



Heuristic and Hermeneutic Analysis of Zuhair Bin Abi Sulma's Poetry

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the poetry of Zuhair bin Abi Sulma through Michael Riffaterre's semiotic approach, employing both heuristic and hermeneutic analysis. This methodology reveals the relationship between the language system, textual meaning, and the ethical and philosophical messages embedded in *Jahiliyah* Arabic poetry. The research adopts a descriptive qualitative design, utilizing seven stanzas from *Mu'allaqah* Zuhair bin Abi Sulma as data, which are examined lexically and grammatically at the heuristic stage and interpreted symbolically and contextually at the hermeneutic stage. The findings indicate that Zuhair's poetry offers profound reflections on human limitations, future uncertainty, the inevitability of death, the significance of moral wisdom, openness of character, and the role of speech in revealing the inner self. Through the integration of heuristic and hermeneutic readings, the poetry is interpreted not only as an aesthetic expression but also as an ethical-philosophical text that encapsulates the worldview of pre-Islamic Arab society and possesses universal value.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Poetry, as a form of literary work, has seen considerable developmental dynamics, both in terms of structure and meaning (Fuadah and Sofa, 2025). Poetry not only functions as a means of aesthetic portrayal but also as a medium for representing the poet's thoughts, life experiences, and worldview (Freeman, 2020; Serez, 2025; Pebrian et al., 2025). Poetic language in poetry works through symbols, metaphors, and indirect expressions that make its meaning not always understandable literally (Balla, 2012; Thwala, 2017). In line with Whorf's view that language shapes thought patterns and influences cultural perspectives (Irmalia et al., 2025), poetry demands a reading approach that is not only textual, but also contextual and interpretive (Solichan and Ahmadi, 2025).

In the Arab tradition, poetry holds a key position as part of the cultural and intellectual identity of its people (Bintang et al., 2025). Hitti stated that no other nation places as high a value on literature as the Arabs (Dardiri, 2011). Since pre-Islamic times, Arabic poetry has served as a medium for social legitimacy, moral criticism, and the preservation of tribal values (Rice and Hamdy, 2016; Szombathy, 2009). The tradition of hanging the best poems on the walls of the *Kaaba*, later known as *Mu'allaqāt*, demonstrates the central position of poetry in classical Arab civilization (Dahlan, 2011). Therefore, Arabic poetry from the *Jahiliyah* era is an important source to understand the value structure, ethics, and outlook on life of pre-Islamic Arab society.

One of the leading poets in the *Mu'allaqāt* tradition is Zuhair ibn Abi Sulma. He is known as a poet of the *Jahiliyah* era who emphasized reflective, ethical, and philosophical styles in his poetry (Azzam, 2022). His works not only show adherence to the conventions of classical Arabic poetic structure, such as the consistency of the *qafiyah* and the division of stanzas, but also contain deep ethical messages and life wisdom (Bunyamin, 2013; Hadri, 2025). This uniqueness distinguishes Zuhair's poetry from that of many other *Jahiliyah* poets who tended to emphasize aspects of heroics and tribal pride.

Previous studies have examined Zuhair bin Abi Sulma's poetry from various perspectives, including stylistic features, *balaghah* (religious rhetoric), and moral values (Marlina et al., 2024; Mufid et al., 2025; Dardiri, 2025). However, these studies tend to be partial, focusing on linguistic or thematic aspects in isolation, and have not fully integrated the analysis of meaning formation with deeper textual interpretation. Consequently, there remains a gap in research that comprehensively explains Zuhair's poetry as both a product of the poet's experience and a symbolic text rich in cultural significance.

The heuristic and hermeneutic approaches developed by Michael Riffaterre offer a relevant methodological structure to resolve these limitations. Heuristic reading focuses on the textual meaning and surface structure of poetry, while hermeneutic reading aims to uncover contextual, symbolic, and implicit meanings through the relationship between parts and the whole text (Pradopo, 2021; Supriatin, 2020). This approach provides for the analysis of poetry not only as a linguistic construct, but also as a representation of the value system and outlook of its society.

