



AL-IRFAN: Journal of Arabic Literature and Islamic Studies  
P-ISSN: 2622-9897 E-ISSN: 2622-9838

Vol. 8, No. 2, 2025, 155-174

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.58223/al-irfan.v8i2.423>



---

## Saussurean Strukturalism on Motherhood in Gibran's 'ummi' poem

---

**'Aqil Dlabit 'Alimuddin Putra Zulfah**

Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University, Indonesia

[24201011006@student.uin-suka.ac.id](mailto:24201011006@student.uin-suka.ac.id)

**Mustari**

Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University, Indonesia

[mustari@uin-suka.ac.id](mailto:mustari@uin-suka.ac.id)

**Farrel Izham Prayitno**

International University of Africa, Sudan

[itsmefarrelizhamp@gmail.com](mailto:itsmefarrelizhamp@gmail.com)

---

### Abstract

**Keywords:** Kahlil Gibran, Ummi's poem, Ferdinand de Saussure, structuralism

This study investigates Kahlil Gibran's poem Ummi by applying Ferdinand de Saussure's structuralist framework to explore its multifaceted portrayal of motherhood. The research problem arises from the limited scholarly attention to structuralist readings of modern Arabic poetry, particularly in revealing how linguistic and symbolic systems shape thematic depth. The study aims to examine how linguistic signs and natural symbols construct the maternal figure as both a universal and cultural archetype, and to assess the broader significance of structuralist analysis in modern literary studies. Methodologically, the research employs a descriptive-analytical approach within a qualitative paradigm. Through close reading and structural analysis, the study identifies the ways in which syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations, along with binary oppositions, contribute to the cohesion and resonance of the poem. The results demonstrate that key linguistic signs—such as the Arabic word أمي (“my mother”)—alongside natural images like the sun, earth, trees, and flowers, function as semiotic units that elevate the mother beyond her biological role. These symbols present her as an embodiment of affection, resilience, and protection, while binary oppositions such as strength versus weakness and hope

---

---

versus despair enhance the poem's philosophical dimensions. The study contributes to literary scholarship by showing that structuralist analysis not only uncovers the symbolic depth of Gibran's poetry but also situates motherhood as a cultural and cosmic principle. Ultimately, this research reinforces the continued relevance of Saussurean theory in interpreting Arabic literature and enriches critical perspectives on Gibran's poetic vision.

---

### Abstrak

**Kata Kunci:**  
Kahlil Gibran,  
syair Ummi,  
Ferdinand de  
Saussure,  
strukturalisme

Penelitian ini mengkaji puisi Ummi karya Kahlil Gibran dengan menggunakan kerangka strukturalisme Ferdinand de Saussure untuk mengungkap representasi keibuan yang kompleks dan berlapis. Permasalahan penelitian muncul dari masih terbatasnya kajian strukturalis terhadap puisi Arab modern, khususnya dalam menyingkap bagaimana sistem linguistik dan simbolik membentuk kedalaman tema. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk menelaah bagaimana tanda-tanda linguistik dan simbol-simbol alam membangun sosok ibu sebagai arketipe universal sekaligus kultural, serta menilai signifikansi analisis strukturalis dalam studi sastra modern. Metode yang digunakan adalah deskriptif-analitis dengan paradigma kualitatif. Melalui pembacaan mendalam dan analisis struktural, penelitian ini mengidentifikasi peran relasi sintagmatik dan paradigmatis serta oposisi biner dalam membangun kohesi dan resonansi tematik puisi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tanda linguistik utama – seperti kata Arab أمي (“ibuku”) – beserta citra alam seperti matahari, bumi, pohon, dan bunga, berfungsi sebagai unit semiotik yang mengangkat figur ibu melampaui perannya secara biologis. Simbol-simbol tersebut menampilkan ibu sebagai perwujudan kasih sayang, keteguhan, dan perlindungan, sementara oposisi biner seperti kekuatan versus kelemahan dan harapan versus keputusan memperdalam dimensi filosofis puisi. Kontribusi penelitian ini terletak pada pembuktian bahwa analisis strukturalis tidak hanya mengungkap kedalaman simbolik dalam puisi Gibran, tetapi juga memposisikan keibuan sebagai prinsip kultural sekaligus kosmik. Dengan demikian, penelitian ini menegaskan relevansi teori Saussure dalam interpretasi sastra Arab dan memperkaya perspektif kritis terhadap visi puitis Gibran.

