



## Literature and Quranic Exegesis: Exploring Literary Aspects in Modern Interpretation

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### Article Information

#### Article history:

Received August 06, 2024

Revised December 09, 2024

Accepted February 18, 2025

### Keywords

Interpretation of the Qur'an;  
Aspects of Literary Cases;  
Contemporary Tafsir.

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### A B S T R A C T

This study aims to analyze the literary style, narrative structure, intertextual interpretation, and creative imagination in contemporary Quranic exegesis. Using a qualitative approach, it provides an in-depth explanation of metaphorical interpretations of Quranic verses and examines the influence of literature on readers' imagination and gender perspectives. The research method employed is library research, involving reading, noting, identifying, and comprehensively analyzing literary criticism of contemporary exegesis. The results indicate that literary aspects, such as metaphors, symbolism, and rhetoric, play a significant role in interpreting the Quran, significantly influencing readers' understanding and imagination. The study also finds that literary interpretation helps convey the Quran's messages more effectively and relevantly within the current social and cultural context. In conclusion, literary analysis in contemporary Quranic exegesis not only enriches the understanding of the text but also opens up space for more inclusive and dynamic interpretations, making the Quran more relevant to modern readers.

## 1. Introduction

This research was initially conducted by Amin Al-Khuli. Islamic studies identify the Quran as the written word of God, conveyed to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) through the angel Gabriel, and it holds worship value for those who read it. Every Muslim believes that the laws and principles of life are contained within the Quran, considered the authentic creation of Allah SWT. This concept implies that interpretation often results in religious perspectives. From a different viewpoint, the Quran is seen as a holy book derived from the mutakallim, whose essence cannot be separated from the meanings of the Arabic language and is bound by the historical context of time and place. Modern thinkers use a literary perspective to create fresh readings of ancient texts, valuing the results of verbal expression.

One effort to manifest the eternal divine message in the holy book is through literary interpretation, or more precisely, capturing the message by focusing on linguistic cues (Rahman, 2019). People from different regions may interpret the same message in various ways. Communication can be interpreted differently or even misunderstood due to differing assumptions. The belief that the Quran contains commandments and prohibitions leads to guidelines on what is recommended, what is not, and so forth. There is a perception that the Quran is a hymn of life, providing teachings, praise, travel advice, joys, concerns, and other experiences of believers in seventh-century Arabia led by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Naturally, this leads to diverse understandings. Amin Al-Khuli was the first to assume how to connect the Quran from a literary perspective.

In the linguistic and literary truth, the Quran is a concrete fact. However, this reality is dynamic and not static, as it clearly impacts the people who were the initial focus of its statements. Here, the Quran is interpreted based on the civilization in which it was first received. This interpretation emerges within the dialectic framework between revelation and current social realities. Therefore, the psychological benefits of the Quran for its readers must be prioritized, followed by other goals that merely deepen their initial interest, considering its profound influence. For instance, the Quran is so beautiful that many were captivated upon its initial revelation; it made no difference whether this charm led the person to believe in it or not. Literary interpretation should reveal what makes the Quran so beautiful. Readers of the Quran should enjoy its appeal regardless of their ethnicity or beliefs. When interpreting the Quran through a literary method, the primary and most crucial premise is what it conveys (Amin Al-Khuli, 2005).

Al-Khuli's archetype of exegesis, starting from the interpretation of the Quran, focuses primarily on the pragmatics of language as used during the revelation and subsequently in the Quran to determine the text's meaning in its original context. Al-Khuli's actions appear to stem from the belief that, based on current interpretations, the original meaning of the Quran tends to be confused with other meanings. The Quran is given new interpretations through various methods, but the connection between the new meanings and the original meaning is never considered. Practically, such an interpretive approach cannot be justified because it ignores semantic elements and fails to consider the circumstances underlying the creation of the relevant text. From this perspective, the origins of the Quran in Arabic become the primary focus of Al-Khuli's theory. The analytical steps following his methodological choices in

studying the Quran reinforce this Arabic essence. This is understandable, as the facts in the Quran are primarily examined in relation to its original readers.

This paper elaborates on Literary Criticism of Contemporary Exegesis, detailing an Analysis of Literary Aspects in Quranic Interpretation, including Literary Style in Contemporary Exegesis, Narrative Structure in Contemporary Exegesis, Intertextual Interpretation in Contemporary Exegesis, and the Use of Imagination and Creativity in Contemporary Exegesis.

