

AN ANALYSIS OF THE SYMBOLS OF LOVE, LIFE, AND DEATH IN KAHLIL GIBRAN'S POEMS

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Abstract: *Kahlil Gibran is a Lebanese-American artist, writer, and poet. He is no stranger to literary lovers and connoisseurs. His phenomenal works made Kahlil Gibran famous. His life experience also adds its unique value to his works. The various meanings hidden behind each of his works deserve further analysis. Some of them are typical poems from Kahlil Gibran. He has his way of expressing the true meaning of life through his poems. Therefore, this study will show the symbolic meaning of these poems by using the hermeneutical analysis method from Paul Ricoeur. This method explains the meaning of the symbol in real life. A symbol is a form that gives meaning to every word or sentence contained in a literary work. The result of this analysis is the discovery of various kinds of symbols contained in the poems by Kahlil Gibran, including symbols of love, life, and death. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that love, life, and death are some of the symbols found in Kahlil Gibran's poems.*

Keywords: *Death; Kahlil Gibran; Life; Love; Poetry*

Abstrak: *Kahlil Gibran merupakan seorang seniman asal Lebanon-Amerika, penulis, dan sekaligus penyair. Dia sudah tak asing bagi para pencinta dan penikmat karya sastra. Karya-karyanya yang fenomenal menjadikan Kahlil Gibran terkenal. Pengalaman hidupnya juga menambahkan nilai keunikan tersendiri ke dalam karya-karyanya. Beragam makna yang tersimpan dibalik setiap karyanya pantas untuk dianalisis lebih lanjut. Beberapa diantaranya adalah puisi-puisi khas dari Kahlil Gibran. Dia memiliki cara tersendiri dalam mengungkapkan makna sebenarnya dari kehidupan ini melalui puisi-puisinya. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini akan menunjukkan makna simbol dari puisi-puisi tersebut dengan menggunakan metode analisis hermeneutikal dari Paul Ricoeur. Metode ini memberikan penjelasan mengenai makna simbol tersebut di kehidupan nyata. Simbol adalah suatu bentuk yang memberikan makna pada setiap kata maupun kalimat yang terdapat dalam karya sastra. Hasil dari analisis ini adalah ditemukannya berbagai macam simbol yang terdapat di dalam puisi-puisi karya Kahlil Gibran, diantaranya ialah simbol cinta, kehidupan, serta kematian. Berdasarkan hasil temuan tersebut, dapat disimpulkan bahwa cinta, kehidupan, serta kematian merupakan beberapa simbol yang terdapat di dalam puisi-puisi karya Kahlil Gibran.*

Kata Kunci : *Cinta; Kahlil Gibran; Kehidupan; Kematian, Puisi*

A. Introduction

Literature is a creative work that comes from the human imagination and has its aesthetic value. According to Ahmad Badrun (1983: 16), literature is an artistic activity that uses language and other symbols as a tool to produce something imaginative. Literature becomes an expression of life through symbols. It's not just writing that just happens. However, the meaning and message contained in it make literature unique. In essence, literature is a mirror of life that is poured into the form of a work.

Literature itself is created from human thoughts and feelings. At first, an author experiences and observes the reality of life in society to reflect it in the form of a literary work. The connecting tool between reality and literary works is the language that can be enjoyed by the readers. Literary works have various types and forms. One of them is poetry. Poetry is built through a process of intensification, the choice of words in harmony with each stanza of the poem. Esten said that if you want to master a poem properly and correctly, it takes some principles and instructions that must be adhered to. These principles and instructions encourage the process of understanding a poem (Esten, 2011: 32). Poetry with all its processes is closely related to the experience of the author.

As the works of poetry written by Kahlil Gibran. His work is arranged very stunningly with beautiful language but contains a deep meaning, so it requires understanding the symbols so that the reader can understand what is the meaning contained in it. Therefore, the writer uses the hermeneutical analysis method from Paul Ricoeur to see the poetry works written by Kahlil Gibran in more depth. This method will explain the meaning of the symbols of this poem and put an explanation of the meaning of these symbols in real life.

