people of Quraysh, this is al-ʿAʿshā. By God, if he goes to Muḥammad and follows him, he will blaze the Arabs' fire with his poetry. Gather a hundred camels for him.” They did, and he took them and set off to his home. When he was at the land of Manfūḥa, his camel threw him and killed him.<sup>٧٧</sup>

According to Richard Bauman saying, "the emergent quality of the performance resides in the interplay between communicative resources, individual competence, and the goals of the participant, within the context of particular situations."<sup>٧٨</sup> In al-ʿAʿshāʿs situation, he was in Mecca (a polytheist country), and he had to immigrate from Mecca to Madīna (the addressee/the Prophet's polity). He also was obligated to perform his conversion before the Prophet to complete his conversion to Islam and his supplicatory poem performance. The above narration demonstrates the intention in an action of al-ʿAʿshāʿs prior composing the poem; that is, the journey to the Prophet to perform his conversion and praising him to seek the Prophet's loyalty and acceptance. However, we understand from the narration that the poet did not complete his journey. This incomplete journey makes the poem different from the famous poetry of conversion. For example, the two poems by *mukhaḍram's* (Mave) poets, ʿAbdullāh ibn al-Zibiʿrā's (d. 15/636) "Anxieties and Worries Stop [my] Sleep" and Kaʿb's ("Suʿād Has Departed"), were composed by poets who completed the ritual ceremony of the poem through making an actual journey to the Prophet and presenting verses before the Prophet.<sup>٧٩</sup> So, using Searle's theory of Intentionality, al-ʿAʿshāʿs

<sup>٧٧</sup> Al-Iṣbahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, 9:127.

<sup>٧٨</sup> Richard Bauman, *Verbal Art as Performance* (Illinois: Waveland Press, 1984), 38.

<sup>٧٩</sup> The stories of ibn al-Zibiʿrā's and Kaʿb ibn al-Zibiʿrā's conversions, and their poems, are narrated by the classical historical and religious scholars, such as the historian and hagiographer Muḥammad ibn Ishāq (d. 151/768) and the Egyptian scholar Abū

intentional act of composing the poem to do the act of conversion failed the conditions of satisfaction of an intention. Respecting the above argument and theories, I will now closely analyze the poetic texts.

**Prelude: al-'A'shā's State with Fate:** (lines 1-8)

Unlike other poems' preludes, which he usually initiates with the erotic description of a beloved (Tashbīb) or a wine prelude (khamrī), including depictions of its assembly, utensils, and colors, and its effect on souls,<sup>١٦</sup> al-'A'shā initiates this *madīḥ nabawī* poem with a unique tone and style which reveals features of intentional action for his utterance. In this way, al-'A'shā uses a new poetic style and different words in his intro to express a new desire and state of belief. This indicates that he not only intended to change from the pre-Islamic Jāhiliyya faith to Islam, but also from its well-known premises, subjects, and styles to new ones.

The language employed in the opening lines is communicational. For example, to use Searle's classification of illocutionary acts, line one is expressive. Searle's expressive categorization includes "speech acts by which the speaker or producer communicates (or attempts to communicate) or expresses the speaker's emotions and/or attitudes towards the main proposition. Such utterances might be thanks, excuses, explanations, and congratulations."<sup>١٧</sup> In this case, the poet laments a new illness that prevents him from calmly sleeping at night. Trosborg says, "The speech act complaint belongs to the category of expressive functions. This category

Muḥammad 'Abd al-Malik ibn Hishām (d. 213/828). See, Ibn Ishāq *the Sīra of ibn Ishāq*, ed. Suḥāil Zakār (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1978), Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya*, edited by Muḥstafa al-Ḥalbaī tafa al-Saqqa, Ibrahim al-Abyari and Abd al-Hafidh al-Shalabi (Cairo: Maktabat wa Matba'at Muḥstafa al-Ḥalbaī wa Awlādih, 1955), 418-420, Abī Jafar Muḥammad ibn Jarīr Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh al-Rusul wa-al-Mulūk wa Ṣilat Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī/ li-'Arīb ibn Sa'd al-Qurṭubī*. (Beirut: Dār al-Turāth, 1967), 3:64 and S. Stetkevych, *The Mantle Odes*, 35.

<sup>١٦</sup> Abū al-Farag Iṣbahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, second edition (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr) 9:127 and Shawqī Ḍayf, *Tārīkh al-'Adab al-'Arabī, al-'Aṣr al-Jāhili* (al-Qāhira: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 2017), 1:355, 357.

