

EXISTENTIAL-PHILOSOPHICAL SYMBOLS AND MEANINGS IN THE SUFISTIC ROMAN “GHURBAH AL-GHARBIYAH” SUHRAWARDĪ: A HERMENEUTICAL STUDY

Lukman Hakim Rohim*

Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University Yogyakarta, Indonesia; lukmanhakla@gmail.com

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Abstract: *Suhrawardī, as the founder of illumination philosophy, has works in the field of literature that have philosophical nuances. Researchers through this article attempt to examine philosophically-hermeneutically the Sufistic Romance of Ghurbah al-Gharbiyah Suhrawardī which has not been extensively studied by researchers including Suhrawardī scholars. The novel is genealogically related to Ḥay bin Yaqqān by Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Ṭufayl, so it is called the Ḥay bin Yaqqān trilogy: Avicenna, Ibnu Ṭufayl, and Suhrawardī. Through Ricoeur’s Hermeneutic Approach and Corbin’s Epistemology of Sufistic Imagination, which is used as a research method, researchers intend to interpret the symbols and existential meanings of Ghurbah al-Gharbiyah’s novel. The purpose of this study is to interpret the background, symbols, and meaning behind Suhrawardī’s novel. The conclusion of this study: Ghurbah al-Gharbiyah discusses the philosophical theme of human alienation in the world with the use of symbols: the city of Qairawan as the imprisoned phase, the Hudhud bird as the enlightenment phase, and the journey on Mount Sinai during the liberation phase and meeting with the “Light of all Lights”. Three phases each characterize today’s Sufistic consciousness of man: the experience of alienation, enlightenment, and liberation. On the other hand, this novel is a representation of Suhrawardī’s subjective creative imagination (al-quwwah al-khayāliyyah) inspired by prophetic experiences: Prophet Muhammad’s Ascension, Prophet Sulaiman’s Hudhud bird, and Prophet Musa’s Mount Sinai.*

Keywords: *Alienation, Philosophy of Illumination, Sufistic Imagination, Sufistic Liberation, Symbolic Hermeneutics.*

Abstrak: Suhrawardī sebagai pendiri filsafat Iluminasi memiliki karya di bidang sastra yang bernuansa filosofis. Peneliti melalui tulisan ini berusaha meneliti secara filosofis-hermeneutis roman sufistik *Ghurbah al-Gharbiyah* karya Suhrawardī yang belum banyak diteliti oleh para peneliti termasuk pengkaji Suhrawardī. Novel tersebut secara genealogis berkaitan dengan Ḥay bin Yaqqān karya Ibnu Sīnā dan Ibnu Ṭufayl, sehingga ketiga karya tersebut disebut dengan Trilogi Ḥay bin Yaqqān: Avicenna, Ibnu Thufail, dan Suhrawardī. Melalui pendekatan Hermeneutika Ricoeur dan Epistemologi Imajinasi

* Corresponding Author

Sufistik Corbin yang digunakan sebagai metode penelitian, peneliti bermaksud untuk menafsirkan dan memaknai simbol dan makna eksistensial dari Novel *Ghurbah al-Gharbiyah*. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah menginterpretasikan latar belakang, simbol, dan makna di balik Novel Suhrawardī tersebut. Kesimpulan dari penelitian ini adalah *Ghurbah al-Gharbiyah* membicarakan tema filosofis tentang keterasingan manusia di dunia dengan penggunaan simbol-simbol: Kota Qairawan sebagai fase terpenjara, Burung Hudhud sebagai fase pencerahan, dan perjalanan di Gunung Sinai sebagai fase pembebasan dan pertemuan dengan “Cahaya segala Cahaya”. Tiga fase yang masing-masing menandai kesadaran sufistik manusia hari ini: pengalaman keterasingan, pencerahan, dan pembebasan. Di sisi lain, novel ini merupakan representasi dari daya imajinasi-kreatif (*al-quwwah al-khayāliyyah*) subjektif Suhrawardī yang terinspirasi dari pengalaman kenabian, yaitu: Mikraj Nabi Muhammad saw., Burung Hudhud Nabi Sulaiman, dan Gunung Sinai Nabi Musa.

Kata-kata Kunci: *Filsafat Iluminasi, Hermeneutika Simbol, Imajinasi Sufistik, Keterasingan, Pembebasan Sufistik.*

Introduction

Sufistic experience which generally comes spontaneously, given, directly (Immediate), is often difficult to articulate in scientific-discursive language. This is because divine experience is obtained not through contemplation (cogitation) but through vision (*al-mushāhadah*) which refers directly to a special reality, namely the “*mundus imaginal*”. So, it is not surprising that the subjective experience of divinity is expressed more in poetry or symbols (non-ordinary language) as ‘meta-linguistic’ which transcends language (Ziai 1996, 808). Only symbols and poetic language can represent the intent of the metaphors and metaphysical symbols of a divine experience. This paper will try to interpret the Roman *Ghurbah al-Gharbiyah* by Suhrawardī, which from its title alone raises the question of “human alienation in a foreign world.”

Suhrawardī is an Islamic philosopher known as *Shaykhul Ishrāq* “The Teacher of Enlightenment” who played an important role in the development of Islamic philosophy after Ibn Rushd. His philosophy of illumination (*ishrāqiyah philosophy*) comes with a theosophical style: a combination of peripatetic rational knowledge (*ḥikmah al-baḥthiyah*) and the intuition of the Sufis (*ḥikmah al-dhawqiyah*) (Corbin 1998, 44). Apart from the main works of Suhrawardī, *Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq, al-Mashāri’ wa al-Muṭārahāt*, etc., this fictional work of *Ghurbah al-Gharbiyah* is interesting to study in more depth; looking for its connection with Suhrawardī’s philosophy of illumination, exploring the meaning behind its symbols and metaphors.

In the midst of the many Suhrawardī scholars such as Henry Corbin (Corbin 1998), Sayyed Hossain Nasr (Nasr 1997) who focused on studying Suhrawardī’s metaphysics, then Ziai (Ziai 1996) and John Walbridge (Walbridge 2018) who focused on developing aspects of Suhrawardī’s logic and epistemology, followed by Mehdi Amin Razavi, Jari Kaukua, not

many scholars have seriously studied the *Ghurbah al-Gharbiyah* roman. Their attention is more on the epistemology and metaphysics of *ḥikmah al-ishrāq* and the interpretations of his commentators—such as Shīrāzī, Shahrāzūrī, and Ibn Kammūnah.

