



Separation Symbols in Al-Muqaddimah Ath-Thalaliyyah of Al-Mu'allaqāt by Tharafah ibn Al-'Abd: A Semiotic Analysis

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ENGLISH ABSTRACT

This study examines the symbolic representation of separation in the first five verses of Al-Muqaddimah Ath-Thalaliyyah that opens Tharafah bin al-'Abd al-Bakrī's al-Mu'allaqāt. The research aims to reveal how symbols of loss and longing are constructed through poetic imagery related to the poet's separation from his beloved, Khaulah. The study employs a descriptive qualitative method using Michael Riffaterre's semiotic framework, including heuristic and hermeneutic readings, as well as the identification of the matrix, model, variants, and hypogram. The findings show that emotional suffering caused by separation functions as the matrix governing the poem's symbolic structure. This meaning is represented through images of abandoned ruins, fading tattoo marks, and ships crossing the waterways of Dad Valley as symbols of memory and Khaulah's departure with her tribe. The analysis also reveals an intertextual relationship with Imru' al-Qays' al-Mu'allaqāt, particularly in the motif of companions consoling a grieving lover. The study demonstrates that these symbolic expressions reflect both the poet's emotional condition and the cultural traditions of pre-Islamic Arab society. It contributes to Arabic literary studies by showing how Riffaterre's semiotic theory uncovers symbolic structures and cultural meanings in classical Arabic poetry.

Keywords: Symbols of Separation, Al-Muqaddimah Ath-Thalaliyyah, Tharafah bin al-'Abd, Semiotic, Michael Riffaterre

INDONESIAN ABSTRACT

Penelitian ini mengkaji representasi simbolik perpisahan dalam lima bait pertama Al-Muqaddimah Ath-Thalaliyyah yang membuka syair al-Mu'allaqāt karya Tharafah bin al-'Abd al-Bakrī. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap bagaimana simbol-simbol kehilangan dan kerinduan dibangun melalui citraan puitik yang berkaitan dengan perpisahan penyair dengan kekasihnya, Khaulah. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dengan pendekatan semiotika Michael Riffaterre yang meliputi pembacaan heuristik dan hermeneutik, kemudian dilanjutkan dengan identifikasi matriks, model, varian, dan hipogram. Pembacaan heuristik berfokus pada struktur kebahasaan, sedangkan pembacaan hermeneutik menafsirkan makna sastra yang lebih mendalam dalam konteks budaya puisi tersebut. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penderitaan emosional akibat perpisahan berfungsi sebagai matriks yang mengatur keseluruhan struktur simbolik puisi. Makna ini dikembangkan melalui sistem simbol yang terdiri atas reruntuhan tempat tinggal dan jejak tato yang memudar sebagai representasi kenangan yang tetap bertahan, serta citraan kapal-kapal yang melintasi perairan Lembah Dad sebagai representasi kepergian Khaulah yang tidak terelakkan bersama kabilahnya. Analisis juga mengungkap adanya hubungan intertekstual dengan al-Mu'allaqāt karya Imru' al-Qays, khususnya pada motif para sahabat yang menghibur seorang pecinta yang dilanda kesedihan. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada kajian sastra Arab dengan menunjukkan bagaimana teori semiotika Riffaterre dapat digunakan untuk mengungkap struktur simbolik dan makna kultural yang terkandung dalam puisi Arab klasik.

Kata Kunci: Simbol Perpisahan, Al-Muqaddimah Ath-Thalaliyyah, Tharafah bin al-'Abd, Semiotika, Michael Riffaterre

Introduction

In Arabic literature, two primary literary genres have traditionally dominated the cultural and artistic expression of the Arab world: prose (*an-Nathr*) and poetry (*asy-Syi'r*) (Husain, 1936; Zaid, et al., 2020). Poetry, frequently structured in metered and rhymed lines, functioned as a potent medium for safeguarding history, articulating personal and communal identity, and transmitting moral and philosophical insights. From the Arab perspective, poetry represents the zenith of literary beauty, as it is a production born from nuanced emotion and imaginative elegance (Sallam, n.d.)

Discussion of Arabic poetry naturally include the poetry of the *Jahiliyyah* (pre-Islamic) era. The *Jahiliyyah* era highlights a period encountered by the Arab society before the emergence of Islam. The duration is approximately one hundred and fifty years, with a maximum extension of two hundred years (Bunyamin, 2013). During this period, poetry functioned not just as an artistic medium but also as a significant cultural institution. It was greatly valued, particularly in the pre-Islamic era, when poets served as the orators and historians of their tribes (Al-'Askar, 2006; Husain, 1936).

Poetry was the foundation of their cultural identity, to the extent that some experts claim the Arabs of *Jahiliyyah* had no other sophisticated art form except from poetry. This perspective is supported by ‘Umar bin al-Khaththāb, who notably stated that poetry represents the knowledge of the Arabs, and no other discipline exceeds it in reality (Thibanah, 1965; Zaid et al., 2023). In this context, poetry functioned not only as a medium of aesthetic expression but also as a reflection of the collective awareness of Arab society. It embodied their cognitive frameworks, social ideals, historical consciousness, and the fundamental nature of their lived experiences (Az-Zauzani, 2011). The Arabs of *Jahiliyyah* preserved their identity, transmitted their traditions, and expressed their worldview through poetry in a manner that was both creative and intellectually lasting.