<sup>١٧</sup> Bousfield, "Stylistics, Speech Acts and im/politeness Theory", 119.

includes moral judgments which express the speaker's approval as well as disapproval of the behavior mentioned in the judgment."<sup>٧٨</sup>

So, al-'A'shā's opening line reflects his dissatisfaction with unknown conditions. For example, it can be understood from employing *ḥarf al-istifhām* (interrogative particle) with *ḥarf al-jazm* (jussive particle) "*lā*" that he expresses an answer of internal dialogue for negating a non-expected act. Although the context of the poem is *madīḥ nabawī* (Prophetic praise), the implied pronoun "you" is not intended to refer to the addressee (the Prophet) in this introduction because the Prophet is excluded from this indication of his suffering in the context of praising him. Therefore, the semantic and syntactical meaning of the implied addressee in this opening line refers to the poet addressing himself to express suffering from an unexpected condition. Al-'A'shā describes himself using the second person pronoun "you," which is a way of communicating with the self in classical poetry and can be understood only in the context of the sentence. According to Mustafa BinMayaba,

Classical poets were accustomed to referring to themselves by the pronoun "you" in different poetic themes (*aghrād*), such as erotic poetry (*ghazal*), self-praise (*fakhr*), etc. Yet, this deixis, from the point of view of pragmatics, cannot be fully understood without additional contextual information. In erotic poetry, for instance, the context supports the classical interpretation of the pronoun "you" to mean "I," the poet himself, when depicting his suffering from love and separation from the beloved. However, the context of a panegyric ode recited before the patron makes it possible for the addressee (the patron) to interpret the pronoun "you" as if the poet were addressing him directly."<sup>٧٩</sup>

Here, the second person pronoun "you" is vital in communicating indirectly to the addressee the complaint that the poet passed the night before meeting the addressee/the Prophet as restless as the wounded one (line 1).

<sup>٧٨</sup> Trosborg, *Interlanguage Pragmatics: Requests, Complaints, and Apologies*, 311.

<sup>٧٩</sup> Mustafā BinMayaba, "From Expulsion to Readmission: Ibn 'Abī Ḥafṣa's Rhetorical Technique at the 'Abbāsīd Court", *J AIS* • 15 (2015): 93-116: 98.

The language in lines 2-3 shifts to the *representative* type of illocutionary act. *Representative* is one of the six types in Searle's classification of illocutionary acts. Bousfield says, "these are speech acts via which the speaker or producer expresses or communicates their beliefs. The speaker represents their understanding of the world or reality in some way. E.g. 'My wife and I went to see our friends for a meal last night. They were in good spirits.'"<sup>٢٠</sup> Lines 2-3 represent the poet's understanding of the reality of his new situation and give a justifiable reason for this new status. For example, the poet replies to the question in line 1, rejecting a predictable suspicion of love behind his condition by using *uslūb al-qaṣar bi al-naft wa al-'istthnā'* (a restriction method by negation and exclusion) in *wamā ... wa 'innama ...* (that was not because of ... but...) (line 2) and *al-qaṣar bi al-'atf bi lākin* (the restriction using the conjunction "but") (line 3). This grammatical structure proves the denial of the aforementioned assumption, negates it, and confirms what follows.<sup>٢١</sup> The philologist Aḥmad ibn Fāris (d. 395/1004) points out what al-Farā' said regarding using *'inamā* "but" with negation and exclusion:

...it never comes but as a response. It means that you are saying "*mā 'anta 'illā 'akhī*" ("not you (are) but my brother") and "*'innmā qāma 'anā*" ("the one who stood up was me"). This is not a start [of an utterance] but rather a response to another. As if he had claimed that he was a brother, supporter, or any other, he denied that and acknowledged the brotherhood. Or if a claimer contended that there were things you did except standing, and you denied them all except for standing up.<sup>٢٢</sup>

Expressly, line 2 represents al-'A'shā's answer of refusal to what everyone may think of his new condition. The expression "*wamā dhāka ... wa 'innamā*" (not because) is a speech act of refusal,<sup>٢٣</sup> since it contains a direct non-performative word of denial, *mā* "not," in response to the likely suggestion of others who may say to the poet: "So your condition is because of worldly passions?"

<sup>٢٠</sup> Bousfield, "Stylistics, speech acts and im/politeness theory", 119 and Pratt, *Toward a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse*, 81.

<sup>٢١</sup> Ya'īsh ibn 'Alī ibn Ya'īsh, *Sharḥ al-Muḥṣṣil lil al-Shmūnī* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīya, 2001), 4:522.

