Journal of General Education and Humanities
Vol. 5, No. 6, December 2026, pp. 7215 – 7227, https://doi.org/10.58421/gehu.v5i6.2214
ISSN 2963-7147

The Meaning of *Gelombang* in D. Zawawi Imron's Poetry Collection *Lautmu Tak Habis Gelombang*: A Structural-Semiotic Approach

Dede Muhtar Safari[1], Ahmad Arifin[2]
[1]Basic Education Study Program, Pamulang University, South Tangerang, Indonesia
[2]Informatics Engineering, Pamulang University, South Tangerang, Indonesia

Article Info

Article history:

Received 2026-09-30
Revised 2026-10-12
Accepted 2026-11-06

Keywords:

D. Zawawi Imron
Gelombang
Heuristic and Hermeneutic Reading
Poetry
Riffaterre
Structural Semiotics

ABSTRACT

This study examines how the recurring sign *Gelombang* acquires meaning in D. Zawawi Imron's poetry collection *Lautmu Tak Habis Gelombang* (2000), using a structural-semiotic approach in which structural description precedes Riffaterre's two-stage semiotic reading. Six of the collection's 83 poems, written between 1975 and 1995, were selected through purposive sampling because *Gelombang* occurs in their title and/or body. For each poem, physical structure (diction, imagery, figurative language, versification, typography) and inner structure (theme, feeling, tone, message) were recorded on data cards. Heuristic reading decoded the literal meaning of each line containing *Gelombang* and marked its ungrammaticalities; hermeneutic (retroactive) reading resolved them through the poem's theme and religious and cultural conventions, and each reading was tested against textual evidence. The poems share nature-based diction, kinesthetic and auditory imagery, personification, hyperbole, free rhyme, and a religious-humanist orientation. Against this background, *Gelombang* moves between a human register (a fisherman's fervor, hard-won hope, regret, perseverance) and a divine register (God's power; God as Creator and forgiver). A recurring lexical sign can keep a constant semantic core while its variants cross registers, so its meaning must be established poem by poem. The six meanings are interpretive readings, not claims about the poet's intention.

This is an open-access article under the CC BY-SA license.

Corresponding Author:

Dede Muhtar Safari
Basic Education Study Program, Pamulang University, South Tangerang, Indonesia
Email: dosen01325@unpam.ac.id

1. INTRODUCTION

Literary works differ from other kinds of writing in how they use language [1]. This is most evident in poetry, where the poet shapes language for aesthetic effect. A poem is not a collection of isolated elements but a unity of physical and inner elements that can be interpreted only in relation to the whole [2]. Because language is itself a first-order sign

system, literature works as a second-order system built on linguistic convention, so that its meaning is "the meaning of meaning" [3], [4]. Semiotics, the study of signs and how meaning is generated and interpreted [5], is therefore best treated as a continuation of structural analysis: without attention to the sign system and its conventions, the structure of a poem cannot be fully understood [6].

Among semiotic methods for poetry, Riffaterre's two-stage reading [7] suits poems whose language resists literal paraphrase. Heuristic reading follows grammatical and referential competence and exposes "ungrammaticalities", such as images or juxtapositions that cannot be accepted literally. Hermeneutic (retroactive) reading then resolves them by tracing the poem's specific images back to an underlying matrix, of which they are variants, and to a hypogram in literary and cultural convention [7], [8]. The poems studied here contain exactly such expressions: sweat that "marries" gelombang, grass that "plays gamelan", a smile that stirs the sea. Their meaning cannot be recovered by a literal reading alone.

The object of this study is *Lautmu Tak Habis Gelombang* [9] by D. Zawawi Imron, a Madurese poet whose work is widely recognised in Indonesian literature. Gelombang vocabulary is conspicuous in the collection itself: its two parts are titled *Sujud di Ubun Ombak* and *Peluh Gelombang*, and the title poem names the sea and its gelombang. This maritime orientation is not incidental. Madurese society has historically been shaped by seafaring and fishing livelihoods alongside a strong Islamic orientation [10], and cultural-literary scholarship holds that a literary text should be read within the cultural formation that produces it [11]. Two broader traditions make the sea a ready vehicle for spiritual meaning: the imagination of water as a material of reverie and transformation [12], and the ocean as a recurrent image of the relation between the infinite divine and the finite creature in Islamic mystical literature [13]. These traditions are treated here as a possible hypogram for the poems, not as a premise that the analysis assumes.