The novelty of this research is the application of an integrative heuristic-hermeneutic analysis to Zuhair bin Abi Sulma's poetry, revealing the relationship between the language system, the poet's experience, and the philosophical meaning of the text within the context of the *Jahiliyah*-period Arabic literature.

Accordingly, this study aims to demonstrate, through heuristic and hermeneutic analysis, how Zuhair bin Abi Sulma's poetry conveys nuanced ethical values and cultural messages, thereby establishing classical Arabic poetry as a literary heritage of enduring philosophical and universal significance.

2. METHODS

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a semiotic analysis method based on Michael Riffaterre's theory, specifically through two main stages: heuristic reading and hermeneutic reading (Riffaterre, 1978). This method was chosen because it is considered most relevant for the analysis of literary texts, especially classical Arabic poetry, which is characterized by indirect expression, symbolic density, and linguistic deviations that produce layers of indirect meaning (Supriatin, 2020). This type of research is a study of literary texts that focuses on the interpretation of meaning through a structural and contextual semiotic approach. This study does not involve field data, but instead focuses on the study of written texts in the form of the poem *Mu'allaqah* by Zuhair bin Abi Sulma.

The data source in this research is 7 stanzas of *Mu'allaqah* Zuhair bin Abi Sulma's poetry contained in the Diwan Zuhair bin Abi Sulma. The following 7 stanzas were studied,

تَمَانِينَ حَوْلًا . لَا أَبَا لَكَ . يَسْأَمُ	سَمِئْتُ تَكَالِيفَ الْحَيَاةِ وَمَنْ يَعِشْ
وَلَكِنِّي عَنْ عِلْمٍ مَا فِي غَدٍ عَمٍ	وَأَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْيَوْمِ وَالْأَمْسِ قَبْلَهُ
وَلَوْ نَالَ أَسْبَابَ السَّمَاءِ بِسَلْمٍ	وَمَنْ هَابِ أَسْبَابَ الْمَنَايَا يَنْلَنَّهُ
يَعُدُّ حَمْدَهُ ذَمًّا عَلَيْهِ وَيَنْدَمُ	وَمَنْ يَجْعَلِ الْمَعْرُوفَ فِي غَيْرِ أَهْلِهِ
وَلَوْ حَاهَا تَخْفَى عَلَى النَّاسِ تُعَلِّمُ	وَمَهْمَا تَكُنْ عِنْدَ امْرِئٍ مِنْ خَلِيقَةٍ
إِذَا هُوَ أَبَدَى مَا يَقُولُ مِنَ الْقَمِ	لِأَنَّ لِسَانَ الْمَرْءِ مِفْتَاحَ قَلْبِهِ
فَلَمْ يَبْقَ إِلَّا صُورَةُ اللَّحْمِ وَالْدَّمِ	لِسَانُ الْفَتَى نِصْفٌ وَنِصْفٌ فُؤَادِهِ

Data analysis was conducted through several stages. First, heuristic reading, which is an initial reading to understand the poem based on the surface language framework in accordance with the grammatical and semantic rules of Arabic, so that the literal meaning of the poem is obtained. Second, hermeneutic reading, which is a further reading that aims to interpret the symbolic, contextual, and ideological meaning of the poem by paying attention to literary conventions, inter-stanza relations, and the socio-cultural background of pre-Islamic Arabia. Through these stages, the meaning of the entire poem is interpreted in its entirety in accordance with the principles of Riffaterre's semiotics.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The discussion of Zuhair bin Abi Sulma's poem begins with a heuristic reading as the initial stage in semiotic analysis, according to Michael Riffaterre. This reading aims to uncover the textual meaning and surface structure of the poem based on Arabic language rules (Kurniawan et al., 2024). At this stage, the poem is understood literally according to the normative language system without involving deeper symbolic interpretation. The heuristic approach acts as the foundation of the analysis because it allows researchers to gain an initial understanding of the poem's content, diction patterns, and syntactic relations between stanzas that form a coherent, explicit meaning (Yuzmukhametova et al., 2018), before entering the hermeneutic reading stage to uncover the implicit and ideological meanings contained therein.

