

THE SOUL OF CIVILIZATIONS: HERITAGE, IDENTITY AND CULTURAL RESILIENCE

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CIVITAS
Contribution to sustainable development, peace and
and Translational Action for Society

GEO.Edukasi

Kediri, 2026

The Soul of Civilizations: Heritage, Identity and Cultural Resilience /ed.: Izharulhak Saiful Hafni, Rosli Nor, Alice Sabrina Ismail, Najib Ariffin, Khatijah Othman – Ed. 1 – Kediri: Center of Conservation for Sustainable Ethnic Heritage [CaSEH], PPKn-UNP Kediri, 2026

xxxix +889 pages: ill.: 16 x 24 cm

eISBN 978-629-92999-5-0

The Soul of Civilizations: Heritage, Identity and Cultural Resilience

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Prepress

Izharulhak Saiful Hafni

First Edition: September 2026

Publication Registration No.: 9786299299950-20260921073709

Cover Design: Izharulhak Saiful Hafni

Publisher

Center of Conservation Sustainable Heritage (CaSEH),

Perbadanan Muzium Melaka (PERZIM),

Kompleks Warisan Melaka,

Jalan Kota, 75000 Melaka, Malaysia.

PPKn UNP Kediri

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This publication was made possible through the generous support of



Contents

List of Figures	x
List of Tables	xv
Contributors	xxii
Acknowledgments	xxxii
Preface	xxxiii
Introduction	1
The Strategic Value of Arabic Education in the Nusantara: Bridging Tradition and Contemporary Needs	3
Mustar, Izharulhak bin Saiful Hafni	
From Local to Digital: The Transformation of Community Education Based on Local Wisdom toward Indonesia Emas 2045	32
Noor Sadira Khairiya R, Andi Zahra Qurrata A'yun, Mukarramah, Mar'atul Zahwah, Fauzan Hidayatullah	
Development and Usability Evaluation of an Interactive Web-Based Platform for Nusantara Arts Education	67
Jovan Diego Benedictus Situngkir, Cavin Agustinus Sitorus	
Dissident Sufism as Counter-Hegemony: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Al-Adl wal Ihsan's Manifestos in Morocco	96
Ahmad Muzaki Alhabibi	
Deconstructing the Masculinity of the Rib Discourse in Nizār Qabbānī's Poem "Taktubīn al-Syī'r.. wa Uwaqqi' Anā.."	132
Yulia Nasrul Latifi, Izharulhak Saiful Hafni	

Institutional Responses to Campus Sexual Violence: Lessons from Yogyakarta Universities Before the 2022 Prevention Act	168
Fathikah Fauziah Hanum, Ali Masykur Fathurrahman	
Strengthening Ecological Citizenship through the National Adiwiyata Program	199
Indah Rahmawati, Sulton, and Ardhana Yanuar Mahardhani	
Language, Care, and Character: Asah, Asih, Asuh as a Framework for Shaping Language Attitudes	232
Ni Kadek Juliantari and Ni Komang Sri Mariati	
The Lost Indonesia: A Reflective Journey through the Archipelago's Forgotten Local Wisdom	265
Satya Cipta	
Islamic Work Ethics: Its Philosophical Foundations and Organizational Outcomes	273
Khatijah Othman, Muhamadul Bakir Yaakub	
Negotiating Difference: Cultural Hybridity and Third Space Formation Among Multicultural Students at UIN Sumatera Utara	303
Azmi Nawaf	
Ecological Crisis and Oil Capitalism in Mudun al-Milh: An Ecocritical Reading	330
Miftachul Huda, Nabhatun Nada	
Guarding Harmony Amid Global Currents: Religious Tolerance as Local Wisdom and Social Resilience in Dandangan Village	357
Feren Yogi Pradewinta, Luluk Siti Jariyah, Dewi Azizah, Nur Awaliya Ala Ma'wah, Therecia Cheysa Febriana, Elda Viana Ndama Mudjuk	

Building Safer Societies: A Comparative Assessment of Flood Risk Governance in Nigeria and Southeast Asia	376
Peter Edoka	
Data-Driven Seismic Resilience for Smart Cities: A Random Forest Model for Predicting Residential Building Vulnerability from ACeBS Rapid Assessment Surveys	406
Fazli Elahi	
Cultural Diplomacy as a Mechanism for Mitigating Identity Conflict and Sustaining Regional Security in ASEAN: Reflections on the Indonesia–Malaysia Cultural Dispute	411
Sarah Syalwa Citra Adillah	
Digital Anomie and the Erosion of Communication Ethics: A Durkheimian Reading of Student Interaction on Instagram and TikTok	435
Farida Putri Aprilia Helistri Arinda, Alin Rahmania, Irmayanti Anggraini Mustika Sari, Devi Ika Yustika Ananda Putri, Allyn Joanetta Cahya Autrian, and Maulydina Rahayu	
Sacred Boundaries and Shared Solidarity: Interreligious Tolerance in the Ogoh-Ogoh Pengrupukan Tradition of Krajan Hamlet	462
Regina Nisa Rahmadhani, Faresa Fresilvia Cahyani, Firdaus Bunga Nirwana, Cintya Rahayu, Amanda Waranggani, and Yasaka Nizar Zakaria	
The Role of Self-Control in Moderating the Relationship between Need to Belong and Fear of Missing Out Symptoms among University Students: A Literature Review Approach	514
Nurul Azimah, Andini Sartika Permatasari Hendra, Dewi Sandra, Sri Rahmadani, Latang	

Reflections from Experience in Fisheries Extension and Community Engagement in Mindanao	530
Leyah Caballejos	
A Capability Approach-Based Social Accountability Model for the Management of POLRI Nutrition Fulfillment Service Units in the Free Nutritious Meals Program	543
Guntur Swandaru, Sulton, Sunarto	
Nusantara on the Plate: Biosphere, Mobility, Trade and the Archipelagic Social Landscape of Food	587
Ahmad Najib Ariffin	
UKM Harmoni Nusantara as a Catalyst for National Integrity: The Internalization of Civic Values among University Students	639
Endah Binti Munawaroh, Aurilia Nafa Hartana, Faradilla Zahratul Qatahaz Zabaniyah, Gita Fatimatuzzahro, Silvia Agustina Anggraini, Mohamad Ilham Rifadana	
Implementation of Multiculturalism Values in the Campus Environment: From Symbolic Acceptance toward Transformative Inclusivity	664
Anggi Dwi Lestari, Anisa Wika Ramadhani, Muhammad Nur Khalifah, Alfarizhi, Ahmad Fatih Nasrullah, Aji Dwi Ramadhani	
Islamic Social-Cultural Values and the Production of Heritage Architecture: Historical Insights from Jawi Peranakan and Melaka Malay Communities in Malaysia	689
Alice Sabrina Ismail	

