

Lived Experience and Qur'anic Exegesis: The Autobiographical Context of Hamka's Tafsir al-Azhar

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Abstract. An important issue in the study of hermeneutics is the dialectical relationship between the life experiences of figures and the interpretation of religious texts. This research aims to analyze life experiences (autobiography) as an instrument to explore divine messages. Methodologically, this study uses Paul Ricoeur's Triple Mimesis theory, which includes three stages of hermeneutical construction: Mimesis I (*prefiguration*), which refers to the experience that precedes the narrative. Mimesis II (*configuration*) is the process of structuring experiences into meaningful stories, and Mimesis III (*refiguration*) is the process when the narrative interacts with the reader and generates new understandings. The results of the textual analysis show that the hermeneutical construction is clearly confirmed through five forms of Hamka's autobiographical narrative, which include: (1) performative function through the Denver Narrative (QS. al-'Ankabut [29]:45); (2) social criticism through the Narrative of Minangkabau Women (QS. al-Baqarah [2]:228); (3) therapeutic function through Prison Narrative (QS. Hud [11]:11); (4) contextual interpretation through the Ann Arbor Slaughterhouse Narrative (QS. al-Maidah [5]:4); and (5) methodological elaboration through the Narrative of Public Lectures at Andalas University (QS. Ali 'Imran [3]:104). From the narrative conveyed by Hamka, he wants to show that the Qur'an is not just a divine kalam that is only understood explicitly but can be explored more widely through certain experiences and contexts. These findings show a new trend that in contemporary Islamic studies, the subjectivity and living space of an interpreter are recognized as methodological instruments that enrich the depth of meaning of sacred texts.

Keywords: Autobiography; *Tafsir al-Azhar*; Triple Mimesis; Paul Ricoeur

Introduction

One of the important issues in modern hermeneutics is the relationship between lived experience and the interpretation of religious texts. Therefore, the hermeneutic approach has emphasized that understanding never takes place in a neutral space, but is always influenced by the historical, social, and experiential horizons of the interpreter.¹ This kind of thing does not happen in a neutral space and will always side with certain elements according to the circumstances experienced.² Meanwhile, autobiographical studies show that life experiences are the construction of meaning created through the process of storytelling and are not present as neutral facts.³ In fact, according to Bruner,⁴ narrative structure helps people understand themselves and their world.

¹ Sidonie Smith dan Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography Now: An Updated Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives, Third Edition* (U of Minnesota Press, 2024).

² Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and method* (J. Weinsheimer & DG Marshall, trans.). (Continuum, 1989).

³ Philippe Lejeune, "Autobiographical Texts." *Genetic Criticism: Texts and Avant-Textes* (University of Minnesota Press, 2004).

⁴ J. Bruner, *Life as narrative social research: An international quarterly* (The New School for Social Research, 2004).

Meanwhile, according to Ricoeur,⁵ the experience of gaining meaning can be achieved through the process of narrative configuration that connects experience, text, and reader.

In the study of religion, religious meaning is shaped by formal doctrines and institutions as well as everyday experiences that are experienced, interpreted, and narrated by individuals.⁶ According to recent research, religious practices are shaped by formal doctrines and institutions as well as experiences that are lived, interpreted, and communicated through various narratives of life.⁷ The results support the idea that life experience is one of the important media in the process of creating and spreading religious meaning. However, this approach is rarely applied to autobiographical narratives that work within the text of Qur'anic commentary. Thus, the relationship between autobiography, life experience, and the process of interpretation of the Qur'an is still an area that has not been explored much. Therefore, this research is presented in the form of Hamka's personal experience (autobiography) as an instrument of interpretation contained in Tafsir al-Azhar.

Görke and Pink affirm that modern interpretive research no longer focuses only on texts, but also on interpretive practices that develop in a variety of social and cultural contexts.⁸ Rahman developed the theory of *double movement* to explain the relationship between the context of revelation and the context of the modern reader.⁹ Abu Zayd emphasizes the historical and linguistic character of the text,¹⁰ while Saeed develops a contextual approach that considers social change and the needs of contemporary society.¹¹ Meanwhile, according to Esack, the reader's social location affects the interpretation process.¹² Of the many existing narratives and theories, some gaps have not fully explained how the life experiences of interpreters play a role in the process of forming the meaning of the Qur'an as carried out in this study.

In his commentary, Hamka expressly mentions that he uses his "own experience" in interpreting the Qur'an. Hamka says:

*"Each interpretation of the Qur'an gives a pattern of direction from the person of its interpreter. So in this 'Tafsir al-Azhar' it will be possible to read the direction of the Interpreter. The interpreter maintains the relationship between naqal and intellect as well as possible. Between riwayat and dirayah. Interpreters do not merely quote or quote the opinions of those who have gone before, but also use their own observations and experiences."*¹³

This "own experience" is what is meant by autobiography. In this study, Hamka mentioned that the interpretation of the Qur'an with autobiography is a characteristic of his interpretation. Hamka mentioned that in interpreting the verse, he did not merely quote people's opinions, but also expressed his own views and his own experiences (autobiography). This shows that the

⁵ Paul Ricoeur, *Time and narrative* University of Chicago press, 1984., Vol. 1 (University of Chicago Press, t.t.).

⁶ Meredith B. McGuire, *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life* (Oxford University Press, 2008).

⁷ Nancy Tatom Ammerman, *Studying lived religion: Contexts and practices* (New York University Press, 2021), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.18574/nyu/9781479804283.001.0001>.

⁸ A. Görke dan J. Pink, *Refining Qur'anic studies: Methodology, context, and interpretation* (Brill, 2023).

⁹ Fazlur Rahman, *Islam & Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (University of Chicago Press, 2017); Rifki Ahda Sumantri, "Hermeneutics of The Quran Fazlur Rahman Double Movement Interpretation Method," *Communication: Journal of Da'wah and Communication* 7, no. 1 (2013), <https://doi.org/10.24090/komunika.v7i1.364>.

¹⁰ Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, "Rethinking the Qur'ân: Towards a humanistic hermeneutics," *Rethinking the Qur'ân: Towards a humanistic hermeneutics* (Rome), no. 30 (2004): 25–45.

¹¹ Abdullah Saeed, *Interpreting the Qur'an: Towards a Contemporary Approach* (Routledge, 2005), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203016770>.

¹² Farid Esack, *Quran, Liberation and Pluralism: An Islamic Perspective of Interreligious Solidarity against Oppression*, 1997, <https://www.africabib.org/rec.php?RID=I00008008>.