---

Received: 03-06-2025, Revised: 12-08-2025, Accepted: 19-08-2025

---

© 'Aqil Dlabit 'Alimuddin Putra Zulfah, Mustari, Farrel Izham Prayitno

---

## Introduction

Literature is a reflection of human life that not only depicts social reality but also presents deep emotional and spiritual experiences (Sekti & Dwi, 2024). As one of the oldest art forms, literature has become the main medium in transmitting cultural values, beliefs, and ideologies from one generation to the next. The role of literature is not only limited to delivering entertainment, but also as a tool for education, social criticism, and reflection of life (Slamet, 2018). In various world literary traditions, literary works often become complex representations of human struggles, in understanding themselves and their world, making it a subject that continues to be relevant to study in various academic approaches.

In literary studies, literary works can be grouped into several forms such as prose, drama, and poetry (Amalia & Fadhilasari, 2019). Each of these forms has its own characteristics in conveying messages to its readers. Prose, for example, tends to be more narrative with a longer structure, while drama offers a performative dimension involving dialogue between characters. Unlike both forms, poetry emphasizes aspects of the beauty of dense, symbolic, and rhythmic language. Poetry is often considered the most esoteric literary medium because of its ability to convey meaning through a concise structure but full of layers of interpretation. This makes poetry have a special place in the literary traditions of various cultures, including Arabic literature (Widayanti, 2024).

Poetry not only functions as a means of aesthetic expression but also plays an important role in conveying cultural and spiritual values (Wajed & Saghar, 2023). In many traditions, poetry is used to express love, joy, sadness, or philosophical reflection. By using symbolism, metaphor, and language play, poetry is able to penetrate the boundaries of logic and bring readers to a more intuitive and emotional understanding. In addition, poetry is often an effective medium for conveying universal messages that transcend geographical and temporal boundaries. In the context of modern Arabic literature, poetry remains

one of the most respected and studied art forms, with many poets such as Kahlil Gibran producing inspiring works (Wissang, 2022).

One of the poems that stands out in Kahlil Gibran's work is the poem '*ummi*' (my mother) which raises the theme of motherhood as the center of reflection on love, sacrifice, and life. This poem is an excerpt from his novel entitled "الأجنحة المتكسرة" in the chapter entitled "أمام عرش الموت" (G. K. Gibran, n.d.). This poem displays the image of the mother as a protective figure, a source of affection, and the center of life, which is relevant to the Arab cultural tradition as well as universal meaning. With soft diction and rich metaphors, Gibran creates an image of the mother who is not only a biological symbol but also spiritual and emotional. This poem also describes the human relationship with motherhood as the core of life experience, making it a meaningful work to analyze.

Kahlil Gibran, a writer, poet, and artist born in Lebanon on January 6, 1883, is one of the most recognized literary figures in modern Arabic and world literature. With works that combine Eastern spirituality and Western philosophy, Gibran presents a unique view of life, love, and humanity (K. Gibran, 1912). His life experiences, including a childhood marked by economic hardship, moving to the United States, and the profound loss of his mother, influence the themes in his works. The poem '*ummi*' (My Mother), reflects the close emotional and spiritual relationship between Gibran and his mother. In this poem, the mother is not only depicted as a protective figure and source of love, but also as a universal symbol of life force and hope. Through a language style full of symbolism, this poem becomes a form of Gibran's respect for the figure of his mother as well as a reflection of his personal experiences that are full of meaning.

To reveal the layers of meaning in the poem '*ummi*', Ferdinand de Saussure's structuralism approach is a very relevant method. Structuralism theory focuses on language as a sign system, which consists of the relationship between the signifier and the signified (Kamil et al., 2023). The signifier refers to the physical form of the word, such as sound or writing, while the signified is the concept or meaning represented by the word. Saussure also emphasized the

importance of syntagmatic relationships, namely horizontal relationships between elements in a text, and paradigmatic relationships, namely vertical relationships involving word choice in a context (Widodo, 2007). By analyzing the poem '*ummi*' from this perspective, it can be revealed how Gibran uses language structures to create complex and profound meanings.