Continuity and Change: Heritage-Led Approaches to Urban Regeneration in Malaysia	717
Indera Syahrul Mat Radzuan, Sabariah Eni, Abdul Jalil Omar, Zarina Shamsudin, Nor Hisham Md Saman	
Towards Global Alignment: Transforming Indonesia's Cultural Heritage Governance through the Open Heritage Statement	743
Hardiansyah	
From Industrial Heritage to Digital Sovereignty: Reconstructing Indigenous Human Capital in Greater Bekasi	770
Anita Novialumi, Fajri Ngainatun Nangimah	
Walking on the Margins: Pedestrian Infrastructure Failures and Mobility Justice in Indonesia's Heritage Corridors	801
Tuanku Muhammad Farras	
Sleep as a Foundation of Human Flourishing: A Scholarly Synthesis of the Benefits of Adequate Sleep for Physical Health, Mental Well-Being, and Productivity	830
Aldrin Fahrul Hidayat, Luthfia Ranggi Nastiti, Lilin Tiara Ramadhani	
Repurposing Estradiol Valerate as a Candidate ESR2 Modulator Against Prostate Cancer: An in Silico Molecular Docking Investigation	859
Nadya Sabrina, Hasna Putri Ananda, Tiara Muktaviona, Refika Amanda Salsabila, Muhamad Alfarezi, and Rahman S. Sianu	
Index	888

List of Figures

Figure 1. Triangulation of the chapter's three-layer methodology	14
Figure 2. Conceptual model linking postcolonial epistemic resilience, the Gontor 'Third Way', and strategic repositioning	27
Figure 2.1. Literature identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion sequence	44
Figure 2.2. Direction of reported effects of digitalisation on non-formal education across the reviewed literature	47
Figure 2.3. Local wisdom as an epistemological filter mediating global digital flows	50
Figure 2.4. The blended mentoring architecture, showing the pairing of virtual and face-to-face tracks	53
Figure 2.2. Represents the directional pattern reported across the corpus: consistent gains in reach, flexibility, and cost, set against consistent losses in interaction, cultural embedding, and collective solidarity	58
Figure 2.3. Represents the mechanism, distinguishing the three outcomes the filter produces: adoption with re-signification, adaptation, and resistance	62
Figure 3.1. Research design and user-centered development process for the NusantaraKita platform	76
Figure 3.2. Mean SUS scores by participant group with standard deviations, against the cross-industry benchmark	80

Figure 3.3. Mean severity ratings across Nielsen's ten heuristics, ordered by severity	82
Figure 3.4. Frequency with which each theme was raised by interview participants	84
Figure 3.5. Convergence of quantitative, expert, and qualitative findings on three design priorities	86
Figure 4.1. Fairclough's three-dimensional model as applied to Yassine's two manifestos	103
Figure 4.2. The deconstruction–reconstruction dialectic across the two manifestos	109
Figure 4.3. Semantic mutation of the state-sanctioned lexicon across both manifestos	116
Figure 4.4. The contested field of symbolic capital and the divergent trajectories of the two Islamic movements	122
Figure 5.1. The five-stage deconstructive procedure applied to the poem	143
Figure 5.2. Structure of the poem across its five stanzas	145
Figure 5.3. The poem's binary oppositions and the values attached to each pole	147
Figure 5.4. The reversal of the hierarchy, the trace that enables it, and the dissolution of the centre	158
Figure 6.1. Reported prevalence of sexual violence across international and Indonesian sources	171
Figure 6.2. Research design and analytic sequence	178
Figure 6.3. The four-layer prevention architecture observed across the institutions studied	184
Figure 6.4. Obstacles, their underlying causes, and institutional responses	187
Figure 1.1. Conceptual framework linking global environmental challenges, the school as a site of	205

character formation, the four pillars of the Adiwiyata Program, and the outcome of ecological citizenship	
Figure 1.2. The collaborative relationship between teachers and students in enacting the culture of environmental care at SDN 1 Mangkujayan	216
Figure 2.1. The relationship between the local wisdom values of asah, asih, asuh and the formation of positive language attitudes in learning	239
Figure 2.2. Data collection and analysis workflow employed in the study of asah, asih, asuh and language attitude formation	244
Figure 2.3. Implementation of asah values during classroom discussion and presentation activity	247
Figure 2.4. Implementation of asih values through respectful, empathetic engagement among students during learning activity	249
Figure 2.5. Implementation of asuh values through lecturer guidance and instructional support during learning	252
Figure 4.1. Philosophical foundation and IWE axioms, with ibadah as the central organizing mechanism	282
Figure 4.2. The operational bridge: axioms to functional pillars	288
Figure 5.2. Process flow from initial regional homophily to the formation of a third space collective identity	317
Figure 5.1. The third space as the site of convergence for regional cultural identities at UINSU	318
Figure 6.1. The narrative arc from pastoral harmony through apocalyptic disruption to the severance of dwelling in Mudun al-Milh	346

Figure 10.1. The convergence of interactional harmony, managed stereotype, and ritual non-intervention into a model of proximity-based negotiative tolerance	367
Figure 11.1. Map of Lokoja Local Government Area and surrounding districts within Kogi State, Nigeria	384
Figure 11.2. Annual rainfall variation at Lokoja, 1951-2020	388
Figure 11.3. August and September rainfall variation at Lokoja, 1971-2020	389
Figure 11.4. Rainfall intensity for South Sulawesi, Indonesia, across 2-, 5-, 10-, 25-, and 50-year return periods	390
Figure 18.2. The capability-accountability synthesis model, linking social accountability's instrument vocabulary to the Capability Approach's evaluative content	548
Figure 18.1. Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG) reform: toward social accountability, summarising governance challenges and the proposed participatory accountability model	555
Figure 18.3. Phased implementation timeline for institutionalising citizen-driven accountability across the SPPG network	572
Figure 1. Map of the countries of Southeast Asia; the Malay Archipelago covers the maritime archipelagic nations namely Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, the Philippines and Timor-Leste	591
Figure 1. Model of civic value internalization through culture-based organizational activity	655
Figure 1. Pathway from symbolic to transformative multiculturalism in the campus environment	681