¹³ A Man Who Is Dead, *Tafsir Al-Azhar*, Lux Edition (National Library, 1989a).

autobiography that he uses in interpreting the verse is not only an addition or sweetener, but functions/plays a role in building the meaning of the verse that Hamka wants to convey.

Previous researchers have examined the methodology and socio-political dimensions of *Tafsir al-Azhar* from various formal perspectives. Alfiah¹⁴ identifies the *bi al-ma'tsur method* and the pattern of *adabi ijtimai'i* in the systematics of Buya Hamka's interpretation in depth. Langaji et al.¹⁵ analyze the concept of patience through the textual integration of the Qur'an and hadith to build the mental resilience of the ummah. Zulkarnaini and Badawi¹⁶ analyze the influence of Muhammad Abduh's thought in *Tafsir al-Azhar*; Shomad et al. discuss the relationship between society and the state in *Tafsir al-Azhar*, which influenced the attitude of Muhammadiyah and MUI towards state power, especially during the New Order period. Muhammad et al.¹⁷ discuss the depiction of the Bani Israel/Jews in *Tafsir al-Azhar*; Rozi et al.¹⁷ mapped the socio-religious reception of this tafsir in the Malay World; in addition, Hidayatullah¹⁸ explained the influence of time and place in the preparation of *Tafsir al-Azhar*. Mursolin¹⁹ discusses Hamka's interpretation method in *Tafsir Al-Azhar*, and Bariqi²⁰ discusses Hamka's interpretation of the death of the Prophet Isa as part of the narrative of Islamic reformism.

Although the above studies have captured the social, collective culture, and political dimensions broadly, the previous literature has proven to have not touched on the subjectivity aspect of individual mufasir methodologically. Faizin et al.²¹ indeed explore the local wisdom of Minangkabau in the interpretation, but they place collective culture as the main variable, not Hamka's personal life experience (autobiography)²² Therefore, existing studies only position Hamka as an interpreter who responds to the text or normative external environment rather than as the main topic in the content of the interpretation. This is where the research *gap* that will be filled is located. This article specifically examines Hamka's personal life experiences, political suffering in prison, and his empirical journey as a direct epistemological and methodological instrument that forms the unique pattern of interpretation in *Tafsir al-Azhar*.

Based on the literature map, this article asks two main questions. First, what hermeneutical function does the autobiographical narrative perform in the process of interpreting the Qur'an in *Tafsir al-Azhar*, and through what mechanism is the life experience transformed into the meaning of

¹⁴ Avif Alfiah, "The Method of Interpretation of Buya Hamka in *Tafsir Al-Azhar*," *Scientific Journal of Ushuluddin* 15, no. 1 (2016): 25–35, <https://doi.org/10.18592/jiu.v15i1.1063>.

¹⁵ Abbas Langaji dkk., "Unveiling Patience: The Intersection of the Qur'an and Hadith in Buya Hamka's Thought," *Uloomuna* 28, no. 1 (2024): 510–35, <https://doi.org/10.20414/ujis.v28i1.1056>.

¹⁶ Zulfikri Zulkarnaini dan Mohammed A. F. Badawi, "The Relevance of Muhammad Abduh's Thought in Indonesian Tafsir: Analysis of *Tafsir Al-Azhar*," *Millah: Journal of Religious Studies*, 26 December 2021, 113–48, <https://doi.org/10.20885/millah.vol21.iss1.art5>.

¹⁷ Syafwan Rozi dkk., "The Reception of Hamka's *Tafsir Al-Azhar* within Social Religious Issues in the Malay World," *Journal of the Study of the Sciences of the Qur'an and Hadith* 25, no. 2 (2024): 247–72, <https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.v25i2.5406>.

¹⁸ Elit Ave Hidayatullah et al., "The Influence of Time and Place in the Preparation of *Tafsir Al-Azhar*," *Quranika Studies* 7, no. 1 (2022): 25–56.

¹⁹ Mukhamad Hadi Mursolin dkk., "Methodology of Interpreting Hamka in the *Tafsir Al-Azhar*," *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 14, no. 11 (t.t.): 2458–63.

²⁰ Sirajuddin Bariqi, "The Narrative of Reformism in the *Tafsir of Al-Azhar*," *SUHUF* 18, no. 1 (2025): 1–25, <https://doi.org/10.22548/shf.v18i1.1176>.

²¹ Faizin Faizin et al., "Representation of Local Wisdom in *Tafsir al-Azhar*," *Rausyan Fikr: Journal of Ushuluddin Science and Philosophy* 18, no. 1 (2022), <https://doi.org/DOI:%20https://doi.org/10.24239/rsy.v18i1.829%20P-ISSN:%201978-7812,%20E-ISSN:%202580-7773>.

²² Stefan Reichmuth dkk., *Humanism and Muslim Culture: Historical Heritage and Contemporary Challenges* (V&R Unipress, 2012).

tafsir? Second, what dimension of meaning is produced through the use of life experiences in Hamka's interpretation? This article fills the research gap by systematically analyzing 194 autobiographical narratives spread across 30 juz of *Tafsir al-Azhar* to explain how life experiences function as an interpretive medium in the process of forming the meaning of the Qur'an.

This research uses a qualitative method based on a literature study.²³ The focus of the research lies in the relationship between Hamka's life experience (autobiography), narrative, and interpretation in *Tafsir al-Azhar*. The primary data source of this research is *Hamka's Tafsir al-Azhar*. Autobiographical data were obtained by browsing and reading all the juz one by one to find the autobiography in the book. An autobiographical indication is a word that shows the first person and a verb that shows experience,²⁴ such as: I ask, I observe, the author of this commentary sees, we give, and so on. An autobiography is a personal story written by the author himself. The autobiography referred to in this study includes two forms: *first*, Hamka recounts his personal experience (personal autobiography), and *second*, his experience of observing a situation or event (observational autobiography). To identify the interpretive contribution of autobiography more clearly, this study selected five autobiographies purposively based on the diversity of themes and the repertoire of interpretive patterns found in the autobiographies. Then the approach used is narrative hermeneutics, and Paul Ricoeur's *theory of triple mimesis*, which consists of: Mimesis I (*prefiguration*) refers to the world of experience that precedes the narrative. Mimesis II (*configuration*) is the process of structuring experiences into meaningful stories, and Mimesis III (*refiguration*) is the process when the narrative interacts with the reader and produces new understandings.²⁵ This study seeks to clarify the contribution of life experience to the practice of interpretation, so that the autobiographical narrative in *Tafsir al-Azhar* does not merely function as an illustration, a record of personal experience, or a rhetorical complement in interpretation. On the contrary, the narrative serves to communicate the meaning of the Qur'an through the life experiences experienced by the interpreter.²⁶

Discussion

Autobiography and Confirmation of Hamka's Experience in *Tafsir al-Azhar*

The life experience (Autobiography) that Hamka explained in his tafsir gave a new color to the methodology of the study of interpretation. This is not only an explanation that the verses of the Qur'an come down to be worshipped, but each verse gives meaning and spiritual experience to each person.²⁷ Therefore, Hamka comes with his interpretation as a real autobiographical interpretive contribution, which can be used as an empirical explanation in religious texts. From this study, the author describes the autobiographical narratives contained in the tafsir of al-Azhar through five discussion issues consisting of personal autobiography (autobiographical narrative 1-3) and observational autobiography (autobiographical narrative 4.5).