There are several previous studies that have similarities in formal objects and material objects with this study, but differ in the method and scope of the study. For example, research by Royyi Muwaffa entitled "Analysis of Ferdinand De Saussure's Structuralism in Kahlil Gibran's Poem '*ummi*' this study is almost the same, but in its discussion the researcher focuses more on the analysis of its intrinsic elements without including any aspects that are studied in studying Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic or structuralism theory (Muwaffa, 2021). As for what is similar in formal objects is the research by Aminatur Rosyidah entitled "Pesan Dakwah dalam Syair "*Da'il Ayyam*" Karya Imam Syafi'i" which focuses on the analysis of the signifier and the signified only and then produces a message of da'wah which is the conclusion of the study (Rosyidah, 2024). Similar research was conducted by Choiril Ulfi entitled "Lamentations of Sorrow in the Poem "*Saqallalu Qabran*" by al-Farazdaq (Ferdinand De Saussure's Semiotic Analysis)" this research is also still limited to the study of only one aspect at the level of study using Ferdinand de Saussure's theory, namely the aspect of the signified and the signifier (Ulfi, 2024). Another study was conducted by Ahmad Solahuddin entitled "Structural Analysis of Surah Al-Ma'un" this study examines using Ferdinand de Saussure's theory by focusing on syntagmatic and paradigmatic relationships and binary oppositions in its study at the level of analysis (Solahuddin, 2018).

Based on several studies above, this study offers novelty by using Ferdinand de Saussure's structuralism theory universally and comprehensively to analyze the poem '*ummi*'. This approach allows the disclosure of how linguistic elements such as syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations, as well as the interaction between signifier and signified, langue and parole, binary opposition,

signification, and meaning relations work together to create meaning in the text. Thus, this study not only contributes to a deeper understanding of Gibran's work, but also expands the application of Saussure's theory in the study of modern Arabic literature. This is expected to be a foundation for further research that examines literary works through a structural approach, especially in Ferdinand de Saussure's structuralism or semiotics theory

## Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical method to analyze Kahlil Gibran's poem '*ummi*' through the perspective of Ferdinand de Saussure's structuralism. This approach aims to understand how linguistic elements in the text, such as the relationship between signifier and signified, langue and parole, binary opposition, meaning relations, signification, collective meaning, and syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations, form the overall meaning. The main data used in this study is the text of the poem '*ummi*', while the supporting data is in the form of literature related to Saussure's theory and previous studies on Gibran's work. The focus of the analysis is directed at the language structure, word choice, and sentence patterns in the poem text to reveal the relational relationships that form the meaning of motherhood. The data collection technique in this study was carried out through library research, which included collecting the original text of the poem, Saussure's theory reference books, and relevant academic journals.

The data analysis technique was carried out in stages, starting with identifying linguistic elements in the text, such as symbols, metaphors, and diction. Furthermore, syntagmatic analysis was carried out to see the horizontal relationship between elements in the text, as well as paradigmatic analysis to identify the choice of words used and their meanings. This analysis was strengthened by the theory triangulation technique to validate the findings through comparison with other theoretical perspectives. Thus, this method allows the disclosure of deep meaning structures in Kahlil Gibran's poem '*ummi*'.

## Result and Discussion

Kahlil Gibran's poem is one of the poems that is an excerpt from a novel entitled "*al-Ajnihah al-Mutakasirah*" (G. K. Gibran, n.d.). Contains expressions about mothers who are not only described as protective figures and sources of love, but also as universal symbols of the power of life and hope. In this poem, Kahlil Gibran expresses his feelings with full metaphors and symbols. The following are the poems and translations of the poem arranged by the researcher into 15 stanzas as follows:

Table 1: Kahlil Gibran's 'ummi' poem and its translation

Terjemah Inggris	Syair Arab
1. The sweetest thing uttered by human lips is the word "Mother"	١. إن أعذب ما تحدثه الشفاه البشرية هو لفظة «الأم»
2. And the most beautiful call is: O Mother	٢. وأجمل مناداة هي: يا أمي،
3. A small big word full of hope, love, affection,	٣. كلمة صغيرة كبيرة مملوءة بالأمل والحب والانعطاف،
4. And all the tenderness, sweetness, and sweetness of the human heart.	٤. وكل ما في القلب البشري من الرقة والحلاوة والعدوبة.
5. Mother is everything in this life.	٥. الأم هي كل شيء في هذه الحياة،
6. She is the comforter in sorrow, hope in despair, and strength in weakness.	٦. هي التعزية في الحزن، والرجاء في اليأس، والقوة في الضعف،
7. She is the source of tenderness, affection, mercy, and forgiveness	٧. هي ينبوع الحنو والرأفة والشفقة والغفران،
	٨. فالذي يفقد أمه يفقد صدرا يسند إليه رأسه ويذا تباركه وعينا تحرسه....