As far as the author's observation, there are several scholars who have studied *Ghurbah al-Gharbiyah* Suhrawardī's roman. First, Ṣāliḥ Maṭar tries to analyze the aspect of narrative literature (*Balāghah al-Sard*) in the narrative works of Sufis, including Suhrawardī's work. According to Shalih, the tradition of exposing the mystical experience of this fictional story was inspired by the story of the Prophet Muhammad's *Isrā' Mi'rāj*. He then associated it with the Roman *al-Ghufrān*, by Abū al-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī. Up to the personal "*Mi'rāj*" of the Sufis, such as the *Mi'rāj* of Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī, Qushayrī to al-Ghazālī in the *Mi'rāj al-Sālikīn* (Maṭar 2009, 1–3). Ṣāliḥ mentioned the close relationship between the Roman *Ghurbah al-Gharbiyah* and Ibn Sīnā's Roman *Ḥay bin Yaqqān*, Ibnu Ṭufayl. After Suhrawardī, using the same model, Ibn al-Nafīs also wrote "*Fāḍil bin Nāṭiq*".

Second, it was Aḥmad Amīn who initially played the role of *rawqīq* and popularized *Ḥay bin Yaqqān's* tetralogy: Ibn Sīnā, Ibn Ṭufayl, and Suhrawardī in one edition. Amīn only provides a general introduction in a comparative tetralogy of the work both in historical context, linguistics, and the meaning in it. Amīn concludes that Suhrawardī's essay is closer to symbolic literature (*al-Adab al-Ramzī*): a satra that contains multiple meanings and interpretations that allow everyone to interpret according to his inclination (Amīn 2008, 8–29).

Third, is al-Layth Sāliḥ 'Atūm in a journal entitled, "*al-Fasafah al-Ishrāqīyah Inda Shihābuddīn al-Sahruwardī min Khilālī Qīṣṣatihi al-Ghurbah al-Gharbiyah*". Athum tries to study Suhrawardī's philosophy epistemologically through the Romans. Athum's focus is to present each epistemology from the philosophy of the soul, knowledge, and prophecy. However, Athum's analysis framework and systematics are still inadequate and comprehensive in dissecting the work. Especially in the symbolic languages in it ('Atūm 2014, 1–4).

Fourth, Sālim Jum'ah Kāzīm, discusses aspects of the theory of "world view" (*Ru'yah al-Ālam/vision of the world*) from *Ḥay bin Yaqqān* four writers at once: Ibn Sīnā, Ibn Ṭufayl, Suhrawardī, and Ibn Nafīs. According to him, Suhrawardī in his work, brought the sufistic awareness of "a human who rejects the existence of the world" after perfecting his mind, and his spirituality to meet the "Light of all Lights". Worldview, according to him, is a manifestation of "ways to save oneself" through the process of *mujahadah* at a high human level (Kāzīm 2021, 189).

This paper attempts to fill in the lacuna and complete the fourth study above on Suhrawardī's roman. For this reason, the author in this study uses Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutic approach—which will be explained in

the next chapter in interpreting symbols and philosophical meanings in the Roman *Ghurbah al-Gharbiyah*. Apart from Ricoeur, the writer also uses the epistemology of Sufistic imagination as an interpretive horizon. The results of this research are expected to contribute to various studies of Suhrawardī's Sufistic thought and add to the integrity of Suhrawardī's philosophy from his various works. The systematics of this research will then discuss the following questions: What was the background (historical motive and context) that influenced the birth of *Ghurbah al-Gharbiyah*? What is the content of *Ghurbah al-Gharbiyah*'s roman? What are the meanings and Sufistic-philosophical symbols that can be interpreted from the story?

Study Approach: Ricoeur's Hermeneutics and Corbin's Theory of Sufistic Imagination

Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutics has been widely used to dissect religious texts such as hadiths, and Sufistic works, as well as literary texts such as poetry, romans, and songs. Such as Ummi Hasanah's research on Women's Hadith (Ahmad and Hasanah 2018), Ziana Walidah on "*Qaṣīdah al-Khamriyyah*" 'Abdul Qādir al-Jaylānī (Walidah 2022), or on Romans such as Aslan Abidin's research (Abidin 2016), and many more. This shows the specialty of Paul Ricoeur and the influence of his thinking so big in the tradition of contemporary hermeneutics.

The specialty of Paul Ricoeur's thought in the history of hermeneutics is that it can mediate and bridge the three major traditions in hermeneutic schools: methodological, philosophical, and critical. The methodological tradition is interpreted as an interpretation that focuses on objectification and interpretation of the meaning of the author. The hallmark of this model is in the thoughts of Schleiermacher to Emilio Betti. Since the contemporary era, especially with Heidegger, a new pattern has emerged which is called philosophical hermeneutics. An interpretive tradition that emphasizes the existential appreciation and subjective presuppositions of an interpreter (reader) rather than the author's objective meaning (Rahman 2016, 47).

One of the important aspects of Ricoeur's thought is about narrative, metaphor, and symbol as variants of texts—including Suhrawardī's Roman. Narratives and metaphors are new ways of expressing reality and describing the world, as well as creating new interpretations and experiences about it (Fithri 2017, 203). Metaphor refers to the workings of describing and explaining creative and imaginative language that refers to a particular reality of the world: a heuristic fiction in forms: of allegory, expansion of literal meaning, and likeness as a semantic innovation (Fithri 2017, 204).

As for symbols, Ricoeur has a slogan in his book "*La Symbolique du mal*", namely "*le Symbole donne a penser*" (a symbol raises a thought). According

to Ricoeur, the existence of symbols does not only trigger interpretation but also philosophical reflection (Hardiman 2015, 243). Text symbolism thus implies a dimension of human existence that cannot be reduced in a conceptual framework (Sastrapratedja 2012, 249). There are three modalities of symbols according to Ricoeur which are in narrative text: 1) Cosmic-sacred symbols (hierophani) such as sky, hills, and trees. 2) Oneiric symbols (dreams) which are more related to the human psyche. 3) Symbols of poetic imagination that are closer to words (Sastrapratedja 2012, 250).