Previous research on Zawawi Imron's poetry and on water and sea imagery in Indonesian literature is considerable, but it has taken different directions from the present study (Table 1). Hasanah [14] describes the structural-semiotic characteristics of Imron's poems in general, reporting the prominence of metaphor, personification, and varied imagery, but without tracing one sign across poems. Ratih [15] applies Riffaterre's semiotics to a single poem, "Tembang Rohani", and identifies Quranic hypograms behind its religious meaning; this shows that Riffaterre's model fits Imron's religious poetry, yet the analysis is confined to one text. Hidayat [16] studies the semiotics of another Imron collection whose title also contains sea imagery, *Bantalku Ombak Selimutku Angin*. Indriasari [17] reads *Refrein di Sudut Dam* semiotically without a preceding structural stage, and Astuti [18] combines structural and semiotic analysis to trace "home" in a different poet's collection, with pedagogical aims. Beyond Imron, Sitepu [19] examines the contrast between the beauty of nature and the realities of life beside water in Indonesian poems from an ecocritical standpoint, and Frolova [20] shows that the sea as an animistic symbol takes on different tones in different modern novels. The first line of work treats sea and water chiefly as environment or tradition; the second shows that a traditional symbol is re-tuned by each text, which is the premise of this study.

Table 1. Positioning of the Present Study in Relation to Previous Research

Previous Studies	**Object**	**Approach**	**Focus**	**Relation to the current study**
Hasanah [14]	Poems by D. Zawawi Imron	Structural-semiotic, qualitative descriptive	General characteristics (figurative language, diction, imagery)	Broad characterisation; no tracing of a single sign across poems
Ratih [15]	"Tembang Rohani" (one poem)	Riffaterre's semiotics	Quranic hypograms and religious meaning	Single poem; supports Riffaterrean reading of Imron's religious poetry
Hidayat [16]	*Bantalku Ombak Selimutku Angin* (Imron)	Semiotic analysis	Signs in a different collection	Different collection; no cross-poem tracing of one lexical sign reported
Indriasari [17]	*Refrein di Sudut Dam* (Imron)	Semiotics only	Various signs	No preliminary structural analysis; no single sign traced
Astuti [18]	*Rumah Cahaya* (Abdul Wachid B.S.)	Structural-semiotic	"Home" in one collection, plus pedagogy	Similar procedure, different poet, symbol, and aims
Proposed Study	*Lautmu Tak Habis Gelombang* (Imron), six poems	Structural description Riffaterre's heuristic and hermeneutic reading	*Gelombang* traced across poems; human–divine register shift	Sustained tracing of one recurring sign through six poems of one collection

From this comparison, the gap can be stated cautiously. In the literature reviewed here, structural-semiotic work on Imron's poetry and on maritime or water imagery has concentrated on general characteristics, single poems, other collections, or other symbols. A sustained, multi-poem tracing of one recurring lexical sign within a single collection, which proceeds from structural description to Riffaterre's two-stage reading and asks whether the sign's meaning stays stable or shifts between human and divine registers, was not found in it. This statement concerns the sources reviewed, not a claim that no such study exists.

Accordingly, the study makes three contributions. First, it uses structural description as a systematic precondition for a semiotic reading of one recurring sign, rather than treating interpretation as detached from the text's formal features. Second, it follows *gelombang* across six poems from 1975 to 1995 by the same poet, which holds idiolect and collection constant while the context varies. Third, it uses Riffaterre's concepts of matrix, model, variant, and hypogram to examine how the sign moves between human and divine registers and, in doing so, tests whether a recurring symbol can be assumed to carry a fixed meaning. The study is deliberately narrow in scope and does not claim that its findings hold for other symbols or poets; its limits are stated in the Conclusion.

Accordingly, this study aims to describe (1) the physical and inner structure of the six poems in *Lautmu Tak Habis Gelombang* in which *Gelombang* appears, and (2) the meaning of *Gelombang* in each poem through heuristic and hermeneutic semiotic readings.

2. METHOD

2.1 Research design

This is a qualitative descriptive study using a structural-semiotic approach [21], [22]. The qualitative descriptive design fits because the data are words and lines of poetry and the aim is an interpretive account of meaning, not measurement. The two parts of the approach are linked sequentially: structural analysis describes how each poem is built and supplies the textual evidence and ungrammaticalities, and semiotic analysis then interprets what the sign means within that structure [23], [24].

2.2 Data source, population, and sampling

The population is all 83 poems in *Lautmu Tak Habis Gelombang* [9], published by Gama Media in 2000 in two parts: *Sujud di Ubun Ombak* (32 poems) and *Peluh Gelombang* (51 poems). The sample was selected purposively [25] using one criterion: the lexeme *gelombang* (gelombang) occurs in the poem's title and/or body, whether in a single or reduplicated form (*gelombang-gelombang*). Title occurrence is not required; of the six poems selected, only the title poem names *gelombang* in its title, and in the other five it occurs in the body.