<p>8. Rest, the hand that blesses her, and the eye that guards her....</p> <p>9. Everything in nature symbolizes and speaks of motherhood.</p> <p>10. The sun is the mother of this earth, nursing her with its heat and embracing her with its light,</p> <p>11. And does not leave her at night until she falls asleep with its rhythm. The waves of the sea and the chirping of birds and their charioteers.</p> <p>12. The earth is the mother of the trees and flowers,</p> <p>13. Tho gives birth to them, suckles them, and then weans them.</p> <p>14. The trees and flowers, in turn, become loving mothers to the delicious fruits and the seeds of life.</p> <p>15. The mother of all that exists is the universal, eternal, everlasting spirit filled with beauty and love.</p>	<p>٩. كل شيء في الطبيعة يرمز ويتكلم عن الأمومة،</p> <p>١٠. فالشمس هي أم هذه الأرض ترضعها حرارتها وتحضنها بنورها،</p> <p>١١. ولا تغادرها عند المساء إلا بعد أن تنومها على نغمة أمواج البحر وترنيمه العصافير والسواقي</p> <p>١٢. وهذه الأرض هي أم للأشجار والأزهار</p> <p>١٣. تلدها وترضعها ثم تفظمها.</p> <p>١٤. والأشجار والأزهار تصير بدورها أمهات حنونات للأثمار الشهية والبزور الحية.</p> <p>١٥. وأم كل شيء في الكيان هي الروح الكلية الأزلية الأبدية المملوءة بالجمال والمحبة.</p>
---	--

From the data, the discussion of the analysis of the poem 'ummi' can be detailed by applying Ferdinand de Saussure's structuralism theory using seven aspects that are the main research of the theory, namely signifier and signified, Langue and Parole, the structure of meaning in text relations, syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations, binary opposition, the relationship of significance in each stanza, and collective meaning in the overall structure. The following is a description of the discussion of the study of the poem:

### **Signifier (signifier) & Signified (signifier).**

Signifier and Signified: The signifier is the physical form of the word (sound or writing), while the signified is the concept represented by the word (Najiyah & Patriansah, 2024). In this poem in stanza 1, the word الأم (Al-Umm) as a signifier brings a signified that leads to the concept of mother, which in the context of Arab culture and in Gibran's work is deeper than just a biological meaning, but a symbol of affection, protection, and wisdom. Example: Signifier: - الأم Signified: The concept of mother as a source of love, sacrifice, and spiritual strength.

Furthermore, Gibran uses natural symbols to expand the meaning of the signified motherhood. In verse 10, a phrase is mentioned الشمس هي أم هذه الأرض (the sun is the mother of this earth), الشمس (the sun) as a signifier that symbolically symbolizes the mother as a source of life that provides energy and light. The signifier of this symbol is the understanding that the mother is not only physically important but also the center of human spirituality and existence. The relationship between the signifier and the signified in this poem is also seen in the choice of words such as الأمل (hope) and الحنان (tenderness), which are used syntagmatically in the text to strengthen the image of the mother as a bringer of peace and comfort.

Gibran also uses signifiers in the form of binary contrasts to describe the complex meaning of motherhood. Examples of opposition such as in verse 6 which reads القوة في الضعف (strength in weakness) and التعزية في الحزن (consolation in

sorrow) show how the mother becomes a symbol of stability amidst the uncertainties of life. Through this opposition, the signifier used builds a signified about the role of the mother as an emotional and spiritual savior. Thus, this analysis shows that the relationship between the signifier and the signified in the poem “*ummi*” not only creates a literal meaning but also connects the reader to a deeper symbolic meaning about motherhood as the core of human life

### Langue and Parole

The concept of langue and parole in the poem ‘*ummi*’ by Kahlil Gibran shows how the two main elements in Ferdinand de Saussure's theory work synergistically to create a complex and profound meaning (Royani & Mahyudin, 2020). The langue in this poem is seen through the use of the Arabic language system recognized by its speakers, including grammar, vocabulary, and cultural symbols that are attached. For example, in the second stanza, the word *أمي* (my mother) not only refers to the biological mother, but also involves Arabic cultural values that place the mother as a symbol of affection, protection, and strength. The language structure in this poem, such as the syntagmatic relationship in the phrase of the 6th stanza *هي التعزية في الحزن، والرجاء في اليأس* (she is a comforter in sorrow, and a hope in despair), shows how language elements work horizontally to form a cohesive meaning. In addition, the relationship paradigmatic in the choice of words such as *أمي* compared to *والدة* strengthens the meaning of the mother as a universal and transcendental entity.