First stanza

سَيئَمْتُ تَكَالِيفَ الْحَيَاةِ وَمَنْ يَعِشْ ثَمَانِينَ حَوْلًا . لَا أَبَا لَكَ . يَسْأَمُ

I am fed up with the burdens of life, and anyone who lives for eighty years - without a father for you- is bound to be fed up.

Lexically, the first stanza of Zuhair bin Abi Sulma's poem begins with the verb سَيئَمْتُ, which means "I feel bored" or "I am fed up" (Munawwir, 2020). This choice of diction indicates the poet's intimate and contemplative psychological state. The word تَكَالِيفَ is the plural form of *taklīf*, which means a heavy burden, difficulty, or demand (Munawwir, 2020). In this context, the phrase تَكَالِيفَ الْحَيَاةِ lexically refers to the various demands and difficulties of life that humans must endure. The phrase ثَمَانِينَ حَوْلًا literally means "eighty years". As for the phrase لَا أَبَا لَكَ, lexically it means "you have no father".

From a grammatical point of view, this stanza is composed of two main clauses combined by the letter وَ, which shows continuity of meaning. The first clause is in the form of a verbal sentence (*jumlah fi'liyah*): سَيئَمْتُ تَكَالِيفَ الْحَيَاةِ, with the subject in *dhamir tā' Fa'il*, which refers to the poet as "I". The second clause is in the form of a conditional sentence (*jumlah syarṭiyyah*): وَمَنْ يَعِشْ ثَمَانِينَ حَوْلًا يَسْأَمُ, which begins with the particle مَنْ as the conditional *isim*, followed by the *fi'il mudhari' majzum* يَعِشْ and the answer to the condition يَسْأَمُ.

Based on hermeneutic analysis, this first stanza is no longer understood merely as an expression of the poet's personal boredom, but rather as a reflective-philosophical statement concerning the existential condition of human beings. The boredom (سَيئَمْتُ) towards (تَكَالِيفَ الْحَيَاةِ) does not only refer to the physical burden or difficulties of life in concrete terms, but symbolizes the accumulation of moral, social, and psychological responsibilities that continue to be attached to humans throughout their life journey.

The reference to eighty years of age serves as a symbolic hyperbole, representing longevity, not a rigid mathematical number. In the context of pre-Islamic Arab culture, old age was synonymous with long experience, wisdom, and spiritual exhaustion (Abbas, 2021). Thus, this weariness referred to is not simply physical exhaustion, but rather an existential weariness resulting from the repetition of life, social conflict, and never-ending demands for values.

The phrase لَا أَبَا لَكَ in hermeneutic reading is understood not as a literal curse, but as an emotional affirmation that strengthens the intensity of the stanza's moral message. This expression functions as a stylistic marker that stresses the sincerity of the statement, while also demonstrating the rhetorical style typical of *Jahili* poetry, which is plain and assertive (Indriati et al., 2025).

This first stanza establishes the overarching theme of the transience and weariness of human life, which serves as the matrix of meaning for the subsequent stanzas. From Riffaterre's perspective, the tiredness of life functions as a conceptual hypogram that guides the reader to understand this poem as an ethical and philosophical reflection, not simply an outpouring of individual feelings. Thus, Zuhair positions himself as an observer of life who advises humans to recognize the limitations of their existence and to be wise in facing life's inevitable burdens.

Second stanza

وَأَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْيَوْمِ وَالْأَمْسِ قَبْلَهُ وَلَكِنِّي عَنْ عِلْمِ مَا فِي عَدِ عَمِ

I know what happened today and yesterday. But I don't know what will happen tomorrow.

Lexically, this stanza begins with the verb وَأَعْلَمُ, which means "and I know" (Saleh, 2020). This verb indicates the poet's cognitive activity and intellectual awareness of the reality he experiences. The object of this knowledge is expressed through the phrase مَا فِي الْيَوْمِ وَالْأَمْسِ قَبْلَهُ, which literally means "what happened today and yesterday before." This expression

encompasses the present and past dimensions of time as a space of experience that humans can understand.