## 2. Method

In qualitative research, contextualized data is where researchers begin, using accepted theories as a basis for explanation and ultimately developing new theories. The goal of qualitative research is often to "discover," and its conclusions are not derived through statistical methods or other types of calculations. "Discover" implies that something new or previously unknown is being uncovered. Some argue that qualitative methods emphasize the core of the topic under study more than other approaches. Qualitative research analysis produces more ideographic truths that cannot be generalized. The results of qualitative research analysis reveal the relationship and influence of literature on the Quran. Literature can influence readers' imagination in understanding the meanings of the Quran. Subsequently, the data is examined using an in-depth explanation method, explaining and critiquing literary aspects in the interpretation of the Quran, from linguistic style to gender perspectives, and providing examples in contemporary issues.

## 3. Results and Discussion

### 3.1. Linguistic Style in Contemporary Quranic Exegesis: A Critical Analysis of Metaphor, Symbolism, and Rhetoric

#### 3.1.1. Metaphor in the Quran

A metaphor is a shift in meaning caused by a comparable form or function. This shift represents an implicit mutual evaluation. The use of phrases or non-word entities with actual meanings as substitutes for images based on similarity can also be referred to as a metaphor. An example is the statement: "The younger generation is the future of the nation."

Furthermore, a metaphor is defined as symbolism or "tropology" (figurative language) involving "indirect" conversation that uses metonymy and metaphor to compare the world and convey intent by shifting between idioms. Metaphors can evoke imagery from a photograph. However, if the image remains as a representative embodiment of something, it becomes a picture and may even develop into a component of a symbolic system forming a narrative (Rene Wellek, 2014).

The Quran is a type of source or way of learning tajweed from the past tense verb "qara'a." The Quran also states that this is an excellent educational ideal. Furthermore, the Quranic approach to gathering specifically combines two letters into a complete sentence in a logical sequence. This metaphor is profound if we consider the definitions of metaphor and the Quranic verses above. One can characterize the Quran as a language and communication system. The Quran can be seen as a tool for transferring meaning. The term "majaz" in the science of Bayan refers to this. Another essence is Majaz. The word "majaz" means "figurative," while "literal" is the actual meaning.

Literary works should be considered when analyzing the rhetoric of Quranic language, particularly the linguistic structure and anatomy of the Quran that no longer relies on previous literary traditions. It is well-known that literary works should be the primary focus of literary studies. It is important to revisit and rethink traditional methods such as classical rhetoric, ethics, and dimensions in relation to modern ideas. Meanwhile, new methods are established based on literary bureaucracies, with modern techniques often derived from surveys. There might be an explanation of "technique de textes" available in French. Evaluations are formalized in Germany, mostly based on similarities between the artistic style of painting and annotations established by Walzel's approach.

The holy book, the Quran, speaks this language fluently in its terms. Jalaluddin As-Suyuthi asserts that the eloquence of phrases is essential, regardless of three factors: conflict, argumentation, and the severity of letters. Secondly, it should not contradict Arabic language policies. Thirdly, "garabah," meaning unique sentences that are difficult to understand and utilize (As-Suyuthi).

### 3.1.2. The Influence of Metaphors on Interpretation

Majaz (metaphor) in the Quran contributes to its extraordinary linguistic form, despite differing opinions among scholars regarding the lifestyle described in the text. Additionally, the grandeur of the Quran enhances its linguistic beauty. Due to its rare usage, this book stands out as a unique and revered holy text, further supporting the miraculous nature of the Quran.

Scholars must consider several important points to understand and appreciate this. One of these is examining the metaphorical language of the Quranic text and its interpretation methods. Majaz serves as a summary of sentences, expressing ideas succinctly, elucidating the substance of the text, and aiding readers in grasping the intended meanings conveyed by Allah SWT when reading the Quran (Ali, 2013).

Verses in the Quran that employ Majazi sentence structures create abstract forms that can only be imagined, which then become reality, to convey the beneficial messages of the Quran to its audience. However, due to the significant meanings hinted at through figurative language, researchers experience various emotions while reading.

