



## Mahrajan Arabi Proceeding International Conference in Arabic Festival (INCAFA) 2025

### UNAIZAH IN THE POETIC IMAGERY OF UMRU'UL QAYS: A MICHAEL RIFFATERRE'S SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS ON AL- MU'ALLAQAT POETRY

**Habib Muharrom Sudarmawan**

Fakultas Sastra, Universitas Negeri Malang

Jalan Semarang No. 5, Malang 65145 Telepon/Faks: 0341-567475, 551312

Pesawat 235 Laman: [www.um.ac.id](http://www.um.ac.id)

[habib.sudarmawan.fs@um.ac.id](mailto:habib.sudarmawan.fs@um.ac.id)

#### ABSTRACT

The *Al-Mu'allaqāt* poems are rich in themes of love, including vivid imagery of the beloved. In the *Al-Mu'allaqāt* composed by Umru'ul Qays, Unaizah as the female figure frequently emerges as a central image that operates both literally and symbolically. This study aims to reveal the symbolic meaning of the image of Unaizah in the poetry of Umru'ul Qays using Michael Riffaterre's semiotic approach. The applied method includes heuristic reading, which focuses on the linguistic level, and hermeneutic reading, which operates at the literary level. Data are drawn from stanzas 31 to 41 of the *Al-Mu'allaqat* poetry, which prominently feature the image of Unaizah. The findings indicate that Unaizah is portrayed through idealized physical imagery, which evokes emotional effects such as love and profound longing. The image of Unaizah represents a beauty that stirs desire and becomes a field of meaning within the poem's semiotic structure. Her symbolism transcends the role of a mere romantic figure, emerging as a poetic construct that intricately links form and meaning in the context of pre-Islamic poetry.

**Keyword:** *Unaizah, Umru'ul Qays, Al-Mu'allaqāt, Riffaterre's semiotics, pre-Islamic poetry, female imagery*

#### مستخلص البحث

تتضمن قصائد المعلقات موضوعات متعددة عن الحب، ومن بينها صور خيالية للحبيب. وفي المعلقات لامرئ القيس، تظهر شخصية عنيزة بوصفها صورة مركزية لا تؤدي وظيفة حرفية فحسب، بل تحمل دلالات رمزية أيضاً. يهدف هذا البحث إلى الكشف عن المعنى الرمزي لصورة عنيزة في شعر المعلقات لامرئ القيس، وذلك من خلال اعتماد منهج السيميائية عند مايكل ريفاتير. وقد تم استخدام طريقتين في القراءة: القراءة الهيوريستية، أي القراءة على مستوى اللغة، والقراءة الهرمنيوطيقية، أي القراءة على مستوى الأدب والسياق الثقافي. تم جمع البيانات من الأبيات الحادية والثلاثين إلى الحادية والأربعين من القصيدة التي تتضمن بشكل بارز صورة عنيزة. وتبين نتائج البحث أن عنيزة صُوِّرت بوصفها مثلاً للجمال الجسدي المثالي، مما أثار تأثيراً عاطفياً يتجلى في الحب والحنين العميق. وتمثل صورة عنيزة جمالاً يحرك الشوق وتصبح ميداناً للمعنى في بنية القصيدة السيميائية. ولا تقتصر رمزية عنيزة على كونها مجرد معشوقة، بل تتجاوز ذلك لتكون بناءً شعرياً يربط بين الشكل والمعنى بطريقة غير مباشرة في سياق الشعر الجاهلي.

Classical Arabic poetry, especially that belonging to the *Al-Mu'allaqat* group, holds a special position in the history of Arabic literature. Arabs regarded *Jahiliyyah* Poetry, particularly *Mu'allaqat* Poetry, as '*Diwanul-'Arab*' which means Arabs saw it as expressing their greatest cultural ideals and aspirations (Kamaldeen, 2012). These poems were then used to inform about the life of the *jahiliyyah* and matters related to it (Tjalau & Safii, 2023). By calling these *Jahiliyyah* poems as *Diwanul-Arab*, they are not only a legacy of the early Arabs in terms of linguistics and aesthetics, but also they transmit a collective memory of the past that brings continuity of meaning to the current reality. This is in accordance with Zoest's (1991:3) thought that the process of interpretation can occur because the sign in question refers to a reality. Then, Panatapraja (2020:187) is also in line with this by mentioning in the closing of his book by mentioning that *Al-Mu'allaqat's* poems are truths that are derived from the world of the creation of a work of art, and originally stand firmly on their own.

Among the poets of *Al-Mu'allaqat*, Umru'ul Qays occupies a central place as a pioneer of *qasidah* poetry with themes of love, wandering, and high aesthetic awareness. One of the imaginative elements that often appears in his poetry is a female figure named Unaizah. One of Umru'ul Qays' poems with the most vivid and complete description of Unaizah is in his poem *Mu'allaqat*. In the poem *Mu'allaqat*, Unaizah is not only present as a literal figure, but also as a symbolic representation that is full of meaning. In *al-Mu'allaqat*, Umru'ul-Qais pours out his flirtations addressed to Unaizah (Sudarmawan & Adlawati, 2024), one of the flirtations he expresses is the form of Unaizah's imagery in his poem. The presence of Unaizah in the poem demands a deeper reading, not only as a character of the story, but as a semiotic element that mediates hidden meanings in the structure of the poem.