In contrast, the phrase *عَنْ عَلِمَ مَا فِي غَدٍ عَم* emphasizes ignorance of the future. The word *غَدٍ* means “tomorrow” or “future,” while the word *عَم* lexically means “blind” (Munawwir, 2020). In this context, blindness is used to describe humans' inability to know something that has not yet happened, although heuristically it is still understood as factual ignorance.

From a grammatical perspective, this stanza consists of two clauses linked by the opposition particle *وَلَكِنِّي*, which serves to mark opposition or contrast in meaning. The first clause is in the form of a verbal sentence (*Jumlah fi'liyah*): *وَأَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْيَوْمِ وَالْأَمْسِ قَبْلَهُ*, with the *dhamir mutakallim* “I” as the hidden subject in the *fi'il mudhari*. The second clause is preceded by *inna wa akhawātuhā* in the form *لَكِنِّي*, which stresses the meaning of the opposition between knowledge and ignorance.

The use of the letter *jar* (*عَنْ*) in the phrase *عَنْ عَلِمَ مَا فِي غَدٍ عَم* indicates separation and the lack of access to future knowledge. This grammatical structure clarifies the epistemological distance between humans and events that have not yet occurred.

At the hermeneutic level, this second stanza not only conveys an objective assertion about the limits of human knowledge but also presents an epistemological conception of the restrictions of human reason. Knowledge of “today” and “yesterday” represents the domain of empirical and historical experience, something that can be sensed, experienced, and remembered. Constanzaly, ignorance of “tomorrow” symbolizes a metaphysical realm that lies beyond the reach of human reason and experience.

From Riffaterre's semiotic perspective, the temporal opposition between *الْيَوْمِ* and *الْأَمْسِ* on the one hand, and *غَدٍ* on the other, functions as a symbolic binary opposition between the recognized and the unseen. Ignorance of the future is not the poet's individual weakness, but rather a universal human condition. Thus, this stanza shifts its meaning from personal confession to philosophical consideration of the nature of human knowledge.

The statement “I know” at the beginning of the stanza is not intended as a claim of intellectual arrogance, but rather as a starting point for affirming one's own limitations. Hermeneutically, this structure creates a reflective irony: the wider one's experience of the past and present, the more aware one becomes of one's inability to penetrate the veil of the future (Nizar, 2023). This rhythm of meaning reinforces the moral message that wisdom is born from an awareness of one's own limitations.

This second stanza deepens the theme of mortality introduced in the first. While the first stanza stresses the saturation of life due to the length of experience, the second stanza adds the dimension of future uncertainty as a source of human existential anxiety. Thus, the hermeneutic meaning of this stanza directs the reader to an ethical attitude of humility, vigilance, and the awareness that humans, no matter how experienced, remain powerless over what will happen in the future.

Third stanza

وَمَنْ هَابَ أَسْبَابَ الْمَنَائَا يَنْلَنَّهُ وَلَوْ نَالَ أَسْبَابَ السَّمَاءِ بِسُلْمٍ

Whoever is afraid of the causes of death will surely find them, Even though he reaches for the heavenly causes with a ladder.

Lexically, the third stanza begins with the particle *وَمَنْ*, which functions as a conditional sentence marker and contains a generalizing meaning. The verb *هَابَ* is synonymous with the word *خاف*, which means “fear” (Munawwir, 2020), which indicates a psychological attitude in the form of fear or excessive vigilance. The object of this fear is *أَسْبَابَ الْمَنَائَا*, where the word *أَسْبَابَ* means “causes” or “means”, while *الْمَنَائَا* is the plural of *المنية*, which means “death”. Lexically, this phrase refers to different factors or paths that lead humans to death.

In the next clause, the verb *يَبْلُغُهُ* means “he will get it,” with the *dhamir -hu* referring to death. The phrase *أَسْبَابَ السَّمَاءِ* means “the causes of the heavens,” which literally refers to the means to reach the heavens. The word *سُلْمٌ* means “ladder,” which serves as a tool to help climb to high places.