In the cultural context of the *Jahiliyyah* period, poetry functioned as both a medium for artistic expression and a personal emotional instrument. Every poet has their own way of expressing how they feel and what they've been through (Afifi, 2023). One of its most personal uses was as a way to express love and desire. *Jahiliyyah* poets often composed verses to captivate and involve their beloved, utilising poetic language to bridge the emotional divide between them (Sudarmawan, 2022). People usually call this type of romantic poetry "*Ghazal*." *Ghazal* commonly started bigger works of poetry before Islam. It was like an emotional prologue that showed how complicated love was between young couples. These themes deeply reflected the nomadic lifestyle of Arab tribes, who constantly moved from one valley to another and from one spring to the next, often leading to brief contacts and separations. These exchanges sometimes led to romantic relationships between people from different cultures. The poet's longing is frequently depicted through evocative imagery of deserted campsites or remnants of a lover's dwelling. This motif developed into a unique poetic technique known as *Al-Muqaddimah Ath-Thalaliyyah*, a nostalgic preface that evokes the pain of separation and the enduring memory of lost love. The poetry of *Al-Mu'allaqāt* by Tharafah bin al-'Abd al-Bakri is an example of *Al-Muqaddimah Ath-Thalaliyyah* from the *Jahiliyyah* era.

Tharafah bin al-'Abd al-Bakri belonged to the al-Bakri tribe. He was a well-known poet from the *Jahiliyyah* period, second only to Imru' al-Qays (Ash-Shanqithi, n.d.). Many poets, critics, and commentators, both old and new, have said that Tharafah is one of the best and most famous poets. People think of him as one of the best poets. Jarir thought Tharafah was the best poet, but other people thought he was in the middle or even last

(Dahami, 2018). No matter what happened, everyone agrees that Tharafah was one of the best Arab poets of all time.

In his *al-Mu'allaqāt*, Tharafah bin al-'Abd begins with an *Al-Muqaddimah Ath-Thalaliyyah*, which is a common introduction in pre-Islamic *qashīdah* poetry that sets the emotional and thematic tone for the rest of the poem. In his work *Tathawwur al-Ghazal baina al-Jahiliyyah wa al-Islam min Imru' al-Qays ila Al-Muqaddimah Ath-Thalaliyyah Abi Rabi'ah*, Syukri Faishal (Faishal, 1959) classifies *ghazal* poetry into five categories: *al-wuqūf 'alā al-athlāl* (pausing at the ruins), *masyāhid at-tahammul wa al-irtihāl* (scenes of separation), *wasf al-mahāsin al-jasadiyyah* (descriptions of bodily beauty), *al-ghazal al-mufhish* (flirtatious or indecent expressions), and *arā' fī al-hubb* (perspectives on love). Using this framework, Tharafah's *Al-Muqaddimah Ath-Thalaliyyah* combines two groups, *al-wuqūf 'alā al-athlāl* and *masyāhid at-tahammul wa al-irtihāl*, to make a symbolic landscape of separation from his lover, Khaulah. The first five verses of Tharafah's *al-Mu'allaqāt* reflect this structure. The first two verses focus on the poet's contemplation of the ruins associated with Khaulah and his emotional response to them, representing *al-wuqūf 'alā al-athlāl*. The following three verses shift to the imagery of Khaulah's departure with Bani Malik, symbolized through the movement of ships crossing the waterways of Dad Valley, which corresponds to *masyāhid at-tahammul wa al-irtihāl*. This dual structure makes these verses an appropriate corpus for examining how symbols of separation are constructed in Tharafah's *al-muqaddimah ath-thalaliyyah*. While these scenes appear to describe concrete events and locations, they also function as poetic symbols that convey deeper meanings of longing, memory, and loss. Therefore, the verses invite a reading that goes beyond their literal descriptions to uncover the symbolic significance embedded within them.

Jahiliyyah poetry often possesses a direct and realistic quality, generally portraying local situations known to the poets (Panatapraja, 2020), leading to interpretations that primarily emphasize concrete physical realities. Conversely, poetry is connotative, imparting a message indirectly (Mushfiroh, 2023). Likewise, the images of ruins, caravans, and ships in Tharafah's *Al-Muqaddimah Ath-Thalaliyyah* should not be understood merely as physical descriptions but also as symbolic expressions of separation and emotional suffering. For this reason, a semiotic approach is required to reveal the deeper meanings encoded in the poem.

The author acknowledges the significance of examining the symbols of separation in the *Al-Muqaddimah Ath-Thalaliyyah* of *Al-Mu'allaqāt* by Tharafah bin al-'Abd al-Bakriy, a notable poet of the *Jahiliyyah* period. This understanding encourages a focused examination of the symbols of separation present in the *Muqaddimah*, particularly through the lens of Michael Riffaterre's semiotic theory. This study aims to elucidate the profound significances and symbolic relevance inside the *Ghazal* section of Tharafah's *al-Mu'allaqat* through a semiotic examination. Riffaterre views the text as an independent entity that can generate various interpretations (Irfan and Riza, 2023). Riffaterre's theory, which emphasizes indirect expression through displacement, distortion, and meaning construction, provides a vital foundation for examining poetic texts beyond their literal structure. This strategy aligns with Zoest's (Van Zoest, 1991) assertion that the interpretation of a sign is enhanced by its reference to a particular reality. This research, titled "The Symbols of Separation in *Al-Muqaddimah Ath-Thalaliyyah* in *al-Mu'allaqāt* by Tharafah bin al-'Abd al-Bakriy: A Semiotic Analysis by Michael Riffaterre," seeks to analyse the narration and symbolic construction of separation through poetic signs that reflect the poet's emotional and cultural reality.