In the context of semiotic reading of poetry, Michael Riffaterre's (1978) offers an approach with a strong theoretical framework for interpreting the meaning of literature as a system of signs. This theory is very operational down to the micro text (Kamil, 2009), and with it the results of the study carried out become more comprehensive. This is because his semiotic theory has two steps in its approach to literary works, they are heuristic reading and hermeneutic reading (Sudarmawan, 2022). Heuristic reading is the initial stage in text analysis that focuses on the language structure or basic semiotic system. Semiotically, this kind of reading only covers the first level of semiotics (Endraswara, 2013). In the context of poetry, this approach is used to analyze the linguistic elements in order to obtain a literal understanding of meaning. In contrast, hermeneutic reading is the next step after the heuristic stage, which involves reinterpreting the text in light of the literary and cultural context. Semiotically, this kind of reading covers the second level of semiotics. The aim is to explore the deeper and symbolic meaning of the text that has been analyzed superficially before (Ratih, 2017). This approach is particularly relevant for dissecting Umru'ul Qays' poetry, which is known for its symbolic complexity.

Literary works are systems of signs that have meaning in accordance with the conventions of signification. According to Pradopo (2003: 109) literary works are a second-level semiotic system that uses language as the first-level semiotic system. From its nature, a literary work is a reflection of the author's thoughts, feelings and desires through a unique language, namely

language that contains signs or semiotics. The language will form a system of signs called semiotics and the science that studies this problem is semiology (Endraswara, 2013: 63). Semiotics in literature is not a genre. Literary semiotics studies the natural language used in literature, but also other sign systems, to find its codes (Luxemburg, 1992: 45).

Basically, literary works are an inseparable part of culture, because they are born as a reflection of the value system, norms, and worldview of the society that gave birth to them. In this case, classical Arabic poetry such as Umru'ul Qays' *Al-Mu'allaqat* reflects the cultural reality of pre-Islamic Arab society, especially in terms of how they viewed love, beauty and gender relations. Culture is easier to understand when viewed from a semiotic angle, as semiotics allows us to interpret cultural signs hidden in the structure of literary texts. This research departs from this idea, by making the character Unaizah the center of poetic imagery full of symbols and signs.

Through Michael Riffaterre's semiotic approach, this research tries to unravel how the figure of Unaizah is constructed in the poetic imagery of Umru'ul Qays and how the construction of meaning can be traced through Riffaterre's semiotic mechanism, because according to Riffaterre (in Faruk, 2017: 141) poetry always expresses concepts and objects indirectly. Simply put, poetry always says things that mean other things. Faruk then continues that poetry always has a special way of carrying its meaning. Through this approach, this study not only presents a new reading of classical poetic texts, but also highlights the process of meaning production in classical Arabic literary works that are rich in symbols and cultural conventions.

The literature review in this research covers two main areas, they are the study of *Al-Mu'allaqāt* and Michael Riffaterre's semiotic theory. Previous studies on *Al-Mu'allaqāt* generally focused on thematic aspects, *qasidah* structure, and socio-cultural values in pre-Islamic Arabic poetry, such as the writing of Risaldi P, M., Ramadhan, I., and Nur, M. in 2024 with the title “*Analisis Syair Al-Muallaqat Amru bin Kultsum (Pendekatan Ilmu Arudh)*”/“*Analysis of Amru bin Kultsum's Al-Muallaqat Poem (Arudh Science Approach)*”. This research focuses on the science of *Arudh* to analyze the poem *Mu'allaqat* by Amru bin Kultsum. The results of this study indicate that Amru bin Kultsum's *muallaqat* poem uses *bahr wafir* and there are *wazn* changes in each stanza. There are two changes, namely *zihaf ashb* and *illah qathf*, and these changes occur in *hasyu*, *arudh*, and *dharb* (Risaldi, Ramadhan, & Nur, 2024).

Furthermore, Khoiril Fata in 2023 wrote in the proceedings of the National Conference on Adab and Humanities with the title “*Ghazal fi qashidati al muallaqat li Atarah bin Syaddad*”/“*Ghazal in the Poetry Al-Mu'allaqat by Antarah bin Syaddad*”. This research focuses on *ghazal* verses in the poem *al-Mu'allaqat* by Antarah bin Syaddad. The result of this research is that there are two types of *ghazal* used by Antarah in his *qasidah*, namely *ghazal 'udzriy* and *ghazal sharih*. It can also be concluded that *ghazal 'udzriy* is more dominant than *ghazal sharih* in *Qasidah Al-Muallaqat* by Antarah bin Syaddad (Fata, Wulandari, & Rahmawati, 2023).

While there is a study of Riffaterre's theory of Arabic poetry entitled '*Sada Harb*' by Firmansyah. The study is entitled “*Analisis Semiotika Riffaterre pada Syi'ir “Sada Al-Harb”*”

*Karya Ahmad Syauqi*”/“Riffaterre's Semiotic Analysis of the *Syi'ir 'Sada Al-Harb* ' by Ahmad Syauqi”. The study focuses on how the poem depicts war and its impact through the use of signs, metaphors and symbols. The analysis shows that *Ṣadā al-Harb* voices the complex emotional struggles associated with war, presenting images of heroism as well as the suffering it causes. This study concluded that Ahmad Syauqi's poem is a subtle criticism of the reality of the war he faced (Firmansyah, 2024). This research uses Riffaterre's theory with heuristic and hermeneutic readings to get the meaning in the poem.

Furthermore, in the same year, there were studies that analyzed *al-mu'allaqat* using Riffaterre's semiotic theory, such as those conducted by Sudarmawan, H. and Adewati, M. in 2024 with the title judul “*Bait-Bait Gombalan Umru'ul-Qais Terhadap Unaizah dalam Al-Mu'allaqāt (Analisis Semiotik Michael Riffaterre)*”/“Umru'ul-Qays' Flirtation Stanzas to Unaizah in *Al-Mu'allaqāt* (Michael Riffaterre's Semiotic Analysis)”. This study reveals that Umru'ul-Qays' flirtation stanzas describe how his desire to get the heart of Unaizah, even after rejection, he still provides further flirting so that Unaizah is interested in him. Umru'ul-Qays experienced unrequited love with Unaizah, which is reflected in the couplets in his work (Sudarmawan & Adewati, 2024). The difference with the research that will be conducted is the focus of the material object. The previous research discusses Umru'ul Qays' flirtation stanzas to Unaizah, while this research will discuss the imagery of Unaizah in Umru'ul Qays' poetry.