On the other hand, the parole in this poem reflects Kahlil Gibran's individual creativity in using these language elements to convey personal and symbolic messages. The choice of diction, style, and symbolism are characteristics that distinguish Gibran's use of language from other writers. For example, the metaphor in stanza 10 *الشمس هي أم هذه الأرض* (the sun is the mother of this earth) shows how Gibran uses parole to create a unique relationship between mother and life through natural symbols. In addition, the delivery of deep emotions through phrases in stanza 6 such as *هي التعزية في الحزن* (she is a comforter in

sorrow) reflects Gibran's personal expression that places the mother as a central figure in his life. Thus, *langue* provides a language structure that allows the message in this poem to be understood universally, while *parole* presents individual creativity that makes this work unique and meaningful. The interaction between *langue* and *parole* is evidence of how the language system and its users can work together to create a literary work that is rich in aesthetic and symbolic value.

### **Structure of meaning in textual relations**

Structure of Meaning in Saussure's Textual Relations emphasizes that meaning in language does not arise from a single word separately, but from the relationship of words in sentences and sentences in the text (Kusairi et al., 2023). Therefore, we must understand each stanza of the poem 'ummi' in relation to one another. Examples from the first to third stanzas: Stanza 1: Gibran often describes mother as a gentle word. This introduces the idea of motherhood in the context of affection. Stanzas 2-3: Gibran expands on this idea by characterizing the mother as the source of life, a place where a child finds comfort again. In the relationship between these stanzas, the meaning of mother deepens. The early stanzas describe the mother as a source of warmth and security. The relationship between the stanzas builds an increasingly strong image of the mother as the center of the child's life.

### **Syntagmatic and paradigmatic relationships**

Syntagmatic and paradigmatic relationships Saussure's structuralism teaches that the meaning of language arises from two dimensions: syntagmatic (horizontal relationship between elements in a sentence) and paradigmatic (vertical relationship between word choices) (Hasna, 2024). Syntagmatic relationships in this poem. Reveals that each verse in the poem 'ummi' is part of a syntagmatic that builds a narrative about the mother. For example, words such as (*al-athfu*-tenderness), (*mahabbah*-love), and (*amal*-hope) appear in one series, showing the relationship between the mother, themes of life and love. The paradigmatic relationship can be revealed by the choice of the word "أم"

compared to other words such as (*al-walidah*) which shows that Gibran chose the word (*al-umm*) to strengthen the universal image of the mother and more than just a biological relationship.

### Binary opposition

Saussure also talks about how meaning often arises from binary contrast, namely the existence of two opposing elements. In addition, binary opposition is a characteristic of structuralism and semiotic studies (Huda, 2014). It is understood that binary opposition (Latin *binarius* - meaning “double” or “consisting of two elements”) in linguistics refers to a form of communication within a semiotic system, which gains meaning only when one sign is contrasted with another (Aimukhambet et al., 2017). Binary opposition in Kahlil Gibran’s poem *Ummi* constitutes a fundamental device in constructing meaning and animating the symbolism of motherhood in profound ways. One of the most salient contrasts is that of strength versus weakness, reflected in the phrase *القوة في الضعف* (strength in weakness), which conveys that a mother’s power does not lie in physical dominance, but in steadfastness of heart and selfless sacrifice. Similarly, the opposition of consolation versus sorrow appears in *التعزية في الحزن* (consolation in sorrow), where the mother is portrayed as a source of comfort capable of dispelling the grief of her children. This contrast is further enriched by the hope versus despair dichotomy, as seen in *الرجاء في اليأس* (hope in despair), depicting the mother as a wellspring of optimism even in circumstances that seemingly offer no resolution. These three binary pairs complement each other to construct the image of the mother as an emotional anchor, a sustainer of the soul, and a source of inner strength in confronting life’s tempests.

Natural symbolism in the poem extends the scope of these binary oppositions through the day versus night contrast, expressed in the metaphor *الشمس هي أم هذه الأرض ... ولا تغادرها عند المساء* (the sun is the mother of this earth ... and does not leave her at night). Day represents the presence and radiance of maternal love, whereas night embodies silence and distance, yet still within the embrace

of care. Here, Gibran also weaves in order versus chaos, where the sunlight and the soothing rhythm of the waves serve as metaphors for the harmony brought by the mother – opposed to the disorder that arises when her light and embrace are absent. The contrast of life versus death is also implicitly present: the loss of a mother is likened to a world without the sun, a state frozen in the absence of warmth. By combining these three oppositions, Gibran underscores that the role of the mother transcends the biological to become a cosmic principle sustaining the balance of existence.