### 3.1.3. Understanding and Concept of Rhetoric

In his book, "Theory and Practice of Communication," Prof. Dr. Onong Uchjana Effendi, MA, states that the English word "rhetoric" originates from the Latin word "rhetorica," meaning "the art of speaking." Rhetoric, as defined by Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren in "Modern Rhetoric," is the art or skill of using language effectively. These interpretations indicate that rhetoric has two distinct meanings: speaking and writing. The narrow meaning of rhetoric is speaking, while the broader meaning encompasses the use of language.

Consequently, some view rhetoric as extensive speech or public address. Writing skills should be included in the definition of rhetoric, along with public speaking. Both are accurate as understanding and assumptions focus on language use. The challenge lies in effectively utilizing language as a means of communication in both interpersonal contexts and media.

Persuasion is defined as:

- Actions taken to change someone's behavior and attitude, either in writing or verbally;

- Efforts to impose a new perspective; and
- Deliberate attempts to alter people's attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors to convey a message. Speech is the foundation of rhetoric.

To achieve a goal, one must speak to specific individuals or groups, known as oration (e.g., through explanations or information transmission). Speaking is a talent, particularly for humans. Therefore, conversation has existed since humanity's inception. When someone speaks and expresses their ideas to others, they use language and speech (Nashrulloh, 2016).

The harmonious blend of communication, art, philosophy, and knowledge characterizes modern rhetoric. Rhetoric, in general English usage, refers to the acceptable, correct, appropriate, and effective use of words in the right time, place, and manner. To facilitate communication, people must be able to speak clearly, concisely, and effectively. Ideas expressed clearly are concise, save time, and demonstrate intelligence and effectiveness.

#### 3.1.4. Analysis of Quranic Rhetoric Interpretation

- *Rhetoric of Qaul Ma'ruf (Good Speech)*: Qaul Ma'ruf involves polite rejection, with forgiveness as the motive to pardon the recipient's undesirable actions. It implies both horizontal and vertical interconnectedness. The phrase "ma'ruf" is directed toward women in the 'iddah period (post-menstruation or post-purity) after their husbands' death. During this time, remarriage is prohibited, but those wishing to marry them may express approval through subtle or explicit words. This verse highlights appropriate language in communication, especially directed at women.
- *Rhetoric of Qaul Sadid (Truthful Speech)*: People should learn not to despair about weak children so they can speak honestly and accurately about resources in caring for orphans. It instructs Christians to speak truthful and pious words. "Sadid" is often compared to an arrow shot directly from a bow to its target.
- *Rhetoric of Qaul Baligh (Effective Speech)*: This section criticizes hypocrites, urging them to speak meaningful and impactful words. "Baligh" means to reach, strike, and attain. Some are astonished, bowing, and amazed by words that disturb their souls; they touch hearts and leave an indelible impression. Considering the context of the verse, it can be concluded that heart-touching comments are useful when interacting with hypocrites.
- *Rhetoric of Qaul Maysur (Appropriate Speech)*: Surah Al-Isra, verse 28, explains the context we experience and the options available: membership or not. If unable to answer, use "qaul maysur," which offers reasoning, conveys good hopes, or can include prayers for satisfaction. Qaul Maysur words are comforting, encouraging, and full of hope.
- *Rhetoric of Qaul Layyin (Gentle Speech)*: Gentle words are Qaul Layyin, but their impact tends to subdue someone. Using the rhetorical approach of Qaul Layyin, communication should be conducted vertically from bottom to top.
- *Rhetoric of Qaul Karim (Noble Speech)*: Surah Al-Isra, verse 23, relates to the conversation between parents and children. Saying "Ah" to parents is prohibited, let alone harsher words.

#### 3.1.5. Symbolism in the Quran

Among academics, the interpretation of symbolic phenomenology has been a controversial field of study since its inception. Doubts frequently arise regarding the legitimacy of this research within the scientific domain of Quranic exegesis. According to the author, the difference between traditional exegesis and symbolic phenomenological exegesis stems from varying perspectives on the fundamental meaning of the Quran. Furthermore, Lukman A.Q. Sumabrata's interpretation deviates from the belief that symbolic elements, rather than verbal language, are the most profound medium through which the Quran was revealed. This is what causes controversy among scholars (Abror, 2000).