Thus, this study is expected to make a theoretical contribution to the field of Arabic literary studies and at the same time expand the application of semiotic theory in the reading of Middle Eastern literary texts that have tended to be studied philologically or thematically.

## METHODS

This study employs a qualitative descriptive method to describe and interpret the symbolic meanings in the *Al-Mu'allaqāt* poem by Umru'ul Qays, particularly focusing on the imagery of the character Unaizah. As explained by Sugiyono (2022:9), the qualitative descriptive approach aims to present phenomena as they are in a systematic and factual manner. The research data consists of poetic verses from line 31 to line 41 that depict various images of Unaizah. Data collection was conducted through library research by referring to the primary poem text and its classical commentary, namely *Syarḥ Az-Zauzanī*. The data analysis in this study applies Michael Riffaterre's semiotic theory, specifically heuristic reading and hermeneutic reading. Heuristic reading is used at the linguistic level to comprehend the literal or surface meaning of the text, while hermeneutic reading is applied as a second, contextual and interpretive reading to uncover the hidden and symbolic meanings within the literary text. These two stages are considered sufficient to reveal Unaizah's image as a poetic construct within the framework of Jahiliyah poetry.

## RESULTS

### Verses Depicting Unaizah's Image in *Al-Mu'allaqat*

مُهْفَهْمَةٌ بِيضَاءِ عَيْزٍ مُقَاصَّةٍ # تَرَائِيهَا مَصْفُورَةٌ كَالسَّجْنَجَلِ ٣١.

31. Slim, slender-bellied, and her chest was white as a piece of silver. ٣٢.  
 كَبِكَرِ الْمَمَانَاةِ الْبَيَاضِ بِصُفْرَةٍ # عَدَاهَا نَمِيرُ الْمَاءِ غَيْرَ مُحَلَّلِ
32. Yellowish white skin, clear like unused water in the morning. ٣٣.  
 تَصَدُّ وَتُبْدِي عَنَ أَسِيلٍ وَتَتَّقِبِ # نَاطِرَةٌ مِنِ وَحْشٍ وَجَرَةٌ مُطْفَلِ
33. And it was clear from her smooth cheeks, and a calm gaze like a mother's gaze towards her child. ٣٤.  
 وَجِيدٌ كَجِيدِ الرَّيْمِ لَيْسَ بِفَاحِشٍ # إِذَا هِيَ نَصَّتُهُ وَلَا بِمُعْطَلِ
34. And her neck was like the neck of a gazelle, long and flawless, a well-groomed neck. ٣٥.  
 وَفَرَعٌ يَرِيئُ الْمَثْنَ أَسْوَدَ فَاحِمٍ # أَيْثُثٌ كَقَفْنِ النَّخْلَةِ الْمَعْتَكِلِ
35. Her long and black hair flowed beautifully down her back, curling like date palms. ٣٦.  
 عَدَائِرُهُ مُسْتَشْرِزَاتٌ إِلَى الْعُلَا # نَضِلُّ الْعِقَاصُ فِي مُثَنَّى وَمُرْسَلِ
36. Her hair was tied up on top, partly tied and partly loose. ٣٧.  
 وَكَشْحٌ لَطِيفٌ كَالْجَدِينِ مُحْصَرٍ # وَسَاقٌ كَأَنْبُوبِ السَّقِيِّ الْمَدَلِّ
37. Her waist was as smooth and slender as a leather rope, and her calves were as clean as a date palm tree that had been thoroughly watered. ٣٨.  
 وَتَضْحِي فَتَبِيتِ الْمَسْكَ فَوْقَ فَرَاشِهَا # نَوْمِ الضَّحَى لَمْ تَنْتَطِقْ عَن تَفْضَلِ
38. The fragrance wafted over his bed as he slept from morning to afternoon without caring about his work. ٣٩.  
 وَتَعْطُوبُ بِرُحْصٍ غَيْرِ شَيْنٍ كَأَنَّهُ # أَسَارِيْعُ ظَنِيٍّ أَوْ مَسَاوِينَاكُ إِسْجَلِ
39. He achieves things easily, as easy as snapping his fingers or as easy as breaking a branch from a tree. ٤٠.  
 تُضِيءُ الظَّلَامَ بِالْعِشَاءِ كَأَنَّهَا # مَنَارَةٌ مُمَسَى زَاهِبٍ مُتَبَيَّلِ
40. He illuminates the darkness of the night with the light of his face like the brightness of a monk's lamp in meditation. ٤١.  
 إِلَى مِثْلِهَا يَرْتَوِ الْحَلِيمُ صَبَابَةً # إِذَا مَا اسْبَكَرَتْ بَيْنَ دِرْعٍ وَجَوْلِ
41. to someone like her, that noble men should gaze upon with love as she begins to reach adolescence.