Grammatically, this stanza is composed of a *Jumlah syarṭiyyah* that begins with *وَمَنْ هَابَ*. The *fi'il māḍī* *هَابَ* functions as the *jumlah syarṭhiyyah*, while the answer to the condition is *يَبْلُغُهُ* in the form of the *fi'il mudhāri' majzum*. This structure shows a definite causal relationship between human behavior and the consequences it receives.

The second clause begins with the particle *وَلَوْ*, which functions as a preposition for *imtinā' li imtinā'*, indicating an impossible or difficult assumption. The phrase *نَالِ أَسْبَابِ السَّمَاءِ بِسُلْمٍ* functions as an additional description that emphasizes that even if humans are able to do something very difficult or almost impossible, the consequences stated in the main clause still apply.

On a hermeneutic level, this third stanza presents an existential paradox about death and human fear. Literally, the poet states that anyone who fears the causes of death will experience it, even if they try to reach the "causes of heaven" with a ladder. However, the stanza's deeper meaning lies in symbolizing human efforts to escape an inevitable fate.

Hermeneutically, this stanza contains an implicit critique of a life dominated by excessive fear. This fear actually traps humans in constant anxiety, so that life loses its substantive meaning. Thus, Zuhair discusses death not simply as a biological event, but as an ontological reality which requires acceptance and wisdom.

This third stanza expands on the theme of human limitations that emerged in the previous stanzas. While the second stanza stressed the limitations of knowledge about the future, the third stanza stresses the limitations of human power over death. Hermeneutically, the moral message expressed is that serenity in life does not come from fleeing death, but through the courage to accept fate and live life with values and integrity.

Fourth stanza

وَمَنْ يَجْعَلِ الْمَعْرُوفَ فِي غَيْرِ أَهْلِهِ يَعْذُ حَمْدُهُ دَمًّا عَلَيْهِ وَيَنْدَمُ

Whoever bestows kindness upon those who are not deserving of it, his praise will turn into blame upon him, and he will regret it.

Lexically, the fourth stanza begins with the particle *وَمَنْ*, which functions as a conditional sentence marker and carries a general meaning. The verb *يَجْعَلِ* means "to make," "to place," or "to place" (Munawwir, 2020), indicating an active and deliberate action. The object of this action is *الْمَعْرُوفَ*, which lexically means goodness, good deeds, or commendable actions that are socially and morally recognized.

The phrase *فِي غَيْرِ أَهْلِهِ* literally means “to someone other than the expert” or “out of place,” indicating inappropriate targeting in doing good. In the second clause, the word *حَمْدُهُ* means “his praise,” while *دَمًّا* means “reproach.” The change from praise to rebuke indicates a reversal of social values. The verb *يَنْدَمُ* means “he regretted,” indicating the psychological consequences of the action.

Grammatically, this stanza is a *syarṭiyyah* sentence beginning with *وَمَنْ يَجْعَلِ*. The *fi'il mudhāri* *يَجْعَلِ* functions as a *syarṭ* sentence and is in a *majzum* state because it is preceded by the conditional particle *man*. The answer to the condition is expressed through two *mudhāri* verbs, namely *يَعْذُ* and *يَنْدَمُ*. This structure shows the continuity of the effect that is immediate and definite. Syntactically, *حَمْدُهُ* functions as a *fa'il* for the *fi'il* *يَعْذُ*, while *دَمًّا* functions as *maf'ul bih*, which explains the change in status from praise to blame.

On a hermeneutic level, this fourth stanza contains an ethical critique of the practice of kindness that lacks wisdom and moral precision. Literally, Zuhair states that someone who

places kindness beyond its purview will find praise turned into blame and ultimately regret. However, symbolically, this stanza emphasizes that the value of kindness is determined not solely by intention but also by the context, target, and worthiness of the recipient.

The term *المعروف* in the Arab tradition of *Jahiliyah* not only means "goodness" in the general sense, but also refers to actions that are socially recognized as right, proper, and dignified (Webb, 2014). When this goodness is placed as *في غير أهله*, this expression becomes a symbol of ethical deviation, namely the failure to read social reality and human character. From Riffaterre's semiotic perspective, this phrase is an indirect sign that implies that goodness without wisdom has the potential to cause damage to meaning and social relations (Setiawan and Andayani, 2019).