Michael Riffaterre's semiotic theory stands out among several semiotic theories for its efficacy in analysing the significance of poetry, as it functions at a micro textual level and enables a more comprehensive investigation. The semiotic theory utilizes a dual methodology for literary texts, encompassing *Jahiliyyah* Arabic literature: heuristic reading and hermeneutic or retroactive reading. Heuristic reading entails interpreting text via the language's structure or the principal semiotic system. Heuristic interpretation of poetry entails examining its linguistic structure to clarify meaning (Kamil, 2009). The hermeneutic reading comes after the heuristic reading and could be called the second-level semiotic system reading. After the poem is first read heuristically, it is then followed by a hermeneutic reading. In this stage, the poem is repeatedly read in its entirety, accompanied by interpretation (Hamzah and Barrunnawa, 2021). Hermeneutic reading entails a retroactive rereading subsequent to heuristic reading, which integrates literary traditions (Pradopo, 2003). Hermeneutic reading aims to reveal significance.

Riffaterre, in his work 'Semiotics of Poetry', proposes four essential considerations for meaning production: (1) indirectness of expression, (2) heuristic and hermeneutic reading, (3) matrix, model, variant, and (4) hypogram.

Literary compositions, specifically poetry, utilize language as the medium. Language, as a medium related to literature, is a primary semiotic system due to its established standards and internal structure. Literature is classified as a second-level semiotic system due to its reliance on language and its established conventions (Pradopo, 2003). Riffaterre asserts that poetry invariably conveys concepts and objects indirectly. Poetry articulates one concept while implying another. Poetry employs three methods to convey indirect meaning: Displacement of Meaning, Distortion of Meaning, and Creation of Meaning (Riffaterre, 1978).

The displacement of meaning refers to a modification of significance induced by figurative language, including simile, metaphor, and metonymy (Riffaterre, 1978, as cited in (Pradopo, 2019). In Arabic literature, this metaphorical discipline is referred to as *'ilm al-bayān*, a subset of *'ilm al-balāghah*. In *'ilm al-bayān*, simile is typically referred to as *tasybīh*, metaphor as *isti'ārah*, and metonymy as *kināyah*. Figurative language serves as a device to achieve a poetic effect in poetry. Figurative language encompasses various expressions, including words, phrases, or sentences that convey meanings beyond their literal interpretation. This figurative language elicits the reader's reaction and conveys multifaceted concepts concisely (Sayuti, 1985).

Distortion of meaning refers to a departure in meaning resulting from ambiguity, contradiction, and nonsensical elements (Riffaterre, 1978, as cited in Pradopo, 2019). The creation of meaning transpires when the textual space serves as an organizing principle, transforming grammatically inconsequential element, such as symmetry, rhyme, enjambment, or semantic relationships among positional equations in the verse (homologs), into signs (Sudarmawan and Adelayati, 2024).

According to Chris Barker (2006), the crucial aspect of signification lies in the production of meaning through the interaction between a text and its readers, where the act of reading simultaneously becomes a process of meaning-making. Meaning is considered complete when readers are able to understand the contextual significance embedded within the text. In literary studies, readers therefore play an essential role in constructing meaning. The interpretation of poetry begins with heuristic reading, which identifies meaning through linguistic competence and the communicative function of language in representing reality (mimetic function). However, interpretation must proceed to the hermeneutic stage, where the literary code is decoded based on deeper

significance and contextual relations. Thus, poetic symbols acquire meaning through the processes of reading and interpretation (Riffaterre, 1978).

Riffaterre elucidated that to comprehensively interpret poetry, the reader needs identify the matrix and model embedded inside the text. The matrix serves as the origin of all meanings in poetry. The matrix is typically absent from the text of the poetry. The matrix is manifested as a model, seen in the poetic language. The model can be regarded as the inaugural realisation of the matrix. A model is a term or phrase that can symbolise a line in poetry. The translation of the model is articulated by the variants included in each line or verse (Riffaterre, 1978).

Riffaterre asserted that a literary work typically possesses complete meaning only when it is contextualized with other literary works, regardless of whether they are complementary or opposing. The connection between one literary work and another is termed a hypogram. The hypogram can also be discerned by examining the relationship between a literary work and its historical context. The hypogram serves as the foundation for the construction of a literary work, encompassing societal conditions, historical events, or the poet's experiences with nature and life. Similar to the matrix, the hypogram represents a void that constitutes the core of poetic meaning that must be uncovered. Riffaterre categorises hypograms into two types: potential hypograms and real hypograms. Potential hypograms are those that manifest in literary works, encompassing all sorts of implications derived from linguistic meanings inside a text. This hypogram may manifest as presuppositions, descriptive systems, and connotative meanings inherent in a literary work. The structure of the implication is absent from the lexicon yet resides in our own cognition. The hypogram serves as the connection between the text and the antecedent text (Riffaterre, 1978).

Prior research on a related topic was undertaken by Sudarmawan (2022) titled "Meaning in the *Al-Muqaddimah Ath-Thalaliyyah* in *al-Mu'allaqāt* by Imru' al-Qays (A Semiotic Analysis by Michael Riffaterre)." This study examined the *Al-Muqaddimah Ath-Thalaliyyah* in *al-Mu'allaqāt* by Imru' al-Qays, whose words illustrate his poetic affection for his deceased sweetheart. This need is articulated through his words, and the poetry is categorised as a *ghazal* that mourns the absence of a beloved.

In 2025, Aryani, Qudsiyah, and Wijaya did a study on symbolism and the significance of love in the *al-Mu'allaqāt* poem by Imru' al-Qais. The findings indicate that love in Imru' al-Qais' poetry is portrayed as a comprehensive emotional experience,

characterised by yearning, sacrifice, and existential contemplation. Natural symbolism, such the wind, remnants of the campground, tears, and the experience of separation, enhance the depiction of love as an integral aspect of the human life cycle. The love depicted in this poem is not idealised but rather genuine, conveying a bittersweet nuance that resonates with readers throughout generations.