Figure 1. Analytical model: Islamic social-cultural values, cultural negotiation, and the production of heritage architecture	705
Figure 1. Integrated heritage-led regeneration framework for Malaysia	735
Figure 2. a. IL2J protein before cleaning, b. IL2J protein after cleaning	747
Figure 3. Sample Interaction with IL2J: a. Estradiol valerate b. ETC	750
Figure 4. String pathway	751
Figure 5. KEGG Pathway of Prostate Cancer (edited using Canva)	754
Figure 1. Transformation logic: from fragmented governance to open heritage outcomes through policy alignment	759
Figure 1. Structural model of Industrial Culture Exposure, Local Wisdom-Based Human Capital, Digital Adaptation, and Creative Economy Sovereignty	780
Figure 1. Three failure points of heritage-corridor sidewalk planning and the mobility justice transition	818
Figure 1. Conceptual framework linking adequate sleep to physical health, mental well-being, productivity, and overall quality of life.	841
Figure 1. Sequential workflow of the in-silico drug-repurposing procedure, from target and ligand selection through interaction analysis.	867

List of Tables

Table 1. Gontor's implementation of this model through the classical POAC management cycle: Planning, Organising, Actuating, and Controlling (Daft, 2021)	15
Table 1. The POAC management cycle at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor	16
Table 2. Posner's five dimensions applied to Indonesian and Philippine Arabic curricula	19
Table 3. Forms of strategic capital generated by reformed Arabic education in the Nusantara	25
Table 2.1. Conceptual framework and the analytical function of each component	40
Table 2.2. Inclusion and exclusion criteria applied during literature selection	44
Table 2.3. Disaggregation of the digitalisation paradox in Community Education	48
Table 2.4. Local wisdom values as operative filtering criteria in digital adoption	50
Table 2.5. Operational specification of the blended mentoring architecture	53
Table 2.6. Synthesis of research findings	56
Table 3.1. Theoretical foundations and their function in the study	73

Table 3.2. Technology stack of the NusantaraKita platform	77
Table 3.3. Participant demographics by group and province	78
Table 3.4. SUS scores by participant group	80
Table 3.5. Expert heuristic evaluation summary	81
Table 3.6. Themes from reflexive thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews (n = 24)	83
Table 3.7. Prioritised design recommendations with evidentiary basis	89
Table 4.1. Three scholarly positions on Sufism and power in Morocco	100
Table 4.2. Primary corpus and analytical treatment	105
Table 4.3. Operationalisation of the analytical framework	107
Table 4.4. The four deconstructive attacks of Al-Islam aw al-Tufan	110
Table 4.5. Comparative trajectories of two Moroccan Islamic movements	124
Table 4.6. Structural conditions and forms of resistance: Morocco and Nusantara	125
Table 5.1. Patterns in scholarship on masculinity and poetry	136
Table 5.2. Deconstructive principles and their analytical function	139
Table 5.3. The analytic stages, their objects, and their outcomes	143
Table 5.4. Binary oppositions in the poem and their attributed values	146

Table 5.5. The reversal of attributes across the deconstructive turn	151
Table 6.1. The fifteen forms of sexual violence identified by Komnas Perempuan	173
Table 6.2. Conceptual framework and analytical function	176
Table 6.3. Informant selection criteria	178
Table 6.4. Institutional measures across six universities in the Special Region of Yogyakarta	180
Table 6.5. Obstacles, causes, responses, and residual gaps	187
Table 1.1. The Four Pillars of the Adiwiyata Program as Implemented at SDN 1 Mangkujayan	219
Table 1.2. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in the Implementation of Ecological Citizenship at SDN 1 Mangkujayan	220
Table 1.3. Assessment of Ecological Citizenship Dimensions at SDN 1 Mangkujayan	223
Table 2.1. Manifestation of Asah Values in Students' Language Attitudes	247
Table 2.2. Manifestation of Asih Values in Students' Language Attitudes	249
Table 2.3. Manifestation of Asuh Values in Students' Language Attitudes	252
Table 4.1. IWE Philosophical Axioms and Essence with Ibadah as Mechanism	279
Table 4.2. The Operational Bridge: Alignment of Axioms to Functional Pillars	284
Table 4.3. Universal Translation of IWE Pillars for Multicultural Organizational Adoption	290

Table 4.4. Implementation Roadmap for the Ethical Excellence Initiative (Six-Month Pilot)	291
Table 5.1. Regional Cultural and Communicative Profiles of Student Groups at UINSU	312
Table 6.1. Structural Mapping of the Ecological Dimensions Explored in the Novel	336
Table 10.1. Summary of Findings on Religious Tolerance as Local Wisdom in Dandangan	362
Table 10.1. Summary of Findings and Their Contribution to National Cultural Resilience	367
Table 11.1. Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents in Lokoja Metropolis (N = 382)	386
Table 11.2. Environmental Factors Contributing to Flood Risk in the Study Area (N = 382)	391
Table 11.3. Environmental Management Practices Used for Flood Mitigation in the Study Area (N = 382)	393
Table 11.4. Institutional Flood Risk Assessment in the Study Area (N = 382)	395
Table 11.5. Environmental Management and Flood Safety in the Study Area (N = 382)	397
Table 1. Inquiry Question Framework	448
Table 2. Summary of Field Findings	449
Table 1. Review of Previous Research and Research Gap	467
Table 2. Indicators of Religious Tolerance and Field Findings in Krajan Hamlet	476
Table 16.1. Typology of Student Character Based on Need to Belong and Self-Control	522
Table 18.1. Citizen-Driven Social Accountability Instruments for the SPPG Network	556

Table 18.3. Resource-Centric versus Capability-Based Evaluation	565
Table 18.2. Proposed Phased Roadmap for Institutionalising Citizen-Driven Accountability at SPPG Units	571
Table 1. Characteristics of Research Informants	649
Table 2. Research Focus and Indicators	650
Table 3. Synthesis of Research Findings	654
Table 1. Implementation of Multicultural Values in Campus Life	676
Table 2. Challenges of Implementing Multiculturalism	677
Table 3. Contribution of Student Organizations	679
Table 1. Islamic Social-Cultural Values and Their Architectural Translation in the Case-Study Communities	704
Table 2. Comparative Overview of the Two Case-Study Communities	706
Table 1. Proposed Five Dimensions of Heritage-Led Urban Regeneration in Malaysia	733
Table 1. Comparative Gap between Open Heritage Statement Principles and Indonesian Governance Practice	757
Table 1. Operational Definition of Variables	779
Table 2. Profile of Respondents	781
Table 3. Outer Loadings of Measurement Items	783
Table 4. Construct Reliability and Validity	784
Table 5. Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)	785
Table 6. Inner Collinearity Assessment (VIF)	785
Table 7. Coefficient of Determination (R^2)	786

Table 8. Effect Size (f^2)	787
Table 9. Predictive Relevance (Q^2)	787
Table 10. Specific Indirect Effects	788
Table 11. Outcomes of Hypothesis Evaluation	789
Table 1. Comparison of Pedestrian Facility Technical Parameters in Indonesia	810
Table 2. Comparative Evaluation Results across Five Heritage Corridors	816
Table 1. Summary of Included Studies	839

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Acknowledgments

The editors would like to extend our sincere gratitude to the Rector of Universitas Nusantara PGRI Kediri (UNP Kediri), and the Dean of the relevant faculty, for their visionary leadership, continuous support, and commitment to academic excellence. Their encouragement and provision of resources have been instrumental in the success of this project.