The change from praise to condemnation presents a strong semantic opposition, hermeneutically affirming the relativity of social judgments on human actions. Zuhair demonstrates that actions that appear outwardly noble can lose their moral legitimacy if undertaken without careful ethical consideration. Thus, this stanza does not simply address social consequences but also contains a philosophical reflection on the individual's moral responsibility for acting.

This fourth stanza stresses the didactic orientation of Zuhair ibn Abi Sulma's poetry, which places wisdom as the primary foundation of social life. The hermeneutic message it conveys is that real goodness demands moral intelligence, social sensitivity, and the ability to evaluate situations, not simply emotional impulses or the urge for recognition. Therefore, this stanza represents Zuhair's ethical perspective, which transcends his time and continues to be relevant as a universal principle in human life.

Fifth stanza

وَمَهْمَا تَكُنْ عِنْدَ امْرِئٍ مِنْ خَلِيقَةٍ وَلَوْ خَالَهَا تَخْفَى عَلَى النَّاسِ تُعْلَمُ

Whatever trait a person may possess, even if he thinks it is hidden from people, it will become known.

Lexically, the fifth stanza begins with the particle *وَمَهْمَا*, which serves as a general conditional marker and means "whatever" or "however." This particle indicates the breadth of the statement being made. The word *تَكُنْ* is a verb derived from the root *kāna*, denoting a state (Khaironi, 2021). The word *امرئ* means "a person" or "human being," while *خليفة* lexically means a person's nature, morals, or innate character (Munawwir, 2020). The phrase *مِنْ خَلِيقَةٍ* emphasizes that what is meant is the internal nature or moral character of an individual.

In the second clause, the word *خَالَهَا* means "he thinks," which indicates the subjective perception of the perpetrator. The word *تَخْفَى* means "hidden" or "obscure," while *تُعْلَمُ* means "known" or "will be known." The contrast between *تَخْفَى* and *تُعْلَمُ* marks the opposition of meaning between concealment and openness. From a grammatical perspective, this stanza is structured in the form of a conditional sentence (the number of requirements) that begins with *وَمَهْمَا تَكُنْ*. The verb *تَكُنْ* is in a *majzum* state as a result of the conditional particle *مَهْمَا*.

The second clause begins with the particle *وَلَوْ*, which indicates an assumption or concession to a situation that is considered possible or believed by the subject. The verb *خَالَ* functions as a *fi'il māḍī* indicating subjective assumption, while the answer to the assumption is stated through the *fi'il mudhāri' majzum* *تُعْلَمُ*. This structure indicates that the final result is not influenced by the subjective assumption of the actor.

Hermeneutically, this fifth stanza stresses the principle of human moral openness before society, namely that a person's inner nature and character will eventually be revealed, even though he tries to hide it. Zuhair's statement goes beyond its literal meaning and functions as a philosophical reflection on the relationship between inner and outer, as well as between the individual and the social order.

The word خَلِيقَةً not only refers to nature or character in a psychological sense, but additionally reflects the ethical disposition that forms human repetitive behavior. In Riffaterre's semiotic perspective, character becomes a latent sign that continuously produces meaning through actions and speech (Setiawan and Andayani, 2019). Therefore, attempts to hide the true character expressed through the phrase وَلَوْ خَالَهَا تَخْفَى عَلَى النَّاسِ are an illusion, because the social system and human interactions will naturally read and reveal these signs.

The phrase "تُعْلَمُ" at the end of the stanza serves as a deterministic affirmation that social knowledge of individual character is inevitable. Within a hermeneutic framework, this word means more than simply "known," but also implies that moral truth has a power to manifest itself outside individual will. Thus, Zuhair presents an ethical perspective that places honesty and integrity as the foundation of a stable social life.

This fifth stanza serves as a thematic link between the social critique of the previous stanza and the anthropological reflection on human nature. While the fourth stanza stressed the fallacy of giving priority to goodness, the fifth stanza asserts that inner character is the primary determinant of the quality of human action, and it cannot be permanently obscured. The hermeneutic message communicated is that humans essentially live in a space of moral legibility, making character formation an unavoidable ethical responsibility.