The approach presented by Lukman A.Q. differs significantly from popular perceptions, starting with the creative process, the basic assumptions used, the utilization of the Ottoman standard text, the creative outcomes, and concluding with his claim as an original method, grounded in mysticism, the supernatural, and metaphysical foundations (Abror, 2000). Therefore, further research is needed to understand how mystical nuances are incorporated into the phenomenological analysis of the Quran and how mystical symbolic phenomenology fits within the framework of traditional exegesis. The author of this article adopts a comparative stance. The goal of the comparative method is to determine where symbolic phenomenological interpretation fits within the broader context of traditional interpretation.

#### *Theory of Letters*

Lukman argues that letters are a kind of "discovery" achieved through intellectual, and sometimes spiritual, struggle, making it impossible for Hijaiyyah letters, with their diverse forms and characters, to lack philosophical and scientific meaning. According to Lukman, each letter in the Quran is a crucial gateway to understanding the text. Every letter in the Quran has a specific meaning based on fundamental logic that can be applied in knowledge.

#### *Theory of Numbers*

Every number in the Quran possesses inherent truth. The relationships between different symbolic elements are demonstrated by the numbers in verses, letters, and chapter numbers. Numbers indicate the connections between verses and verses, verses and letters, and letters and letters. Additionally, numbers serve as representations and symbols of the dimensions of space and time in the universe. The author believes that the arrangement and sequence of these names are intentional and not coincidental. The Quran has two paradigms regarding numbers. A number can signify various things. A particular concept in human perception will be referenced through the number of letters, the number of verses, and the number of alphabets.

### 3.2 Narrative Structure in Contemporary Exegesis: An Investigation into the Development of Stories and Themes in Quranic Interpretation

#### 3.2.1 Understanding Narrative Structure in Contemporary Exegesis

In the context of modern exegesis, narrative structure refers to the development of stories and themes in the interpretation of the Quran. This structure includes the analysis of plot, characters, conflict, and themes present in the Quranic text. Modern exegesis uses narrative structure to understand the messages contained in the Quran and place them in the context of contemporary times. Investigating the development of narratives in Quranic interpretation requires a deep analysis of the Quranic text and its historical context. In

contemporary interpretation, exegetes use different methods and approaches to understand the narrative structure of the Quran and connect it with issues relevant to today's society.

The methods of exegesis used in modern interpretation vary depending on each exegete's approach. Common methods in modern exegesis include historical-critical methods, structuralist methods, semiotic methods, and hermeneutic methods. In modern exegesis, the Quran's narrative structure can also be linked to specific themes relevant to the present context. For example, themes such as social justice, peace, gender equality, and environmental issues are found within the Quranic narrative structure and are analyzed in a contemporary context. Opinions on narrative structure in modern exegesis may vary depending on each exegete's perspective and approach. Some exegetes emphasize the importance of understanding the Quran's plot and characters to grasp its messages. Others may focus on analyzing specific themes that emerge within the Quranic narrative structure.

### 3.2.2 Examples of Opinions on Narrative Structure in Contemporary Exegesis

Opinions on narrative structure in modern exegesis may differ depending on the perspective and approach of each exegete. Some exegetes emphasize the importance of understanding the Quran's plot and characters to comprehend its messages. On the other hand, some exegetes might focus on analyzing specific themes that arise within the Quranic narrative structure. Opinions on narrative structure in modern exegesis can be found in various sources, including books on Quranic interpretation and academic studies on the subject.

For instance, modern exegesis highlights the importance of understanding the Quran's narrative structure to delve deeper into its meaning. These exegetes claim that by analyzing the Quran's plot, characters, and conflicts, they can understand the messages Allah intends to convey to humanity. They argue that the Quran's narrative structure provides a robust framework for understanding the context and purpose behind its verses. Conversely, other opinions focus on analyzing specific themes within the Quranic narrative structure. These exegetes believe that by understanding themes like social justice, peace, gender equality, and environmental stewardship present within the Quranic narrative structure, they can relate these themes to contemporary issues. They argue that the Quran's narrative structure can provide guidance and inspiration for Muslims facing modern challenges.

In conclusion, opinions on narrative structure in modern exegesis can vary depending on the perspective and approach of each exegete. Some emphasize the importance of understanding the Quran's plot and characters, while others focus on analyzing specific themes within the Quranic narrative structure.