We are also deeply thankful to all the institutions and universities of the contributors, particularly Universitas Nusantara PGRI Kediri and various partner institutions across Indonesia, for creating a vibrant and supportive scholarly ecosystem. The outstanding quality of the research and chapters in this volume is a direct result of the conducive academic environment, collaborative spirit, and intellectual dynamism nurtured within these campuses.

Special appreciation goes to the contributors for their expertise, dedication, and high-quality contributions. Their efforts in producing insightful and impactful work on regional issues are greatly appreciated.

Finally, our heartfelt thanks go to our families for their endless patience, understanding, and support throughout the preparation of this volume.

Preface

This book emerged from a long-held belief by the editors and many other academic observers that many tourism dynamics in the developing world are quite different from those in the more affluent portions of the globe. The editors have lived in, traveled around, and worked widely throughout the developing world and have observed firsthand many of these unique dimensions of tourism. Both editors have a strong interest in cultural heritage and have studied heritage issues in the developing world context on many occasions. Based on an understanding of the different heritage and tourism experiences in the less-developed world, this book was conceived. Our original plan was to provide conceptual overviews of critical issues, challenges, and opportunities in the heritage tourism context in developing regions and then invite scholars who themselves are interested in heritage tourism and who live in less-affluent countries of the world to contribute regional overviews to highlight these crucial issues in their various regions. This “indigenous” approach was considered the best way to understand the challenges and issues facing heritage places in developing countries. Unfortunately, however, several people were unable to contribute for various reasons, and new authors were asked to fill in, some in the last hours of the project. We are grateful to them and their willingness to work with us. Despite this glitch, we were able to put together a successful collection of regional overviews that illustrate the common problems and prospects of cultural heritage and

tourism in the less affluent regions. The developing world is rich in awesome cultural resources that have created and continue to create some of the most attractive tourist destinations in the world.

The Editors

5 Deconstructing the Masculinity of the Rib Discourse in Nizār Qabbānī's Poem "Taktubīn al-Syī'r.. wa Uwaqqi' Anā.."

Yulia Nasrul Latifi, Izharulhak Saiful Hafni*

The discourse on the objectification of women persists to this day, one instance of which is the perpetuation of the theological-masculine discourse of the rib (the narrative that Eve was created from Adam's rib). As a counter-discourse aimed at the liberation of women, this chapter examines the deconstructive meanings in "Taktubīn al-Syī'r.. wa Uwaqqi' Anā..", a poem by Nizār Qabbānī, through the lens of Jacques Derrida's theory of deconstruction. The theory rejects binary oppositions and suspends meaning on the grounds that contexts and perspectives within a text are perpetually shifting; consequently, the meaning of a text is never stable, and the hierarchy of the regime of meaning is destabilised by the text itself. Proceeding through five analytic stages (mapping binary oppositions,

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exposing the instability of masculine subjectivity and feminine objectivity, reversing the rib myth, tracing ancient matriarchy as *différance*, and dissolving the centre) the chapter argues that the discourse of the rib is a patriarchal myth: woman was not created from man's rib; rather, it is man who emerges from woman's womb. This reversal stems from the instability of meaning within both the male subject and female object positions, an instability occasioned by the persistence of a strong historical trace of ancient matriarchy. The chapter concludes that dismantling the centralised meaning, rather than installing a new centre in its place, is what an egalitarian relation between the sexes requires.

Introduction

To this day, the discourse of the masculine rib shapes a common mindset that establishes the objectification of women and places them in an inferior position. According to al-Sa'dāwī (1974, 1980, 2010), the discourse of the rib first appeared in the Torah, in the account that Eve (woman) was created from the rib of Adam. This discourse was reproduced in the Gospels, where woman (Ishshah) is said to have come from man (Hassan, 1995, p. 45). The view was subsequently absorbed into the cultural structure and thought of Islamic commentary through several hadiths regarded as sound (Zayd, 2004, p. 27).

Accepted by the majority within the three Semitic religious traditions, the rib discourse gave rise to a misogynistic doctrine. In Islamic transmission, some reports hold that most of Hell's inhabitants would be women (Bukhārī 4, n.d., p. 136), that three causes of misfortune are women, houses, and horses (Bukhārī 3, n.d., p. 242), and that the most dangerous trial for men is women (Bukhārī 3, n.d., p. 242). In Christian teaching, interpretations of the Gospels attach to women an identity as destructive and negative (al-Sa'dāwī et al., 2000, p. 34). In Jewish doctrine, women appear as the cause of men's distress and as the principal source of trial for the Israelites (Hassan, 1995,

p. 86). Studies indicate that a majority within all three communities believe women to be the cause of humanity's fall from Paradise (al-Sa'dāwī, 2003; Hassan, 1995).

The Rib Discourse in Islamic Commentary

In the Islamic tradition, commentators who read the rib discourse through a literal interpretation of the Prophetic hadiths constitute the majority among the *mu'tabar* interpretations of the *jumbūr*. These include *Tafsīr al-Kaṣṣyāf* (Zamakhshārī, 1996, p. 492), *Tafsīr al-Qāṣyī* (al-Qāṣyī, 1971, p. 189), *Tafsīr al-Marāghī* (al-Marāghī, n.d., p. 175), and *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Adzīm* (Ibn Kasīr, 1991, p. 424). All interpret the term *nafs waḥ* idah, “one soul,” as Adam, the first human being, and *ṣamjabā*, “his partner,” as Eve. Into this reading they incorporated the hadiths concerning the rib, which they treated as an account of the origin of woman (Latifi, 2020a, 2025).

The belief has survived for thousands of years without serious questioning and has spread far beyond the Arabian Peninsula and the Middle East. In Arabic literature, the short fiction of Taufiq al-Ḥakīm (1945, 1985) affirms that Eve was created from Adam's rib, that she was a sinner, a source of negative things, and the first transgressor who brought suffering upon humankind.