Sixth stanza

لَأَنَّ لِسَانَ الْمَرْءِ مِفْتَاحَ قَلْبِهِ إِذَا هُوَ أَبْدَى مَا يَقُولُ مِنَ الْفَمِ

Because a person's tongue is the key to his heart. If he shows what he says with his mouth.

Lexically, the sixth stanza begins with the particle لَأَنَّ, which means "because," and serves to explain the cause or reason for the previous statement. The word لِسَانَ means "tongue" or "speech," which in Arabic refers not only to a physical organ but also to the ability to speak. The word الْمَرْءِ means "a person" or "human being," while مِفْتَاحُ means "key," which is a tool to open or a means to know something.

The word قَلْبِهِ means "his heart," which in the context of classical Arabic culture is often understood as the center of human feelings, intentions, and morals. In the second clause, the word أَبْدَى means "to reveal" or "to reveal," while the phrase مَا يَقُولُ refers to the content of one's speech. The phrase مِنَ الْفَمِ literally means "from the mouth," stressing the verbal and outward aspects of human expression (Munawwir, 2020).

Grammatically, this stanza consists of two clauses that are related to each other through cause and effect. The first clause is a phrase that begins with the letters *jar* and *Anna*: لَأَنَّ لِسَانَ الْمَرْءِ مِفْتَاحَ قَلْبِهِ, with *lisān al-mar'i* as the *isim anna* and *miftāḥ qalbihi* as the *khobar anna*. The particle لَأَنَّ serves to strengthen the logical relationship between this stanza and the previous stanza.

The second clause is in the form of a conditional sentence beginning with إِذَا, which indicates the condition or time when the event occurred. The word هُوَ functions as a *dhamir faṣl*, which stresses the human subject in general. *Fi'il māḍī* أَبْدَى indicates the actual action of expressing speech, while the phrase مَا يَقُولُ مِنَ الْفَمِ functions as an adverb that explains the process of oral expression.

At the hermeneutic level, this sixth stanza contains a central metaphor about the relationship between language, the mind, and human values. The statement that "a person's tongue is the key to his heart" is not simply intended physiologically, but likewise symbolizes that language in the form of speech functions as the primary means to open and reveal the contents of the human mind. From Riffaterre's semiotic perspective, the metaphor مِفْتَاحُ قَلْبِهِ is an indirect sign that points to the mechanism of revealing inner meaning through verbal expression (Setiawan and Andayani, 2019).

The phrase "The words of the Prophet Muhammad" emphasizes that speech is not a neutral event, but rather a manifestation of a person's inner disposition and value system. Thus, language is not seen merely as a means of communication, but as a moral and ethical indicator. In the context of Arab *Jahiliyah* culture, eloquence and word choice held high social value, making one's speech a measure of honor, wisdom, and individual integrity (Sahin, 2022). Every spoken word contains traces of inner attitudes, whether in the form of wisdom, arrogance, sincerity, or falsehood (Pietrzak, 2022).

This sixth stanza serves as a conceptual foundation for language ethics. The hermeneutic message expressed is that humans cannot separate moral responsibility from the use of language. Therefore, Zuhair positions control over speech as a form of ethical maturity, as it is through speech that a person's inner values are read and assessed within the social order.

Seventh stanza

لِسَانُ الْفَتَى نِصْفٌ وَنِصْفٌ فُؤَادِهِ فَلَمْ يَبْقَ إِلَّا صُورَةُ اللَّحْمِ وَالْدَّمِ

A person's tongue is half and the other half is his heart, Apart from that it is just a form of flesh and blood.

Lexically, the seventh stanza begins with the phrase لِسَانُ الْفَتَى, which means "the tongue of a young man" or "someone's speech." The word الْفَتَى in Arabic not only refers to youth but likewise symbolizes humans in general as moral and social subjects. The word نِصْفٌ means "half," indicating an essential division of human nature (Munawwir, 2020).