The workings of Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutics of symbols can be briefly explained by—borrowing Budi Hardiman's language—*"Believe to understand and understand to believe"*: has two meanings: 1) Faith is the interpreter's pre-supposition, 2) interpretation helps the interpreter to believe. A hermeneutic circle that can lead interpreters to understand sacred texts and symbols. Ricoeur, by developing Bultmann's demythologizing and Husserl's phenomenology, creates a philosophical hermeneutic that wants to reveal the author's 'intention' from behind its sacred symbols and texts (Hardiman 2015, 246).

The two slogans above are closely related to the two keywords in Ricoeur's hermeneutics: distanciation and appropriation. Two dialectical movements are carried out by an interpreter in the process of approaching the text and interpreting it. Distanciation can be understood by trying to 'take distance' from the text so that creative interpretation emerges and avoids distortion of meaning (Pamungkas 2016, 74). There are four kinds of processes of distance taking by the interpreter in this distanciation: separating meaning from events, separating meaning from the author's intent, separating meaning from its sociocultural conditions, and finally separating meaning from the initial audience (Fithri 2017, 206).

The next step is called appropriation which will help the interpreter in his level of existential understanding and appreciation. Appropriation is an attempt to enter the text into the existence of the interpreter, making 'what is foreign' to be 'one's own'. As if "I understand my own authentic existence in the text" (Pamungkas 2016, 75). In other words, Appropriation aims to actualize the meaning of the text for current readers: a fusion horizon between the worlds of readers and writers. From there this phase marks the emergence of the strong character of interpreter subjectivity (Fithri 2017, 209).

To overcome the gap between method (theory) and metaphysics (ontology) Ricoeur describes three stages of understanding:

First, the semantic level: analysis of the language structure of the text and symbols as ontological expressions. Text according to Ricoeur is any discourse fixed by writing. The word Discourse refers to language as a moment (event) that includes a living and dynamic dimension (Rahman 2016, 48). According to Ricoeur, the text that is read as discourse is divided

into spoken and written language. Where both are apart is autonomous: regardless of speakers or writers, the process of disclosure, the initial context dialogue system, and the initial audience (Rahman 2016, 49). Thus, the text has an immanent structure in it and thus can build its own imaginary world. According to Ricoeur, this semantic level is very fundamental to avoid text reduction and distortion.

The emphasis at this stage can also be explained by efforts to objectify the structure of the text, in which methodological hermeneutics plays a role. A step shows the internal relationships in the text, structural analysis which with its help will facilitate the next stage in 'self-understanding' or the level of appreciation and experience (Fithri 2017, 205). Through this form of objectification too, someone will reveal something behind the text: human actions that are embedded in it and can be treated as text. Likewise, actions will always have actors, motives, goals, scope, and consequences as a conceptual network for the structure of meaning (Fithri 2017, 206).

Second, the reflective level: the process of understanding the text and oneself philosophically and existentially. A hermeneutical circle stage in Schleiermacher's terms, is the bringing together of subject and object, author and reader. Beyond Cartesian and positivistic logic, through direct encounters with reality (Dilthey) and transcendental awareness (Husserl).

Third, the existential level: is the most complex stage. A process of uncovering the essence of understanding, the ontology of understanding through interpretation methods. Intentionality and transcendental reduction (Rame 2014, 7-9). Ontology of understanding will also lead humans to cosmic awareness of the reality of the universe (phenomenology of the Spirit) which is theological in nature. A reality that is higher than self-consciousness, which is more orderly and limiting to human desires. The ontology of understanding will end and be rooted in the last layer of consciousness, namely the path of the phenomenology of religion which is eschatological beyond time and space. An awareness that can be pulled up beyond the past and the future toward the sacred (Rame 2014, 9).

The second approach that the writer will borrow is the theory of the world imagination used by Corbin in studying esotericism and the gnosis of the Sufis, especially his study of Ibn 'Arabī. As Alfi Kamalīah's research shows the role of creative imagination in the *Mi'rāj* Ibn 'Arabī experience. The role of the creative imagination in Ibn 'Arabī's experience appears both as a real reality, a thinking power as well and a reproductive and productive function (Kamalīah 2021, 211).

What is imagination? To what extent is it an instrument and source (discovery) in the Sufistic experience? Initially, according to Corbin, it is necessary to distinguish between imagination as a result of sensory stimulation and imagination produced by the heart/intuition. According

to Corbin imagination is not fantasy or fantasy that is produced by the senses, imagination is one of the powers of thought, creative magical potential. In the Sufi tradition, imagination is interpreted as a mediator between the world of pure spiritual reality (*al-'alam al-mithāl*) and the world of the senses (*al-'alam al-ḥis*). According to Corbin, this idea played an important role in the philosophy of Renaissance and Western romanticism (Corbin 2002, 231).

With the above understanding, all things which cannot be demonstrated, which are invisible to the eye, and which cannot be heard can be understood with the power of imagination. Including the theory of 'god created by faith,' Ibn 'Arabī is a product of the human imagination. More specifically, the epistemology of imagination in the dictionary of the Sufis has two functions: *first*, the cosmogonist or theogonic function which talks about the metaphysics of how 'existence' begins, including God and Divine names. *Second*, psychological function depends on how high the degree of 'presence' or 'imaginative dignity (*ḥaḍrah al-khayyāliyah*) of a seeker is. Among its forms in this function is how prayer works to make the impossible possible (Corbin 2002, 279).

In both of these functions, this science of imagination can mean 'theogony' on the one hand (studying the origin of God), as well as theophany on the other hand (studying the emergence of God). This science is also the science of mirrors which reveals the 'surface' and facts that appear in the mirror even though they are not in the mirror. Lastly, this science also contains mystical geography: about how the earth is created from an "immaterial matter" (Corbin 2002, 281).

Ibn 'Arabī—in Corbin's study—then distinguished two kinds of imagination related to the subject. This is important to understand because many see "imagination" as a product of psychology which is interpreted as "imagination/fantasy". First, imagination is combined with an imaginary subject (*khayāl al-muttaṣil*). The characteristic is in the imagination that is triggered by a conscious mind that is present alone as in a dream or daydream. Second, Imagination is separate from the subject and autonomous (*khayāl al-munfaṣil*). Where the imagination has an autonomous and independent reality "outside" the subject. And this type of imagination, according to Corbin, is closely related to "Creative Imagination" in mystical experience (Corbin 2002, 283–85).