Contemporary Circulation

In the contemporary era, and particularly on social media, the influence of the rib discourse is visible in songs both devotional and popular. In Christian wedding repertoire, “Tulang Rusuk” (“The Rib”) ranks among the most frequently produced anthems, with lyrics describing the awaited rib that arrives to stand alongside and to become a helper.

In Indonesia, in the more popular register, the dangdut song “Kau tercipta dari Tulang Rusukku” (“You Were Created from My Rib”), popular in the 1970s, has resurfaced in a cover by Via Vallen. Another singer, Rita Sugiyarto, released a new song in January 2019 entitled “Tulang Rusuk,” concerning a woman suffering the absence of her

beloved, who must accept her situation because she is not perfect and because she believes herself born from a man's rib.

The persistence of the discourse across scriptural commentary, literary fiction, and popular music indicates that it operates not as a doctrine held consciously but as an assumption absorbed below the level of deliberate belief. That is precisely the condition Derridean deconstruction is designed to address.

The Poem and Its Poet

"Taktubīn al-Syī'r.. wa Uwaqqi' Anā.." was written by Nizār Qabbānī (1989), the Arab poet known as *Syā'ir al-Mar'ah*, the poet of women. The poem challenges the rib discourse in a manner that distinguishes it from other treatments of the theme. It offers a deconstructive engagement with patriarchal construction by undermining the rib discourse from within, and it reveals hidden historical-anthropological ideas deployed as a strategy for dismantling the patriarchal assumption embedded in the rib narrative. This is of interest because literary works constitute a medium of knowledge with multiple meanings, arising from the complex encounter between author, text, and audience, and yielding meanings that are more plural, richer, and more progressive than doctrinal statement allows.

Nizār Qabbānī was born on 21 March 1923 in Damascus, the second of four brothers and one sister (Qabbānī, 1983, p. 25). His father, as the poet described him, was not a wealthy man but a lover of revolution. Qabbānī was not of royal descent; he was, like most people, one who sought sustenance with dignity and consistency, and with a spiritual conviction that only God is worthy of fear (Qabbānī, 1983, p. 29). He held that literary work is among the sacred forms of worship (Qabbānī, 1983, p. 33). Educated first in Damascus, he received a bachelor's degree in literature at eighteen and subsequently pursued a master's degree in philosophy. This formation shaped the concept of culture in his thought, drawing on both Western (particularly French) and Eastern Arabic traditions (Qabbānī, 1983,

p. 43). His published works include the poetry collections *Qalat Lī al-Samrā'* (1944), *Anti Lī* (1950), *Kitāb al-Ḥub* (1970), *Kullu 'Am wa Anti Ḥabibati* (1978), *Qāmus al-'Āsiqīn* (1981), *Hawāmisī 'Alā Hawāmisī* (1991), and *Khamsūn 'Am fī Madh al-Nisā'* (1994). He died in 1999 (Fathoni, 2007, pp. 129–130).

The Research Gap

A survey of the literature indicates that the study of masculinity and poetry covers at least three patterns: hegemonic, non-hegemonic, and therapeutic. The hegemonic form, being the most common, positions women as inferior and men as superior. Works in this category include studies of hegemonic masculinity in Afghan war poetry (Ul Haq et al., 2018), masculine dominance in twentieth-century British poetry (Kennedy, 2011), pedagogical masculinity in English Renaissance poetry (Chedgzoy, 2013), masculine superiority in sixteenth-century Italian love and war poetry (Barlow, 2018), and hierarchical-imperial masculinity in Horace (McCarter, 2018). The second pattern, non-hegemonic masculinity, appears in the feminine voice within Hellenistic masculinity (Warwick, 2020), the balanced masculinity voiced by women poets (Chedgzoy, 2017), and the contestation of masculine prose and feminine poetry (Yazdanpanahi, 2020). The third pattern, the therapeutic function of poetry, is examined by Furman and colleagues (2012), who treat poetry as therapy for hegemonic masculinity, and by Thompson and colleagues (2012), who examine its therapeutic function for masculinity among disabled men.

Table 5.1 summarises these patterns and locates the present study within them.

Table 5.1. Patterns in scholarship on masculinity and poetry

Pattern	Representative studies	Characteristic position	Formal object
Hegemonic	Ul Haq et al. (2018);	Women positioned as	War, love, pedagogy,

Pattern	Representative studies	Characteristic position	Formal object
	Kennedy (2011); Chedgzoy (2013); Barlow (2018); McCarter (2018)	inferior; men as superior	patronage, empire
Non-hegemonic	Warwick (2020); Chedgzoy (2017); Yazdanpanahi (2020)	Balance between masculine and feminine registers	Genre contestation; women's authorship
Therapeutic	Furman et al. (2012); Thompson et al. (2012)	Poetry as remedy for the costs of masculinity	Masculine identity; disability
The present study	Qabbānī (1989) read through Derrida	Femininity exalted; women's autonomy affirmed rather than balanced	The rib discourse as theological foundation of patriarchy

Set against these existing studies, an analysis of Qabbānī's poem contributes a distinct picture. In its non-hegemonic register, the poem does not offer a balance between masculinity and femininity; it exalts femininity in a manner that foregrounds women's autonomy. Where existing studies take war, love, pedagogy, or imperialism as their formal object, the present study takes the discourse of the rib. Deconstructing that discourse matters because it functions as a strategy for dismantling the theological instrument through which masculine domination has been perpetuated, and therefore as a route toward egalitarianism in gender relations.

Conceptual and Theoretical Foundations

The analysis is grounded in Jacques Derrida's theory of deconstruction. Derrida, a French philosopher of Algerian descent, introduced deconstruction in the 1960s as a critical response to the

dominant traditions of Western thought, particularly those privileging singular truths and binary oppositions. Abrams (1981) observes that deconstruction challenges the assumption that a text possesses a stable structure, a coherent unity, and a fixed meaning. It is accordingly regarded as a key perspective within post-structuralist theory.

Meaning as Suspension

The aim of deconstruction is not to achieve understanding (*Verstehen*) through the fusion of horizons; rather, it seeks to engage differences that cannot be subsumed into a unified whole (Hardiman, 2015, p. 285). For Derrida, interpretation entails the suspension of meanings that tradition has regulated and stabilised, allowing meaning to be simultaneously present and absent, immediate and mediated. A text can be read within shifting and arbitrary contexts, rendering meaning perpetually deferred and ultimately undecidable (Hardiman, 2015, p. 287). To understand, from this perspective, is precisely to suspend meaning. Meaning is continually deferred through the emergence of alternative possibilities of signification and therefore never attains final status.

Four Principles

Several principles characterise the approach, and each performs specific analytical work in what follows.