(Az Zauzaniy, 2011:23-27)

## Heuristic Reading

The image of Unaizah in Umru'ul Qays' poetic imagery starts from the thirty-first stanza to the forty-first stanza. Umru'ul Qays begins this image of his beloved with descriptive verse, describing a woman. He immediately mentions the *khobar muftada'*, and omits the *muftada'* because it has already been mentioned in the previous stanzas. The word *مُهْفَهْفَةٌ* becomes the *khobar* of *Dhamīr ghāibah mahdzūf* which means 'slender-bellied and slender-waisted' (Ma'luf, 2011:868). The word *مُفَاضَةٌ* means 'broad, wide' (Ma'luf, 2011:603). The word *تَرَائِبُ* is the plural of the word *تربية* which means 'upper part of the chest' (Ma'luf, 2011: 60). The word *مَصْفُورَةٌ* is the *khobar* of *تَرَائِبُ* which means 'that which is polished and buffed to a shine' (Ma'luf, 2011: 430). While the word *السَّجْنَجَلُ* is a description of the upper part of the woman's chest which means 'a piece of silver' (Ma'luf, 2011:322). From the above description, this stanza can be interpreted as follows, Umru'ul Qays describes a woman, that she has a slim body with pure white skin, her hips are slender and not fat. The upper part of her chest below her neck is shiny clean like a piece of silver exposed to light.

The thirty-second stanza begins with a description of woman's skin color by mentioning *بِكْرٍ* which means 'the beginning of something' (Ma'luf, 2011:46). Furthermore, the word *المِثْمَانَةُ* is an *ism Maf'ul* of *قَانِي* which means 'that which is mixed' (Ma'luf, 2011:659). The word *عَدَاهَا* means 'flowed' (Ma'luf, 2011:546). The word *نَيْمِزُ الْمَاءِ* means 'purity of water' (Ma'luf, 2011:838). The word *مُحْلَلٌ* is an adjective of *نَيْمِزُ الْمَاءِ* which means 'not united' (Ma'luf, 2011:147). From the description above, this stanza can be interpreted as follows, the color of the woman's skin is like the beginning of a white color mixed with a little yellowish color that emanates from a pure stream of water that has not been mixed and has not been united by anything.

The thirty-third stanza is integrated with the previous stanzas which describes the woman. The word *تَصُدُّ* is *fi'l mudhāri' lil-ghāibah* meaning 'seen' (Ma'luf, 2011:418). The word *أَسْبِيلٌ* means 'rosy cheeks' (Ma'luf, 2011:11). The word *وَحْشٌ* means 'a wild animal with no owner' (Ma'luf, 2011:891). While the word *وَجْرَةٌ* is a place name (az-Zauzani, 2011:24). The word *مُطْفِلٌ* is an adjective of the word *وَحْشٌ* which means 'one who has children' (Ma'luf, 2011:467). Overall, this stanza can be interpreted as follows, she is seen showing her rosy cheeks and also her soothing gaze like a wild animal of the Wajrah region that has had a child.

The thirty-fourth stanza continues the description of the woman again. The word *جَيْدٌ* means 'neck' (Ma'luf, 2011:112), which is *majrūr* because it is the *ma'thūf* of the word *عَنْ أَسْبِيلٌ* in the previous stanza. The word *الرَّيْمُ* means 'white deer' (Ma'luf, 2011:243). The word *فَاحِشٌ* with means 'ugliness, badness' (Ma'luf, 2011:571) and is an adjective of *جَيْدِ الرَّيْمِ* with the preceding

ليس as the negative form of the adjective. The word نَصَّته means 'to raise' (Ma'luf, 2011:810). The word مُعْطَل means 'unkempt' (Ma'luf, 2011:513) is the second. The sentence that corresponds to Arabic grammar is as follows وَجِيدٌ إِذَا هِيَ نَصَّته كَجِيدِ الرِّيمِ لَيْسَ بِفَاحِشٍ وَلَا بِمُعْطَلٍ overall, this stanza can be interpreted as follows, and when she raised her neck, it was like the neck of a white deer that was cared, there was no ugliness in it and no badness.

Stanza thirty-five continues the depiction of women in the previous stanzas. The word فَرْع majrūr is still the ma'thūf of عَنْ أُسَيْلٍ as in the previous stanza and means 'long hair' (Ma'luf, 2011:578). The word المِثْن means 'back' (Ma'luf, 2011:746). The word فَاحِم means 'jet black' (Ma'luf, 2011:571). The word أُثَيْث means 'many' (Ma'luf, 2011:3). This word, along with the previous two, فَاحِم and أُسُود, becomes the adjective of the word فَرْع, so they are also majrūr. The word قِنُو means 'a sprig, a bunch' (Ma'luf, 2011:659). The word المِثْعَنُكِل is an adjective of the word قِنُو النَّخْلَةِ which means 'bunch of bound' (Ma'luf, 2011:487). Taken as a whole, this stanza can be interpreted to mean that she shows the thick, jet-black hair that adorns her back like a bunch of ripe dates tied together.

The thirty-sixth stanza begins with a description of the woman's hair with the word عَدَائِرُهُ. The word is the plural of the word غَدِيرَةٌ which means 'ties, braids of women's hair' (Ma'luf, 2011:545), while the *Dhamīr muttashil* that follows is the pronoun for the word فَرْع in the previous stanza. The word مُسْتَشْرَزَات is an *ism fā'il lil jam'* from the word اسْتَشْرَزَ which means 'entangled, bound, entangled' (Ma'luf, 2011:386). The word تَضَلَّ means 'lost, entangled' (Ma'luf, 2011:542), with the subject of the verb being العِقَاصُ which means 'hair tie' (Ma'luf, 2011:520). The word مُشَّتَّى means 'to be twisted, curled (for hair)' (Ma'luf, 2011:75), and the word مُرْسَل means 'to fall and unravel' (Ma'luf, 2011:259). Overall, this stanza can be interpreted as follows her hair is braided up to the top of her head, where her hair, which is tied with a rope, is entangled so that some of her hair is tied together with the rope, and some of it falls out of its bindings.