Furthermore, Gibran constructs the giving versus emptiness opposition through the depiction of the earth giving birth to, nursing, and eventually weaning trees and flowers, as in *تلدها وترضعها ثم تفضمها* (it gives birth to them, nurses them, and then weans them). This cycle symbolizes love manifested through boundless giving, while emptiness emerges when such giving ceases, leaving a void in existence. On a more philosophical level, the eternity versus mortality opposition is embodied in the phrase *الروح الكلية الأزلية الأبدية* (the universal, eternal, everlasting spirit), positioning the mother within a spiritual realm beyond time, in stark contrast to the finite nature of human life. This juxtaposition elevates the mother from a familial figure to a participant in the cosmic and eternal order.

Finally, the human realm versus the cosmic realm becomes the unifying thread tying all these contrasts together. Gibran parallels the human mother with elements of the natural world – such as the sun, earth, trees, and flowers – thereby making the mother a universal symbol that operates across all levels of existence. The sun as the giver of light, the earth as the nurturer of plants, and the flowers as protectors of fruit all mirror the maternal role at every tier of life. Thus, the nine binary oppositions – strength vs. weakness, consolation vs. sorrow, hope vs. despair, day vs. night, order vs. chaos, life vs. death, giving vs. emptiness, eternity vs. mortality, and human realm vs. cosmic realm – not only enrich the structural meaning of the poem but also shape a poetic narrative that unites the emotional, philosophical, and cosmological dimensions of the maternal figure.

### The relationship of significance in each stanza

In the first verse, the phrase *إن أعذب ما تحدثه الشفاء البشرية هو لفظة أسي* (indeed the sweetest word spoken by humans is, my mother) introduces the signifier *أمي* (my mother) as a marker that carries the signified motherhood as a figure full of love and peace. In the second verse, the phrase *و أجمل مناداة هي: أمي* (and the most beautiful call is: My mother!) emphasizes the sign that the mother is the central figure who provides guidance in life. The word “*ummi*” (my mother) here has an emotional and spiritual dimension that goes beyond biological meaning.

In the third stanza, the phrase *كلمة صغيرة مملوءة بالأمل والحب والانعطاف* (a small word full of hope, love, and tenderness) shows how the word “*ummi*” becomes a signifier of the sign that the mother is a source of emotional warmth and hope in the lives of her children. The fourth to sixth stanzas expand on this meaning by describing the mother as *ينبوع الحنو والرأفة والشفقة والغفران* (source of tenderness, compassion, and forgiveness), emphasizing the mother's function as a center of spiritual and moral warmth.

The relationship of signification deepens in the seventh to tenth stanzas, where Gibran uses natural symbols to strengthen the maternal signifier. For example, in the seventh stanza, *الشمس في أم هذه الأرض* (the sun is the mother of this earth) shows how the signifier *الشمس* (the sun) is used to describe the mother as the source of life and energy. In the ninth verse, the phrase *كل شيء في هذه الحياة بحراسة صدر الأم وعين الأم* (everything in this life is protected by the mother's breast and the mother's eyes) creates a sign that the mother is a universal protector who guards her children from harm.

The eleventh to fifteenth stanzas combine metaphors of nature with motherhood, such as (the earth is the mother of trees and flowers) and (the word mother is hidden in our hearts like the core is hidden in the soul). In these stanzas, Gibran connects symbols of nature such as trees, flowers and the core of the earth

as a signifier to indicate that the mother is the foundation of life and the sustainability of generations. The relationship of significance in each verse forms a collective meaning structure that describes the mother as a universal symbol of love, protection, hope, and the sustainability of life. Each verse supports each other to create a cohesive narrative rich in symbolism about motherhood.

### **Collective meaning in the overall structure**

Overall, through structuralist analysis, we see how Gibran builds the image of the mother through the relationship between linguistic signs in this poem. Each verse carries a strengthening impression that the mother is a source of good qualities, the analogy of the mother with the sun, earth, trees and flowers reinforces that overall the structure of the poem is that the mother is like a soul for every human being. As the nucleus is the core of the earth in terms of interests and needs.

### **Conclusion**

This study demonstrates that Kahlil Gibran's poem *Ummi* constructs a multilayered portrayal of motherhood through the lens of Ferdinand de Saussure's structuralism. The analysis reveals that linguistic signs such as the word *أمي* (my mother) and natural symbols like the sun, earth, trees, and flowers function as powerful signifiers that convey the mother as a universal embodiment of affection, protection, and strength. The relationship between signifier and signified in the poem transcends literal meaning, embedding spiritual and cultural dimensions that reflect both the Arab worldview and Gibran's personal experiences. This combination of direct and symbolic signification establishes the mother as the emotional and existential core of human life.