Numerous scholars have conducted research employing a comparable theoretical approach. Yaqin (2022) analysed the poetry *Ayyuhā an-Nās* by Tamim al-Barghouti through the lens of Riffaterre's semiotic theory. The results indicated that the heuristic interpretation rendered the poetry unclear and devoid of coherent meaning. Through hermeneutic (or retroactive) reading, by identifying the model, matrix, and actual relationships within the poem, it was found that one of the models is encapsulated in the words "O people, you are leaders," while the matrix of *Ayyuhā an-Nās* represents "the character of a leader."

Likewise, Faizun and Kawa (2023) utilized the same idea in their analysis of the poetry *Ilā Ummī* by Mahmoud Darwish. Their investigation demonstrated that the poem conveys deep sorrow, yearning, and lamentation. These emotions arise from Darwish's desire for his mother, which concurrently reflects his yearning for his homeland, Palestine, especially his place of birth. The poem was composed in 1965 during Darwish's imprisonment in Israel, enhancing its emotional depth. Furthermore, the hypogram identified in the poem is *Ummī* ("My Mother") by Abdullah al-Baradouni, indicating an intertextual influence and shared themes of maternal and patriotic longing.

In the same year, Choironi, Ahmad, and Saber (2023) applied this theory to analyze the song *Kun Fa Yakoon* by Mohammad bin Dhahi. The findings revealed a shift in meaning through metaphor and the creation of meaning via repetition. In the heuristic analysis, non-grammatical elements such as "من" ("who") as an interrogative connected with "لا!" ("except") generated a new meaning, indicating a firm statement: "I testify." The global situation at the time, impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, also added a sense of sincerity in prayer and the heightened demands placed upon the individual. This represents the songwriter's response to the anxiety affecting society and signifies an increase in faith.

In 2020, Akastangga also employed this theory to study *al-Hikmah wa al-Mau'izhah* poetry in the *Dīwān* of Maḥmūd al-Warrāq. The heuristic reading suggested that humans should forgive each other's mistakes, even if those mistakes are numerous.

In the hermeneutic reading, it meant that a judge should oblige himself to forgive others' faults, then described three types of judges: the noble judge, the humble judge, and the good judge, equivalent to the noble judge. The model was found in four phrases: "there is no human except one of three," "as for my equal," "I was careful not to answer it, for my honor," and "indeed, to respect with respect is wisdom." The poem also contains simplified binary oppositions such as forgiveness vs. fault, nobility vs. humiliation, and above vs. below. The essence of the poem embodies the sagacity of a judge. As for intellectual relations, the poetry of Maḥmūd al-Warrāq shows similarities with verses of the Qur'an, the sayings of the Prophet, and the poetry of Imām asy-Syāfi'ī in his *Dīwān*.

Previous studies demonstrate that Riffaterre's semiotic theory has been widely applied to Arabic literary texts, including the poetry of Tamim al-Barghouti, Mahmoud Darwish, Mohammad bin Dhahi, and Mahmud al-Warraq. Studies on *Al-Mu'allaqāt* have also examined themes of love, longing, and symbolism, particularly in the poetry of Imru' al-Qays. However, these studies have not specifically explored the symbolic construction of separation in the *al-Muqaddimah Ath-Thalaliyyah* of Tharafah bin al-'Abd. Moreover, no previous study has focused on the first five verses of Tharafah's *al-Mu'allaqāt* through a comprehensive application of Riffaterre's semiotic framework, including heuristic and hermeneutic readings, as well as the identification of matrix, model, variants, and hypogram. This gap is significant because the opening verses combine the motifs of *al-wuqūf 'alā al-athlāl* and *masyāhid at-taḥammul wa al-irtihāl*, which collectively construct a symbolic narrative of separation. Therefore, this study applies Michael Riffaterre's semiotic framework to examine how symbols of loss, memory, longing, and departure are articulated in the *al-Muqaddimah Ath-Thalaliyyah* of *al-Mu'allaqāt* by Tharafah bin al-'Abd. By doing so, it contributes to both Arabic literary studies and semiotic criticism by providing a focused analysis of separation as the central symbolic theme of Tharafah's poetic introduction.

Methods

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research design to examine the symbolic representation of separation in the opening section (*al-muqaddimah ath-thalaliyyah*) of the *al-Mu'allaqāt* poem by Tharafah bin al-'Abd al-Bakrī. The material object of this research is the poetic text itself, particularly the introductory verses that portray the poet's emotional response to separation from his beloved, Khaulah. The

formal object of the study is the semiotic theory of Michael Riffaterre, as presented in *Semiotics of Poetry* (1978), which is used to uncover the symbolic meanings embedded in the poem.

According to Faruk (2012), data collection methods are a set of techniques that function as an extension of human senses in obtaining empirical data related to research problems. Based on this perspective, data collection in this study was conducted through close reading and documentation techniques. The data source consists of *al-muqaddimah ath-thalaliyyah* verses from Tharafah's *al-Mu'allaqāt*, from first until fifth verse, obtained from authoritative editions of classical Arabic poetry and supported by relevant scholarly references discussing pre-Islamic Arabic literature and semiotic theory. Data collection was conducted through close reading and documentation techniques. The researcher identified poetic expressions, symbols, metaphors, and imagery related to themes of separation, longing, and loss within the text. Supporting theoretical and contextual data were also collected from books, journal articles, and previous studies relevant to Riffaterre's semiotics and Arabic literary criticism.