<sup>٢٢</sup> Aḥmad Ibn Fāris, *al-Ṣāhibī fi Fiḥ al-Lugha wa-Sanan al-'Arab fi Kalāmihā*, (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyā, 1997), 93.

<sup>٢٣</sup> Susan M. Gass and Noël Houck, *Interlanguage Refusals: A Cross-cultural Study of Japanese-English* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1999) 2.

Susan M. Gass and Noël Houck say, "a refusal is generally considered a speech act by which a speaker 'denies to engage in an action proposed by the interlocutor' [...] Refusals are one of a relatively small number of speech acts which can be characterized as a response to another's act (e.g., to a request, invitation, offer, suggestion), rather than as an act initiated by the speaker."<sup>٢٤</sup> They go on to say, "Non-accepts can be expressed as a refusal, a postponement, or the proposal of an alternative."<sup>٢٥</sup> So, line 2 is the poet's proposed alternative or non-accepting answer to this predictable point of view, as if he responds with, "that's a valid point, but I interpret it differently." Also, line 2 evokes the poet's non-acceptance that love is the reason for his condition, since he had forgotten the relationship between him and his beloved (Mahdad). Moreover, line three serves as the Final Outcome of the poet/Respondent's contribution, explaining that his condition is because of what he has gotten out of his knowledge about Fate (line 3). Gass and Houck explain, "The Final Outcome refers to the resolution of the interaction, the status of the action (or nonaction) by the respondent that is in force at the end of the interaction [...] The Final Outcome can be acceptance (complete or conditional), refusal postponement, or an alternative action or compromise by the respondent."<sup>٢٦</sup> To strengthen the denial of the poet in line 2, in line 3 he uses the connective particle *wa lākin*, which rarely appears except after negation and denial.<sup>٢٧</sup> Though, the denial of doing something could be an affirmative of what is being denied.

However, in lines 3-4, the poet uses intensive representative language to give explicit evidence that Fate is the reason for his condition. For instance, to vindicate the meaning of his condition, which is not because of illness nor love, al-'A' shā employs metaphorical language in

<sup>٢٤</sup> Gass and Houck, *Interlanguage Refusals*, 2

<sup>٢٥</sup> Gass and Houck, *Interlanguage Refusals*, 3.

<sup>٢٦</sup> Gass and Houck, *Interlanguage Refusals*, 4.

<sup>٢٧</sup> Ibn Fāris, *al-Ṣāhibī fī Fiqh al-Lughā wa-Sanan al-'Arab fī Kalāmihā*, 125.



line 3, likening Fate to a treacherous person who has hands that spoil what the poet makes in life. In contrast, he compares himself to an actively good person who continues to fix things that Fate spoils (lines 3-4). Moreover, the swear "*fa li-llāhi* (for Allāh) in line 4 represents the poet's condemnation of Fate as the reason for the state of opposites that have happened in his life. On the one hand, he depicts how Fate made him fluctuate between middle-age and youth, wealth and poverty (in line 4).

On the other hand, Fate gave him the passion to continue to seek money, wealth, and companionship, and the ability to travel the distance between al-Njjēr and Sarkhad to praise masters of the past, present and future (lines 5-6). Thus, this opening section reveals that the poet was not responsible for his past behaviors, but instead the traitor Fate is to blame. In other words, to avoid misinterpretation by the addressee, al-'A'shā blames Fate, implying that he did not have control over his past destructive behaviors. Still, he is not ashamed of some of his past behaviors, such as voyaging to ask for money and gifts with his poetry.

Overall, the opening lines have some features of the classical panegyric *nasīb*, such as lamenting the past and the present suffering. However, the poem does not include any self-abasement, the first element of the supplicatory structure of most *madīḥ nabawī* poems. According to S. Stetkevych, "an essential element of the self-abasement is the poet's expression of fear and hope, that is, his throwing himself upon the mercy of the formidable *mamdūh*."<sup>٢٤</sup> Al-'Ashā's introduction reflects the feeling that the poet's intention is insincere, and he is not serious about supplication for conversion through the poem's utterance, because it includes the opposite of self-abasement and a confession of sins, which are essential acts for a supplication.

<sup>٢٤</sup> For more about the three elements of the supplicatory structure of the *madīḥ nabawī* poem, which are lyric-elegiac prelude (*nasīb*), self-abasement and submission, and supplication, see S. Stetkevych, *The Mantle Odes*, 14.