The thirty-seventh stanza is the ma'thūf of the thirty-third to thirty-fifth stanza. The word كَشْح means 'the part of the body between the navel and the middle of the back, the waist' (Ma'luf, 2011:686). The word الجَدِيل means 'braided rope' (Ma'luf, 2011:82). The word مُحْصَرٌ which means 'soft in the middle' (Ma'luf, 2011:181) is an adjective that is positioned later than its initial position, so the *Shadr al Bait* in this stanza should be وَكَشْحٍ لَطِيفٍ مُحْصَرٍ كَالْجَدِيلِ and the waist is smooth and soft in the middle like a braided rope'. The word سَاق means 'the part of the body between the ankle and the knee, the calf' (Ma'luf, 2011:365). The word أَنْبُوبٌ means 'the segment

of a date palm' (Ma'luf, 2011:784). The word المسقي السقي has the same meaning as the word المسقي which means 'watered' (Ma'luf, 2011:340). Overall, this stanza can be interpreted as follows, she showed her waist that was smooth and soft in the middle, like a braided leather strap. She also shows off her fresh calves like the segments of a date palm that had been watered by clean water.

In the thirty-eighth stanza, the word تضحى is *akhawāt kāna* which becomes *fi'l mudhāri'* which means كان but usually applies at dawn (Barakat, 2007:300-301). The word فتيت means 'that is crushed' (Ma'luf, 2011:567). The word نؤوم means 'one who sleeps a lot' (Ma'luf, 2011:848), this word can be used for both *mudzakkar* and *mu`annats*. The word تنتطق means 'to tighten her belt' (Ma'luf, 2011:816). The word تفضل means 'to put on her pajamas' (Ma'luf, 2011:586) and the previous word عن means 'after'. Taken together, this stanza can be interpreted as follows, and in the morning, she was like a musk still on her bed, still sound asleep at dawn, she had not yet begun to fasten her belt after putting on her pajamas.

The thirty-ninth stanza is a continuation of the previous stanza. The word تَعْطُو is *fi'l mudhāri' lil-ghāibah* which means 'to reach, to get' (Ma'luf, 2011:513). The word رَحْص means 'easy' (Ma'luf, 2011:254), and the word عَيْر شَنْ is an adjective of the word رَحْص which means 'not difficult' (Ma'luf, 2011:374). The word أُسَارِيع is the plural of the word أُسْرُوع which means 'vegetables worm' and the word ظِي is a place name (az-Zauzani, 2011:26). The word مَسَاوِيك is the plural of مسواك meaning 'a rod for cleaning teeth, siwak,' (Ma'luf, 2011:365). The word إِسْجَل means 'the tree from which the miswak is taken' (Ma'luf, 2011:324). The words أُسَارِيعَ ظِي and مَسَاوِيك إِسْجَل are two phrases which both consist of *idhāfah* and mean من. Overall, this stanza can be interpreted as follows, and she grabs and gets things easily and without any difficulty, as if her fingers were like vegetable worms from the region of Dzaby or also like *Siwak* from the *Ishil* tree.

The fortieth stanza is a continuation of the previous stanza. The word نُضِيء means 'to illuminate' (Ma'luf, 2011:456). The word ب in the word بِالْعِشَاء has the meaning of في 'within'. The word مَنَارَةٌ means 'a lamp with a flame, an oil lamp' (Ma'luf, 2011:846). The word مُمَسَّى means 'evening' (Ma'luf, 2011:762). The word رَاهِب means 'one who fears for the worship of his Lord, priest, monk' (Ma'luf, 2011:282). The phrase رَاهِب مُمَسَّى مَنَارَةٌ is an *idhāfah* phrase with two *mudhāf ilaih*. The word مُتَبَيِّل is an adjective of the word رَاهِب which means 'one who is detached from the world' (Ma'luf, 2011:26). Overall, this stanza can be interpreted as follows, she

illuminates the pitch-darkness of the night like the oil lamp of a solitary priest and releases the glitter of the world in the evening.

The forty-first stanza is the conclusion of the description and characterization and simile of the woman. This stanza begins with *إِلَىٰ مِثْلِهَا* 'to someone like her', and continues with *يَرْتُو* which means 'to see her in one spot for a long time' (Ma'luf, 2011:282) with the subject *الْحَلِيمِ* which means 'one who understands' (Ma'luf, 2011:150). The word *صَبَابَةٌ* meaning 'love' (Ma'luf, 2011:413) is *manshūb* because it is *Maf'ūl li ajlih* meaning 'cause'. The sentence in *Shadr al Bait* in this stanza is *taqdīm wa ta`khīr* which is intended to mean *ينبغي* 'should'. The word *اسْبَكَرَتْ* means 'to stretch, expand' (az Zauzani, 2011:27). The word *دِرْع* means 'shirt' (Ma'luf, 2011:213), while the word *وَمِجْوَلٍ* means 'a small garment worn by slave girls' (Ma'luf, 2011:111). Overall, this stanza can be interpreted as follows, it is to such a woman that the understanding people should look because of their love for her, when her clothes stretch and expand from the shirts of an ordinary woman to the clothes of a slave girl.

### Hemeneutic Reading

Heuristic reading only produces meaning based on language conventions, but not the significance of the stanza. Therefore, to get the full meaning, the poem must be read based on a hermeneutic reading, which is a reading based on literary conventions.

The depiction of Unaizah in *Al-Mu'allaqat* by Umru'ul Qais starts from stanza thirty-one, the phrase *مُهْفَهْفَةٌ بَيْضَاءُ غَيْرٌ مُفَاصَةٌ* 'slender white belly, not wide' implies a slender woman who is the ideal body of women for men. The hyperbole, *بَيْضَاءُ* 'white', indicates how bright the skin of her belly is. The emphasis, *غَيْرٌ مُفَاصَةٌ* 'not wide', is presented again to add to the impression that the woman's body is really tempting to men, because a beautiful woman according to the *jahiliyah* society is one who has a physique that excites men, one of which is having slender and not wide curves (Buana, 2010: 92-93). Then the description of the woman is continued with the word *تَرَائِيهَا* 'the upper part of the chest' which is compared to *السَّجْنَجَلِ* 'pieces of silver' because both are shiny. The word *مَصْفُوْلَةٌ* 'lustrous' implies that it is the part that is most in focus, the first part to be seen for its luster compared to other parts, just as the piece of silver is seen for its luster and shine.