B. Discussion

Hermeneutics is a human phenomenon that is obtained from an indication of using symbols or symbols to distinguish humans from animals, which focuses on the field of language. Hermeneutics which is also a theory is a tool in interpreting or defining a literary work. Hermeneutics can be interpreted universally as a theory or philosophy related to the interpretation or explanation of meaning. The word hermeneutics comes from the Greek *hermeneuinen* which means a verb with the meaning of interpreting, translating, or interpreting.

This hermeneutic theory was discovered by Paul Ricoeur, who is considered as someone who has arbitrated a fierce dispute between the methodological hermeneutic tradition and the philosophical tradition. Paul Ricouer here starts from the same starting point

as the methodological hermeneutic tradition which states that hermeneutics is a method for explaining the objective meaning of a text that has a certain time and distance from the reader.

According to Paul Ricoeur, symbols and metaphors are the two main elements that are the subject of interpretation or translation of the meaning in hermeneutics. Paul Ricoeur pays more attention to his hermeneutic discourses on these two main elements. Paul Ricoeur argues that metaphor is a form of expression or sentence whose words are used metaphorically. This shows that Paul Ricoeur takes the case of metaphor from word semantics to sentence semantics, which are connected to statement metaphors. The statement-metaphor analysis is carried out by discourse analysis. Therefore, the interpretation theory of Paul Ricoeur recognizes the classical metaphor theory based on the word metaphor. According to Paul Ricoeur, metaphor is the tension between two meanings in a sentence with the use of linguistic rules. Then, the metaphorical statement emerges as a decrease in the tension through semantic creativity that is adapted to the overall sentence.

Therefore, Paul Ricoeur asserts that metaphor is an innovation or a new form of semantics that is part of the predicative arrangement (new conformity) and lexical order (paradigmatic deviation). The meaning of the metaphor will be achieved with a few propositions (sentences) as the smallest factor of discourse, as well as language that contains meaning when used in sentences. Likewise, poetry will reach its existence after being appreciated through the construction of propositions and discourses. Paul Ricoeur interprets a sign or symbol as a text that is linguistically determined in the form of an interpretation of the expression of life. This is because language is a part of human life. Moreover, the form of art that is displayed visually as a whole is also interpreted using language.

Paul Ricoeur argues that humans are language and the main condition for human experience is language itself. Therefore, hermeneutics is the latest method that is in line with language and interpreters whose task is to describe the chain of life as a whole and its history in latent language. Authors who depart from Latin rhetoric or neo-Platonic traditions who turn symbols into analogies, differ from Paul Ricoeur who defines symbols more broadly. Then, Paul Ricoeur defines a symbol as a signification structure whose contents contain a direct, indirect, main, literary meaning that points to, functions as an additional, secondary, and figurative which can be understood through the former. Symbols are not the same as metaphors. So the symbol is more complex and contains certain values in it. According to Paul Ricoeur, there are two dimensions in symbols, namely the dimensions that are bound to the linguistic rules and the dimensions that are not bound to the linguistic rules. First, symbols can be analyzed through semantic studies. Then secondly, symbols tend to be assimilative

which comes from the free experience of various methods for the study of the meaning. Symbols can be analyzed from various perspectives, such as the history of psychoanalysis, comparative religion, mysticism, and others.

Symbolism is a literary device that refers to the use of symbols in a literary work. A symbol is something that represents or replaces something else. In literature, symbols can be words, objects, characters, actions, or concepts that embody and evoke various other additional meanings.

Dillistone provides an interesting thought on symbols. Symbol theory is explained at length by combining several views of experts from various fields as a research reference source so that it influences his view of symbols. Symbols are very interesting because they affect humans in expressing and reflecting on their lives, in horizontal and vertical aspects, or related to their surrounding life or with transcendence or God so that human existence can be explained using symbols.

According to Dillistone, who based his thoughts on Erwin Goodenough, a symbol is an object or pattern for whatever reason, reacts to humans, affects humans, and passes through mere assumptions about what is provided with the given form. Symbols become a link in human exploration to always ask and try to find an answer to unite the two realities to find new symbol meanings as well as the development of previous meanings (Dillistone et al., 1903).