Table 2. Sampled poems (original titles with English glosses)

No.	Original title	English gloss	Year
1	*Di Pintu Bandar*	At the Harbor Gate	1975
2	*Tembang Selanget*	Song of Selanget	1979
3	*Luka*	Wound	1982
4	*Yang Betah di Sini Hanya Siul Nelayan*	The Only One at Home Here Is the Fisherman's Whistle	1985
5	*Jembatan II*	Bridge II	1994
6	*Lautmu Tak Habis Gelombang*	Your Sea Never Runs Out of Gelombang	1995

2.3 Instruments and data cards

Data were collected by close reading and note-taking, supported by library research, with data cards as the instrument. Each card records the poem's title and year, the line(s) containing *gelombang* with their surrounding context, the structural elements found in that segment, a note on the heuristic meaning, any ungrammaticality, the hermeneutic meaning, and the textual evidence for it. Table 3 gives a completed card as an example. This procedure lets the structural findings (Section 3.1) and the semiotic readings (Section 3.2) be cross-referenced poem by poem.

Table 3. Example of a completed data card (poem 1)

Field	Entry
Poem/year	*Di Pintu Bandar* / 1975
Line containing the sign	"senyummu di sampan gegagur ombak" ("your smile on the sampan stirring the surging gelombang")
Context	A fisherman setting out to work; the gelombang phrase closes the clause on the departing boat.
Physical structure	Diction: maritime lexicon (*sampan*, *ombak*). Imagery: kinesthetic and visual. Typography: line break isolates the gelombang phrase
Heuristic meaning	A fisherman's broad smile as his boat heads into rough water
Ungrammaticality	A smile cannot literally "stir" gelombang; a human expression is joined to a verb of sea movement.
Hermeneutic meaning	*Gelombang* = the fisherman's burning enthusiasm for his work
Textual evidence	Agitated verb attached to a joyful image; kinesthetic imagery; poem's theme of work and struggle (Section 3.1)

2.4 Identifying physical and inner structure

To make the structural analysis systematic, each element was identified with an explicit operational indicator (Table 4), based on Waluyo's distinction between physical and inner structure [2]. The same indicators were applied to all six poems, and the results are compared in Table 5.

Table 4. Indicators used to identify structural elements

Structure	Element	Operational indicator
Physical	Diction	Word choice that is denotative or connotative; dominant semantic field [26]
Physical	Imagery	Words that evoke sensory experience; classified as visual, auditory, kinesthetic, olfactory, gustatory, or tactile [27]
Physical	Figurative language	Expressions that deviate from literal meaning; classified as personification, hyperbole, metaphor, or simile [28]
Physical	Versification	End-rhyme pattern, alliteration, assonance, rhythm, enjambment [29]
Physical	Typography	Line and stanza arrangement and its effect on meaning
Inner	Theme	Central idea that holds the whole poem together
Inner	Feeling and tone	The poet's emotional stance and attitude toward the reader
Inner	Message	Intention or advice that can be drawn from the poem as a whole

2.5 From heuristic to hermeneutic reading

Readings followed Riffaterre [7] in five steps. (1) A heuristic reading decoded each line containing *Gelombang* according to standard grammar and referential meaning. (2) Ungrammaticalities, meaning semantic incongruity, contradiction, or nonsense at the literal level, were marked on the data card. (3) The hermeneutic reading treated each ungrammaticality as a signal to reread retroactively, asking which underlying idea (matrix) the specific image is a variant of, and which religious or cultural convention (hypogram) it echoes [8]. (4) The meaning of *Gelombang* in that poem was stated as the resolution of the ungrammaticality in light of the poem's theme. (5) The meaning was checked against the structural evidence and against at least one alternative reading (Section 3.5).

2.6 Credibility of interpretation

Because interpretation is partly subjective, a reading was accepted only if it met four criteria: (a) it is supported by at least two textual or structural features, such as diction, imagery, figure, typography, or title; (b) it is coherent with the poem's theme and with the poem as a whole; (c) it rests on an identifiable cultural, religious, or theoretical reference; and (d) plausible alternative readings were considered, and the reason for preferring the accepted one is stated. Trustworthiness was supported by procedures commonly used in qualitative inquiry [30], [31], [32]: theory triangulation (Waluyo's structural model together with Riffaterre's semiotic model), triangulation of evidence (textual features against cultural and literary sources).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Physical and inner structure of the poems

3.1.1 Physical structure

Across the six poems, diction is predominantly nature-based: *pasir pantai* (sandy beach), *laut* (sea), *gelombang* (gelombang), *karang* (coral reef), *bintang* (stars), and *langit* (sky) are used symbolically, not only literally [26]. This maritime lexicon places each poem in a coastal and seafaring world consistent with the poet's Madurese background [10].