The phrase وَنِصْفٌ فُؤَادِهِ means, "and the other half is his heart." The word فُؤَادٍ means the heart in the inner sense, the center of feelings, intentions, and moral consciousness. In the second clause, the phrase صُورَةُ اللَّحْمِ وَالْدَّمِ literally means "the form of flesh and blood." The word صُورَةٌ refers to the outward appearance or form, while اللَّحْمُ and الدَّمُ emphasize the physical-biological aspects of human beings. Grammatically, this stanza consists of two main clauses. The first clause is a nominal sentence: لِسَانُ الْفَتَى نِصْفٌ وَنِصْفٌ فُؤَادِهِ, with لِسَانُ الْفَتَى as *mubtada'* and نِصْفٌ as *khabar*.

The second clause begins with the particle فَلَمْ, which indicates a logical consequence of the previous statement. The *fi'il mudhāri'* يَبْقَى indicates the absence or loss of any other element besides the one already mentioned. The phrase إِلَّا صُورَةُ اللَّحْمِ وَالْدَّمِ functions as an exception, stressing that apart from the tongue and the heart, there are no other essential elements that determine human nature.

Hermeneutically, this seventh stanza culminates Zuhair bin Abi Sulma's ethical and anthropological reflections on human nature. The statement that the tongue and the heart are each "half" of a human being carries a symbolic meaning that the core of humanity is determined by the unity between language and the mind. Within Riffaterre's semiotic framework, this division is not intended mathematically, but rather as a symbolic oppositional structure that stresses the dominance of the moral and spiritual dimensions over the physical (Setiawan and Andayani, 2019).

The phrase "Apart from that it is just a form of flesh and blood" serves to reduce the human body to a mere biological form when it loses its linguistic integrity and clarity of heart. A body devoid of ethical values is depicted as merely "flesh and blood" an image that negates the dignity of humans as meaningful beings. Thus, Zuhair presents an implicit critique of a life that denies ethics, wisdom, and moral responsibility in speech and behavior.

This stanza thematically ties together the previous ideas: the limitations of life, the uncertainty of the future, the inevitability of death, the importance of wisdom in doing good, the openness of character, and the role of speech as a revealer of the inner self. Hermeneutically, the seventh stanza asserts that humans are judged not by their age, strength, or social status, but by the quality of their hearts and the language they use.

The philosophical message of this stanza is universal. Zuhair places language and the heart as the primary foundations of humanity, making his poem not simply an aesthetic work as well as a reflective text containing ethical guidance on how humans should live, speak, and define themselves in society.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the heuristic and hermeneutic analysis of Zuhair bin Abi Sulma's poem, it can be concluded that this poem not only represents the aesthetic beauty of *Jahiliyah* Arabic literature but also contains deep ethical and philosophical reflections on the nature of human life. The heuristic reading successfully uncovers the linguistic structure, choice of diction, and grammatical relations that build the literal meaning of each stanza. This stage shows that Zuhair employs straightforward, concise, and structured language through conditional sentences, semantic oppositions, and concrete metaphors that are easily recognized in the classical Arabic language system. Thus, the heuristic reading serves as an important basis for comprehending the coherence of explicit meaning before entering a deeper stage of interpretation.

A hermeneutic reading reveals that beneath the seemingly simple linguistic structure, Zuhair's poetry contains a complex system of symbolic meaning. Each stanza is interconnected within a matrix of meaning centered on human limitations: age, knowledge, power over life and death, and the boundaries of human influence over social judgment. Zuhair is not merely conveying personal experiences, but positions himself as a reflective poet who offers a worldview grounded in wisdom, acceptance of fate, and moral responsibility. Themes such as existential boredom, future uncertainty, the inevitability of death, the importance of discernment in doing good, openness of character, and the role of speech in revealing the inner self collectively form a unified and reinforcing ethical message.

Zuhair ibn Abi Sulma's poetry can be read not only as a cultural product of the *Jahiliyah* period but also as a universal text relevant across time, as it contains timeless ethical principles of humanity. This finding strengthens Zuhair's position as a philosophical moral poet and demonstrates that Arabic poetry of the *Jahiliyah* period is an important source for the study of literature, philosophy of life, and human values in the Arab intellectual tradition.

5. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. Authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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