²³ Wahyudin Darmalaksana, "Qualitative Research Methods of Literature Study and Field Studies," *Pre-Print Digital Library UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung*, 2020, <http://digilib.uinsgd.ac.id/id/eprint/32855>; Ifit Novita Sari et al., *Qualitative Research Methods* (UNISMA PRESS, 2022).

²⁴ James Olney, *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, 2014, 1–374.

²⁵ Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another* (University of Chicago Press, 1996); Ricoeur, *Time and narrative University of Chicago press*, 1984., vol. 1.

²⁶ Helena Kupari, "Lived religion and the religious field," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 35, no. 2 (2020): 213–30, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13537903.2020.1759901>.

²⁷ Shadab Rahimtullah, *Qur'an of the Oppressed: Liberation Theology and Gender Justice in Islam* (Oxford University Press, 2017).

1. *Autobiography as Performative Confirmation: Denver's Narrative in the Interpretation of QS al-'Ankabut [29]:45*

Hamka's autobiography, which is outlined in the Narcan interpretation of QS al-'Ankabut [29]:45 about the function of prayer as a deterrent to heinous and unlawful acts, is presented in his personal experience when he was in Denver, United States. At that time, he was on a long journey, far from his family and the social environment that knew him. At that time, a hotel maid offered a young woman to accompany him for the night. As a healthy man, the temptation is not something light to resist. However, what is interesting is that the reason for Hamka's rejection is not built through the threat of punishment or fear of the judgment of others. But what appears in his consciousness is precisely the spiritual experience that becomes a fortress against Hamka's every action.²⁸

Interpreter experience: *During a visit to America around 1952, he became an honored guest of the American Government. In circumnavigating the country, the writer arrived in the state of Denver by train at around 9 pm. He immediately spent the night at a hotel. After a break after the prayer, with a respectful smile, the hotel maid knocked on the door and asked if the writer would like to be accompanied by a young woman. The author's age at that time was only 44 years old. Children and wives are far from the eyes. None of the students and people who loved or sympathized knew, while the attraction of sex as a healthy man is certainly shaken by the offer, not to mention the trip to America, when it had been almost two months.*

But what was imagined at that time? I had just finished the jama' qashar prayer between maghrib and 'isha and was getting ready to go to bed and rest; The scars are still on my face! What I remembered when the smile of the knot fell on the lips of the young hotel waiter was... Prayer! If I have slept tonight with another woman, even though my wife does not see and does not know, how will I pray tomorrow morning? In fact, in the iftitah prayer I always say:

إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ وَبِذَلِكَ أُمِرْتُ وَأَنَا مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

"Verily, my prayer and all my worship, even my life and my death, are all for Allah, Rabbul 'Alamin. There is no company for Him, and this is what I have been commanded, and I am one of those who have surrendered myself to the Lord."

How should I say that reading early in the morning? Of course I would be embarrassed to say it. Of course, that morning I would also be embarrassed to do prayers. And of course my mistake yesterday will cause me to be constantly wrong; I will be ashamed to continue praying because I have sinned! No, thank you, I said to the waiter, and I closed the door to my room. And I slept too. After I woke up in the morning to pray shubuh, I felt that my prayer in the morning was more solemn than usual, something that I rarely felt in other prayers.²⁹

Through this narrative, Hamka shows that the function of prayer as mentioned in the verse is not to eliminate the impulse of human desires, but to provide the moral ability to control and direct it. The experience is living proof that prayer can work as an ethical force that shapes one's concrete choices even in situations where no one is watching.

Denver's narrative also shows that the transformative power of prayer lies not in the distant eschatological threat, but in the spiritual relationship that is constantly renewed through the practice of daily worship. The realization that he will return to Allah in the Fajr prayer a few hours later becomes a more decisive factor than the fear of punishment in the hereafter, which is abstract and

²⁸ A Man Who Is Dead, *Tafsir Al-Azhar*, Lux Edition (National Library, 1989e).

²⁹ A Man Who Is Dead, *Tafsir Al-Azhar*, lux edition.

distant. In this sense, Hamka's autobiography serves as a performative confirmation of the meaning of the verse: the verse is not only explained, but proven through the interpreter's own life experience.³⁰

Table 1. Mechanism of Production of Interpretation Meaning
via Autobiography on Denver Narrative

Hamka's Empirical Experience	Hermeneutic Staff	Meaning of the Resulting Verse	Autobiography Function
Female deals in Denver hotels	How does prayer work without social supervision?	Prayer becomes a moral controller.	Performative confirmation
Remembering the iftitah prayer after prayer	Why keep choosing the right one when no one is looking?	Prayer builds inner awareness	Performative confirmation
Imagining the Fajr prayer tomorrow	What is the psychological mechanism of prayer?	Awareness of meeting God forms self-control	Performative confirmation
Resisting temptation and feeling more special at the next prayer	Can a verse be proven in experience?	Sentences work in real life	Performative confirmation

Denver's narrative shows that Hamka's empirical experience transformed his reading of Qur'an al-'Ankabut 29:45 from a normative statement about prayer to a question of how prayer works in concrete situations. This experience allowed Hamka to bring out the performative dimension of verse, namely the ability to pray to form moral choices in real life.