The analysis was carried out in several stages following Riffaterre's method of signification. First, heuristic reading was conducted to interpret the text based on its linguistic and grammatical structures, focusing on the literal meaning of words and expressions according to the communicative function of language. Second, hermeneutic reading was applied to reveal deeper literary significance and symbolic meanings within the cultural and poetic context of the *al-Mu'allaqāt*. Third, the analysis identified the matrix, model, and variants that structure the poem's symbolic system. Finally, the study examined the hypogram, namely the cultural, historical, and intertextual background underlying the poem's meaning construction.

To ensure the validity of interpretation, the researcher compared the findings with classical commentaries, previous scholarly studies, and established theories of Arabic literary criticism. Interpretations were continuously re-evaluated through contextual analysis to maintain consistency between textual evidence, semiotic interpretation, and the socio-cultural background of pre-Islamic Arab society. This process was intended to strengthen the reliability and depth of the analysis conducted in the study. In addition, the use of multiple references helped provide a more comprehensive understanding of the symbolic meanings contained in the poem.

Result and Discussion

In *al-Mu'allaqāt* by Tharafah bin al 'Abd al Bakriy, the *al-muqaddimah ath-thalaliyah* consists of five verses, from the first verse to the fifth verse.

The Verses of Al-Muqaddimah Ath-Thalaliyyah in al-Mu'allaqāt by Tharafah bin al-'Abd

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| <p>1. Dear Khaulah, the ruins on the hill where the pebbles are scattered sparkled like the remnants of the tattoo on the back of the hand.</p> <p>2. My friends stopped from their vehicles for me, saying: do not be sad and try to be patient.</p> <p>3. Bani Malik's mounts that early afternoon was like big ships in the streams of Dad's valley.</p> <p>4. The ships of the Bani Adūliyah or also Ibn Yamin, which the captain brought to anchor and sail.</p> <p>5. The front of the ship separated the waves of the ocean like a child who divides the land in two with his hands when playing.</p> | <p>١. لَخَوْلَةٌ أَطْلَالٌ بَيْرُفَقَةٌ تَهْمَدُ
تَلُوحُ كَبَاقِي الْوَشْمِ فِي طَاهِرِ الْيَدِ</p> <p>٢. وَفُوفًا بِهَا صَحْبِي عَلَيَّ مَطِيئِهِمْ
يَقُولُونَ لَا تَهْلِكْ أَمْسَى وَتَجَلَّدِ</p> <p>٣. كَأَنَّ حُدُوجَ الْمَالِكِيَّةِ غُدُوءًا
خَلَايَا سَفِينٍ بِالنَّوَاصِفِ مِنْ دَدِ</p> <p>٤. عَدُولِيَّةٌ أَوْ مِنْ سَفِينِ ابْنِ يَامِنٍ
يَجُوزُ بِهَا الْمَلَّاحُ طَوْرًا وَيَهْتَدِي</p> <p>٥. يَشُقُّ حَبَابَ الْمَاءِ حَيْرٌ وَمُهَا بِهَا
كَمَا قَسَمَ الرَّبِّبُ الْمَفَايِلُ بِالْيَدِ</p> |
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- (Az-Zauzani, 2011)

Heuristic Reading

The aforementioned verses constitute the *al-muqaddimah* of Tharafah's *al-Mu'allaqāt*. The poem *al-Mu'allaqāt* by Tharafah bin al-'Abd lacks a title, similar to the other *al-Mu'allaqāt*. It is usually referred to as "*Li Khaulah Athlāl Biburqah Tsahmad*," which is derived from its opening line, the *Sadr al-Bait*. This *Al-Muqaddimah Ath-Thalaliyyah* will undergo analysis through heuristic reading and literary examination grounded in its linguistic framework.

The initial lyric plainly references the name of his beloved, Khaulah. The term أَطْلَالٌ is the plural form of طَلَلٌ, signifying 'ruins, rubble' (Ma'luf, 2011). The term بَيْرُفَقَةٌ signifies 'rocky hill' (Ma'luf, 2011). The term تَهْمَدُ designates the hill's name. The term تَلُوحُ signifies 'to appear, to rise' (Ma'luf, 2011). The term كَبَاقِي الْوَشْمِ signifies 'remnants of the tattoo on the skin' (Ma'luf, 2011). The term طَاهِرِ signified 'back, visible' (Ma'luf, 2011). Overall, these lyrics can be construed as a reflection of the poet's reminiscence of his

beloved, Khaulah. The image of the ruins on the rocky hill of Tsahmad is distinctly apparent, akin to the remnants of a tattoo on the back of his hand.

The second stanza commences with *وَقُوفًا*, which is a *Maf'ūl Muthlaq* with the *'āmil* omitted. *'Āmil* in the term *وَقُوفًا* is a *fi'l mādhi* derived from the *mashdar*, *وقفوا*, so it should be rendered as *وقفوا ووقفوا*. The term might be construed as 'they have ceased'. Moreover, the term *مَطِيئِهِمْ* signifies 'their mounts' (Ma'luf, 2011). The term *أَسَى* signifies 'sorrowful.' (Ma'luf, 2011) defines *لا تَهْلِكْ* as 'do not perish due to your sorrow'. The term *وَتَجَلَدٌ* is an imperative verb, signifying 'exercise patience' (Ma'luf, 2011). This fifth verse also features *taqdīm* and *ta'khīr*; it should be read as: *وقف أصحابي مطيئهم علي وقفا*, which translates to "my friends ceased sitting on their mounts and were positioned above me." This fifth lyric indicates that the poet's pals ceased their activities due to the poet's presence. They remained in their vehicle, advising, "do not succumb to your sorrow and exercise patience."