Kinesthetic imagery dominates, alongside auditory, olfactory, gustatory, and visual imagery [27]. In *Di Pintu Bandar*, the line "senyummu di sampan gegagur ombak" combines gesture and sight to dramatise the fishermen's spirit; in *Tembang Selanget*, the image of storing the bitterness of the ancestors is gustatory and conveys inherited sadness.

Figurative language is dominated by personification and hyperbole [28]. Natural elements are given human capacities: the night "bathes" in soot, gelombang are "recognised" as mighty, and the sea and grass "play gamelan". Hyperbole ("departing to the sky", "between the stars") raises the emotional weight of ordinary acts.

Versification tends toward free rhyme with irregular line and stanza lengths, with recurrent internal alliteration and assonance and deliberate enjambment [29]. Typographically, all six poems use conventional left-aligned lines, so line breaks, enjambment, and word order carry the expressive weight. In *Di Pintu Bandar*, the line break separating the gelombang phrase from the preceding clause creates a pause that mimics the swell and fall of gelombang, so that typography reinforces the kinesthetic imagery. In *Jembatan II* the concluding line stands alone as a short unit, giving the acknowledgment of the gelombang' power the weight of a calm final statement.

3.1.2 Inner structure

The dominant theme is religious humanism. Some poems dramatise human struggle, effort, and resilience (*Di Pintu Bandar*; *Yang Betah di Sini Hanya Siul Nelayan*); others turn to death, repentance, and divine grace (*Tembang Selanget*, *Luka*, *Jembatan II*, and *Lautmu Tak Habis Gelombang*), a duality consistent with the poet's religious-cultural setting [11]. The poet's feeling moves from joy and pride in human perseverance to

sadness, regret, doubt, and acceptance. The tone is didactic: inviting, advising, or narrating, and it leads the reader to awe, empathy, or awareness. The recurring message is that people must work hard, be patient in hardship, and finally return to and be reconciled with God.

3.1.3 Comparison across the six poems

Table 5 compares the structural elements poem by poem. Cells marked for completion should be filled from the data cards before submission.

Table 5. Comparison of structural elements across the six poems

Poem	**Diction**	**Imagery**	**Figurative language**	**Versification and typography**	**Inner structure (theme; feeling)**
1 *Di Pintu Bandar*	Maritime (*sampan*, *ombak*)	Kinesthetic, visual	-	Free rhyme; line break isolates the gelombang phrase	Work and struggle; joy, pride
2 *Tembang Selanget*	Death, ancestry, grave	Gustatory (bitterness of ancestors); auditory (grass playing gamelan)	Personification (grass "plays gamelan")	-	Death, repentance; sadness, longing for peace
3 *Luka*	Affective abstraction (awareness, regret)	-	Gelombang as metaphor for regret; reduplication *gelombang-gelombang*	-	Regret; sorrow, self-reproach
4 *Yang Betah di Sini Hanya Siul Nelayan*	Livelihood (sweat, whistle, fishermen)	-	Personification (sweat "marries" gelombang)	-	Perseverance; resilience
5 *Jembatan II*	Bridge, afterlife	-	Bridge as eschatological metaphor	Final line set apart as a single short unit	Death and judgment; awe, acceptance
6 *Lautmu Tak Habis Gelombang*	Sea, debt, forgiveness	-	-	-	Forgiveness; humility, hope

Two points stand out. First, the physical features that recur in all six poems (maritime diction, kinesthetic imagery, personification, free rhyme) form a stable background. Second, the inner structure is what differentiates the poems: theme and feeling move from labour (poems 1 and 4) through hope and regret (2 and 3) toward eschatological and forgiveness themes (5 and 6). This stable-form, varying-theme pattern is the structural reason why the same sign can bear different meanings.

3.2 Heuristic and hermeneutic readings of *Gelombang*

Table 6 summarises both readings for each poem; the following paragraphs provide the textual evidence and justification. Quotations marked for verification should be checked against the book [9].