In the thirty-second stanza, the *tasybīh* *كَبِيرِ الْمَقَانَةِ الْبَيَاضِ بِصُفْرَةٍ* 'like the initial color of the mixture of white and yellow' is used to illustrate the bright color of the lover's skin. The choice of the word white is a symbol of the brightness of the skin color, while yellow is a symbol for skin color in general. So it can be understood that the meaning of the mixing of white and yellow is to indicate that the woman's skin color is brighter than the skin color in general. This is clarified in the *'Ajz al-bait* with the expression *عَذَاهَا تَمَيِّزُ الْمَاءِ غَيْرٌ مُحَلَّلٌ* 'the purity of unmixed water

flows'. The expression *تَمَيَّرَ الْمَاءُ* 'the purity of water' is a metaphor meaning something pure, unmixed with anything, holy, clean. While the word *عَدَا* 'flowing' is a symbol for freshness, coolness, and full of goodness. This is as explained by Imam Shafi'i:

إِنِّي رَأَيْتُ وَقُوفَ الْمَاءِ يَفْسُدُهُ # إِنَّ سَاحَ طَابَ وَإِنْ لَمْ يَجْرَ لَمْ يَطْبِرْ

I have seen that still water is destructive, if it flows it becomes good, but if it does not flow it will not become good  
(Salim,26)

In the stanza, Imam Shafi'i compares the seeker of knowledge to water, he also explains the nature of water. Water that stands still will not be good and refreshing, but if it flows it will be good water. In this mu'allaqat stanza, Umru'ul Qays compares the skin of the lover to water that carries within it the attributes that come with it. So the color of the woman's skin is compared to a pure yellowish-white color like the color of a baby's skin that is still fresh untouched by anything like the purity of flowing water.

Thirty-third stanza, *تَصَدُّ وَتُبْدِي عَنُ أَسْبَلِ*, 'as if the woman showed her smooth cheeks'. This expression means that the presence of the woman in the midst of society is as if she is showing her beautiful cheeks to the people who see her, this happens because the beauty of her cheeks is more beautiful than other women, so it makes the eyes fixed on her. She also shows her shady eyes by being compared to *وَحْشٍ وَجَرَّةٍ مُطْفَلٍ* 'a wild animal of Wajrah that has given birth', because the expression *بِنَاطِرَةٍ مِنْ وَحْشٍ مُطْفَلٍ* 'the eyes of a wild animal that has given birth' is an expression for someone who has beautiful eyes like the eyes of a wild animal mother who is affectionate towards her child (az-Zauzani, 2011:24). The wild animal in this verse is either a wild cow or a wild deer. Because both are mammals, when they become mothers of their young, they will have the instinct to care for and love their child. This can be clearly seen in their eyes. It is these affectionate eyes that make the above expression a metaphor for Unaizah.

In the thirty-fourth stanza, besides showing her cheeks, the woman also shows her beautiful neck. That beautiful neck is compared to *جَيْدِ الرَّيْمِ* 'the neck of a white deer'. In addition to being compared to the neck of a white deer, she is also described as having a nature that is *لَيْسَ بِفَاحِشٍ* 'without ugliness' without blemish, smooth and perfect and is also described with the adjective *وَلَا بِمُعْطَلٍ* 'not left damaged, maintained, cared' which means that the perfection of her neck is not just born, but she takes care of it because she knows there is beauty in it. In addition, the *tasybīh* with *جَيْدِ الرَّيْمِ* 'white deer's neck' also implies that it is clean, pure, and also brightly colored. If she raises her neck, she has shown the perfection that lies within, making the men who see her become amazed by her beauty.

In the thirty-fifth stanza, the woman also shows her long flowing hair adorning her back. The word *يُرِينُ* 'adorn' is a symbol for something beautiful that can adorn its surroundings so that it becomes more beautiful. Her beautiful black and clustered hair adorned her white back,

making the color contrast and making it a beautiful sight. The clustered black hair is then compared to قِنَوَالنَّخْلَةِ الْمِعْتَكِلِ 'a bunch of clustered dates'. This is due to the characteristic of Arabs who tend to have curly and wavy hair that if the hair is long, it will be like a bunch of dates on the stalk. In addition, the ripe dates that are the *musyabbah bih* of the hair have a sweet nature, so that the hair flowing down the woman's back is something sweet to be seen by those around her.

Her black hair is tied at the top, so that the hair that adorns her back does not spread out due to the curly and wavy characteristics of the woman's hair, on the other hand, it was mentioned in the previous stanza that her hair يَرْبِنُ 'adorns' which means that the hair itself must 'look beautiful' to be able to beautify something else, so tying the hair on top of her head is something that the woman tries to do to keep her hair 'adorning' the rest of her body. The stanza also describes the state of the tying which is assisted by العِقَاصُ 'rope' so as to create her hair that is مُتَنَّى 'partially tied' and وَمُرْسَلٌ 'partially loose', where this adds to the beauty of the hair that can adorn her back, not just let her hair loose without any effort to beautify it.