The third verse commences with *tashbīh*. The term *خُدُوجٌ* is the plural of *حُج*, signifying 'mounts for women' (Ma'luf, 2011), while *الْمَالِكِيَّةِ*, as *mudhāf ilaih*, denotes 'Bani Malik' (Az-Zauzani, 2011). The term *عُدْوَةٌ* functions as a *zharf az-zamān*, signifying 'the transition between morning and afternoon, early afternoon' (Ma'luf, 2011). The term *خَلَايا* is the plural form of *خَلِيَة*, signifying 'large ship' (Ma'luf, 2011), while *سَفِين*, as *mudhāf ilaih*, denotes 'ship'. The term *بِالنَّوْاصِفِ* is a *zharf al-makān*, signifying 'flow of water' (Ma'luf, 2011), and it denotes the name of the valley. This passage can be read to mean that the mounts and saddles of the Bani Malik, which Khaulah boarded in the early afternoon, resembled large ships traversing the waterways of Dad's valley.

The fourth verse commences with the adjective of the third, *'ajz al-bait*. The term *عَدُولِيَّةٌ*, denoting the name of the tribe, serves as an adjective for *خَلَايا سَفِين* in the third verse, signifying 'large boats belonging to the Adūliyah tribe'. The phrase *سَفِينِ ابْنِ يَامِنٍ* is an ellipsis of the word *عَدُولِيَّةٌ*, signifying 'Ibn Yamin's boat'. The term *يَجُوز* signifies 'to anchor' (Ma'luf, 2011). The term *الْمَلَّاحُ*, signifying 'sailor' (Ma'luf 2011), is classified as *fa'il*. The term *طَوْرًا*, synonymous with *hāl*, signifies 'sometimes' (Ma'luf, 2011). The term *وَيَهْتَدِي* is derived from the phrase *يَجُوز*, which signifies 'to follow the way' (Ma'luf, 2011). This verse can be regarded as analogous to a big vessel belonging to the Adūliyah tribe or Ibn Yamin, which is occasionally anchored by sailors and at other times navigates its course autonomously.

The fifth verse extends the themes of the third and fourth verses. The term **يَنْسُقُ** signifies 'to split' (Ma'luf, 2011). The term **حَبَابِ الْمَاءِ** translates to 'waves'. The term **حَيْزُومٌ** functions as a *fā'il*, signifying 'the front' (Az-Zauzani, 2011), while the pronoun **ها** is associated with the term **خَلَايَا سَفِينٍ** in the third verse. The term **التَّرْبِ** signifies 'land' (Ma'luf, 2011). The term **المَفَايِلِ** derives from *fā'il*, originating from **قَسَمَ التَّرْبِ**, signifying 'a kid who plays with the ground' (Az-Zauzani, 2011). This verse can be read as the bow of the ship cleaving the ocean waves, akin to the earth players of the *Jahiliyyah* era partitioning the land with their hands.

The comprehensive analysis of the *Al-Muqaddimah Ath-Thalaliyyah* verses of *al-Mu'allaqāt* by Tharafah bin al-'Abd, when examined through heuristic readings, yields the following understanding. The poet was reflecting on his beloved, Khaulah. Recollections of the ruinous site on the rocky hill of Tsahmad, which he had explored with Khaulah, reemerged and were evident, akin to the remnants of a tattoo on an unblemished hand. Observing the poet reflecting on the location, his companions halted their vehicles and advised, "do not succumb to your sorrow and exercise patience." The poet recalls his beloved, stating, "The mounts and saddles of the Bani Malik, which Khaulah rode in the early afternoon, resembled grand vessels traversing the waters of the Dad Valley." At times, the vessel is secured by its mariner, while at other instances, it navigates its course independently. The bow of the ship cleaves the ocean waves akin to a youngster from the *Jahiliyyah* era parting the ground with his hands.

Hermeneutic Reading

The heuristic interpretation of the *al-muqaddimah* verses of *al-Mu'allaqāt* by Tharafah bin al-'Abd reveals a sense of variety, as the analysis is confined to the linguistic framework. Consequently, to attain a comprehensive understanding, the introductory verses in Tharafah bin al-'Abd's *al-Mu'allaqāt* must be examined hermeneutically, interpreting the verses through literary conventions, which entails discerning the connotative meanings of words and the poet's indirect expressions.

The poet promptly indicates in the initial verse that it addresses his beloved, Khaulah. He conversed with Khaulah over the recollections associated with the stones from the ruins on the rugged hill of Tsahmad. The ruins he observed evoked thoughts of Khaulah, as it was the location where he and his beloved had shared moments together. The recollection that surfaced with the emergence of the ruins before him was compared

to *كَبَاقِي الْوَشْمِ فِي ظَاهِرِ الْيَدِ* 'the visible remnants of a tattoo on the back of the hand'. He compared it to *بَاقِي الْوَشْمِ*, 'the remnants of the tattoo,' since it denotes memories that have persisted throughout time yet continue to manifest, allowing him to still sense their presence. Subsequently, it was supplemented with *فِي ظَاهِرِ الْيَدِ* 'on the back of the hand'. This contributed to the interpretation of 'appear', as even if it is a remnant of the tattoo, if located on the back of the hand, the remainder of the tattoo will remain distinctly visible to the observer. Similarly, the vestiges of Tharafah's memories with Khaulah, despite their prolonged existence due to Tharafah's affection for her, will remain discernible and manifest within Tharafah's recollection.