### 3.2.3 Investigation into the Development of Stories and Themes in Quranic Interpretation

Investigating the development of stories and themes in Quranic interpretation involves a deep analysis of the Quranic text and its historical context. In contemporary exegesis, exegetes use various methods and approaches to understand the Quran's narrative structure and connect it with issues relevant to today's society. The methods of exegesis used in contemporary interpretation can vary depending on the approach employed by each exegete. Common methods include historical-critical methods, structuralist methods, semiotic methods, and hermeneutic methods. In contemporary exegesis, the Quran's narrative structure can also be linked to specific themes relevant to the current context. For example,

themes about social justice, peace, gender equality, and environmental issues can be found within the Quranic narrative structure and analyzed in a contemporary context.

Ziauddin Sardar is an Islamic scholar who provides a critical explanation of themes and their contextual interpretation of the Quran. One of Sardar's books, "Reading the Quran: The Contemporary Relevance of the Sacred Text of Islam," presents his unique interpretation (Anggoro, 2019). In explaining the Quranic verses, Ziauddin Sardar aims to elucidate not only the textual content of these verses but also their implied meanings. The significant meanings underlying the Quranic verses are referenced in these inferred meanings. Some forward-thinking Muslim scholars have also noted significant nuances in these articulations. This is where the meanings of the Quranic verses emerge, as the verses are the means by which the Quran achieves universality.

Sardar argues that the concept of the ummah is a moral notion referring to the community, a monolithic entity, and an expression used to critique different groups (with a negative connotation) based on Surah al-Mujādilah: 7. Sardar assesses the significance of the meaning of the ummah in the Quran alongside the idea of the ummah. According to Sardar, the term "khalifah" refers to a person who holds or protects a divine trust. This understanding has the opposite meaning when we understand khalifah as a "leader" living a glamorous and exclusive life. Sardar emphasizes that the true duty of a khalifah is to perform accountability well and ensure the continuity and development of the entrusted wealth.

If we pay attention to the important and less important meanings in Quranic exegesis, we find that these meanings are significantly different. This certainly highlights the uniqueness of the contextual approach in understanding the Quran. Therefore, investigating the nature of meaning is crucial. In his view, Sardar also critiques the modern notion of the caliphate, which closely resembles a lifestyle of exclusivity and luxury. This aligns with the principles of contextual interpretation, which considers the socio-historical factors surrounding the revelation of the verses, beyond the surface meaning of the text. By first analyzing the socio-historical background in which the Quran was revealed and then examining current events and situations, one can understand the substantive meaning of the Quran.

Sardar emphasizes the importance of critical and argumentative reading in this contextualization. For him, discussion and Q&A sessions are the only ways to gain access to the Quran. The moral principles found in the Quran, which may serve as societal critiques of human existence, are essential in this situation. Thus, we can observe several key components in Sardar's exegesis, including the translation of the Quran, thematic exegesis, historical context, substantive meaning, and contextual chemistry.

### 3.3 Intersectional Interpretation in Contemporary Tafsir: A Study of Gender, Culture, and Power Perspectives

#### 3.3.1 Gender and Power Relations in Indonesian Islam

Margaret L. Anderson, a leading radical feminist, believes that the subjugation of women, which is a significant cause of societal injustice, is largely influenced by religious doctrines perpetuated through supportive poetry. She asserts that these biases are deeply ingrained and given "sacred" legitimacy based on theology, making religion, particularly Islam in Indonesia, a perpetrator of this power imbalance (Anderson, 2006).

Moreover, she argues that cultural factors contribute to this issue by interacting with false religious justifications, further weakening women's bargaining power against men. Additionally, the government has intentionally upheld discriminatory laws against women in society. This reality has driven Islamic scholars to reassess their interpretations of Islam, especially regarding gender relations. It is recognized that accurate theological knowledge is crucial for creating a level playing field between men and women. To achieve more equitable relationships, it is necessary to revisit and reinterpret hadiths and Quranic verses that have traditionally been used to undermine women's status. This will ensure that religion is not continually exploited as a scapegoat for social injustice, and male-biased interpretations need to be reevaluated.

In the context of parenting, men are often regarded as deserving "more" than women. Consequently, many Quranic verses value women as "half" of men. Common examples include witness testimony and inheritance laws, where the testimony of one man equates to that of two women, and a woman's inheritance is half that of a man's. Therefore, it is challenging to separate Islamic teachings on gender relations from sociological and historical human influences.