Denver's narrative brings out five substantive meanings born of experience; *First*, prayer does not work by eliminating lust but by giving the strength to choose in the presence of lust that is still full. *Second*, shame (*haya'*) before Allah is a natural consequence of a vow that is repeated thousands of times until it becomes part of the soul, the result of the consistency between what is said in prayer and what is chosen in life. *Third*, the next prayer time horizon that is always close is a more effective moral psychological mechanism than a distant eschatological threat. It is easier for humans to choose the right when the consequences are near and concrete: not the Day of Resurrection, but the Dawn of tomorrow morning. *Fourth*, the body is a real arena of faith: prayer traces itself not only in consciousness but in the body — the marks of ablution on the face, the

³⁰ Lukman Afandi and Monika @. Munirah Abd Razzak, *The Progress of the Quranic Scientific Exegesis in South-East Asia*, 19 October 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22321969-12340104>.

rhythm of the body accustomed to prostrate, is a physical barrier to actions that will defile it and *Fifth*, a great moral decision does not always require great drama: "No, thank you" —two brief and polite words—are the resolution of the most strenuous of inner battles, showing that the maturity of faith is manifested not in the display of steadfastness but in the calmness of choosing the right. Thus, these five meanings are the *content* of the performative confirmation that Denver's narrative runs

2. *Autobiography as Therapeutic Confirmation: Prison Narratives in the Interpretation of QS Hud [11]:11*

The main theme of therapeutic confirmation in the tafsir of al-Azhar explains Hamka's personal experience regarding the concept of patience and pious deeds in the face of calamities outlined in the tafsir of QS Hud [11]:11. Hamka interprets this verse by describing his personal experience during political detention. At the time of writing this part of the commentary, he was still in custody and was experiencing the psychological distress caused by the condition. Therefore, the experience he recounted was very close to the interpreted verse.

Hamka wrote his autobiography as follows:

*Try to pay attention to God's advice to believers in this verse. First, you must be patient, courageous, and persevering. He is like a fortress of defense. Second, they are told to do righteous deeds. Righteous deeds are to divert attention and thoughts from the calamity that befell earlier. Experience has proven that if a calamity is brought to mind, it will poison the heart and add to the wound. To eliminate it, it should be used to work. The author of this commentary will probably languish in endurance if he does not work quickly to compile this commentary. Without our hands, our dreams will spread far away.*³¹

Constant suffering can damage the heart and deepen the inner wounds. Hamka realizes that he has the potential to drown in sadness and despair because he is isolated from family, students, and social activities that have given meaning to his life. This awareness encourages him to keep working and engaging in worthwhile activities. As he himself said, he wrote Tafsir al-Azhar to help maintain his mental health and divert his mind from suffering through the experience that the pious deeds mentioned in this verse can not only be understood as acts of worship in the formal sense, but also as positive actions that help one maintain hope and meaning in life in difficult circumstances. Beneficial activities do not eliminate calamities, but prevent a person from dissolving into difficulties that can gradually destroy him. In this situation, writing tafsir is not just an intellectual activity; It is a type of virtuous act that has a therapeutic effect.³²

The peculiarity of this narrative lies in the very close relationship between the text, the experience, and the resulting work. The Tafsir of al-Azhar that readers read today is a direct result of Hamka's choice to continue working in the midst of detention. Thus, the autobiography in this interpretation not only serves to explain the meaning of the verse, but also to be a living testimony to the therapeutic power of patience and pious deeds as taught by the Qur'an. The verse is not merely interpreted, but is embodied in actions that then give birth to the work of interpretation itself.

³¹ A Man Who Is Dead, *Tafsir Al-Azhar*, Lux Edition (National Library, 1989b).

³² Muhammad Amin dkk., "Evolution of Qur'anic Exegetical Methods in Aceh through Hermeneutic and Sociological Lenses," *Al-Mu'ashirah Scientific Journal: Multi-Perspective Study Media of the Qur'an and Al-Hadith* 22, no. 2 (2025): 267–82, <https://doi.org/10.22373/jim.v22i2.32061>.

Table 2. Mechanism of Production of Interpretation Meaning through Autobiography on the Prison Narrative

Hamka's Empirical Experience	Hermeneutic Staff	Meaning of the Resulting Verse	Functions of Autobiography
Experiencing political detention	How does verse work in real suffering?	Patience is active endurance	Therapeutic confirmation
Writing tafsir in prison	How to cope with psychological stress?	Pious deeds have therapeutic power	Therapeutic confirmation
Acknowledging the potential of mushroom languishing	How to maintain the meaning of life in limitations?	Meaningful activities maintain mental health	Therapeutic confirmation

The prison narrative shows that the experience of suffering led Hamka to read Hud 11:11 as a practical guide to survive psychologically and spiritually. Autobiography serves as a therapeutic confirmation that proves the healing power of patience and pious deeds in real life. This narrative of prison brings out four substantive meanings of patience and charity: *First*, patience in the sense of this verse is not passivity but deliberate activity — the metaphor of patience as *a bulwark of defense* shows an active, planned, and strong position: it does not attack, but it does not give up, and its strength lies in the ability to survive while remaining productive. *Second*, the mind that is not given work will create its own work, and in a state of disaster, the work it creates is almost always in the form of worry, regret, and despair that spins endlessly; charity breaks the circle not by suppressing the mind but by giving the mind a productive and meaningful direction. *Third*, the recognition of vulnerability is the foundation of true spiritual authority — Hamka does not present himself as a scholar unaffected by imprisonment, and it is precisely the honesty of the potential destruction of his soul that makes his interpretation of *sabr wa amal shalih* fully believable to the reader who faces calamity. *Fourth*, the Tafsir of Al-Azhar is the deed of righteousness itself — not just a work that explains the deeds of righteousness: it is a narrative in which the work of tafsir being read is at the same time direct evidence (confirmation) of the correctness of the verse being interpreted. These four meanings are the therapeutic confirmation itself that has happened and continues to occur whenever one reads the Tafsir of Al-Azhar in conditions that resemble the conditions of its writing.³³

3. *Autobiography as a Methodological Elaboration: Narrative of Public Lectures at Andalas University in the Interpretation of QS Ali Imran [3]:104*

Hamka is not only known as a scholar of interpretation and a famous writer, but he is also known as a preacher who masters the pangung; verse after verse, he always conveys loudly as a form of mastery of the material he conveys. In addition to the skill of delivering sermons and lecture narratives, the basic skills that a preacher must possess are to understand the state of the audience or listeners; this is definitely possessed by Hamka. One of the experiences in conveying a message he shared was interpreting QS Ali Imran [3]:104 about the obligation to call for goodness and prevent

³³ Hamka, *Islamic Studies* (Gema Insani, 2020); Alfian, "The Thought of Islamic Education Buya HAMKA."

evil; Hamka not only explained the importance of da'wah as a religious commandment. He presented his personal experience when he gave a public lecture at the Faculty of Economics, Andalas University in 1966. On this occasion, Hamka stated that he prefers to speak in front of students rather than to speak to the village community. This statement surprised several lecturers who attended because they thought that ordinary people were easier to understand than academics.