The second verse depicts the poet's nostalgia for his beloved, Khaulah, prompted by the sight of the ruins on the hill of Tsahmad, causing his companions on horseback to observe him halting his ride and weeping over their shared memories. They ceased when the poet commenced lamenting his recollections. The travelling companions are a collective of individuals who journey together, fostering a shared emotional experience. Observing the sorrow of a fellow traveller lamenting the past, they took the initiative to pause and console the poet by offering advice and reassurance, stating *لَا تَهْلِكْ أَسَىٰ وَتَجِدْ*, which translates as 'do not succumb to despair and strive for patience.' His travelling companions believed the poet was ill, prompting them to say *لَا تَهْلِكْ أَسَىٰ*. 'Do not succumb to despair.' The anguish that torments the poet, if he persists in his sorrow, may ultimately prove fatal. The anguish his companions experienced was a psychological torment that affected him, rendering him profoundly sorrowful merely upon witnessing the ruins. They then counselled him to find a remedy for the poet's pain, one that could either cure or at least lessen it. They said *وَتَجِدْ*, which means 'be patient'. They provided the poet with a remedy to alleviate his suffering; that remedy was patience. The advice they took to lighten their friend's burden didn't really have much effect on him because the poet was feeling a terrible heartbreak as a result of being separated from his lover, leaving only memories of her.

The third, fourth, and fifth lines compare the departure of a camel, bearing Tharafah's beloved, to big vessels navigating the waters of Dad's valley. The departure of the saddle-bearing camels of Bani Malikiyah lined up and in herds was like the departure of the ships passing through the stream of Dad's valley. This is evident from the *musyabbah bih*, which states *خَلَايَا سَفِينٍ بِالنَّوْاصِفِ مِنْ دَدٍ*. 'Large vessels navigate the waterway of Dad's valley.' Large ships, if passing through a stream of water, will run in a row. He

lamented this because the departure of the ship took his lover away from him. The poet lamented the loss of his lover along with his departure from his tribe.

The large vessels will navigate to the destination determined by the skipper and thereafter anchor. If the captain anchors him, he will also sail if the captain chooses to set sail. This is similar to the reality experienced by Tharafah's lover. His lover will always follow wherever his tribe goes. If the tribe stops for a moment, then Khaulah, who is in the tribe, will also stop, but if his tribe takes him away to continue walking, then he will also walk with them. Khaulah did not have the power to make her stay when her tribe left the place. This is what Tharafah lamented.

The departure of the ship on the water causes the water below to be split, and this phenomenon is likened to *المفايل*, a traditional Arab game player who divides the land into two parts. In this *tashbīh*, apart from giving an equation of how the water splitting in front of the ship is like the splitting of land in the hands of the traditional game player, there is also an implied meaning in it, that when the Maliki tribe went with Khaulah in it, it had separated a young couple who loved each other and also split the hearts that were previously united, both the Tharafah's hearts and Khaulah's hearts, like a ship splitting the waves in front of it, and also like a traditional game player splitting the ground into two parts with his hands.

The Symbols of Separation in Al-Muqaddimah Ath-Thalaliyyah in al-Mu'allaqāt by Tharafah bin al-'Abd al-Bakriy

The initial five verses of Tharafah bin al-'Abd's *al-Mu'allaqāt*, included in the *al-Muqaddimah ath-Thalaliyyah*, convey the poignant emotions of a lover enduring separation. The emotional tone emerges in the second stanza and is further elaborated by the imagery in subsequent lines, illustrating the poet's estrangement from his beloved. A hermeneutic analysis utilising a descriptive framework reveals an opposing semantic pair: meeting–separation. Within this symbolic framework, the notion of meeting is linked to all things that signify the presence or memory of the beloved, articulated through terms such as *كَبَائِي الْوَسْمِ* (like the remnants of a tattoo), *بِيرْقَةِ نَهْمَدِ* (with black kohl), and *أَطْلَالٌ* (ruins). In contrast, separation is represented by the motifs of departure and motion, exemplified by *خَلَايَا سَفِينٍ بِالنَّوْاصِفِ* (remnants of a caravan in the mid-desert), *يَشُقُّ حَبَابَ الْمَاءِ* (slicing the surface of the water), and *فَسَمَ التُّرْبِ* (dividing the dust). The dichotomy of meeting and separation transcends the personal realm,

embodying a greater societal consciousness and emotional truth profoundly ingrained in *Jahiliyyah* society.

Consequently, in accordance with the title "The Symbols of Separation in *Al-Muqaddimah Ath-Thalaliyyah* in *al-Mu'allaqāt* by Tharafah bin al-'Abd al-Bakriy: A Semiotic Analysis by Michael Riffaterre," this study contends that the *al-Muqaddimah* establishes an illusory cohesive framework wherein the poet laments his estrangement by invoking the emotional vestiges of prior interactions. This poetry portion employs oblique language to depict the inner turmoil of a man whose love culminates in sorrow as his beloved's tribe departs, leaving him abandoned. The verses metaphorically depict a shared human experience, like yearning, reminiscence, and the anguish of separation, anchored in the emotional and cultural milieu of pre-Islamic Arab existence.

Matrix, Model, and Variants

The thematic essence of the *al-muqaddimah* verses of Tharafah bin al 'Abd's *al-Mu'allaqāt* is predominantly melancholic, stemming from an unforeseen separation. The sorrow sprang from a haunting recollection that reemerged in his mind. Recollections of former love evoke both pleasurable and painful experiences; pleasurable due to the encounters and painful due to the separations. Alongside the matrix, there exist models and variants. Models are lexical constructs or phrases that can embody poems in poetry.