Table 6. Heuristic and hermeneutic readings of *Gelombang* in the six poems

No.	Poem (year)	Key text	Heuristic reading	Hermeneutic reading	Meaning of *Gelombang* (register)
1	*Di Pintu Bandar* (1975)	"senyummu di sampan gegagur ombak"	A fisherman's smile as the boat goes out into rough water	The agitated sea is joined to a joyful image: enthusiasm for work	Burning spirit of a fisherman at work (human)
2	*Tembang Selanget* (1979)	Unswept gelombang; grass playing gamelan; ancestral bitterness	Gelombang that are not swept away, with music from grass	A visit to a grave and preparation to return to God; peace is sought but elusive	Hope that is hard-won and attained only through effort (human, turning toward divine)
3	*Luka* (1982)	"kesadaran datang begitu singkat / meninggalkan gelombang sesal"	Brief awareness leaves gelombang of regret	A moment of recognising one's fault that passes before action; regret recurs	Deep, recurring regret (human)
4	*Yang Betah di Sini Hanya Siul Nelayan* (1985)	"keringat kawin dengan ombak"	Sweat marries gelombang	Labour united with life's trials; endurance through effort	Hard work and perseverance (human)
5	*Jembatan II* (1994)	Closing line: acknowledging the majesty of the gelombang	A bridge, then an acknowledgment of the gelombang' majesty	The bridge as the Sirāt crossed after death; the sign points to divine power	God's overwhelming power (divine)
6	*Lautmu Tak Habis Gelombang* (1995)	Title line; closing plea about unpaid debts	A sea that never runs out of gelombang; a plea about debts	Inexhaustible creation set against human insufficiency; mercy	God as Creator and the greatness of His forgiveness (divine)

3.2.1 Di Pintu Bandar: the burning spirit of the worker

Heuristically, "senyummu di sampan gegagur ombak" ("your smile on the sampan stirring the surging gelombang") describes a fisherman's broad smile as he sets out. A smile cannot literally stir gelombang, and this ungrammaticality directs a second reading. Hermeneutically, the sea's agitation transfers to the person: *Gelombang* embodies a fiery, wholehearted devotion to work. The reading is supported by (i) kinesthetic and visual imagery that fuses the smile with the sea's movement, (ii) the line break that isolates the gelombang phrase and imitates its surge (Section 3.1.1), and (iii) the poem's theme of work and struggle.

3.2.2 Tembang Selanget: hope that must be earned

Heuristically, unswept gelombang accompany the sound of grass "playing gamelan". Both are ungrammatical: gelombang are not swept, and grass does not make music. Read hermeneutically, the poem follows a person at a grave, remembering ancestral sorrow and preparing to return to God, and *Gelombang* signifies hope for peace and forgiveness that is elusive but not impossible for one who keeps seeking it. The evidence is the grave and ancestral setting, the gustatory image of inherited bitterness, and the personified landscape. In Riffaterre's terms, the bitterness is a variant of a deeper matrix of unresolved legacy, and the poem answers with the hope that effort can turn it into peace.

3.2.3 Luka: regret that returns

Heuristically, awareness comes briefly and leaves a gelombang of regret. Hermeneutically, this is a moment of recognising one's mistake that passes before one can act on it, so that *Gelombang* signifies deep and recurring regret. Three features support the reading: the title (*luka*, "wound") fixes an affective frame; the phrase "datang begitu singkat" sets brevity against what is left behind; and the reduplicated form *gelombang-gelombang* signals plurality or intensity, so regret appears as recurrent and cumulative, not as a single pain.

3.2.4 Yang Betah di Sini Hanya Siul Nelayan: labour and endurance

Heuristically, "keringat kawin dengan ombak" says that sweat marries gelombang, which is a nonsensical union at the literal level. Hermeneutically, it unites human labour with life's trials: happiness is bound up with hardship, and only sustained effort allows one to endure, so *Gelombang* stands for personal hard work and perseverance. The personification in *kawin* (marry) makes sweat and gelombang equal partners in a lasting bond, and it echoes the title, in which only the fishermen's whistle is "betah" (at home) amid the gelombang. Belonging here is conditional on resilience, not comfort.

3.2.5 Jembatan II: the power that must be acknowledged

Heuristically, the poem moves from a physical bridge to a closing line that acknowledges the gelombang's majesty. The shift from concrete bridge to acknowledgment of gelombang is the ungrammaticality. Hermeneutically, the bridge can be read against the Islamic eschatological image of the Sirāt, crossed after death, so that the gelombang point to God's overwhelming and incomparable power. The evidence includes the verb of acknowledgment, which places the speaker below what is acknowledged; the separation of the final line as a short, calm unit (Section 3.1.1); and the poem's theme of death and judgment. The reading is an interpretation of the poem's eschatological frame, not a statement of the poet's doctrine.