Khalil Gibran is a Lebanese-American artist, poet, and writer. Born in the city of Bsharri, Lebanon, he migrated with his family to the United States where he studied art and began a literary career. In the Arab world, Gibran is considered a literary and political rebel, his romanticist style at the heart of the renaissance in modern Arabic literature, particularly prose poetry. In Lebanon, he was still revered as a literary hero. In other countries, Gibran became known in 1923 with his book *The Prophet*, an early example of inspirational fiction with a series of philosophical essays written in English poetic prose. The book sold well and became popular in the 1930s. Gibran is the third best-selling poet after Shakespeare and Lao-Tzu. Most of Gibran's early writings were in Arabic, which was finally published after 1918 in English.

An artist who could draw and paint, he attended art school in Paris from 1908 to 1910, pursuing a romanticist and symbolic style. Gibran held his first art exhibition in 1904 in Boston. At the exhibition, Gibran met Mary Elizabeth Haskell, who eventually became a woman who had a great influence not only on Gibran's personal life but also on his career. Gibran died in New York City on April 10, 1931, of liver cirrhosis and tuberculosis. Before

his death, Gibran expressed a desire to be buried in Lebanon. This wish was fulfilled by her lover Haskell in 1932.

Symbols of love, life, and death are some of the meanings that often appear in the poems by Kahlil Gibran. According to Kahlil Gibran, love is the only freedom in the world because it evokes the spirit of human laws and natural phenomena cannot change its direction. Love is like a beautiful bird, asking to be caught but refusing to be hurt. Besides love, the symbol of life is often interpreted by Kahlil Gibran as an afterthought for humans. He thought that living things were just dust particles floating around in an eternal and infinite void. The human self is only to surrender and obey. If humans are in love, their love does not come from them, nor does it belong to them. If humans are happy, their happiness is not in humans, but in life itself. Furthermore, there is a symbol of death in the view of Kahlil Gibran. According to him, death is the end of the children of the earth. But for the soul, death is a beginning, a triumph over life.

*Love is the deadliest poison
It is like the hiss of the most venomous snake that suffers wounds in hell,
Hovering and spinning through the sky.
Then it fell covered with dew
And drunk by thirsty souls.
And they were intoxicated for a moment,
Sleep for a year and die forever.
(Love Poison by Kahlil Gibran)*

Based on one of the poems by Kahlil Gibran above, when love is reciprocated by a poison it becomes wound and approaches death. Here love becomes something that is not good and deadly. It is like the hiss of a venomous snake that is in hell so that anyone who falls too deep into love then they will get lost, drunk, or forget themselves to death slowly.

*Love is beauty that comes straight from heaven
Love lights up our eyes and shows everything about it
Like the gods who always watch it
Love is like a thick fog that covers the soul
And hides the image of him being
Love makes him able to see the shadow of his lust
Roaming among the rocks
Deaf to the voices of his pain
That echoes in the valleys
(Love by Kahlil Gibran)*

The poem entitled *Love* above shows that the symbol of love is a beauty that came down from heaven. Love shows humans everything like the gods who also witnessed it. However, the symbol of love can also envelop and cover the human soul to hide the image of

himself. Love can make people forget themselves and then there is only lust until they are deaf to the voices of truth.

*If you regret passing through the years of freedom far from confinement,
So I remember and call it a sad silence.
Love opens the eyes of the heart and illuminates them with knowledge.
Silence has silky hands and softness,
But his strong fingers grip the heart
And loneliness makes him sick.
Silence is a lonely friend
Like a friend of spiritual joy
It is like a stemless white lily
Which makes it vibrate in the wind,
Open in the day and close in the dark
(Memories and silence by Kahlil Gibran)*

The poem entitled *Memories and Silence* by Kahlil Gibran shows the symbol of love as something that opens the eyes of the heart and illuminates it with knowledge. Unlike in previous poems which consider love to be deadly, here Gibran also shows the goodness of love. In addition, Gibran also believes that humans will see the greatness of God through love. It will make life peaceful. Then humans can find God through that peace. Love is a great power to achieve its goals.