Hamka wrote his autobiography as follows:

*In providing education or explaining a science that conveys an appeal, it will fail if you do not know the science of the soul. The science of the soul in this day and age has become very widespread. It is not necessarily that a professor who usually teaches in high school will succeed in conveying an appeal to illiterate villagers. Because the professor is stiff. Deep and broad knowledge of the field he knows, but he does not necessarily know the condition of the listener who listens to the "lecture" he gives. Therefore, this interpreter once said at the beginning of a public lecture held at the Faculty of Economics of Andalas University in Padang, at the beginning of August 1966: "I prefer to face students in this hall, and it is more difficult to face the villagers." Some lecturers were very astonished, because they found it difficult to give lectures. After all, what was given was knowledge. As for the villagers, we do not need to provide deep knowledge. The lecturer said this because he was not used to dealing with villagers. He has not mastered how difficult it is to give a popular understanding of knowledge to people who do not yet have a receiving basis in their brains. I have often seen that a professor who is very skilled in a science fails altogether when he brings his knowledge to the villagers. This is where there is a need for psychics, so that as a da'wah bearer there is no failure in facing a society of various groups and various levels of education.*³⁴ (Hamka, 1989d)

Through this experience, Hamka revealed a problem that is often overlooked in the discussion of da'wah, namely the importance of understanding the character and condition of the audience. According to him, mastery of deep knowledge does not automatically make a person able to convey messages effectively. A professor can be an expert in his field, but he is not necessarily able to explain his knowledge to people who do not have the same knowledge background. On the other hand, the success of da'wah is highly determined by the ability to understand the way of thinking, needs, and the level of acceptance of the people who are the target of da'wah.

Hamka's empirical experience after years of interacting with various levels of society led him to find that the biggest challenge of da'wah does not lie in the absence of a message, but in the way it conveys the message. This made him read QS Ali Imran [3]:104 not only as a commandment of da'wah (*what to do*), but also as a matter of da'wah methodology (*how to do it*). If at the textual level the verse commands Muslims to call for goodness and prevent evil, Hamka's life experience shows that the success of carrying out the command depends very much on the way it is delivered. In other words, life experience shifted Hamka's attention from the substance of the message to the method of conveying the message. From this comes the realization that da'wah is not enough to rely only on the truth of the material conveyed, but also requires the ability to bridge the world of preachers with the world of audiences.³⁵

Autobiography in this interpretation serves to bring out a methodological dimension that is not explicitly seen in the verse. Hamka's experience interacting with various community groups opens up a new question to the text: how can the commandment of da'wah be realized effectively in diverse social realities? The question does not arise solely from the linguistic analysis of the verse, but from the concrete experience experienced by the interpreter in his da'wah activities. Therefore,

³⁴ Hamka, *Tafsir Al-Azhar Juz Amma* (Gema Insani, 2020).

³⁵ Gordon, "Character and Self in Autobiography"; Jed Deppman dkk., *Genetic Criticism: Texts and Avant-Textes* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

life experiences are not only an illustration of the meaning of verses, but also form the horizon of questions that Hamka brings when reading the text of the Qur'an.

Thus, autobiography in this interpretation serves as a methodological elaboration in preaching. Through his life experience, Hamka broadened his understanding of QS Ali Imran [3]:104 from the normative commands on da'wah to a reflection on the methodological conditions that enable da'wah to achieve its goals. The verse not only talks about the obligation to call for goodness, but also contains a demand to understand the human being who is the target of the call. This is where empirical experience plays a role in unlocking the dimensions of the meaning of the verse that were not previously explicitly visible in the text.

Table 3. Mechanism of Production of Interpretation Meaning
Through Autobiography on the Narrative of Andalas University

Hamka's Empirical Experience	Hermeneutic Staff	Meaning of the Resulting Verse	Functions of Autobiography
Public lectures at Andalas University	How can da'wah be done effectively?	Da'wah requires audience understanding	Methodological elaboration
Seeing professors fail to explain to the public	What are the conditions for the success of da'wah?	Mastery of knowledge alone is not enough	Methodological elaboration
Experience facing various levels of society	How to bridge messages and recipients?	Psychology is an important part of da'wah	Methodological elaboration

The narrative of Andalas University shows that Hamka's empirical experience made him read QS Ali Imran 3:104 not only as a commandment of da'wah (*what to do*), but also as a matter of da'wah methodology (*how to do it*). Life experience shifts the focus of reading from the obligation of da'wah to the way da'wah is carried out effectively. QS Ali Imran 3:104 contains the commandment of da'wah — *yad'una ilal khair wa ya'muruna bil ma'ruf wa yanhawna 'anil munkar* — which is normatively clear but methodologically does not provide guidance on what is actually needed to carry it out effectively. Hamka's narration explains the importance of knowing the condition of the audience and the importance of psychology for it. Through this narrative, it can also be understood that, *first*, the general public is the most complex audience because they do not have the same knowledge base or concept as the preacher. *Second*, the failure of da'wah should not always be imposed on the audience who are considered unprepared, but it also needs to be seen from the opposite perspective, namely the limitations of da'i who do not have adequate ability to bridge their world with the world of the audience.

4. *Autobiography as Social Criticism: The Narrative of Minangkabau Women in the Interpretation of QS al-Baqarah [2]:228*

In interpreting QS al-Baqarah [2]:228, Hamka does not immediately start with a debate about the meaning of *darajah* that men have over women. Instead, he first brought back memories of his childhood when he witnessed various domestic disputes that the community brought to his father for mediation. From this experience, Hamka sees a recurring pattern: women are almost always

placed as the guilty party, even when the blame comes from their husbands. They are required to apologize, bear the consequences of divorce, and accept various decisions made by their families and communities. In Hamka's memory, the women could only cry because they did not have room to defend themselves.

When the writer was a child in the village, there were often disputes between husband and wife; people came to the writer's father to complain about things and find a solution. The author still remembers that at that time many mistakes were made by people who were women. He is always to blame and always told to bear the risk. He is the one who always apologizes. Mamak-mamak and male relatives all blamed him. She was just good at crying. If she is divorced by her husband, even if it is the husband's fault, if the husband is invited to recede (refer) and return home, it is the woman who is told to apologize. So it has become a common feeling that this is how it should be if you are a woman. She is obliged to respect and serve her husband, but she cannot demand that he take care of her feelings.³⁶

This experience became Hamka's departure point in reading verses. He shows that there is a distance between the social practices that develop in society and the principle of justice affirmed by the Qur'an.³⁷ Although the verse contains the statement that men have a *right* over women, it is still inseparable from the previous statement, which states that women have rights that are balanced with the obligations imposed on them. Therefore, according to Hamka, the understanding that makes women parties who always have to submit, yield, and bear the entire burden of domestic conflict does not have a strong basis in this verse.