Additionally, lines 5-6 are transitional lines to introduce the poet's purpose. To vindicate his approach in his past and continue into the future, al-'A'shā uses the present verbs *wamā ziltū* (and I have not ceased) (line 6) and *abtadhilu* (I used to). This grammatical construction hints at the poet's "worldly practices" and expresses that he did not cut himself from the past to move toward a different future. Shawqī Dayf points out,

As for the praise, they (critics) said that he was the first to ask with his poetry and beg with his poetry, and take it to shop with as he voyaged around nations, and indeed, the poet was preceded with praise like Zahir and Al Nabigha. However, none of them took to their knees in beggary and asked for money [by the poetry], as al-'A'shā did. He roamed the borders of the Arabian Peninsula, praising the masters and leaders, mentioning all they flooded to him, including she-camels, horses, enslaved people, silver sheets, and clothes. In the meantime, he said that he would ask and was not to be ashamed of himself.<sup>٢٤</sup>

So, it can be understood that lines 5-6 declare his intention of journeying to the *mamdūh*/the Prophet, that is, to pursue not only spiritual matters but also more importantly, "material" from the most generous person, the Prophet.

The language used to close the section is communicational and is built on the referential function, and as Roman Jakobson says, "focuses primarily on the information of the context."<sup>٢٥</sup>

For example, when the poet says, "*'Alā 'ayu hādha al-sā'ilī 'ayīna yammamat*" (No doubt! O who asks where she [she-camel] is headed?) (line 7) he refers to the incident that happened between him and the people of Quraysh. They watched him on his way to the Prophet, aiming to perform this poem, and questioned him about his destination. So the second hemistich of line 7 refers to al-'A'shā's answer to their question, as he declares the destination of his she-camel is to the people of Yathrib (Madīna), the place of the *mamdūh*/the Prophet.

### **The Description of the She-Camel: (lines 9-12)**

<sup>٢٤</sup> Shawqī Dayf, *Tarīkh al-'Adab al-'Arabī, al-'Aṣr al-Jāhilī*, 1:348.

<sup>٢٥</sup> Roman Jakobson, "Linguistics and Poetics," in *Language in Literature*, ed. Krystyna Pomorska and Stephen Rudy (London: Harvard University Press, 1987), 66-71.

The poet begins the journey by evoking the description of the running of his she-camel, who crosses the highlands swiftly with solid hooves, and as if she runs with her legs and on her two back hooves because he tightens her loop and does not pity her (line 9). She is proudly and tirelessly running at midday like a chameleon with a slashed neck at noon (line 10).

Then, the poet ends his description of this journey in lines 11-12 with the use of the speech act swearing (*Ālaytu*) to express that he does not care about the she-camel's tiredness and hoof-soreness because he is confident that she will get to rest at the door of the *mamdūh*/Muḥammad/Ibn Hāshim (lines 11-12). The performative utterance of swearing in the construction of the journey lines is what Searle calls representative. Pratt explains that representative acts are illocutionary acts "that undertake to represent a state of affairs, whether past, present, future, or hypothetical, e.g., stating, claiming, hypothesizing, describing, predicting, telling, insisting, suggesting, or swearing that something is the case."<sup>41</sup> Thus, the poet uses a performative utterance of swearing to express his wish to meet and communicate with the *mamdūh*/Muḥammad in order to deliver the poem and receive some of his generosity and virtue.

Additionally, the poet's declaration that he will not rest his she-camel until she descends into the yard of the noble addressee/*mamdūh*/Ibn Hāshim, who will inevitably honor her with his good manners and refreshment, is a demonstration of what the poet hopes from the addressee. Also, by stating the specific name and title, Muḥammad/Ibn Hāshim confirms the addressee's name (the Prophet Muḥammad ibn Hāshim) with the poet's intention in action, whom he aims to address with this praise. So line 12 is a transition line that links the journey section with the following theme, the praise of the Prophet and his message.

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<sup>41</sup> Pratt, *Toward a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse*, 81.

**The Prophetic Praise and the Assertion of the Prophet's Message and Legislation:** (lines 13-23)

In this section, the poetic language does not employ complex rhetorical constructions to perform praise (poetic function). Yet, a direct speech addressed to two different addressees, the Prophet, and the *mushrkīn* (polytheists), makes the poem focus on the addressee's response and ideas (the conative function). Based on the findings of Jakobson, the conative function focuses on the addressee's response.<sup>٤٧</sup> To illustrate, the discourse in this section can be divided into three parts: (1) direct praise addressed to the Prophet (lines 13-14); (2) advice preparing for death addressed to the *mushrkīn* (polytheists) (lines 15-17); and (3) criticism of pre-Islamic practice addressed to the *mushrkīn* (polytheists) (lines 18-23). However, the Prophet is free of any blame or wrongdoing, so the second and third parts imply indirect praise to the Prophet and his message and legislation. The mere mention of denouncing the actions and beliefs of the polytheists is an admission and admiration from the poet of the authenticity of the Prophet's message and laws.