With the help of the two types of analysis above: namely Ricoeur's hermeneutics as a device for interpreting symbols and meanings, then Corbin's theory of Sufi imagination as a horizon—in the Gadamerian sense, the writer will interpret the Roman *Ghurbah al-Gharbiyah* philosophically-hermeneutically, especially in terms of symbols. his Sufism. Including reading it in the context of Sufistic imagination to read the extent of Suhrawardī's Sufistic experiences as outlined in his fictional work. Before touching on the contents of *Ghurbah Gharbiyah's* story,

the following discussion will first explain the background of the sufistic Roman, including genealogically before Suhrawardī's work appeared.

Genealogical Context of Roman *Ghurbah al-Gharbiyah*

The context behind the birth of a written work is sometimes influenced by internal and external motives. Internal influences can be read through the intention of the author explicitly which is also closely related to the influence of experience on the author's life. While external influences can be read in the socio-political context of the author's lifetime. Thus, what was Suhrawardī's motive for writing *Ghurbah al-Gharbiyah's* roman?

There is no definite information about when and where this Roman was written by Suhrawardī. As far as the author's observation, there have been no historians or readers of Suhrawardī who have studied this essay philologically. However, we only find specific information on Suhrawardī's motives at the beginning of the manuscript, he says:

When I read the story "*Ḥay bin Yaqqān*" I was captivated by its contents in the form of magical spiritual sentences and deep hints.... contained in divine books, which are conveyed in philosophers' symbols, which are vaguely interpreted in the story of "Salman and Absal"... that is the secret that has been regulated in the *maqams* of Sufis and *Kashaf* experts...(Suhrawardī 2018, 278).

The above quotation explicitly mentions the influence of *Ḥay bin Yaqqān*, and Ibn Ṭufayl on *Ghurbah al-Gharbiyah's* Roman. According to Aḥmad Amīn, *Ghurbah al-Gharbiyah* can be referred to as a trilogy of works from *Ḥay bin Yaqqān*: Ibn Sīnā, Ibn Ṭufayl, and Suhrawardī. Apart from referring to Ibn Ṭufayl for reasons of amazement above, according to Salim, this work also exists as a criticism of *Ḥay bin Yaqqān* Ibn Sīnā. Suhrawardī's reason for choosing the diction "*al-Ghurbah*" is as a criticism of the content of *Ḥay bin Yaqqān* Ibn Sīnā which is more focused on talking about human power and the world rather than spiritual nature and the ceiling of the spirit (Kāzīm 2021, 188).

When we make a comparison, Ibn Ṭufayl's *Ḥay bin Yaqqān* was born against a background of building reconciliation between religion and philosophy of Andalusia at that time. How Ḥay—in Ibn Ṭufayl's story—is described as a 'child' of life who was born naturally from nature and then grew up to know God on an island untouched by humans. Ḥay is described by Ibn Ṭufayl as a symbol of rational epistemology which later also succeeds in reconciling the tension between exotericism—as depicted in the character Salman—and esotericism—in Absal. Two traditions that represent epistemological feuds in the Andalusian Islamic tradition (Amīn 2008, 6). From this, Ibn Ṭufayl is classified as a philosopher who agrees with the unification of rational and intuitive schools.

Meanwhile Ḥay in Ibn Sīnā's story is described in a dialogue that took place between the Sheikh and several travelers who met on a journey. The sheikh is a symbol of reason, while the traveler is instinct, lust, and

senses. So the narrative of the story as a whole is an example of a dialogue that occurs between reason, instinct, lust, and senses in humans (Amīn, 2008, 15). Ḥay in Ibn Sīnā's narration is a symbol of intellect *fa'āl, rūḥ al-quḍs* in al-Farābī's terminology, or *rūḥ al-amīn* in the theologians' terminology. The symbol represents the source of human rational and intuitive knowledge, both philosophers and prophets (Irbi' 2017, 6). The story in Ibn Sīnā's essay ends with the victory of reason against all other forces, and its ability to be able to interact with the supernatural world or in the language of the nine sense emanations (Amīn 2008, 15).

In terms of linguistics, the language used by Ibn Ṭufayl is the most direct than that of Ibn Sīnā and Suhrawardī. Because Ibn Ṭufayl has high linguistic and literary insights his essays are easier to understand. Ibn Ṭufayl used the language of literature and scholars as well as what developed in his time, while Ibn Sīnā and Suhrawardī limited it to the language of academics so that they used more language and philosophical symbols which we cannot solve except with the same mystical experience (Amīn 2008, 27).

After the genealogical analysis above, we will now understand the background of Ghurbah al-Ghabiyah's romance through the life of Suhrawardī. As we know, Suhrawardī whose full name is Shihābuddīn Yaḥya Ibn Ḥabash Suhrawardī was born in Sohrevard, Iran in 1155 AD. A village located between the cities of Zanjan and Bijar Garrus. Suhrawardī's intellectual journey when he was still in Maraghah, Azerbaijan, and then went to Asfahan, the central region of Iran where the influence of Ibn Sīnā's philosophy still lives there (Corbin 1998, 304).

Also, in Maraghah, he met and studied with Majdudīn Jīlī—a figure heavily influenced by peripatetic traditions, who was also the teacher of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī. The two eventually became intellectual rivals so debates and dialogues were recorded between the two (Rayyan 1959, 11). Apart from this trip, he also migrated to Persia, Anatolia, Damascus, and Syria to study Sufism and live an ascetic life (Sumadi 2015, 280).

His closeness to the king of Qurah Arsalan, one of the kings of the Seljuk dynasty, and his advisers, is an important experience that needs to be noted here. The palace is considered to be a meeting place for Byzantine cultural influences which are Hellenistic Greek heritage, with eastern Iranian thoughts and traditions. In addition to Islamic heritage and Christian traditions (Makkī 1997, 3:422–37). It was later proven that this influenced the syncretic pattern in Suhrawardī's philosophy of illumination.