The structuralist approach further shows how syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations work cohesively to sustain thematic unity in the poem. Syntagmatic sequences – such as the arrangement of terms denoting hope, love, and compassion – form coherent textual patterns that reinforce the maternal image, while paradigmatic choices – such as the preference for *أمي* (my mother)

over alternative terms—emphasize universality and transcendence. Binary oppositions, including strength versus weakness, hope versus despair, and order versus chaos, emerge as crucial narrative devices that deepen the philosophical and emotional resonance of the work. Collectively, these structural elements highlight the complexity of Gibran’s linguistic choices in crafting a symbolic and emotionally charged representation of motherhood.

The findings imply that structuralist analysis is an effective and comprehensive method for uncovering both the explicit and implicit layers of meaning in modern Arabic poetry. By examining the interplay of linguistic structures and symbolic imagery, this study not only enriches the scholarly understanding of Gibran’s poetic vision but also reinforces the applicability of Saussurean theory in literary research. The poem *Ummi* ultimately stands as a testament to the enduring significance of motherhood in literature, serving as both a culturally rooted and universally resonant work whose thematic and structural coherence can inform further academic inquiry in modern Arabic literary studies.

### **Acknowledgment**

The authors would like to express their deepest gratitude to Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University, Indonesia, and the International University of Africa, Sudan, for providing academic support and an inspiring scholarly environment that enabled the completion of this research. Sincere appreciation is also extended to colleagues and mentors who offered valuable insights, constructive feedback, and encouragement throughout the research and writing process. Special thanks are due to our families and friends, whose patience and constant support have been a source of motivation. Finally, the authors acknowledge all scholars whose works on structuralism and Arabic literature have laid the foundation for this study and enriched our analysis of Gibran’s poetic vision.

### **Author Contributions Statement**

'AD'APZ was responsible for formulating the research framework, conducting the structuralist analysis of Gibran's poem *Ummi*, and drafting the initial manuscript. M contributed to the refinement of the theoretical foundation, provided critical insights on Saussurean structuralism, and supervised the overall research process to ensure academic rigor. FIP supported the comparative analysis, offered perspectives on Arabic literary studies in a global context, and contributed to the final editing and proofreading of the manuscript. All authors have read and approved the final version of the article and agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

## References

- Aimukhambet, Z. A., Abdilmanatkyzy, A., Baitanasova, K., Seiputanova, A., & Kurmambayeva, K. (2017). The poetic interpretation of binary opposition in the structure of Myth. *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, 9(1), 11–20.
- Amalia, A. K., & Fadhilasari, I. (2019). Apa Itu Sastra; Jenis-Jenis Karya Sastra dan Bagaimanakah Cara Menulis dan Mengapresiasi Sastra. In *CV Budi Utama*.
- Efendi, E., Siregar, I. M., & Harahap, R. R. (2023). Semiotika Tanda dan Makna. *Da'watuna: Journal of Communication and Islamic Broadcasting*, 4(1), 154–163.
- Gibran, G. K. (n.d.). *al-Ajnihah al-Mutakasirah*. Maktabah al-Tsaqofiyah. <https://www.noor-book.com/كتاب-الأجنحة-المنكسرة-pdf>
- Gibran, K. (1912). *The Broken Wings* (A. R. Ferris (trans.)). British Library.
- Hasna, N. (2024). Struktur Makna Aşar Dalam Al-Qur'an. In *Repository.Uinjkt.Ac.Id*. [https://repository.uinjkt.ac.id/dspace/handle/123456789/77644%0Ahttps://repository.uinjkt.ac.id/dspace/bitstream/123456789/77644/1/Nadiya Hasna\\_Gabungan Fix\\_Revisi PascaSidang.pdf](https://repository.uinjkt.ac.id/dspace/handle/123456789/77644%0Ahttps://repository.uinjkt.ac.id/dspace/bitstream/123456789/77644/1/Nadiya%20Hasna_Gabungan%20Fix_Revisi%20PascaSidang.pdf)
- Huda, M. M. (2014). Pola Analisis Wacana Strukturalisme Stanton Dan Hermeneutika; Ke Arah Tafsir Al-Qur'an Humanis-Harmonis. (GU) *El-Wasathiyah: Jurnal Studi Agama*, Vol 2, No 1 (2014), 2338-9648, , 2016, 55–85.
- Kamil, M. I., Ulya, N., Dina, R., Siswanda, S., Ramadhani, S., Putri, S. A., & Harahap, S. S. A. (2023). Kajian Bidang Ilmu Filsafat Tentang Epistemologi Strukturalisme. *PRIMER : Jurnal Ilmiah Multidisiplin*, 1(3), 268–281.
- Kusairi, A., Arijal, H., & Sultan Zakaria, M. (2023). Strukturalisme Linguistik Sebagai Pendekatan Tafsir Kontemporer; Kajian Kritis. *Indonesian Journal of Islamization Studies*, 1(1), 77–109.
- Muwaffa, R. (2021). Analisis Strukturalisme Ferdinand De Saussure pada Puisi