*Part One: Direct praise to the Prophet (lines 13-14):*

The poet in this part praises the Prophet by recounting his distinct attributes, which God gives him: the revelation, message, and prophethood. Then he uses examples of the Prophet Muḥammad's miracles from the Prophet's lifetime as proof of his prophethood. He begins by praising the Prophet for not being like other people (who can see what you cannot see) (line 13), expressing the Prophet's superhuman power.<sup>٤٧</sup> The miracle of seeing what is behind him as if it were in front, is mentioned in the *ḥadīth* narrated by Abū Hurayra, who says that the Messenger of God, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "Do you see me facing my Qibla there! By God, your bowing and

<sup>٤٧</sup> Jakobson "Linguistics and Poetics," 66-71.

<sup>٤٧</sup> This miracle is narrated by 'Ā'isha and Ibn 'Abbās. See, Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Ṣāliḥī al-Shāmī, *Subul al-Hudā wa-al-Rashād fī Sīrat Khayr al-'Ibād* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīya, 1993), 2/24.

your prostrating are not hidden from my view. Indeed, I see you behind my back."<sup>٤٤</sup> Bringing up this miracle in this last section of the poem evokes the Prophet's supernatural power to respond to the requester, regardless of his location or condition.

Then, the poet praises the Prophet's good qualities, and he evokes that his remembrance fills all the countries in the Arabian Peninsula and all the parts of the world, east and west (the nation's valleys and plateaus) (line 13). He describes two reasons for the good reputation of the Prophet; his generosity and charity are plentiful, and he is permanently giving all the time and not at intervals (line 14). Indeed, the intense focus on the Prophet's ability to give in the use of the words *ṣadaqāt* (charities), *nā'il* (favors), and *'atā'* (bid) after praising his remembrance in all the nations in lines 13-14 reflects al-'A'sha's style of being obsessed with glorifying gift-giving, and traveling to seek it. As explained by al-Aṣbahānī, "it is said that he was the first to ask with his poetry and resort to it in a faraway country. And they used to sing his poetry, so the Arabs used to call him Ṣanājat al-'Arab (the Singer of the Arabs)."<sup>٤٥</sup> Not surprisingly, the poet chooses among the attributes of the Prophet to emphasize the "giving", which is, to some extent, the only matter that interests him, in that he continually strives for it, and makes journeys for it.

Furthermore, hinting at the Prophet's ability to "give" confirms al-'A'sha's intention in action to compose the poem as part of his journey to praise the most generous *mamdūh*/the Prophet, in hopes of exchanging the poem for a counter-gift and obtaining gifts from his generosity. S. Stetkevych explains this conventional poetic practice by applying Marcel Mauss's formulation of archaic gift exchange to classical poetry, saying it "is fully applicable to the ritual exchange of

<sup>٤٤</sup> Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj Al-Naysābūrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (Riyadh: Dār Ṭayba, 2006) book 4, *ḥadīth* 424, 202.

<sup>٤٥</sup> Al-Iṣbahānī, *Kitāb Al-Aghānī*, 9:129.

poem for the prize that is characteristic of Arabic praise poetry—whether a court or tribal panegyric or Prophetic praise."<sup>٤٦</sup>

This interpretation supports the anecdote accompanying the poem [mentioned above], which notes when al-'A'shā found generosity with the people of Mecca, he was satisfied with it. He returned without completing his journey to the Prophet to recite this poem to him and change his loyalty. As Mubārak says regarding al-'A'shā's poem, "But this is not a type of prophetic praise [...] because al-'A'shā did not say this poetry as if he was sincere in intending to praise the Messenger. It was not an honest effort by which he wanted to draw close to the Prophet of Islam, and the sign for that is that he returned when the Quraysh dismissed him, and if he were honest, he would not have converted."<sup>٤٧</sup>

*Part Two: Advice preparing for death addressed to the al-mushrkīn (polytheists) (lines 15-17):*

After mentioning the unique characteristics of the *mamdūh*/the Prophet, al-'A'shā praises the Prophet's message and legislation for the Umma (community). When he says, "By your grandfather did you not hear the word of Muḥammad" (line 15), al-'A'shā addresses the audience with the third person plural pronoun "you" to refer to the people of Quraysh who do not know the Prophet's message and legislation. So, to prove that the Prophet is God's Messenger and that his message rejects the pre-Islamic practices, al-'A'shā bases his speech on al-Qur'ān verses and anecdotes of those who praised the Prophet before him.