Socio-politically in the 11th century AD, the condition of the Muslim Ummah was in instability both internally and externally. Namely at the end of the Sunni-Abbasid government who were busy fighting the *Bāṭiniyyah* who were identical to the Fatimid dynasty. On the other hand, the emergence of the Mongols continued to undermine the stability of

the country and the revolution of the Seljuk dynasty (Rayyan 1959, 25–28). This internal condition was exacerbated by external threats: namely when the English king, Richard the Lion Heart landed in Arce which later gave birth to the Muslim-Christian Crusade in fighting over the Holy Land (Sumadi 2015, 280).

Social-thought-wise, Suhrawardī also lives in an era where Muslims are keeping their distance from rational ideas, especially philosophy. This accumulated after the *Miḥnah Mu‘tazilah* tragedy, al-Ghazālī’s attacks on philosophy, until finally, Ibn Taymiyah appeared who systematically undermined the tradition of Sufism and the philosophy of Neo-Platonism (Rayyan 1959, 26).

The important thing from Suhrawardī’s life history is also the matter of his death being the same as that of al-Ḥallāj: ending up being executed. According to Abu Rayyan, the execution event involving the Caliph Ṣalāhuddīn al-Ayyūbī and Qāḍī Malik al-Zāhir was read for two reasons: *First*, the event was driven more by the envy of the Syrian jurists who they lost in arguing with Suhrawardī. Until then they accused Suhrawardī of being an infidel and complained about him to Sholahuddin. *Second*, the fact from the testimony of historians that Malik Zāhir actually admired and respected Suhrawardī more than the Syrian jurists because of the depth of Suhrawardī’s knowledge. This then reinforces the fact that Suhrawardī’s execution was more influenced by social conditions: namely the fanatical power of jurisprudence experts (Rayyan 1959, 16–17).

The results of the genealogical analysis above evidence of the influence of *Ghurbah al-Gharbiyah* on *Ḥay bin Yaqqān* and the influence of Suhrawardī’s life experience—an intellectual journey and socio-historical conditions—we can note three conclusions: *First*, *Ghurbah al-Gharbiyah* was written as an intellectual response to *Ḥay bin Yaqqān*’s work Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Ṭufayl. However, Suhrawardī wrote it with a more philosophical and mystical construction and content, both in terms of writing and meaning. This conclusion is read as the horizon of the author’s intention (motive) in the text.

Second, the relationship between the socio-political conditions of Suhrawardī’s life and his execution experience with the main topic of this roman: alienation in the world. Indirectly, the narrative of Ḥay’s imprisonment in Qairawan—more on this in the next chapter—is a satire of the socio-political conditions of Muslims and Suhrawardī’s bitter experience. Thus, the meaning of “alienation” originally got its relevance from Suhrawardī’s own life. This data can be read as a socio-historical horizon that surrounds the *Ghurbah al-Gharbiyah* text.

Third, the experience of Suhrawardī’s execution—so he was nicknamed *al-Maqtūl*—is an existential experience related to the ending of a romance story. Namely meeting with the “Light of Lights” on Mount Sinai as a form of liberation from Qairawan’s prison. This experience of execution is

like that experienced by controversial Sufis (drunk Sufism). Just like the experience of al-Ḥallāj's execution which he himself later interpreted and expressed as the essence of true love. This is what is then called Sufi-liberation.

Analysis of the Meanings and Symbols of Roman *Ghurbah al-Gharbiyah*

The genealogical context and the three results of its meaning, we place first as a form of objective meaning as well as a process of distancing. In this chapter, we will focus on interpreting both explicit and implicit meanings and symbols in *Ghurbah al-Gharbiyah's* roman. First of all, we place this work as a narrative text that uses symbolic and metaphorical language. As in Ricoeur's hermeneutic principle, symbols we believe first as 'meaning anchors' that invite interpretation. Then we will analyze it in three levels of understanding: semantic, reflective, and existential.

Ghurbah al-Gharbiyah's Roman as a work of fiction is not as systematic as *Ḥay bin Yaqqān*—as has been described in the previous chapter. In terms of characters, plot, and setting, this concise Roman will not directly understand its connection and explicit meaning. Because of these limitations, the author will limit the story in the Roman to three settings which the author refers to as phases: 1) the phase in Qairawan as an existential symbol of alienation and imprisonment of humans in the world. 2) The phase of meeting the Hudhud bird as an epistemological symbol will get human rational and intuitive knowledge. 3) The phase of reaching Mount Sinai as a symbol of metaphysical experience and human liberation from the shackles of the world

Qairawan and the West: A Symbol of Human Alienation

This first phase is narrated: once upon a time Ḥay (instead of the word I) together with 'Āṣim—his brother, were traveling to an area in Maghrib. Suddenly they arrived at a Qairawan area which was described by Suhrawardī with the verse, "*al-Qaryah al-Zālimi Ahluha*" (The people are unjust) (Q.S. An-Nisā' verse 75). Seeing the sudden arrival of two foreign travelers, the villagers of Qairawan immediately surrounded the two of them and then arrested them and handcuffed them with iron after the residents learned that they (Ḥay and his brother 'Āṣim) were descendants of al-Hādī Ibnu al-Khayr al-Yamānī. Then imprison them both in a well that is so deep.

Above the well where Hay and his brother ('Āṣim) were imprisoned, there is a magnificent palace with soaring towers. Someone—from the villagers—said to Ḥay, "*You may climb the well to go to the palace if you wash yourself (Mutajarridīn) at night. But when it's morning you have to stay in this deep hole*" (Suhrawardī 2018, 278) The well is described as so deep and pitch black as in the verse, "*Zulumat Ba'duha Fawqa Ba'd*" (one

part and the other is dark) (Q.S. An-Nūr verse 40).

From the narrative above, Qairawan was originally the name of a city in Tunisia. Qairawan by Suhrawardī is used as a symbol of the world. Ḥay was thrown there just like humans were thrown in the world. According to Aḥmad Amīn why Suhrawardī chose the city of Qairawan because when the sun rises, the light spreads and sparkles in the area (Amīn, 2008, 26). In another language, it is not Qairawan as the city in question but refers to the western territory of the city.