*When love takes you, follow it even though the road is steep
When he flaps his wings, then surrender yourself to him
Even if the sword is inserted to injure you.
When he speaks in his voice that will destroy you,
So keep trusting him.
Even if love crowns you, it will also sacrifice.
He will also break your branches even though he climbs high on your branches,
And wipe your trembling branches in the dim light of the sun,
He also descends to your roots and shakes from the bowels of the earth.
(Love by kahlil Gibran)*

Furthermore, the symbol of love is shown by Kahlil Gibran in the poem above, according to Gibran Love must be followed even though the path is steep to the point of injuring and destroying humans. Here the good and bad side of love is shown in the poem above. Love can make people happy but it can also destroy them. In addition, love will also make people understand the secrets of their hearts so that they become a piece of the heart of life. But if the man is afraid of love, then they are better off from love.

In addition to the symbol of love, the symbol of life is also one of the symbols contained in the poems by Kahlil Gibran. He has been renowned for his work that takes life with deep meaning. His unique delivery of words through the poems is a distinctive feature of his own.

*Like a house, our body is a temple to the soul;
That is, the abode of the spirit that makes it alive,
And life is nothing but the soul residing in the body itself.
Of course, we have to maintain the sanctity and sturdiness of the Temple,
According to the divine steadfastness that resides in the temple of our soul.
(Temple for the soul by Kahlil Gibran)*

According to Gibran, life is the soul in the human body. He likens it to a temple in which there is a spirit that gives life. This life must also be maintained following the provisions of God. Kahlil Gibran has a perspective that the way to find God is that humans must see how God's creations are. In God's creation will be found the power of God. After contemplation of nature, the results will lead to the greatness of God.

*You are whispered that life is darkness
And with great fear
You spread what has been said to you full of doubt
I proclaim to you that life is darkness if it is not covered by the will
And all will be blind if it is not covered with knowledge
And all kinds of knowledge will be empty if not accompanied by work
And work is nothing but emptiness unless accompanied by love
So if you work with love
You are anchoring yourself
With your form, another human form
And the existence of God.
(Life by Kahlil Gibran)*

In the poem above, Kahlil Gibran describes life in darkness if it is not accompanied by knowledge and love. Humans do not need to be afraid because if they work with knowledge and love, they do not get lost in life.

*Humans are the foam of the waves floating and isolated in the ocean
Occasionally he oscillates into the middle of the sea and the shore
When the wind blows hard,
Then the foam is destroyed as if it never existed
So it is with our lives
When exhaled by death
Life never knows us
We know life
(Life by Kahlil Gibran)*

Humans are likened by Kahlil Gibran such as the foam of the waves floating and isolated in the ocean. This means that humans are lost and helpless by life. Likewise, with death, humans can not do anything. Humans know life but Life does not know humans. This means that they know what to do with their lives.

I purposely withdraw from the hustle and bustle of the city

*Just to find the silence
Because I'm getting tired of uncivilized kindness
A civilization that imagines humility as weakness,
Love as a complement to cowardice,
While arrogance is made into glory.
And in the silence, I can feel
Something I've never had before.
I heard the sound of a calming and peaceful life.
(Silence by Kahlil Gibran)*

Kahlil Gibran describes the symbol of life as something reassuring and peaceful in silence. He was willing to leave the hustle and bustle of the city just to find silence. It can be seen how important silence is in life from the poem above.

*The beauty of life is truly peace of mind,
Where self-confidence and brotherhood are the main strengths.
Justice makes prosperity
And knowledge becomes health for them.
Because behind the present, on the stage of the future,
Beauty like a bridegroom and the soul of the bride,
And life is like a night sprinkled with shining stars.
(Beauty by Kahlil Gibran)*

Peace of mind is a beauty in life. Humans certainly want peace of mind in their lives. According to Kahlil Gibran, the symbol of life is like a night sprinkled with sparkling stars that make life beautiful.