This autobiography also shows Hamka's moral alignment towards marginalized groups. As a man who grew up in a social environment that accepts the practice as normal, Hamka chooses to preserve the memory of the suffering of the women he has witnessed. The memory then becomes a means to evaluate social traditions based on the values of the Qur'an. Thus, autobiography in this interpretation serves as a social critique that affirms that the authority of interpretation is measured not only by its ability to explain the text, but also by its ability to correct social practices that are contrary to the message of justice carried by the text.³⁸

Table 4. Mechanism of Production of Interpretation Meaning
through Autobiography on the Narrative of Minangkabau Women

Hamka's Empirical Experience	Hermeneutic Staff	Meaning of the Resulting Verse	Functions of the Autobiography
Watching women always blamed	What interpretations do that apply to justice?	Equality of rights and obligations must be the basis for the reading of the verse.	Social criticism
Women are always asked to apologize.	How is the relationship between rights and obligations understood?	Darajah cannot be interpreted as absolute superiority	Social criticism

³⁶ A Man Who Is Dead, *Tafsir Al-Azhar*, lux edition.

³⁷ Muhammad Alfian, "The Thought of Islamic Education Buya HAMKA," *Islamika : Journal of Islamic Sciences* 19, no. 02 (2019): 02, <https://doi.org/10.32939/islamika.v19i02.454>.

³⁸ David J. Gordon, "Character and Self in Autobiography," *The Journal of Narrative Technique* 18, no. 2 (1988): 105–19.

Women's cry in domestic conflict	What is the social impact of an interpretation?	Interpretation must be measured by its value of justice	Social criticism
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The narrative of Minangkabau women shows that Hamka's social experience shaped a critical sensitivity to practices that were considered Islamic but resulted in injustice. This experience led her to read QS al-Baqarah 2:228 as a verse that affirms the balance of rights and obligations and corrects social practices that oppress women.³⁹ As a social critique, from the narrative about Minangkabau women, it can be understood that *the darajah* in QS al-Baqarah 2:228 cannot be interpreted in isolation from the context of the verse that explicitly states the equality of women's rights and obligations in the preceding sentence. A good interpreter should read each part of the verse in the context of the overall meaning that the verse carries.

5. *Autobiography as Contextual Interpretation: The Narrative of the An-Arbor Slaughterhouse in the Interpretation of QS al-Maidah [5]:5*

Spiritual experiences are not born from narratives that are described in text, but they are present when individuals are in certain circumstances that can influence actions or thoughts.⁴⁰ The influence of this experience also seems to have overtaken Hamka. In interpreting QS al-Maidah [5]:5 about the halalness of slaughtered animals, Hamka does not limit his discussion to the explanation of the law inherited from classical fiqh literature. Instead, he presented his personal experience when he visited an animal slaughterhouse in Ann Arbor, United States, in 1952. In this place, he witnessed firsthand the modern slaughter process that uses stunning techniques before the animals are slaughtered. The experience then became a starting point for Hamka to reflect again on the purpose and spirit of *maqashid* contained in Islamic teachings regarding the slaughter of animals.

Hamka wrote his autobiography as follows:

The author of this commentary, before reading the statement of Prof. Dr. Abdurrahman Taj, also went to America in 1952. The author also deliberately went to the slaughterhouse of livestock by one of the largest meat companies in An-Arbord. There, people slaughtered 14,000 cattle in one day. They will later be sent to surrounding cities, and half of them will be canned. The author witnessed how to slaughter cows. Dozens of cows that will be slaughtered are first put into a truck and then pushed through a room with gas. Before entering, the cows were still upright, but after coming out of the room, they had all fallen asleep, but not dead. One by one, the shearers cut off the neck of the ox. The screams were not much anymore; the blood gushed out, then hung and skinned. Apparently, the "technique" is more advanced. Because in the old days it was rumored that his head was hit first with a large iron, so that he was stunned and fell, and then slaughtered. So let us think, which one is more likely to achieve the will of the Messenger of Allah, when compared to the cow being snared first, in a snare to its four legs, persuaded and sometimes it resists, then squeezed together, after its fourth leg is entangled, then it is snatched so that it falls. It was also held together until it was silent. After he was still in the slaughter, until before his death, he threw himself in pain? Which is closer to the will of the Prophet?⁴¹

Interestingly in this narrative, Hamka does not begin his analysis with the question of whether the method is identical to the practice known in the time of the Prophet. Instead, he asks a more basic question: which method is closer to the will of the Prophet? This question shows a shift in perspective from the search for similarity in form to the search for goals and values/*maqashid*

³⁹ Reichmuth dkk., *Humanism and Muslim Culture*.

⁴⁰ Rahemtulla, *Qur'an of the Oppressed*.

⁴¹ A Man Who Is Dead, *Tafsir Al-Azhar*, Lux Edition (National Library, 1898c).

that the sharia wants to realize. For Hamka, loyalty to the teachings of Islam does not necessarily mean maintaining its literal historical form, but also understanding the wisdom and purpose behind these provisions.

Through a detailed description, Hamka compares the experience he witnessed in modern factories with the slaughtering practices that are prevalent in people's lives. He described how animals that were stunned first appeared to experience less suffering compared to animals that had to be snared, dropped, and held before being slaughtered. The comparison does not end with a firm legal decision, but with a reflective question that invites the reader to reconsider the maqashid of the way of slaughter.

Autobiography in this interpretation serves as a means to bring together the text of the Qur'an with a new reality unknown at the time of revelation. The empirical experience gained through direct observation allows Hamka to see the problem from a different perspective and opens up possibilities of meaning that are not immediately apparent through textual reading alone. Thus, life experiences not only serve as additional illustrations, but also become a medium that helps actualize the message of the verse in an ever-changing social and technological context.⁴²

Through this narrative, Hamka shows that the universality of the Qur'an does not lie in the mechanical reproduction of historical forms, but in its ability to provide clues to new situations that have never been imagined before. The experience in An-Arbor is an example of how a mufasir uses a direct encounter with reality to re-read the verses of the Qur'an in the light of the purpose and value it contains. Thus, autobiography in this interpretation functions as a contextual interpretation that bridges the text of revelation with the changing times without detaching itself from the basic principles that are the spirit of Islamic teachings.