From there, Qairawan is identical with the great title of this Roman, "*Gurbah al-Gharbiyah*" which means "The alienation of a Sufi in a foreign world". The word "*al-gharbu, al-ghurbatu,*" is the *maṣḍar* form of the verb "*gharaba*" which means "to set", and "*al-ghrabu*" which means "to the west". At the same time the word "*al-Ghurbatu*" means "alienation" so "*al-gharīb*" means "foreigner". The important link then is the distinction between "*al-Gharbu*" as the west direction and "*al-sharqu*" which means "east" which is identical to the word "*ishrāq*" from the philosophy of Suhrawardī's Illumination. So, "*al-ḥikmah al-mashriqiyyah*" is then interpreted as Eastern philosophy. What is the meaning of this territory meant by Suhrawardī?

The discussion of the semantic meaning of "*al-sharqu*" or "*al-mashriq*" has attracted the attention of Suhrawardī's scholars. Corbin specifically mentions that the eastern word from "*al-mashriq*" refers to Persia, so he interprets the illumination philosophy project as reviving ancient Persian wisdom (Corbin 1998, 304–5). In contrast to the above, Hasan Hanafi argues that the word "*al-gurbah*" in does not mean 'West' territorially—as a criticism of Corbin's opinion which defines "east" as territory: Persia. But the word 'West' in the sentence is only a symbol of the alienation of the soul that is in the 'foreign' realm, namely the sensory realm (Hanafi 2012, 304). The author agrees with the last opinion: Qairawan is a symbol of humans who experience alienation.

In addition to the lexical meanings above, Qairawan also refers to the reality of the human senses. Thus, according to 'Atūm, Suhrawardī considers sensory reality to exist, given, and cannot be completely rejected. In contrast to other Sufis who consider the sensory realm other than God to not exist ('Atūm 2014, 551). Meanwhile, the well which is Suhrawardī's prison is interpreted as an ontological symbol of the shackles of material nature. A well as a well is indeed limited to the meaning of a water source, but the position described by Suhrawardī here emphasizes the meaning of 'darkness' that surrounds the well. From the darkness that is characteristic of the material world which also exists in the well ('Atūm 2014, 552–53),

"You may climb the well...if you wash yourself (mutajarridīn) at night...", the sentence expressed by the Qairawan residents is a form of metaphor for "*self-abstraction*". "*Climbing the well*" by "*Cleaning yourself*" is

actually a form of human transcendence to restore consciousness. If we appropriate the meaning of “*trying to climb the well as a form of saving ourselves*” in our horizons and awareness today, we can reflectively draw that the story alludes to a modern human disease: materialism. The beginning of human imprisonment was when he was unable to get out of the bondage of materialism broadly: hedonism, consumerism which eventually eliminated his self-awareness as a human being. So, it seems as if Suhrawardī wants to invite us to always be introspective, aware of ourselves of Qairawan’s trap, its inhabitants, and wells which are nothing but diseases and prisons of modernity.

Hudhud Bird and a Sheet of Paper: Symbols of Revelation and Reason

After the condition of Ḥay who was imprisoned in the city of Qairawan’s well, the story then continued with the second phase. Namely the arrival of the Hudhud bird which will give instructions to Ḥay. So, while Ḥay and ‘Āṣim were still unable to do anything in the well, suddenly they saw the Hudhud bird enter from the small hole of the well in the middle of the moonlight safely. In its beak is a sheet of paper that appears from “*Min Shāṭi’i al-Wādi al-Aymani fi al-Buq’ati al-Mubārakati min al-Shajarati*” (Q.S. Al-Qaṣaṣ verse 30). It means, “*From the right bank of the valley, from a tree, in a blessed piece of land.*”

The Hudhud came to free them both. The bird also came from “*Min Saba’ Binaba’in Yaqīn*” (Q.S. An-Naml, verse 22) (from the land of Saba’ with convincing news). In that piece of paper, explain in detail an important message. The piece of paper—the Hudhud bird—came from their father (God). That is from al-Hadi contains,

Bismillahirrahmānirrahīm, we miss you, but you don’t miss us. We called you but you did not come home soon. We have signaled, but you don’t understand it. O Fulan! If you and your brother want to be free from this (shackles). Never neglect (hesitate) to leave immediately. Hold on to our rope. That is the rope of the substance of the sacred star orbit, which controls from various angles of the eclipse (Suhrawardī 2018, 579).

If you have come to *Wādhi al-Namli*, (Q.S. An-Naml verse 18) the valley of bees, then clean your dirt. And say, “*All praise be to Allah who has revived me after he killed me and to Him is the place of return (wa Ilayhi al-Nushūr)*” (Q.S. Al-Mulk verse 15).

In the Islamic historical tradition, especially those recorded by the Koran, the Hudhud bird is a bird sent by Prophet Solomon who has the mission of delivering a letter to Queen Bilqis. The story of Hudhud is famous in terms of the intelligence of a bird that became the intermediary for Queen Bilqis’ Islam. Thus, it is clear that Suhrawardī was inspired by the preaching experience of Prophet Solomon. He then also wears the symbol of the Hudhud bird which will save Ḥay from the confines of the Qairawan prison. The Hudhud bird symbol originating from religious texts is included in the category of cosmic and sacred *hierophant* symbols. Here

too, *muttaṣil's* imagination which unites closely with the author's subject (Suhrawardī) plays its role in presenting the prophetic experience. That is the experience of Prophet Solomon.

The Hudhud bird, according to al-Lais's interpretation, is a symbol of the power of inspired knowledge (*al-quwwah al-ilhāmīyah*) which is present to bring revelation/inspiration from God to humans. Rather than that, this power has an epistemological meaning: in humans, there is a power of inspiration that has the potential to receive God's vision and *tajallī* through *riyāḍah* (spiritual practice) and self-contemplation ('Atūm 2014, 558). The epistemological stage of obtaining the experience of revelation, or the experience of *ishrāqīyah* (spiritual enlightenment) is through going beyond three powers: sensory power, imaginative power, and theoretical power so that from the process the three will manifest in the most perfect power to approach God: intuitive power (*dhawq*). That is illuminative knowledge (*ishrāqīyah*) which is obtained after the struggle of rational, contemplative power combined with intuitive power.