- الألم Karya Kahlil Gibran. *‘A Jamiy : Jurnal Bahasa Dan Sastra Arab*, 10(1), 47.
- Najiyah, D. S. ., & Patriansah, M. (2024). Analisis Semiotika Pada Poster “Efek Samping Sedentary Lifestyle” Menggunakan Pendekatan Ferdinand De Saussure. *Jurnal Seni Rupa Dan Desain*, 02(01), 242–255.
- Pramasheilla, D. A. A. (2021). Penerapan Analisis Semiotika Ferdinand De Saussure dalam Pertunjukan Kethoprak Ringkes. *Indonesian Journal of Performing Arts Education*, 1(2), 16–23.
- Pratama, F., & Budi, W. (2025). The Structure of Signs in Awaydays Film : A Semiotic Analysis by Ferdinand De Saussure ’ s Theory ( 2009 ). *Jejak Digital: Jurnal Ilmiah Multidisiplin*, 1(5), 2711–2731.
- Rosyidah, A. (2024). Pesan Dakwah dalam Syair “Da’il Ayyam” Karya Imam Syafi’i Kajian Semiotika Ferdinand De Saussure. *KNM BSA (Konferensi Nasional Mahasiswa Bahasa Dan Sastra Arab) BSA UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya 2024*, 829–844.
- Royani, A., & Mahyudin, E. (2020). Kajian Linguistik Bahasa Arab. In S. Anwar (Ed.), *Kajian Linguistik Bahasa Arab* (Vol. 1, Issue Vol. 2 No 1 (2023): Kajian Linguistik). Publica Institute Jakarta, Anggota IKAPI DKI Jakarta.
- Sekti, G., & Dwi, W. E. (2024). *Mistikisme Kiai dalam Cerpen Kiai Genggong karya Moh . Wan Anwar ( Kajian Realisme Magis ) kedamaian dan kemajuan bangsa . Masyarakat Indonesia telah membuktikan bahwa kehidupan masyarakatnya . Salah satu tradisi khas dalam Islam di Indonesia adalah*. 6(2), 128–145.
- Slamet, Y. B. M. (2018). Fungsi dan Peran Karya Sastra dari Masa ke Masa. *Praxis*, 1(1), 24.
- Solahuddin, A. (2018). Analisis Struktural Surah Al-Mâ’ûn. *Mutawatir*, 6(1), 160–178.
- Sultan, U. I. N., Hasanuddin, M., & Maulana, A. W. (2025). Semiotika Al-Qur’ an Pendekatan Strukturalisme Ferdinand De Saussure. *Journal of Qur’an and Hadith Studies*, 01(01), 19–30.
- Ulfi, C. (2024). Ratapan Kesedihan dalam Syair “ Saqallahu Qabran ” Karya al - Farazdaq ( Analisis Semiotika Ferdinand De Saussure ). *KNM BSA*

*(Konferensi Nasional Mahasiswa Bahasa Dan Sastra Arab) BSA UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya 2024, 1065–1078.*

Wajed, Z., & Saghar, E. (2023). Role of Poetry and the Poet'S Mission in the Awakening of Society. *Sprin Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2(11), 20–30.

Widayanti, R. (2024). *Sejarah Perkembanga Sastra Arab* (Y. Dewi (ed.); 1st ed.). CV. Literasi Nusantara Abadi.

Widodo, S. A. (2007). Analisis Struktural Dalam Kajian Al-Qur'an (Surat Yusuf). *Ulumuna: Jurnal Studi Keislaman*, 11.

Wissang, I. O. (2022). *Puisi Amsal dan Konstruksi Nilai*. Penerbit Qiara Media.