First, deconstruction examines the contamination of binary oppositions, pairs of opposing meanings structured hierarchically by privileging one term over the other. Through deconstructive reading, these oppositions are reversed and destabilised to expose their interdependence and to challenge their hierarchical arrangement.

Second, deconstruction is concerned particularly with what has been marginalised. Within binary oppositions, dominant discourses occupy the centre while alternative voices are relegated to the margins. The marginal, however, is never entirely excluded or stable; it possesses the capacity to unsettle and transform the dominant

discourse from within. In this sense the text contains the forces that enable its own deconstruction.

Third, deconstruction is fundamentally historical. The privileged term in a binary opposition is never fully stable or self-sufficient, since its meaning is constituted through relationships with other terms and contexts, rendering it vulnerable to self-deconstruction.

Fourth, there is nothing outside the text. Textual meaning emerges through traces and contextual networks (political, historical, religious, economic, and cultural) embedded within the text and contributing to the production of meaning (McQuillan, 2000; Hardiman, 2015).

Table 5.2 sets out these principles and their function in the analysis.

Table 5.2. Deconstructive principles and their analytical function

Principle	Formulation	Function in this chapter
Contamination of binary opposition	Hierarchical pairs are interdependent rather than separable	Grounds the mapping of the poem’s oppositional pairs
Attention to the marginal	The margin can unsettle the centre from within	Positions woman as the marginalised subject whose recovery drives the reading
Historicity of the privileged term	Privileged terms are constituted relationally and therefore unstable	Supports the claim that masculine subjectivity is not self-sufficient
<i>Il n’y a pas de hors-texte</i>	Context is itself text; the two are inseparable	Licenses reading historical and anthropological material as part of the poem’s meaning

Différance and Trace

In *De la grammatologie*, Derrida introduces the expression *il n’y a pas de hors-texte*, there is nothing outside the text (Hardiman, 2015, p. 281). The meaning that exists both within and beyond tradition is what he

terms *différance*. It is impossible, on his account, to maintain a strict distinction between these positions, because a sign signifies continuity and discontinuity simultaneously (Hill, 2007, p. 15). *Différance* must therefore be understood as preceding the distinction between deferring, the postponement or suspension of meaning, and differing, the active process of differentiation through which meaning is produced (Derrida, 1973).

Through *différance* Derrida suspends the fixed meanings embedded within binary oppositions, arguing that every tradition, order, or system of values constitutes a regime of meaning organised hierarchically. Deconstructing such regimes destabilises the established structures upon which traditions are founded. Deconstruction does not destroy structures from the outside; it operates from within, drawing upon the strategic and subversive resources already present in the existing structure. The possibility of deconstruction is embedded within the work itself (Derrida, 1997, p. 24).

Derrida further rejects the conventional semiotic conception of the sign as a division between signifier and signified, since such a distinction implies that each element exists as an independent and self-contained substance. Deconstruction proposes instead the concept of the trace: an elusive and imperceptible phenomenon functioning as a formative force within writing and operating continuously across an extensive network of signification (Leitch, 1983, as cited in Jabrohim, 2012, p. 213). To engage in deconstruction, as Culler (1983, pp. 85–86) glosses Derrida, is to reverse the hierarchical arrangements embedded within existing systems of opposition, and beyond that initial reversal to destabilise and displace classical binary oppositions altogether. The practitioner of deconstruction, in Derrida's formulation, works within the terms of the system to break it.

Research Context

Two contextual frames are needed to read the poem's intervention accurately.

The Rib Discourse as Theological Infrastructure

The rib narrative is not one misogynistic motif among others. It occupies a structural position, because it locates the subordination of women at the moment of creation and therefore places it prior to history and beyond social negotiation. A hierarchy grounded in a creation account cannot be contested by pointing to changed circumstances, since the account claims to describe what is, not what has come to be.

This is what makes the discourse a suitable object for deconstruction specifically, rather than for sociological critique alone. What requires dismantling is not a set of practices but the assumption that renders those practices natural.

The Arab-Islamic Grammar of Aş l and Far'

The discourse has a further institutional expression in Arab-Islamic learning. The conceptual pair *al-aş l wa al-far'* (origin and branch) organises reasoning across several disciplines, and it positions men as origin and women as branch. In Arabic grammar the sexism of *naḥw* places *muṣṭakkar*, the masculine, as *al-aş l*: universal and prior. Muannaş , the feminine, is *al-far'*: partial and subsequent. The masculine is above, the feminine below, and the female stands between the intelligent and the unintelligent, something foreign, and not fully human (Nahdiyyin, 2019).

This matters for the reading that follows, because when the poem reverses the hierarchy, it is not merely contesting a scriptural narrative. It is contesting the grammar in which the narrative is thought.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design and a literature review approach, grounded in Derrida's theory of deconstruction as set out above.

Data were collected heuristically, through careful and repeated reading (Endraswara, 2013, p. 180), the *simak* method, which attends to significant linguistic units in the poem with reference to the chosen theory (Faruk, 2012, pp. 168–169). The data consist of verbal expressions in the form of words, phrases, or sentences containing deconstructive ideas concerning the masculinity of the rib, their implications, and the image of women depicted. Data were selected according to parameters derived from the assumptions of deconstructive theory. The data source is Nizār Qabbānī's poem "Taktubīn al-Syī'ra.. wa Uwaqqi' Anā.." as it appears in his collection *Hakaẓū Aḡtub Tāriḡh al-Nisā'* (Qabbānī, 1989).

Drawing upon Derrida's framework, the analysis proceeds through five stages: identifying binary oppositions and the marginalisation of women; examining the instability of masculine subjectivity and feminine objectivity; reversing the binary opposition by challenging the notion that women were created from men's ribs and asserting instead that men are born from women's wombs; exploring the trace as *différance*, which enables the deferral and destabilisation of binary meanings; and dissolving the centre of binary oppositions in gender relations in order to envisage a more egalitarian social order. Figure 5.1 presents the procedure.

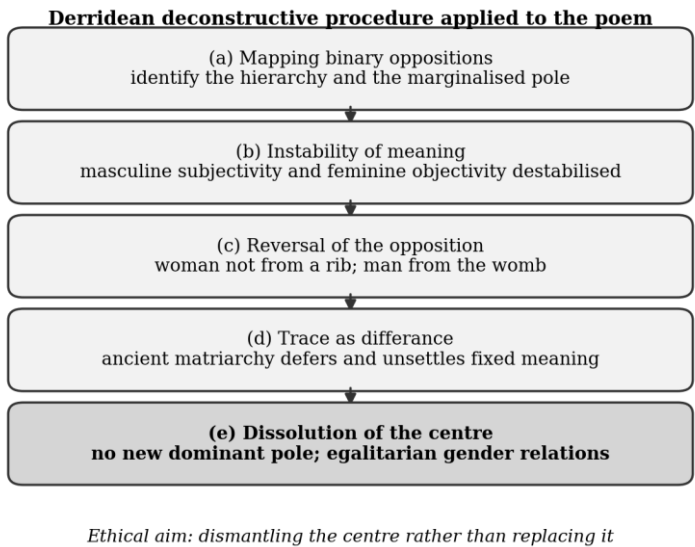


Figure 5.1. The five-stage deconstructive procedure applied to the poem.