We will also interpret the Hudhud bird symbol philosophically by further linking it to the epistemology of the illumination philosophy. How are truth and knowledge obtained in illumination philosophy? Borrowing Ziai's term, the epistemology of the philosophy of illumination is what he calls '*ilm al-ḥuḍūrī*'. Hossein Ziai describes how "epistemology *ḥuḍūrī*" (knowledge by presence) works, namely: a knowledge base that originates from direct intuitive (Intuitive mode of cognition) which is immediate, without depending on the object or the object itself. Knowledge that is "immediate, duration less, intuitive mode of cognition" (Ziai 1996, 434–38).

Ḥuḍūrī knowledge is obtained by means of the subject being aware of its existence first (*ana'īyya*) who then makes direct contact with the object. Knowledge is also obtained without visualizing the object in logical thinking. So that the object appears by itself under divine light and guidance (Ihsan, Perdana, and Sutoyo 2022, 95). From here, the arrival of the Hudhud Bird, and the advice it brings, gets its meaning philosophically: namely a metaphor for humans who have succeeded in achieving knowledge through the *ḥuḍūrī* process as far as it is understood in Suhrawardī's philosophy of illumination.

In addition to the epistemological meaning above, the Hudhud bird symbol also has an ontological meaning. Hudhud birds are ontologically in an intermediary position between God and humans. In the terminology of Islamic philosophy, the intermediary between God and humans is called *al-'aql al-fa'āl* (Angel Gabriel) which plays an important role in the process of humans gaining knowledge. If referred to by Suhrawardī's terminology, the intermediary position between God and man is *nūr mujarrad's* "pure light" which functions as an ontological and emanations hierarchy in the process of realizing everything in the world.

After the process of interpreting the symbols and lexical meanings of the Hudhud bird, along with its ontological and epistemological meanings, we can then draw an outline of the meaning of this phase. If we appropriate the Hudhud in our horizon and awareness, then that phase is a form of our subjective experience when interacting with God. A divine experience that is obtained *ḥudūrī* through direct intuition. These are intimate, indescribable Sufistic experiences, which dissolve in the subject who 'experiences' and immerses himself in a situation of mortality, unity, and the totality of love.

The Moment at Mount Sinai: God's Symbol and Ishrāqiyah Metaphysics

After the first phase of Ḥay's imprisonment in Qairawan and the arrival of the Hudhud bird that helps him as the second phase, along with the interpretation of the two from semantics, philosophy to appropriative meanings to our consciousness, here we are going to the third phase in the *Ghurbah al-Gharbiyah* roman story. As the author named the subtitle, the discussion this time will touch on divinity and metaphysics a lot.

This third phase is described as Ḥay's *Mi'rāj* journey towards the sky as was done by the Prophet Muhammad. The journey to Mount Sinai was started by Ḥay who saw a large rock that was on top of a small mountain, as if the rock was like a large mountain. There he met the Snake who lived there, then asked, "*What is this mountain? What is this big rock?*" then one of the snakes took its way to the sea. Then answer,

That's what you are looking for, this mountain is Mount Turisina. While this big rock is your father's place of worship." Ḥay asked, "What the heck are the two snakes?" "He is a creature similar to you, you are children of one lineage. Something similar happened to you from them. They are your brothers" (Suhrawardī 2018, 582).

After knowing what they were, Ḥay then hugged them. Ḥay is happy for them, and so are they for Ḥay's arrival. Then Ḥay began to climb the mountain. At once Ḥay saw his father in the image of a great sheikh shining so that his flash almost split the heavens and the earth. Ḥay was instantly pale, confused in front of him. He walked to meet her, shook her hand, and then bowed down to her. Until Ḥay almost died due to its sparkling light (Suhrawardī 2018, 582).

Ḥay immediately cried long enough to kneel and complain in front of him while he was being held in Qairawan. Then the father said to Ḥay, "*That's good! You are free, but you still have to go back to the prison of seclusion. And after you let go of the bridle, it only grows more perfect.*" After Ḥay heard his words, he groaned, screaming like someone on the verge of collapse. Then looked down at him. The father then said again,

Now, you must return. But I give you the good news with two things: firstly, if you go back to prison, you can come back to us, ascend our paradise easily whenever you want. Second, you will truly be liberated at the end walking towards us while leaving the country of complete and absolute exile.

Ḥay then felt excited by what was said. The father said back, “*Know that this is Mount Sinai. On top of Mount Sinai, there are the residences of my father and your grandfather. I am not when seen in his position, the same as your position towards me (father and son).*”

And so do we have many other grandfathers until the lineage ends with the ruler, namely the great grandfather (*al-jad al-a‘zam*) — referring to the verse, “*Wa Annahu Ta‘āla Jaddu Rabbinā*” — which there was neither grandfather nor father after him. We are all his servants, by his light we receive light, and from him we copy light. To him is the greatest glory, the highest majesty, and the most overwhelming light. He is above it (*fawqal fawqī*), the light of all lights (*nūr al-anwār*), and above it is the eternal light (*azalan wa abadan*), it is He who appears to all entities. And everything will be destroyed except the Essence (*Kuullu Shay’in Hālikun Illa Wajhah*). (Suhrawardī 2018, 582).

First of all, we will analyze why Suhrawardī uses the ‘father’ and ‘grandfather’ symbols. The symbols of ‘father’ and ‘grandfather’ were explained by Suhrawardī as—first—the position of the father, Ibn al-Hadi al-Yamani, whom Ḥay always missed after his fall in prison. The figure who sent the Hudhud bird to save Ḥay. The father is the figure that Ḥay met—as explained above. Then the word ‘grandfather’ which is described above as a symbol of God is then characterized as “Being above all above” (*fawq al-fawq*), “the light of all lights” (*nūrīn nūr*), “eternal is above the light” (*fawq al-nūr azalan wa abadan*.)” Grandpa who is the light-light, the light that conquers, the eternal light, the theophany of all things.

Ayah in Arabic is “*al-ab*” which, when traced, does not refer to any of the verses of the Koran, nor in the Islamic philosophical tradition which designates a philosophical meaning. However, the implicit meaning of the word “father” is the relation of ownership (*idāfiyah*) between “father” and “son”, between “Ḥay” and “*al-Hādī*”. The relation then implies the meaning of the closeness of God and his creatures. This is reinforced by the father’s position as Ḥay’s mentor. The use of the word ‘father’ as a symbol of God according to al-Layth, because Suhrawardī influenced the Bible uses the word ‘father’ for God and son for Jesus (‘Atūm 2014, 51). So, the symbol of the father gets the relational meaning of God and man as well as refers to the experience of the Christian tradition of Prophet Isa.