Table 5. Mechanism of Production of Interpretation Meaning through Autobiography on the An-Arbor Narrative

Hamka's Empirical Experience	Hermeneutic Staff	Meaning of the Resulting Verse	Functions of Autobiography
Visiting a modern slaughterhouse	What is the purpose of the sharia of slaughter?	The spirit of the sharia is more important than the historical form	Contextual interpretation
Comparing traditional and modern methods	Which is closer to the will of the Prophet?	Maqasid is the basis for evaluation	Contextual interpretation
Witness firsthand the realities of modern industry	How do verses answer new questions?	The universality of the Qur'an lies in its principle	Contextual interpretation

The An-Arbor narrative shows that empirical experience opens up new questions to verse that do not arise from textual reading alone. This experience prompted Hamka to read QS al-

⁴² Mohamad Maulidin Alif Utama, "Integrating Thematic Tafsir of Qur'an Surah Al-'Alaq with Local Wisdom-Based Learning Media: An Islamic Education Model for Generation Z in West Sumatra," *Al-Mu'ashirah Scientific Journal: Multi-Perspective Study Media of the Qur'an and Al-Hadith* 22, no. 2 (2025): 222–39, <https://doi.org/10.22373/jim.v22i2.31977>.

Maidah 5:4 with reference to the purpose and wisdom of the Shari'ah, thereby producing a contextual reading. As a contextual interpretation, the narrative of the An-Arbor factory highlights two points directly related to the Qur'an as a text and to the way it should be read. *First*, this narrative affirms that the universality of the Qur'an lies in its principles and spirit, so that the verses that came down in the 7th century can still be a guide for new problems that have never existed before. *Second*, reading the ruh/maqasid verse is not only the theory of ushul fiqh, but it is also the way of the interpretation of the Qur'an.⁴³

The Dimensions of Qur'an Interpretation Instruments: Paul Ricoeur's Theory of Triple Mimesis and Hamka's Life Experience

Scholars generally define tafsir as an attempt to explain the meanings of the Qur'an according to human ability. Explanation of meaning is the main purpose of interpretation activities.⁴⁴ The autobiographical narrative presented by Hamka does not stop as a personal story or biographical information that is beyond interpretation. In contrast, autobiography participates directly in the process of explaining the meaning of a verse. When Hamka recounted his experience of facing sexual temptation in Denver, the narrative was used to explain the meaning of QS. al-'Ankabut [29]:45 about the function of prayer as a deterrent to heinous and unrighteous acts. When she recounted the experience of witnessing injustice against Minangkabau women, the narrative was used to explain the dimension of justice contained in QS. al-Baqarah [2]:228.⁴⁵ Similarly, when he presents his experience of imprisonment, autobiography is used to explain the therapeutic power of patience and pious deeds in the face of life's sufferings. Likewise, when narrating his experience at the slaughterhouse of an Arbord, Hamka uses this narration to explain the meaning of QS al-Maidah (5):3 about the purpose or maqashid of the way of slaughtering animals.⁴⁶

In this case, it shows that autobiography in Tafsir Al-Azhar has a function that is in line with the essence of the tafsir itself, which is to explain the meaning of the verse. Thus, autobiography cannot be understood as an additional element that is illustrative, but rather as an instrument of interpretation that participates in the process of production of meaning. In this context, life experiences that have been configured into narratives serve as a medium that helps connect the text of the Qur'an with the reality of human life. The study of tafsir so far has highlighted the use of language, hadith, asbab al-nuzul, or the opinions of scholars as a tool of interpretation. This research shows that life experiences can also perform similar functions when they are used to explain, concretize, confirm, or criticize the understanding of verses. Thus, autobiography gained legitimacy as an instrument of interpretation because of its ability to explain the meaning of the Qur'an.⁴⁷

Life experience does not directly produce the meaning of interpretation. This experience first forms the perspective of the mufasir when reading the verses of the Qur'an. This perspective directs the attention of the mufasir to certain aspects of the verse so that it gives birth to a distinctive

⁴³ Yaoping Liu dan Saichol Chudjuarjeen, *Continuity and Change: Rethinking Identity, Tradition, and Innovation in a Globalized World*, 10 April 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1163/29502683-20240201>.

⁴⁴ Badr al-Din Muhammad Al-Zarkashi, *al-Burhan fi'Ulum al-Qur'an* (Dar al-Fikr, 1988); Mannā' Kalil al-Qattan, *Mabahit fi 'ulum al-Qur'an* (Manšūrāt al-'aṣr al-ḥadīth, 1973); Khalid 'Abd al-Rahmān Al-Akk, *Usul Al-Tafsir Wa Qawa'iduhu* (Dār al-Nafāis, 1986); Subhi al-Salih, *Mabahit fi'ulum al-Qur'an* (Dar al-alam li-l-malayin, t.t.).

⁴⁵ Hamka, *Buya Hamka Talks About Women* (Gema Insani, 2014); Azzura, "Buya Hamka's Criticism of the Misogynistic Interpretation of Eve (Study of the Story of Adam's Descent to Earth in the Qur'an)," *Qaf: Journal of Qur'an Science and Tafsir* 2, no. 2 (2020): 283–302.

⁴⁶ Muhammad Muhammad, *Hamka's Thought in Tafsir Al-Azhar: Between Acculturation and Rejection of Local Culture*, March 20, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1163/29502683-bja00012>.

⁴⁷ Kupari, "Lived religion and the religious field"; Reichmuth dkk., *Humanism and Muslim Culture*.

interpretation. Thus, the influence of life experience on interpretation does not lie in the change in the meaning of the text, but in the way in which the experience shapes the understanding of the verses. Life experience presents certain problems and concerns that then become the entrance to the interpretation process. The influence of autobiography in the interpretive process is Hamka's main point in explaining the narrative of the Qur'anic text; the experiences he goes through either personally or from the observation of social practices make Hamka's interpretation of al-Azhar even more interesting. The public's enthusiasm for the narrative presented by Hamka is reflected in the many previous studies on this book. The response given is always positive, not just a personal assessment, but the value contained in the tafsir of al-Azhar is indeed special.⁴⁸

Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutic construction through the concept of Triple Mimesis provides a powerful framework for understanding how the life experience (*leben swelt*) of a mufasir dialogues with the text of the Qur'an. In Tafsir Al-Azhar, Hamka not only presents the meaning of language, but also integrates his autobiographical experiences into interpretation. In summary, the framework operates through three stages: Mimesis I (Prefiguration): The pre-narrative world; life experiences, social realities, and real suffering/events that the interpreter experiences before the text is produced. Mimesis II (Configuration): The process of story/narrative assembly (*emplotment*); how the interpreter composes and interprets the experience into the structure of the interpretation of the verse. Mimesis III (Refiguration): Remeaning; Interaction between the pre-configured text and the reader to give birth to new awareness, transformation, or action.