The poet employs some Qur'ānic expressions and patterns, such as using the phrase *zād min al-tuqā* (the provision of piety) with the verb *tazauda* (provisions) in line 16. These

<sup>٤٦</sup> S. Stetkevych, *The Mantle Odes*, 6. See Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. Ian Cunnison (New York: Norton and Co., 1967); S. Stetkevych, *The Poetics of Islamic Legitimacy: Myth, Gender, and Ceremony in the Classical Arabic Ode*, 18; and Al-Mallah, "Doing Things with Odes: A Poet's Pledges of Allegiance: Ibn Darrāj al-Qasṭallī's "Hā'iyah" to al-Mundhir," 45-81.

<sup>٤٧</sup> Mubārak, *al-Madā'ih al-Nabawīyya fī al-'Adab al-'Arabī*, 19.

expressions are taken from the Qur'ānic verse, *wa-tazawwadū fa-'inna khayra al-zādi al-taqwā* (And take provision; but the best provision is godfearing,) (al-Qur'ān 2:197).<sup>4^</sup> Also, *faturşid lil mawt allādhhi* with *kāna arşada* (line 17) brings to mind the Qur'ānic verses, *'inna jahannama kānat mirşāda*, (Behold, Gehenna has become an ambush) (al-Qur'ān 78:21) and *'inna rabbaka la-bi al-mirşād*, (surely thy Lord is ever on the watch) (al-Qur'ān 89:14). The language used in this part can be considered as both Searle's assertive and directive speech acts. Bousfield explains,

#### Assertives

Those types of speech acts that commit a speaker to the truth of the central proposition. Examples would include repeating an idiomatic lesson, e.g., reciting a statement of faith, belief or prayer, or asserting a lay or legal belief about how the world, society, or culture works. E.g., 'It is illegal to drink and drive.'

#### Directives

These are speech acts which cause, or are uttered in an attempt to cause, the hearer (or rather, the main recipient) to take a particular course of action. Prototypical speech acts of this type include requests, advice, commands, and, crucially for us, conditional threats (as in, if you do/ don't do Act a, I will perform Act b, which is detrimental to you).<sup>4^</sup>

The language used by the poet is assertive in telling the *mushrkīn* (polytheists) how things are in Islam. On a deeper level, it is a directive language that tries to get them to do something in this world. For example, he uses more than one expression of emphasis (*mu'akkidāt*) in line 16: the present verb *al-fi'il al-mudāri'*, in "*faturşid lil mawt*"; the demonstrative pronoun *allādhhi* with the auxiliary verb *kāna*, in "*alladhī kāna*"; and the *maşḍār* (infinitive), in "*arşada*" (surely ever watchful) to emphasize the outcome if they do not prepare in this life for the afterlife. It is a method to direct people to the act of preparing for death. Also, he uses the conditional clause in lines 16-17, "If you do not do... you will," to demonstrate the outcome. This is also an indirect command as if the poet is asking the *mushrkīn* (polytheists) to perform sincere piety to God's words and

<sup>4^</sup> I use for the translation of the Qur'ānic verses, A. J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted: A Translation*, translated by A. J. Arberry. Simon and Schuster, (1996).

<sup>4^</sup> Bousfield, "Stylistics, Speech Acts and im/Politeness Theory," 119.

follow the Prophet's path in this life, so that they do not regret in the afterlife, when that regret can no longer be beneficial.

It is worth mentioning here that the Islamic beliefs presented, particularly in his part of the poem, are intense and related to deep thoughts in the Islamic sector, which makes some Islamic scholars question the validity and attribution of these verses to al-'A'shā. Ibn Qutayba (d. 276 AH/889), had suspicions about this poem of being attributed to al-'A'shā. Shawqī Ḍayf said,

and we should doubt, as Ibn Qutayba doubted, the other al-'A'shā poems that depict Christian or Islamic ideas. As for Christian beliefs, they may exist because the narrator who published them is a Christian, and as for the second, because there are new meanings that were not known in the pre-Islamic period, with neither it nor everything related to it being from the words of the Qur'an and his methods.<sup>°</sup>

*Part Three: Criticism of pre-Islamic practice addressed to mushrkīn (lines 18-23):*

To compel them to believe in the Prophet's message and legislation, the poet performs illocutionary acts, such as informing, ordering, and warning; using Austin's words, "utterances which have a certain (conventional) force."<sup>°1</sup> He employs Qur'ānic expressions and patterns, such as *al-tahdhīr* (threatening), *al-nahy* (prohibition), and *al-amr* (command), etc. For example, he warns them about slaughtering except the Islamic way (line 18), worshiping idols, and following Satan. He commands them to believe in monotheism, God Almighty, to pray in the evening and the morning, and to praise God Almighty (lines 19 and 22). He urges them to adopt the law of marriage and chastity and leave betrayal and immorality (line 20), and give to the needy, the deprived, and the chained captive (line 21). He exhorts them to not mock the vulnerable and miserable and avoid immorality (line 23).