The model can also be regarded as the initial realisation of the matrix. The model in this rhyme is 'dividing the ocean waves' due to its poetic nature, and the events depicted arise from the separation of a couple, analogous to the bow of a ship that 'splits the ocean waves' into two sections. The term *يَسُقُّ حَبَابَ الْمَاءِ*, meaning 'dividing the ocean waves,' corresponds to the verses found in the subsequent *muqaddimah* of *al-Mu'allaqāt* by Tharafah bin al 'Abd. While the images of ruins and fading tattoo marks, which primarily evoke memory and remembrance, the image of splitting the waves directly represents separation itself. The act of a ship cutting through the water creates a visual image of division, symbolizing the emotional rupture between Tharafah and Khaulah after her departure with her tribe. This image condenses the poem's central meaning into a single symbolic expression and serves as the basis for the development of other variants throughout the text. The ruins, the fading tattoo, and the departing caravan can thus be understood as variant expressions of the same underlying model of division and separation.

٣. كَأَنَّ حُدُوجَ الْمَالِكِيَّةِ غُدُوَّةٌ
خَلَايَا سَفِينٍ بِالنَّوَاصِفِ مِنْ دَدٍ
3. Bani Malik's mounts that early afternoon was like big ships in the streams of Dad's valley.
٤. عَدُولِيَّةٌ أَوْ مِنْ سَفِينِ ابْنِ يَامِنٍ
يَجُوزُ بِهَا الْمَلَّاحُ طَوْرًا وَيَهْتَدِي
4. The ships of the Bani Adūliyah or also Al-Muqaddimah Ath-Thalaliyyah Yamin, which the captain brought to anchor and sail.
٥. يَشُقُّ حَبَابَ الْمَاءِ حَيْرٌ وَمُهَا بِهَا
كَمَا قَسَمَ التَّرْبُ الْمَفَايِلُ بِالْيَدِ
5. The front of the ship separated the waves of the ocean like a child who divides the land in two with his hands when playing.

The concept of 'dividing the ocean waves' manifests in various forms throughout these *al-Muqaddimah* verses, specifically (1) flashing, and (2) the mounts of Bani Malik. The initial variation, 'sparkling,' denotes something that emerges and becomes the primary focus of the observer. In this line, memories of separation caused by the ruins dominate the poet's thoughts. This variation appears in the first and second verses. The second variant, 'Bani Malik's mounts,' represents the lover's departure with her tribe, leaving the poet behind. The poet mourns her departure, describing it as a 'large vessel traversing Dad's valley.' Her departure was unavoidable because she had to follow her tribe's journey and activities.

This version is depicted in verses three to five. According to the reading process that includes the interpretation and explanation of the matrix, model, and its variations. Ultimately, it can be asserted that the primary issue of these *muqaddimah* verses is that the poet laments Khaulah's departure shortly after he seen the wreckage of their former rendezvous. Her departure is characterised by the simultaneous passage of the ships of Bani Adūliyah and Ibn Yamin through the valley of Dad.

Hypogram

The second verse of *Muqaddimah* in *al-Mu'allaqāt* by Tharafah bin al-'Abd, which addresses his companion who descends to counsel the poet against sorrow and to exercise patience, exhibits an intertextual connection with the fifth verse of *al-Mu'allaqāt* by Imru' al-Qays, titled '*Qifā Nabki min Dzikrā Habīb wa Manzil*'.

٥. وَفُوقَهَا بِهَا صَحْبِي عَلَيَّ مَطْمَئِنِّمْ
يَقُولُونَ: لَا تَهْلِكْ أَسَى وَتَجَمَّلِ
5. My friends stopped from their vehicles for me, saying: do not be sad and try to be patient. (Ibrahim, 1969)

The two poems convey identical concepts and are articulated similarly; Tharafah's lyric use the term تَجَدَّد 'be patient', which parallels Imru' al-Qays's تَجَمَّل 'be patient'. The essence of the two aforementioned verses is identical; they convey the endeavour of a friend of the poet who seeks to advise him against despair and to exercise patience regarding his circumstances, thereby alleviating his sorrow. This notion is encapsulated in the Arabic proverb الصبر أفضل علاج للحزن, which translates to 'Patience is the best remedy for sadness.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the *al-Muqaddimah ath-Thalaliyyah* in Tharafah ibn al-'Abd al-Bakrī's *al-Mu'allaqāt* symbolically represents separation, longing, and emotional suffering through a series of interconnected poetic images. Using Michael Riffaterre's semiotic approach, the analysis reveals that the poem constructs meaning through heuristic and hermeneutic readings, supported by the identification of matrix, model, variants, and hypogram. The central matrix of the poem is emotional loss caused by separation from the beloved, Khaulah. This meaning is developed through symbolic images such as abandoned ruins, fading tattoo marks, caravans, and ships crossing the waters of Dad Valley, all of which represent memory, departure, and emotional division.

The study also finds that the poem employs indirect poetic expressions through figurative devices such as *tasybīh*, *isti'ārah*, and *kināyah* to intensify the emotional experience of separation. Furthermore, the intertextual relationship with Imru' al-Qays's *al-Mu'allaqāt* demonstrates that themes of longing and consolation form part of a broader poetic tradition in pre-Islamic Arabic literature.

This research contributes to Arabic literary studies by demonstrating the effectiveness of Riffaterre's semiotic theory in uncovering symbolic meanings in classical Arabic poetry. It also enriches the study of *Jahiliyyah* literature by highlighting how symbolic language reflects both personal emotion and the socio-cultural realities of pre-Islamic Arab society. Through semiotic analysis, the study reveals how poetic symbols function not only as aesthetic elements but also as representations of emotional experience and cultural values. In addition, this research provides a deeper understanding of the relationship between literary expression, symbolism, and social context in classical Arabic poetry. The findings may also serve as a reference for future studies on semiotics and Arabic literary criticism.

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