Table 5.3 specifies what each stage examines and what it yields.

Table 5.3. The analytic stages, their objects, and their outcomes

Stage	Object of analysis	Method applied	Outcome
(a) Mapping	Oppositional pairs across the five stanzas	Lexical identification of contrasting terms	The hierarchy and the marginalised pole are made explicit
(b) Instability	Openings of each stanza	Reading masculine self-description	Masculine subjectivity revealed as not self-sufficient

Stage	Object of analysis	Method applied	Outcome
(c) Reversal	First stanza	Tracing the inversion of origin and branch	The rib myth declared void; woman named as origin
(d) Trace	Second stanza and its historical references	Reading historical and anthropological context as text	Ancient matriarchy defers and destabilises fixed meaning
(e) Dissolution	Fifth stanza	Testing whether a new centre is installed	Centre dissolved rather than replaced; egalitarian aim affirmed

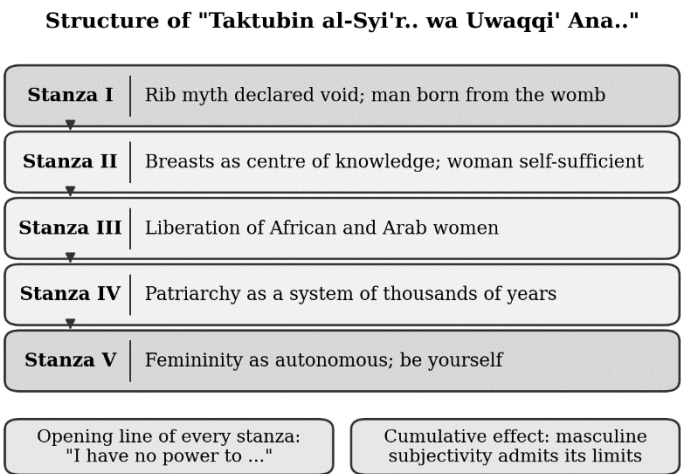
Trustworthiness and Limitations

Analytic transparency is pursued by presenting each datum in the original Arabic alongside translation, identifying the deconstructive operation at work in each case, and tracing the movement from lexical observation to interpretive claim.

Three limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study analyses a single poem, and its conclusions concerning Qabbānī's poetics cannot be generalised across his corpus without further work. Second, deconstructive reading is by its nature not replicable in the manner of empirical analysis; a different reader working from the same principles might foreground different passages. Third, the historical material concerning ancient matriarchy is drawn from a body of scholarship that remains contested within archaeology and anthropology; the chapter treats this material as it functions within the poem's argument rather than adjudicating the historical debate.

Findings

“Taktubīn al-Syi’ra.. wa Uwaqqi’ Anā..” consists of five stanzas, each containing approximately twelve to sixteen lines. The first presents the lyrical speaker’s critique of the traditional belief that woman was created from man’s rib, emphasising instead that man is born from the womb of a woman and thereby challenging patriarchal narratives of origin. The second sets out the speaker’s inability to teach women anything, given women’s historical autonomy and their influence across spheres of life. The third underscores the necessity of liberating African and Arab women from the constructs that have subordinated them. The fourth reflects on the endurance of patriarchy as a cultural system persisting across millennia. The fifth affirms the strength and autonomy of women’s femininity and its potential to foster egalitarian relations. Figure 5.2 presents the architecture.



Deconstruction culminates in the first stanza and is ethically qualified in the fifth

Figure 5.2. Structure of the poem across its five stanzas.

The poem offers criticism, rejection, challenge, and deconstructive reflection on the rib discourse to proclaim an existence for women

that is elevated and autonomous. It moves through common vocabulary, natural syntax, accessible language, and relatively simple rhyme. It nonetheless demonstrates considerable poetic innovation, with philosophical elements serving both creative purposes and social and political criticism, and it breaks with what had been considered sacred and beyond question.

Mapping the Binary Oppositions

The poem is structured around a series of binary oppositions: man against woman, reason against emotion, father against mother, parent against child, origin (aṣ l) against branch (*far*), movement against stability, and culture against nature.

These concepts are conventionally interpreted oppositionally and positioned against one another, producing contradictory meanings. This oppositional perspective can be understood as a legacy of colonial thought that continues to be reproduced in contemporary contexts, concealing oppressive hierarchies by privileging one pole while subordinating the other. The first pole is regarded as positive and positioned as subject, superior, dominant, civilised, and bearer of truth. The second is constructed as negative and positioned as object, inferior, controlled, and underdeveloped. Table 5.4 and Figure 5.3 present the mapping.

Table 5.4. Binary oppositions in the poem and their attributed values

First pole	Second pole	Attributed hierarchy	Domain of operation
Man (al-rajul)	Woman (<i>al-mar'ah</i>)	Subject over object	Social and religious order
Reason (<i>al-'aql</i>)	Emotion (<i>al-'aṭ ifah</i>)	Rationality over affect	Epistemology
Father (al-ab)	Mother (al-umm)	Authority over care	Family structure

First pole	Second pole	Attributed hierarchy	Domain of operation
Parent (<i>al-wālid</i>)	Child (<i>al-ṭifl</i>)	Maturity over dependence	Generational relation
Origin (<i>al-aṣl</i>)	Branch (<i>al-farʿ</i>)	Priority over derivation	Arab-Islamic grammar and jurisprudence
Movement (<i>al-mutaḥarrrik</i>)	Stability (<i>al-ṣābiṭ</i>)	Agency over passivity	Attribution of capacity
Culture (<i>al-ṣaḡāfah</i>)	Nature (<i>al-fiṭrah</i>)	Civilisation over instinct	Cultural evaluation

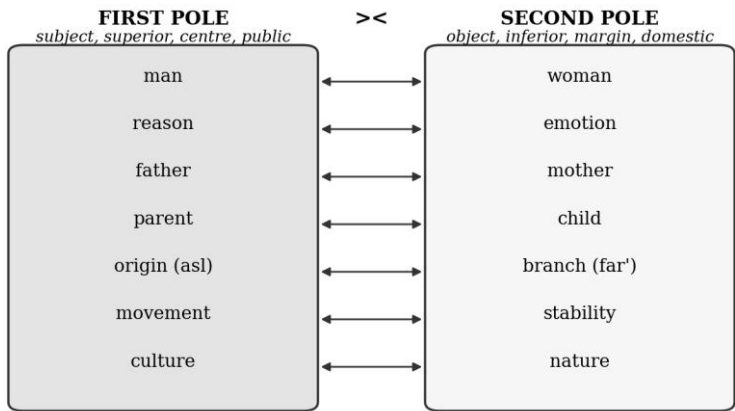


Figure 5.3. The poem’s binary oppositions and the values attached to each pole.