Also, the poet evokes words or meanings from the Qur'ān. For instance, line 18 is taken from the verse of the Qur'ān, *ḥurrimat 'alaykumu al-maytatu wa-al-ddamu wa-laḥmu al-khinzīri*

<sup>°</sup> Shawqī Ḍayf, *Tarīkh al-'Adab al-'Arabī, al-'Aṣr al-Jāhili*, 341.

<sup>°1</sup> Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 109.



*wa-mā 'uhilla li-ghayri allāhi bihī*, (Forbidden to you are carrion, blood, the flesh of swine, what has been hallowed to other than God) (al-Qur'ān 5:3). Line 19 is from the verse, *wa-dhkur rabbaka kathīran wa-sabbih bi-l- 'ashiyyi wa-l- 'ibkār*, (And mention thy Lord oft, and give glory at evening and dawn) (al-Qur'ān 3:41). Line 20 is from, *wa-lladhīna fī 'amwālihim ḥaqqun ma 'lūmli-s-sā'ili wa-l-maḥrūm*, (those in whose wealth is a right known – for the beggar and the outcast) (al-Qur'ān 70:24). Similarly, line 21 is from, *yā- 'ayyuhā al-ladhīna 'āmanū lā yaskhar qawmun min qawmin 'asā 'an yakūnū khayran minhum*, (O believers, let not any people scoff at another people who may be better than they) (al-Qur'ān 49:11). Additionally, the first hemistich of line 22 is from the verse, *wa-lā taqrabū al-zzinā 'innahū kāna fāḥishatan wa-sā'a sabīla*, (And approach not fornication; surely it is an indecency, and evil as a way) (al-Qur'ān 17:32); and the second hemistich of the same line 22 is from the verse, *wa-l-yasta 'fifī al-ladhīna lā yajidūna nikāḥan ḥattā yughniyahumu allāhu min faḍlihī*, (And let those who find not the means to marry be abstinent till God enriches them of His bounty) (al-Qur'ān 24:33). Shawqī Ḍayf said regarding the poet utilizing these words of the Qur'an and its methods in his poem, "It is clear from all of this that the poem is plagiarized and disagrees with al-'A'sha and his psyche. He would not have listened to the Qur'ān, believed in its teachings in this way, and then turned away from His noble Messenger and guidance."<sup>57</sup>

Accordingly, the language used in this last part has a conative function, stressing the addressee's response.<sup>58</sup> The poet aims to compel, blame, and command the *mushrkīn* (polytheists) to believe in the Prophet's message and legislation. These linguistic techniques that the poet intensively uses indicate a powerful speech or request that is not mere advice. However, the reader

<sup>57</sup> Shawqī Ḍayf, *Tarīkh al- 'Adab al- 'Arabī, al- 'Aṣr al-Jāhilī*, 341.

<sup>58</sup> Jakobson, "Linguistics and Poetics," 66-71.

expects the poet to praise the Prophet's miracles performed during his lifetime, like most *madīḥ nabawī* poems, usually in the section of *madīḥ*, with the hope of procuring similar benefits for the poet. Also, poets use referential language to select some miracles from the *sīra* that pave the way for their supplication. However, on the surface, the poet's speech does not directly relate to his *gharaḍ*/purpose, because the poem's context is not an exhortative speech to the polytheists. On a deeper level, al-'A'shā praises the Prophet's message and legislation by clarifying its concepts, which is the opposite of pre-Islamic practices, in the hope of persuading himself, in particular, and the polytheists, in general, to follow the Prophet. Moreover, the poet tries to show his addressee/the Prophet that he acknowledges that the Prophet is the one who has a strong message for the Umma (community) and that he is good for the community and must have the power to accept those who come to him as a believer.