3.2.6 Lautmu Tak Habis Gelombang: Creator and forgiver

Heuristically, the title states that a sea never runs out of gelombang, and the closing plea concerns unpaid debts. Hermeneutically, the title's negated verb of exhaustion asserts inexhaustibility, which, set beside human obligations left unfulfilled at death, can be read

as the infinity of divine mercy. *Gelombang* then signifies both God as Creator of nature and the greatness of His forgiveness. Because this is the title poem, the sign is at its point of widest semantic expansion, from a natural phenomenon to a name for divine infinity, and this position invites (but does not force) a retroactive reading of the earlier, human-scale meanings as partial refractions of it.

3.3 Patterns and differences across the six readings

Three patterns emerge. **Constant core:** in all six poems *Gelombang* denotes a force larger than the human subject, which the subject must meet, endure, or acknowledge. **Variable valence:** the same force is joyful (poem 1), elusive (2), accusing (3), demanding (4), awe-inspiring (5), and merciful (6). **Variable agency:** in poems 1 and 4 humans act upon or with gelombang; in 2 and 3 gelombang act upon humans; in 5 and 6 gelombang are the attribute of God. Meaning therefore shifts along a scale from human labour to divine power, with *Tembang Selanget* and *Luka* in the middle, where human feeling turns toward judgment and grace.

The years of composition run in the same direction: the human-register poems date from 1975–1985 and the divine-register poems from 1994–1995, with 1979 and 1982 as transitional. This may suggest a development in the poet's use of the sign, but six poems are too few, and this selection too purposive, to support a claim about the poet's development; the observation is offered only as a hypothesis for future study.

3.4 Riffaterre's concepts: matrix, model, variant, hypogram, and indirect expression

In Riffaterre's model, a poem is the expansion of a minimal, non-literal matrix into a model and its variants, which repeat the same structure in different words; the matrix is never quoted in the poem and is formulated by the reader [7]. In these poems, *Gelombang* functions as the model, the visible word in which the matrix is actualised, and the six meanings are its variants. A matrix that fits all six may be stated as: *human life is always exposed to a restless force greater than itself, and its meaning depends on how that force is met*. The variants differ in what they put at the centre: the response of the worker (1, 4), the aspirant (2), the repentant (3), or the believer before God (5, 6).

The hypograms identified are of two kinds. The first is the maritime-livelihood conventions of Madurese coastal life [10], which sustain the human-register variants. The second is the Islamic eschatological and devotional repertoire, namely the grave, repentance, the Sirāt, and divine forgiveness, which sustains the divine-register variants and resembles the Quranic hypograms Ratih [15] found in another Imron poem. The idea of the ocean as an image of the infinite divine [13] and the imagination of water as the matter of transformation [12] provide a wider interpretive background, though these were not shown to be direct sources of the poems.

Riffaterre's three modes of indirect expression can also be observed. *Displacing of meaning* appears when *Gelombang* is displaced from sea to emotion (regret, enthusiasm) and to God. *Distorting of meaning* appears in the contradictions and nonsense that trigger the hermeneutic reading: smile stirring the sea, sweat marrying gelombang, grass playing gamelan. *Creating of meaning* appears in textual organisation that has no linguistic

meaning in itself: the isolated gelombang phrase in poem 1, the detached final line in poem 5, the reduplication in poem 3, and the placing of the sign in the title of poem 6.

3.5 Alternative interpretations

The readings above are not the only ones possible. In *Di Pintu Bandar*, the stirred gelombang could be read as danger that the fisherman's smile masks, which would make the spirit one of defiance more than joy; the joyful imagery and the poem's theme of work were taken to favour the first reading. In *Luka*, *gelombang sesal* could be read as a conventional metaphor for any strong emotion rather than regret in particular; the title and the contrast with brief awareness were taken to narrow it to regret. In *Jembatan II*, the closing acknowledgment could refer to the natural power of the sea without an eschatological frame; the bridge image and the theme of death were taken to support the eschatological reading, but a reader who gives less weight to them could reasonably resist it. In *Lautmu Tak Habis Gelombang*, inexhaustible gelombang could simply convey the endlessness of nature; the plea about debts is the strongest warrant for reading the sign as forgiveness, so this reading is the most dependent on one passage. These cases show why each reading is presented as an interpretive finding that can be revised against further evidence, and not as the definitive meaning of the poem.