### 3.3.2 Concepts of Gender and Culture

Generally, every society has clear expectations for men and women, shaping broad perspectives and prejudices held by both genders. According to Mosse, gender is determined by roles, norms, and practices—akin to masks or stage costumes—that signal to others whether one is male or female. It is essential to distinguish the concept of gender from its implicit (natural) understanding. These biological traits are seen as gifts and destinies bestowed upon individuals at birth, unchangeable at will (Partini, 2013).

In popular culture, gender is depicted as roles performed by men and women. Despite anatomical differences, both genders have the same roles and responsibilities from birth. However, sociocultural development leads to differences, such as social life gaps often placing women in secondary positions due to practical considerations and cultural studies emphasizing identity as part of social growth for both men and women.

Gender in society is a cultural concept that defines role differences in both public and domestic spheres. Population growth, mobility, and the rapid development of the industrial revolution support and interact with social change. Along with global economic developments, women's roles have significantly evolved, leading to ongoing social changes in the form of cultural assimilation and acculturation. This situation shapes domestic norms and creates space for public participation.

Traditional norms are replaced by modern ones as society becomes accustomed to seeing more women in public positions. The rapid advancement of technology and science has resulted in equal opportunities based on human rights, making gender roles less defined. Ethnographic evidence disproves the notion that a universal dichotomy between men and women is due to inherent differences and culture, as well as between domestic and public roles. New facts have emerged, reflecting a varied dichotomy among women (Kuper, 2008).

Men and women are central to society, determining their roles and the division of labor. This division is a consequence of a patriarchal society. In social structures, men and women are not yet treated equally, due to the partial definition of gender and rigid definitions

of male and female identities stemming from sacred nature, unaffected by social or biological contexts (Maksum, 2016).

### 3.4 The Use of Imagination and Creativity in Contemporary Tafsir: A Case Study on Innovative Approaches to Quranic Interpretation

This subsection focuses on the utilization of imagination and creativity, particularly the use of hermeneutic approaches to foster innovation and renewal in the interpretation of the Quran.

#### 3.4.1 Classical Scholars' Views on Hermeneutics

The Quran holds a special place in the hearts of Muslims as it is considered the divine word of God, whose authenticity must be preserved. Classical scholars used the science of tafsir to understand the Quran. Tafsir was seen as the ultimate truth of the Quran, and scholars devoted their entire abilities to creating invaluable interpretative works. Social theory posits that the presence of a great civilization magnifies smaller ones. Rejecting this can lead to conflicts between civilizations, where larger cultures can sponsor smaller ones, potentially making them replicas of the larger civilization.

In relation to hermeneutics, this signifies a shift in the established science of tafsir over centuries. When hermeneutics is considered a legitimate method of understanding the Quran, it is perceived as causing the collapse of Islamic epistemology. From a classical perspective, hermeneutics is linked to Aristotle's writings in *Peri Hermeneas* or *De Interpretatione*, focusing on the interpretation of texts. While hermeneutics has been increasingly used as a method to understand the Bible, its term has gained popularity in recent decades due to advances in technology, information, and the growing scholarly spirit towards the Quran.

Thus, it is evident that classical scholars understood hermeneutics differently from Europeans who later studied it. Hermeneutics is generally understood as a scientific approach to interpreting the Quran and understanding its meanings. The goal of studying hermeneutics is to facilitate the interpretation of meanings, vocabulary, context, and texts that are challenging to comprehend (Muhammad Jailani, 2021).

#### 3.4.2 Hermeneutic Method

Terminologically, hermeneutics is the explanation of what is unclear through language, interpretation, and clarification of ambiguous meanings. Hermeneutics allows for the interpretation and understanding of texts and past events, enabling us to grasp their complete meaning and apply it to the present context. In Islamic scholarly tradition, tafsir resembles hermeneutics in dealing with interpretation, understanding, and the meaning of texts. However, they fundamentally differ; hermeneutics focuses on theoretical and methodological aspects of meaning, whereas tafsir pertains to the practice of textual interpretation.

Three semantic components form hermeneutics, each generating different interpretations and tendencies of meaning (Mufid, 2011):

- A Theory of Author-Centered Interpretation: The interpreter (author) is central, and their historical, geographical, sociopolitical, psychological, and cultural background significantly influences the derived meaning.
- A Theory of Reader-Centered Interpretation: Emphasizes the reader's desire, engaging them in conversation with the text, allowing for creative interpretations that deepen

the text's meaning. Readers aim to understand the original meaning but cannot detach from surrounding factors, leading to varied interpretations.