While the word “grandfather” as in the words “*On this Mount Sinai, there is the residence of my father and your grandfather...namely the greatest grandfather (al-jad al-a‘zam)*” this presupposes the position of the father—which previously implied the meaning of God— present as an intermediary to the grandfather who is a higher entity than him. Lexically, the term *al-Jaddu* here may be related to referring to the editorial in the Koran surah al-Jin where Allah is called “*Wa Annahu Ta‘āla Jaddu Rabbbinā*”. However, scholars generally interpret the word “*al-jaddu*” from the verse with “*al-‘azamatu*” (glory). So, the meaning of the verse is,

“Indeed, the glory of our Lord is high.” So why did Suhrawardī use *“al-Jadd”* as a symbol of God?

This ambiguity in meaning between ‘father’ and ‘grandfather’ can be resolved if we choose to interpret ‘father’ only as an intermediary. Finally, the symbols of ‘father’ and ‘grandfather’ are understood as a metaphysical relation of a series of hierarchies of beings towards God. This ontological relation is related to and refers to Suhrawardī’s concept of “primacy of quiddity” in John Walbridge’s language—which means making essence the most real, genuine, original being, while existence and substance are its derivatives (mental form). Suhrawardī states, *“Article 8: that the difference in rational abstract light is based on perfection and the deficiency (essence), not based on type (substance). All the Light within him does not differ in essence except based on perfection and deficiency (of that light) and the consequences of external things”* (Shirazi 1960, 285).

Thus God in Suhrawardī’s metaphysics is the pinnacle of all pure light entities (*al-nūr al-mujarrad*) which have no light after that. *“So it is certain that all substantive and accidental lights, along with all barzakh entities (jism) culminate in pure light which has no light after it, it is the light of all lights, the light that encompasses, the light that is upright within itself, the most glorious light (al-nūr al-a‘zam al-a‘la)”* (Shirazi 1960, 298). From this understanding, the problem of the symbols ‘grandfather’ and ‘father’ can be resolved as long as they are interpreted as a relation or hierarchy of “light” whose substance is not different.

After analyzing the metaphysical metaphors of the words “Father” and “grandfather”, Ḥay’s encounter on Mount Sinai as the end of his journey in this story, points to an existential meaning of human experience. Namely the phase of liberation, as reflected in this editorial: *“Ḥay suddenly cried long enough to kneel and complain in front of him during his imprisonment in Qairawan. Then the father said to Ḥay, “That’s good! You are free, but you still have to go back to the prison of seclusion. And after you let go of the bridle, it only grows more perfect.”* This liberation is also the goal of the instructions that the Hudhud bird brought in its paper in the previous phase.

The above editorial also means Ḥay’s condition that has returned to his homeland: a metaphysical reality symbolized on the peak of Mount Sinai where his “father” and “grandfather” reside. Liberation is thus: the return of all mankind to God’s presence in the reality of the afterlife: reuniting with the “Light of all Lights”. This liberation is also precisely mentioned by Suhrawardī in two kinds of Sufistic journeys (travelers) to God: external journeys through the macrocosm or internal journeys (microcosms) through human beings out of the world (Ma’rufi 2021, 62). The phases of the journey to Mount Sinai can be interpreted on two kinds of journeys at once: the macrocosm with the meaning of a mystical journey to the sublunar outer sky until then entering the spiritual world.

The microcosm with meaning through the highest faculties of the soul reaches the primal mind and subdues the perceptions of the senses and the body.

It is interesting here that we really look at the last paragraph of *Ghurbah al-Gharbiyah's* roman:

So I (Ḥay) in this story: suddenly things changed for me: I fell into an abyss from the sky, thrown among the non-believers imprisoned in the Maghrib country. Remaining pleasure that I cannot describe earlier. I can only sigh, beg, and cry for parting. The serenity in the experience just now was just a dream that vanished too soon, may Allah save us all from the prisons of the senses and the shackles of matter!

The “separation” that Ḥay cries for from the text above further strengthens Suhrawardī’s “intention” and position as a writer: namely an expression of his deep longing to continue *mushāhadah* and to experience God’s experience first-hand. Longing (*al-shawq*) for Suhrawardī is the nature of the low light to always desire and long for the light above and beyond more perfect than him (Shirazi 1960, 327).

Conclusion

From the overall results of reading this paper, the writer can draw two main conclusions: First, the text of *Ghurbah al-Gharbiyah's* roman is part of Suhrawardī’s philosophical expression and Sufistic experience as outlined in a fictional narrative. Genealogically, this work continues Hay bin Yaqdzan’s project in the vision of going beyond rational and empirical knowledge—which is understood implicitly from the word “alienation”—and is inspired by the experience of the *Mi’rāj* of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH in meeting with God, the Light of all Lights. This is where we understand the role of Suhrawardī’s creative imagination, both *muttaṣil* and *munfaṣil*, in presenting prophetic experiences: *Isrā’ Mi’rāj* (Prophet Muhammad PBUH), Hudhud birds (Prophet Solomon), to the meeting on Mount Sinai (Prophet Musa).

Second, the existential and appropriative meaning of Suhrawardī’s Roman as a whole can be described in the three phases of human Sufistic awareness today: experience of alienation, enlightenment, and liberation. Alienation refers to our condition that continues to follow the influence of the senses and self-passion. Enlightenment will come first from humans who purify themselves (abstraction-transcendence) from the confines of the senses. Namely by picking up the Hudhud bird (mind) that is present in him-in *ḥudūrī* through contemplation and self-cleaning. After that, we will rise to the highest and transcendent existential level: free from the shackles of the senses and unite with divine reality. With Suhrawardī’s terminology: liberation will make us get pieces of pure light from the essence of ‘Light of all Lights’.

As a result, the overall hermeneutical meaning of this paper is only the result of a phenomenological-existential appreciation of someone

who still reads Suhrawardī's philosophy seriously. The *Ghurbah al-Gharbiyah* romance remains essentially autonomous and open to all kinds of interpretations and reading experiences for future readers and researchers. The level of wholeness and depth of meaning will come according to the level of existential and phenomenological experience of an interpreter.

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