In the thirty-seventh stanza, the woman also shows her smooth and slender waist. The smooth waist is deliberately shown, meaning that the woman is wearing clothes, but her belly and waist are exposed, so that I can see how smooth and soft the waist is. The word لَطِيفٍ مُخَصَّرٌ 'smooth and slender' is sufficient to describe the beauty of a woman's waist which is then compared to الجَدِيْلِ 'braided rope', because of its similarity in terms of being slim and smooth, and its brownish color like the color of skin. If we look deeper, the braided rope has a curve that is similar to a woman's slim waist, not only the curve, but also the color. This is the basis for Umru'ul Qays comparing Unaizah's waist to a braided rope. In his *'Ajz al-bait*, he compared her calves to watered segments of date palms. In Arabic literacy, a woman's calves are often likened to tubular objects such as pipes and others, one of which is a segment of a date stem to describe the level shape of the calf. on the other hand, the segment of the date stem is characterized by 'wet' watered, to give the impression of being fresh and clean. That is because the woman's calf looks long and fresh because of its bright color like the rest of her skin.

In the thirty-eighth stanza, in the morning, the woman became a powder of musk on his bed, the word فتيت المسك 'powder of musk' is a *Kināyah* to the woman which actually means a person who makes comfortable, it is because the woman is the reason for Umru'ul Qays not to get up from his bed when there is still the woman on his bed, so the woman becomes something fragrant to the person who is beside her and makes Umru'ul Qays comfortable and at home beside her. The context of this stanza is the morning when they both wake up from sleep, the woman becomes the fragrance of musk that makes him reluctant to get up from sleep, because the woman is still sleeping on her bed until *dhuḥā* time. They both had not fastened their belts after putting on their pajamas. The word لم تنطق 'tightening their belts' is a figure of speech meaning that they have not moved from their sleep to get ready to start other work outside their beds.

In the thirty-ninth stanza, the woman gets what she wants easily and without any trouble, because of her beauty and her situation that makes Umru'ul Qays comfortable and complies with everything she wants. Every time she wants something, she points to it with her fingers. The fingers that can anesthetize Umru'ul Qays to do whatever he wants are likened to vegetable caterpillars in the area of Dzabiy because of their beautiful and enchanting shape for those who see, Umru'ul Qays also likens his fingers to the miswak of the *Ishil* tree, because of its flexible and tapered shape like the trunk of the miswak branch of the *Ishil* tree.

In the fortieth stanza, the woman illuminates the darkness of the night. The word نُضِيءُ بِالْعِشَاءِ 'illuminates the darkness of the night' is a metaphor which means, she can make the darkness of Umru'ul Qays' condition which is being hit by ugliness become meaningful and luminous, so that Umru'ul Qays can see the good in his life. The illuminating nature of the woman is compared to مَنَارَةٌ تُمَسِي رَاهِبٍ 'the priest's oil lamp at dusk'. Both give light to the dark surroundings. The woman illuminates the life of Umru'ul Qays, and the lamp illuminates the surroundings of the priest. The priest is described by مُتَبَيِّلٌ 'who is detached from the world', this explains the condition of Umru'ul Qays who is being illuminated by the woman, so that he has forgotten and left his world because of his love for her.

In the forty-first stanza, it is to someone like her that understanding people should look because of their longing. The word إِلَى مِثْلِهَا 'to someone like her' refers to the descriptions in the previous stanza, that she is a slim-waisted, beautiful-chested, fair-skinned, rosy-cheeked, pretty-eyed, flawless-necked, dazzlingly curly-haired, calf-length woman, who not only finishes her physique, but also makes her surroundings feel at home because of her, she also illuminates the gloomy lives of people around her, and can also hypnotize people around her to love her. This is the kind of woman that, according to Umru'ul Qays, an understanding man should see with all his love. The phrase إِذَا مَا اسْتَبَكَّرَتْ بَيْنَ دِرْعٍ وَمَجْحُولٍ 'when her clothes stretch from the clothes of an ordinary woman' is a metaphor that means when she grows up and has a body that has passed her *baligh* period and already resembles an adult woman, so that at that time she is worthy of a proposal.

## DISCUSSIONS

### The Meaning of the Verses Depicting Unaizah's Imagery

The thirty-first to thirty-seventh stanza of Umru'ul Qays' poem al Mu'allaqāt marks the beautiful appearance of Unaizah. The thirty-eighth stanza to the fortieth stanza marks how Umru'ul Qays became fascinated with Unaizah's beauty. The forty-first stanza is the conclusion of her beauty and the beauty of her appearance: “to someone like her, namely Unaizah, that noble men should gaze upon with love as she begins to reach adolescence.”

Based on a hermeneutic reading, with a descriptive system as its potential hypogram, a pair of causally linked semantic fields can be identified: 'beauty' and 'love'. In this context,

'beauty' refers to the physical state of the beloved and is expressed through terms such as: *slender, white skin, smooth cheeks, flawless, long hair, slim waist, fragrant, and radiant*. Meanwhile, 'love' represents the emotional response elicited by this physical beauty, conveyed through phrases like *to her, full of love, and reaching adolescence*.

Overall, through a hermeneutic reading that emphasizes indirect expression, the imaginative unity of the verses describing Unaizah can be seen as portraying her captivating physical appearance. This appearance evokes deep affection in those with gentle hearts, including Umru'ul Qays himself. Thus, the meaning conveyed in these verses is that Unaizah's physical beauty holds the power to mesmerize the poet, compelling him to gaze upon her with sincere love.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study reveals that the figure of Unaizah in *Al-Mu'allaqāt* by Umru'ul Qays is not only presented as a female character, but also as a poetic image that plays a central role in the construction of the poem's meaning. Through the semiotic approach of Michael Riffaterre, specifically the hermeneutic reading guided by the principle of indirect expression, it was found that the verses referencing Unaizah construct two interrelated fields of meaning: the physical (*jasadiyah*) and the affective domains.