In this article, the author only includes five narratives as research material in using the theory of Triple Mimesis Integration. The validity of this hermeneutic model is confirmed clearly through five forms of autobiographical narratives presented by Hamka in his commentary:

Table 6. Dimensions Triple Mimesis Configuration in Tafsir al-Azhar

Text of the Qur'an	Theory of Triple Mimesis		
	Mimesis I (Autobiographical Experience)	Mimesis II: Narrative of Tafsir (Verse)	Mimesis III: Output Interpretation
QS. al-'Ankabut [29]: 45	Hamka's experience during a visit to Denver, United States	Hamka configures this experience when interpreting a verse about prayer that prevents heinous and unrighteous deeds	This interpretation brings to life the function of prayer not just a formal ritual, but as an absolute spiritual instrument to form a moral fortress in the midst of modernization
QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 228	Hamka's observation and direct experience of	This social experience is woven into the discussion of	Presenting a new understanding that distinguishes which

⁴⁸ Basri Basri dan Muhammad Muhammad, "Rethinking Religious Moderation through the Study of Indonesian Exegesis: A Study of Tafsir al-Azhar by Hamka," *Khazanah: Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities* 21, no. 1 (2023): 41–58.

	the Minangkabau matrilineal traditional structure	\text{QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 228, which regulates the rights and obligations of husband and wife.	Islamic teachings are fair for women and which traditional practices are restrictive/patriarchal, so that it becomes a criticism of local gender inequality.
QS. Hud [11]: 11	Hamka's mental and physical suffering when he was detained without a fair trial by the Old Order regime (1964–1966).	This experience of isolation is woven into the interpretation of the verse about patience and righteous deeds in the midst of suffering.	These verses reconfigure the suffering of prison into a crater of soul cleansing (tazkiyatun nafs), providing a healing effect both for Hamka and for readers who face life's tests.
QS. al-Ma'idah [5]: 4	Hamka's empirical experience saw firsthand the process of mechanical slaughter of animals at a slaughterhouse in Ann Arbor, Michigan.	This food technology experience is used as a configuration basis when reviewing halal/thayyib food laws in	Producing an inclusive and contextual understanding of fiqh, that modern slaughter science and technology can be in harmony with Islamic law as long as its main principles are fulfilled
QS. Ali 'Imran [3]: 104	Hamka's role as an academic and intellectual when delivering a public lecture on the dynamics of social movements and da'wah at Andalas University.	The academic dialogue is configured when explaining the obligation of amar ma'ruf nahi munkar	Formulate da'wah methods that are not only based on oral sermons, but also institutions, scientific movements, and structured social-collective actions.

Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutics is rooted in the idea that texts have the autonomy of text from their authors, but the meaning of the text only radiates in its entirety when it undergoes a cycle of integrating experience. Ricoeur divides this mimetic cycle into three stages:

[Mimesis 1: Prefiguration]—> [Mimesis 2: Configuration]—> [Mimesis 3: Refiguration]

Mimesis 1 (Prefiguration): The world of pre-text. It includes the practical understanding, symbolic networks, and historical-cultural life experiences that the subject had before the text was produced or interpreted.

Mimesis 2 (Configuration): Text-world. This stage involves the process of plotting stories/narratives (emplotment or muthos), language structure, and organizing discourse so that pre-text symbols become literary works or written texts that are distant from the author.

Mimesis 3 (Refiguration): The world in front of the text. The stage of reading and interpretation is restored. The text is released into the hands of the reader/interpreter to reconstruct a new meaning oriented to the real action and existential understanding of the reader.

Therefore, each individual's personal experience must be different in understanding the existing verse. Therefore, other knowledge tools such as anthropology and psychology are needed in understanding the rules of interpretation and the study of a person's autobiography as a whole.⁴⁹ Ricoeur explains that life experiences do not produce meaning by themselves, but must first be configured into a narrative through the process of *emplotment*.⁵⁰ In the framework of *triple mimesis*, Hamka's life experiences form a prefigurative world or *mimesis I*. The experience was then configured into an autobiography through *mimesis II*. The findings of this study show that at this configuration stage, an important process occurs that has not received much attention in interpretation studies, namely the birth of the hermeneutical problem that connects experience with text. These problems function as a bridge that allows life experiences to enter the process of interpretation. Through the interaction between the question and the text, the meaning of the interpretation is born, which is then reconfigured to the reader through *mimesis III*.⁵¹

Conclusion

The integration of Buya Hamka's personal narrative is not just a life experience and a complement to the story but a substantial methodological instrument. This is confirmed through Paul Ricoeur's Triple Mimesis theoretical framework, including *Mimesis I (prefiguration)* as the background for pre-understanding of mufasir, *Mimesis II (configuration)* as the process of preparing interpretive texts, and *Mimesis III (refiguration)* as a space for transforming readers' understanding. This hermeneutical construction is confirmed through five forms of Hamka's autobiographical narrative, namely: performative function through the Denver Narrative (QS al-'Ankabut [29]:45), social criticism through the Minangkabau Women's Narrative (QS al-Baqarah [2]:228), therapeutic function through the Prison Narrative (QS Hud [11]:11), contextual interpretation through the Ann Arbor Slaughterhouse Narrative (QS al-Maidah [5]:4), and methodological elaboration through the Public Lecture Narrative at Andalas University (QS Ali Imran [3]:104).

⁴⁹ Farhani Azkia dkk., "The Semantics of Mukhtāl and Fakhūr in the Qur'an: Perspectives from Indonesian Tafsir Scholarship," *Al-Mu'ashirah Scientific Journal: Multi-Perspective Study Media of the Qur'an and Al-Hadith* 23, no. 1 (2026): 89–108, <https://doi.org/10.22373/jim.v23i1.33065>; Rahman Arivaie et al., "The Existence of Nusantara-Indonesian Tafsir Literature in Tafsir al-Azhar Karya Hamka," *Mashdar: Journal of Qur'an and Hadith Studies* 3, no. 2 (2021): 2, <https://doi.org/10.15548/mashdar.v3i2.2895>.

⁵⁰ Ricoeur, *Time and narrative University of Chicago press, 1984.*, vol. 1.

⁵¹ Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*.

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