Finally, as the Egyptian Zakī Mubārak says, al-'A'sha "indicates that his praise of the Prophet was nothing but an attempt, like all the poets who attempt to praise, and that his poem is not the result of a strong religious sentiment attached to the prophetic praise."<sup>٥٤</sup> Although al-'A'shā's poem has some features of the regular *madīḥ nabawī* poems and is considered by famous Islamic historians one of the oldest praises of the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, it lacks any mention of the elements of supplication and submission. Therefore, the spiritual communication with the Prophet was never conducted, either within or outside of the poem. One of the proofs of this is the narration of Muḥammad ibn Ḥabīb (d. 245AH/ 859), who explained al-'A'shā's *Diwān* (collection of poems) as stated by 'Abd al-Qādir al-Bagdādī, in his book *Khizānt al-Adab*. Ibn Ḥabīb gives a similar narration to the above narration, and at the end, he says, "when

<sup>٥٤</sup> Zakī Mubārak, *al-Madā'ih al-Nabawiyya fī al-'Adab al-'Arabī* (al-Qāhira: Dār al-Kātib al-'Arabī, 1967), 20.

they [Quraysh] repelled him, he [al-'A'shā] left on the spur of the moment, traveling until he reached Al-Yamāma, where he stayed for a while, then died."<sup>°°</sup> Al-Bagdādī goes on to say

Ibn Da'ab and others narrated that al-'A'shā went out seeking the Prophet, and he said poetry. When he had gone some way, his camel drove him away and killed him. So, when reciting his poetry in which he says ([the meter] al-ṭawīl),

(I swore I would not care about her tiredness  
nor her hoof-soreness until she meets with Muhammed.)

(When she arrives at the door of Ibn Hāshim,  
she will rest and receive the generosity of his virtue),

the Prophet says, 'He could have survived.'<sup>°¹</sup>

Accordingly, all narration agrees that al-'A'shā composed his poem aiming to change his loyalty from Jāhilīya to Islam, and to perform it before the addressee/the Prophet. Still, he died before the action of submission, so the poem cannot be considered a successful poetic performance.

### Conclusion:

*Madīḥ nabawī* poems usually encode, in addition to their spiritual and moral aspects, a performative speech that entails a ritual performance to the high authority addressee/the Prophet. It is not a "parasitic" use of language,<sup>°²</sup> but a serious supplicatory speech, and performs a specific action in which the addressee/the Prophet has the power to make the final decision. The paper reveals an unusual *madīḥ nabawī* poem composed by al-'A'shā that includes some performative aspects and the proper ritual *madīḥ nabawī* structure. The discussion shows how the poem's context, circumstances, and analysis prove it was a mere attempt by the poet to communicate with the addressee/the Prophet through his poetry. Furthermore, the paper suggests that the poem does not meet Austin's conditions: "an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect, that procedure to include the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain

<sup>°°</sup> 'Abd al-Qādir ibn 'Umar al-Bagdādī, *Khizānt al-Adab wa Lub Lubāb lisān al-'Arab*, ed. 'Abd al-Salām Hārūn (al-Qāhira: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1997), 1:177.

<sup>°¹</sup> al-Bagdādī, *Khizānt al-Adab wa Lub Lubāb lisān al-'Arab*, 1:177.

<sup>°²</sup> Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 22.

circumstances."<sup>^</sup>According to Austin's theory, the poet needs to complete his conventional procedure of performance. As a result, the perlocutionary act of the communicative interchange needs to be completed.

The analysis of the poem explores that the poem has, to use Austin's terminology, the locutionary act (phonetic, phatic, and rhetic acts) of praising the Prophet. But it does not perform the illocutionary action (direct performatives) of declaring a change in loyalty and conversion to Islam, and the perlocutionary force (intended result). Moreover, in Austin and Searle's theory, the "illocutionary act" must have a sincere intention. Al-'A'shā's *madīḥ nabawī* gives the impression that the poet wants or desires to do things through his praise, but it is defective and incomplete. Undeniably, al-'A'shā has the power to compose a structural performative *madīḥ nabawī* poem and succeeded in communicating the meaning to an addressee. Nevertheless, *madīḥ nabawī* is not functional here, because he neither had the honest intention in action to do the conversion at the time of uttering his Prophetic praise, nor the intention to produce a perlocutionary effect.

Analyzing the pragmatic, semantic features, and linguistic dimensions of *madīḥ nabawī* poems is not limited to Speech Act Theory and Performative speech. Analysis could be possible through other cognitive linguistic and pragmatic theories, such as the Relevance Theory and Mutual Knowledge, to ensure the success of the shared background knowledge (context) and common sense, and to show the inferences by the addressee/the Prophet. These linguistic theories could apply to other *madīḥ nabawī* poems that were composed during the life of the Prophet, and how the Prophet replied or responded to the speech addressed to him.

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<sup>^</sup> Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 14-15.

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