Physically, Unaizah is depicted as an idealized figure through explicit and detailed imagery: "slender," "fair-skinned," "smooth cheeks," "flawless," and "fragrant." These images not only construct visual beauty but also establish a system of signs that function as a matrix, or core meaning, within the poetic segment. Affectively, this physical beauty evokes profound love, expressed through diction such as "towards her," "with full affection," and "youth age." The causal relationship between "beauty" and "love" becomes a potential hypogram in the semiotic structure of the poem.

Thus, Unaizah in this poem represents a form of beauty that is not only physical but also symbolic, that stirs emotion, triggers affection, and constructs the poetic narrative of Umru'ul Qays as a lover-poet. The image of Unaizah serves as a poetic device through which the poet expresses his admiration for women, while also demonstrating how *Al-Mu'allaqāt* encodes the concept of love through refined aesthetic and symbolic mechanisms. This research affirms that the image of women in pre-Islamic poetry cannot be separated from its complex cultural, symbolic, and semiotic constructions, with Unaizah standing as a significant element within that web of meaning.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the Head of the Department of Arabic Literature at Universitas Negeri Malang for the continuous support and encouragement throughout the completion of this research. I am also sincerely thankful to all the lecturers in the department whose insights, academic guidance, and scholarly discussions have greatly enriched my understanding and contributed significantly to the depth of this study. Their

dedication to advancing the field of Arabic literature has been an enduring source of inspiration for my work.

## REFERENCES

- Barakāt, I. (2007). *An Nahw al Arabiy*. Part I. Mesir: Dār an Nashr li al Jāmi'āt.
- Buana, C. (2010). *Citra Perempuan dalam Syair Jāhiliyyah*. Yogyakarta: Mocopat Offset.
- Endraswara, S. (2013). *Metodologi Penelitian Sastra, Epistemologi, Model, Teori, dan Aplikasi*. Yogyakarta: CAPS..
- Faruk. (2017). *Metode Penelitian Sastra, Sebuah Penjelajahan Awal*. Fourth Printing. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.
- Fata, K., Himam, A.S., Wulandari, D.A., & Rahmawati, Z.S. (2023). *Ghazal fi qashidati al muallaqat li Atarah bin Syaddad*. KONAUM: Konferensi Nasional Adab dan Humaniora, Vol. 1. [Vol. 1 \(2023\): KONAUM](#)
- Firmansyah, T. (2024). *Analisis Semiotika Riffaterre pada Syi'ir "Sada Al-Harb" Karya Ahmad Syauqi*. KNM BSA: Konferensi Nasional Mahasiswa Bahasa dan Sastra Arab.
- Kamaldeen, Y. (2012). *The Image of Woman in Pre-Islamic Qasida: The Mu'allaqat Poetry as a Case Study*. [Master's Thesis, the American University in Cairo]. AUC Knowledge Fountain.  
<https://fount.aucegypt.edu/etds/883>
- Kamil, S. (2009). *Teori Kritik Sastra Arab Klasik dan Modern*. Rajawali Pers.
- Luxemburg, V.J. (1992). *Pengantar Ilmu Sastra (Translated by Dick Hartoko)*. Jakarta: Gramedia.
- Ma'luf, L. (2011). *Al-Munjid fi al-Lughah wa al A'lām*. Forty-fourth Printing. Beirut: Dār al Masyriq.
- Panatapraja, F.H. (2020). *Al-Mu'allaqāt, Estetika, Kritik Seni dan Kapital Bahasa*. Malang: Arah Baca. 187.
- Ratih, R. (2017). *Teori dan Aplikasi Semiotik Michael Riffaterre (2nd ed.)*. Pustaka Pelajar.
- Riffaterre, M. (1978). *Semiotics of Poetry*. Indiana University Press.
- Risaldi P, M., Ramadhan, I., & Nur, M. (2024). *Analisis Syair Al-Muallaqat Amru bin Kultsum (Pendekatan Ilmu Arudh)*. *Jurnal Sarjana Ilmu Budaya*, 4(02 (Mei), 58-74.  
<http://journal-old.unhas.ac.id/index.php/jsbsk/article/view/35186>
- Salīm, M.I. *Dīwān al Imām asy Syāfi'iy al Musammā al Jauhar an Naftis Fī Syi'r al Imām Muhammad bin Idrīs*. Kairo: Maktabah Ibn Sīnā.
- Sudarmawan, H. (2022). *Makna pada Muqaddimah Thalāliyyah dalam Al-Mu'allaqāt Karya Imru'ul-Qays (Analisis Semiotik Michael Riffaterre)*. *Middle Eastern Culture & Religion Issues*, 1(1), 9-28. [https://doi.org/10.22146/mecri.v1\(1\).9-28](https://doi.org/10.22146/mecri.v1(1).9-28)

- Sudarmawan, H.M., & Adewati, M. (2024). *The Umru'ul-Qais Flirtation Stanzas to Unaizah in the Poetry Al-Mu'allaqat (Michael Riffaterre's Semiotic Analysis)*. *Insyirah: Jurnal Ilmu Bahasa dan Studi Islam*, 7(2). 167-182. <https://doi.org/10.26555/insyirah.v7i2.10329>
- Tjalau, C.A., & Safii, R. (2023). *Kajian Historis: Corak Sastra Arab (Zaman Jahiliyah, Shadr Islam dan Umawiyah)*. *Assuthur: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab*. 1-23. <https://doi.org/10.58194/as.v2i1.805>
- Zoest, A.V. (1991). *Fiksi dan Non Fiksi dalam Kajian Semiotik*. Jakarta: Intermasa. P 3.
- Az-Zauzaniy, A. A. al-H. bin A. (2011). *Al-Mu'allaqāt as-Sab'u ma'al-Chawāsyi al-Mufīdah Liz-Zauzaniy. Tahqīq dari Muhammad Khair Abu al-Wafa`*. Authorized by Mushthafa Qishash. Maktabah al-Busyra.