- A Theory of Text-Centered Interpretation: The text possesses eternal and universal values, contrasting with the limited world of interpretation. Though separating Quranic interpretation from the interpreter's or reader's world is challenging, this theory can be used to interpret the Quran through hermeneutics.

### 3.4.3 Reading Quranic Stories as Literary Narratives

To convey God's messages based on reality and His conception of existence, the Quran uses a style that appeals to readers' emotions and intellect. Thus, it's appropriate to say that the Quran presents teachings and guidance through a literary style. Literary stories, also called suggestive stories, are writings that showcase beauty and joy through words. Words in a story profoundly impact and help readers understand the author's ideas.

Badwi outlines several objectives in narrating these tales (Hadiyanto, 2015):

- Encourage people to think.
- Provide lessons.
- Affirm and establish truths.

Khalafullah summarizes the purposes of Quranic storytelling as follows (Hadiyanto, 2015):

- Affirmation of the Prophet Muhammad receiving divine revelation.
- All religions brought by prophets are from God.
- The ultimate truth brought by prophets can overcome falsehood, calling people to monotheism.
- Eternal enmity for the disbelievers.
- God's omnipotence in creating beyond human comprehension.
- Strengthening the faithful and urging them to strive for truth.
- Threats and provocations against the disbelievers to ease the pressure on the Prophet and his followers.

The Quran uses these stories to explain principles, inspire ideas, advocate for good and truth, and prohibit evil. Quranic history, influenced by its religious objectives, affects its presentation technique, including material selection. Notable impacts include:

- Repetition of stories in different contexts.
- Selection of story parts contributing to the story's goals.
- Integration of religious teachings at various story points.

Hussein Ali adds that the religious mission of Quranic stories has specific characteristics:

- Characters often remain unnamed with minimal description.
- Events are described without specifying time and place.
- Always aim to engage the intellect and emotions simultaneously, encouraging reflection and steadfastness.

- The story's end usually contains wisdom or a brief summary.

Thus, Quranic narratives are a form of literary work intended to convey religious ideas/themes, guiding readers/listeners through the portrayal of characters influencing events. The Quran employs beautiful, engaging, and imaginative language and style. The Quran's narrative constructs reality, created by God according to His design, using language as a fundamental tool. Language not only expresses reality but also shapes our response to it. Consequently, narrative language offers opportunities to shape meanings and visuals from created realities. Simply put, the story was revealed according to God's will, and the Quran uses specific language to build reality and encourage readers to understand it. The main goal is not to represent reality but to guide how readers perceive it.

#### 4. Conclusion

In interpreting the Quran, a literary criticism approach is employed to analyze the literary aspects of the Quranic text. This approach involves examining the narrative structure, language style, and use of symbols in the Quran. It is important to note that literary criticism in contemporary tafsir does not always imply negative criticism but can also offer valuable insights into understanding the Quranic text.

One critique of contemporary tafsir is that some interpreters tend to overlook the literary aspects of the Quran. They often focus more on legal, historical, or theological aspects and give less attention to in-depth literary analysis. This critique highlights the importance of understanding the narrative structure, language style, and symbolic use in the Quran to achieve a more comprehensive understanding.

However, there are also interpreters who effectively utilize literary criticism in Quranic interpretation. They analyze the narrative structure, language style, and use of symbols in the Quran to uncover deeper meanings. This approach aids in comprehending the messages contained within the Quranic text more thoroughly and provides a broader perspective.

The literary criticism approach in contemporary tafsir also helps in understanding the literary and cultural context in which the Quran was revealed. Analyzing the literary aspects of the Quran can provide insights into the influence of pre-Islamic Arabic literature and the social context of that time. This, in turn, helps in better understanding the meanings and purposes behind the Quranic verses.

In conclusion, literary criticism in contemporary tafsir underscores the importance of understanding the literary aspects of Quranic interpretation. Analyzing the narrative structure, language style, and use of symbols in the Quran can offer a more comprehensive and profound understanding. The literary criticism approach in contemporary tafsir aids in grasping the literary and cultural context in which the Quran was revealed, thus enhancing the overall comprehension of its message.

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