3.6 Comparison with previous studies

The structural findings agree with Hasanah's [14] report that Imron's poetry relies on personification and on concrete, connotative diction with varied imagery; the present study adds that, in this collection, the same features recur around a single sign. The finding that the divine-register variants rest on a religious hypogram agrees with Ratih's [15] Riffaterrean reading of "Tembang Rohani", which traced Quranic sources. Unlike Sitepu's [19] ecocritical reading, in which water imagery chiefly bears a relationship between humans and their environment, the poems studied here use the sea mainly to address labour, conscience, and God. Moreover, just as Frolova [20] found that the sea as a traditional symbol takes on a different tone in each novel, *Gelombang* here is re-tuned by each poem. These comparisons are limited by the fact that the studies concern different texts, and Hidayat's [16] study of another Imron collection was not compared in detail.

3.7 Theoretical contribution and implications

The study applies an established method, and its contribution to structural-semiotic theory is correspondingly modest and specific. Riffaterre's matrix and hypogram are normally formulated for one poem; tracing one sign across several poems of a collection suggests that a recurring sign may hold a single matrix while its variants cross registers. This extends the concepts from the single text to the collection, though only as a hypothesis supported by six poems. It also gives a practical rule: frequency of recurrence should prompt a poem-by-poem reading and not the assumption of a fixed symbolic value.

For literary criticism, the procedure (structure, then ungrammaticality, then hypogram, then matrix, then tested meaning) is replicable for other recurring symbols in Imron's work, such as *laut* (sea), *karang* (coral reef), or *angin* (wind), and in other coastal

poetry. For poetry education, the same sequence offers teachers and students a staged model for moving from paraphrase to interpretation, with each step requiring evidence from the text.

4. CONCLUSION

The main finding is that a recurring poetic symbol can express different meanings depending on its textual context. In six poems by D. Zawawi Imron from *Lautmu Tak Habis Gelombang*, a stable structural background of nature-based diction, kinesthetic imagery, personification, and a religious-humanist theme carries *Gelombang* across a human register (a worker's fervor, hard-won hope, regret, perseverance) and a divine register (God's power and forgiveness), around a common core of a force greater than the human subject.

The study's theoretical contribution is to show, through the combination of structural description with Riffaterre's two-stage reading, that the meaning of a recurring sign should be established poem by poem, and that Riffaterre's matrix and hypogram can be used to compare variants of one sign across poems. These six meanings are the interpretive findings of this study, supported by the textual evidence and alternatives discussed above; they are not claims about what the poet intended or how readers received the poems.

The study is limited to one sign, six poems, one collection, and one poet, and to a text-centred reading without reader-response or reception data. Future research could compare the same sign across poets or collections, take an intertextual approach to the Islamic and Madurese sources suggested here, or use reader-response methods to test whether readers recover the same registers.

REFERENCES

[1] Safari, "Portrait of Islam in the novel *Jejak Langkah* with a liberation theology approach and its relevance to character education," *Bindo Sastra J.*, vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 75–81, 2022.

[2] H. J. Waluyo, *Teori dan Apresiasi Puisi* [Theory and Appreciation of Poetry]. Jakarta, Indonesia: Erlangga, 1987.

[3] R. D. Pradopo, *Pengkajian Puisi* [Poetry Analysis]. Yogyakarta, Indonesia: Gadjah Mada Univ. Press, 2007.

[4] A. Teeuw, *Sastra dan Ilmu Sastra* [Literature and Literary Science]. Jakarta, Indonesia: Pustaka Jaya, 1984.

[5] P. Cobley and L. Jansz, *Introducing Semiotics*. New York, NY, USA: Icon Books–Totem Books, 1999.

[6] Jabrohim, Ed., *Metodologi Penelitian Sastra* [Literary Research Methodology]. Yogyakarta, Indonesia: Hanindita, 2003.

[7] M. Riffaterre, *Semiotics of Poetry*. Bloomington, IN, USA: Indiana Univ. Press, 1978.

[8] M. Riffaterre, *Text Production*, T. Lyons, Trans. New York, NY, USA: Columbia Univ. Press, 1983.

[9] D. Z. Imron, *Lautmu Tak Habis Gelombang* [Your Sea Never Runs Out of Gelombang]. Yogyakarta, Indonesia: Gama Media, 2000.

[10] H. de Jonge, *Madura dalam Empat Zaman: Pedagang, Perkembangan Ekonomi, dan Islam* [Madura in Four Eras: Traders, Economic Development, and Islam]. Jakarta, Indonesia: Gramedia, 1989.

[11] N. K. Ratna, *Sastra dan Cultural Studies* [Literature and Cultural Studies]. Yogyakarta, Indonesia: Pustaka Pelajar, 2007.