*If only human nature were like an eagle,
Though a hurricane can break its wings and blow its head off.
Of course, it will be great.
Or man has a character like a rock that is buffeted by waves,
Always strong and brave.
Humans are cowards,
Once hit by the storms of life, he rushes to escape,
Then hid among the rocks and caves of the earth.
(Coward by Kahlil Gibran)*

Based on one of the poems by Gibran above, life makes humans coward. If only that character is ignored, humans will become great naturally and do not need to hide and run from life. Thus, humans have their own choices in their life. Whether it is facing it, hiding, or running from life.

In addition to the symbol of love and life, the symbol of death gives its characteristics to Kahlil Gibran because death is also closely related to love and life. This death will come to every human being, but the way each human reacts is certainly different. Likewise, with Gibran, he has his view on this matter.

*Man will see the world with God's eyes,
 And will understand the secrets of life
 After death with the human mind.
 That is the fruit of ignorance.
 So be like a bee that flies among the flowers,
 And don't waste spring.
 Be like a baby mesmerized by the light of the lamp,
 And let his mother keep working.
 The words spoken by your lips are the links that bind you,
 And always be your follower.
 The conclusion of sadness and pleasure
 Are the seeds you will harvest in the future.
 The world itself is the world that moves you over your heart.
 And the people you think are dwarfs and fools are messengers of God,
 He came to learn the pleasures of life through suffering.
 (Kindness word by Kahlil Gibran)*

The human will understand the secrets of life after death. It is the result of stupidity. The earth will swallow the human body as a redeemer of the soul. Thus, all words and deeds while on earth are the determinants after death.

*Sweetheart, I'm alone in the world tonight.
 My loneliness hurts so much,
 Cruel as death.
 Last night, when I felt alone,
 I am a word that is not spoken by a voice
 In the mind of the night.
 However, Today, I have incarnated
 Be a happy song
 Dancing on the tongue of the day.
 Within a minute of the time,
 Gave birth to a glimpse,
 A word and a kiss on the lips.
 (Last Night by Kahlil Gibran)*

In the poem above, the symbol of death becomes something cruel and painful in human solitude at night. However, from that painful loneliness like death, there will be another great day. It is only a matter of time between loneliness, death, and the joys of life.

The issue of the nature of death is an ontological field in the world of philosophy. Death is a stage in the human journey as a process of detachment from the world. The Prophet Muhammad once said that in fact, the world is a corner or a shackle for those who believe in Allah swt. The world is analogous to the life of one's body and faith is the spirit that occupies it. This means that the essence of death is life itself. Death is a stage to a much more essential next life. This life is the eternal afterlife.

The real problem of death is not the spirit, but the matter of matter. This is because the spirit is what makes matter alive. Without the spirit, all things material in the form of death. Sheikh Siti Jenar said that the world is the realm of death. The world is a grave realm, while the body is likened to an iron bar that holds a soul to stay in the world and feels various difficulties in living in this world, such as hunger, thirst, and sadness. Life on earth is just a preparation for real life. If not ready, then the soul will be trapped again into the realm of death that is a carrion or corpse. Real-life is a life without the body because the body often leads to misguidance. The body is a cage for the self and the soul that causes humans to live with various sufferings (Chodjim, 2002: 22-24).

C. Conclusion

Poetry with all its processes is closely related to the experience of the author. The symbols of love, life, and death are symbols found in the poems by Kahlil Gibran. According to Gibran, love is the only freedom in the world because love evokes the spirit of human laws and natural phenomena cannot change their direction. Love is like a beautiful bird, asking to be caught but refusing to be hurt. Besides love, the symbol of life is often interpreted by Kahlil Gibran as an afterthought for humans. He thought that living things were just dust particles floating around in an eternal and infinite void. The human self is only to surrender and obey. If humans are in love, their love does not come from them, nor does it belong to them. If humans are happy, their happiness is not in humans, but in life itself. Furthermore, there is a symbol of death in the view of Kahlil Gibran. According to him, death is the end of the children of the earth. But for the soul, death is a beginning, a triumph over life.

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