[12] G. Bachelard, *Water and Dreams: An Essay on the Imagination of Matter*, E. R. Farrell, Trans. Dallas, TX, USA: Dallas Inst. Publ., 1983.

[13] A. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*. Chapel Hill, NC, USA: Univ. North Carolina Press, 1975.
[14] M. Hasanah, "Karakteristik struktural-semiotik puisi-puisi karya D. Zawawi Imron" [Structural-semiotic characteristics of the poems of D. Zawawi Imron], *LITERA*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2013, doi: 10.21831/ltr.v12i02.1589.
[15] R. Ratih, "Sajak 'Tembang Rohani' karya Zawawi Imron: Kajian semiotik Riffaterre" [The poem "Tembang Rohani" by Zawawi Imron: A Riffaterrean semiotic study], *Kajian Linguistik dan Sastra*, vol. 25, no. 1, pp. 92–107, 2017, doi: 10.23917/kls.v25i1.88.
[16] R. Hidayat, "Analisis semiotika pada kumpulan puisi *Bantalku Ombak Selimutku Angin* karya D. Zawawi Imron" [Semiotic analysis of the poetry collection *Bantalku Ombak Selimutku Angin* by D. Zawawi Imron], *Asas: Jurnal Sastra*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2018, doi: 10.24114/ajs.v7i2.10012.
[17] W. Indriasari, "Kajian semiotik kumpulan puisi *Refrein di Sudut Dam* karya D. Zawawi Imron" [Semiotic study of the poetry collection *Refrein di Sudut Dam* by D. Zawawi Imron], unpublished thesis,
[18] P. Astuti, "Makna 'rumah' dalam kumpulan puisi *Rumah Cahaya* karya Abdul Wachid B.S. (kajian struktural-semiotik) dan alternatif pembelajaran puisi di SMA" [The meaning of "home" in the poetry collection *Rumah Cahaya* by Abdul Wachid B.S. (structural-semiotic study) and alternatives for teaching poetry in senior high school], unpublished thesis,
[19] I. V. Sitepu, "The charms of the nature vs. realities of people living alongside the water in Indonesian poetry," *Poetika: Jurnal Ilmu Sastra*, vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 21–28, 2024, doi: 10.22146/poetika.v12i1.95961.
[20] M. Frolova, "The sea, the volcano, and the tiger: Some animistic symbols in oral tradition and modern Indonesian literature," *Int. J. Humanity Stud.*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 29–36, 2017, doi: 10.24071/ijhs.v1i1.669.
[21] S. Arikunto, *Prosedur Penelitian: Suatu Pendekatan Praktik* [Research Procedures: A Practical Approach]. Jakarta, Indonesia: Rineka Cipta, 2006.
[22] S. Endraswara, *Metodologi Penelitian Sastra: Epistemologi, Model, Teori, dan Aplikasi* [Literary Research Methodology: Epistemology, Models, Theories, and Applications]. Yogyakarta, Indonesia: Pustaka Widyatama, 2011.
[23] R. D. Pradopo, *Beberapa Teori Sastra, Metode Kritik, dan Penerapannya* [Several Literary Theories, Critical Methods, and Their Application]. Yogyakarta, Indonesia: Pustaka Pelajar, 2008.
[24] J. Culler, *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature*. London, U.K.: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975.
[25] N. K. Ratna, *Teori, Metode, dan Teknik Penelitian Sastra* [Theory, Methods, and Techniques of Literary Research]. Yogyakarta, Indonesia: Pustaka Pelajar, 2004.
[26] G. Keraf, *Diksi dan Gaya Bahasa* [Diction and Style of Language]. Jakarta, Indonesia: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2006.
[27] S. A. Sayuti, *Berkenalan dengan Puisi* [Getting to Know Poetry]. Yogyakarta, Indonesia: Gama Media, 2002.
[28] Siswantoro, *Metode Penelitian Sastra: Analisis Struktur Puisi* [Literary Research Methods: Analysis of Poetry Structure]. Yogyakarta, Indonesia: Pustaka Pelajar, 2010.
[29] Wiyatmi, *Pengantar Kajian Sastra* [Introduction to Literary Studies]. Yogyakarta, Indonesia: Pustaka, 2006.
[30] Y. S. Lincoln and E. G. Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA, USA: Sage, 1985.
[31] M. B. Miles, A. M. Huberman, and J. Saldaña, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*, 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA, USA: Sage, 2014.
[32] L. S. Nowell, J. M. Norris, D. E. White, and N. J. Moules, "Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria," *Int. J. Qual. Methods*, vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 1–13, 2017, doi: 10.1177/1609406917733847.