Within the regime of meaning produced by these oppositions, the marginalised subject is woman. Across social realities (political, economic, social, cultural, and religious) women have been positioned as secondary, marginal, and domestic, occupying the second pole as objects, subordinated subjects, and inferior beings confined to the private sphere, while men occupy the first pole as subjects, centres, and representatives of the public sphere.

The degradation of women's position, persisting across millennia within patriarchal construction, is depicted directly in the poem. The text represents women through stereotypes of the primitive, the moody, the aggressive, and the source of negativity, sustained over thirty years, three hundred years, and three thousand years: a storm trapped in a glass, a body that senses the scent of men by instinct, attacks them by instinct, and conquers them by instinct.

The poem's specification of three thousand years is significant. Read alongside the origin of the rib discourse in the Torah, the figure corresponds to the estimated period in which that text introduced the account of Adam and Eve, locating the beginning of the discourse historically rather than treating it as coeval with human existence. This is itself a deconstructive move: what can be dated can be contested.

Because women are positioned within the second pole, deconstruction creates a space in which they can be foregrounded and restored to attention as marginalised subjects. The opposition that marginalises them is then deconstructed by the poem itself, through its rejection of masculine-patriarchal oppositional thinking. Deconstruction emerges from the instability of meanings within oppositions previously considered fixed.

The Instability of Masculine Subjectivity

Derrida's theory reveals the instability of meaning within binary oppositions, particularly between the first pole (subject, positive, masculine) and the second, object, negative, feminine. For millennia patriarchal ideology has operated to reinforce the position of masculine subjectivity while weakening that of women, rendering them increasingly marginal, inferior, and ultimately constructed as objects. From a deconstructive perspective, however, such positions are never fully stable. The text itself disrupts the opposition sustaining the subject-object hierarchy by exposing the instability of meaning underlying these categories.

The poem demonstrates this instability directly. Men, culturally positioned as masculine and superior subjects, are represented as questioning that position by acknowledging their limitations. Women, marginalised and subordinated for centuries, are revealed to possess strengths and capacities whether these are consciously recognised. The seemingly fixed structure is gradually challenged and questioned.

The relevant data are the openings of the stanzas: the injunction not to believe that a man can change a woman, followed by the successive admissions that the speaker has no power to teach, no power to train, no power to break her habits, and no power to change her nature. These five expressions are located at the opening of each of the poem's five stanzas, a structural placement that gives the admission the force of a refrain and makes it the organising principle of the whole.

Because deconstruction is rooted in postmodern thought, it rejects the notion of a singular and absolute truth centred on men within binary opposition. Before reversing the opposition, the poem first reveals the instability of meaning within the gender categories constructed as oppositional.

The Reversal of the Rib Myth

The constraints of patriarchy continue to be reinforced through various discourses, religious discourse among them. Within the Abrahamic traditions the rib discourse concerning the origin of women continues to be reproduced and remains a factor in the persistence of patriarchal ideology, notwithstanding ongoing efforts to develop humanistic and gender-just interpretations. The discourse asserts that Eve was created from Adam's rib; studies indicate that it emerged first through interpretations of the Torah, was transmitted into interpretations of the Bible, and later influenced interpretations of the Qur'an.

As a form of deconstructive resistance, the poem possesses considerable critical force, and the culmination of its deconstruction

appears in the first stanza. That stanza declares void the claim of all men who imagine they made woman from one of their ribs; asserts that woman never comes out of a man's rib but that it is man who comes out of her womb, as a fish comes out of a pond; that he is the one who branches from her, as streams branch from a river; and that he revolves around the sun of her eyes while imagining himself fixed in place.

The passage demonstrates that the male rib as the origin of womanhood is a myth to be critically questioned rather than accepted as unquestionable truth. In its place the poem presents an alternative in which women give birth to men: woman becomes the origin, man the branch. Like a fish emerging from the water of a pond, woman is portrayed as a sustaining medium, whereas man is represented as continuously moving around her.

The hierarchical and oppressive opposition, in which the first pole is constructed as subject-superior and the second as object-inferior, must be destabilised because of the inherent instability of meaning. The subversion occurs through reversal, whereby the position previously constructed as subject-superior is repositioned as object-inferior.

Here the reading connects to the grammar of *aṣ l* and *far'* discussed above. The Arab mindset has constructed men as origin and women as branch, a construction traceable to the patriarchal interpretation of Adam and Eve in the Semitic religions and formalised in Arab-Islamic learning (Nahdiyyin, 2019). The poem's deconstruction challenges this masculinity of the Arab-Islamic mindset. Its refusal is voiced not only through negation of the rib but through the positive assertion that it is men who are born of women. The words *ḥ auḍ* (womb, basin) and *syams* (sun), attached to women, are symbolic expressions emphasising superiority and autonomy. For this poem, woman is a being in full existence; man is the branch, woman the origin; man revolves, and woman is the sun that abides and shines.

The first stanza illustrates the appropriation of nature the poem performs through words and the tearing of received thought. Poetry, in the deconstructive register, has as its task the initiation of movement away from the silence of language, the silence of books, and the silence of history. Deconstruction of thought is the key to driving change. The poem destroys the oppressive masculinity of the rib and replaces it by reversing the existing logic: it is not that women are subordinate, but that women are the origin.

Table 5.5 sets out the reversal.

Table 5.5. The reversal of attributes across the deconstructive turn

Domain	Received construction	The poem's reversal	Textual figure
Origin of the human person	Woman created from man's rib	Man emerges from woman's womb	Fish emerging from the pond
Derivation	Woman as <i>far'</i> , branch of the masculine as I	Man as branch of the feminine origin	Streams branching from a river
Centre of motion	Man, as fixed centre; woman as peripheral	Man revolving around the woman	Orbit around the sun of her eyes
Authorship of knowledge	Man as maker of poems	Woman writes, man signs	The poem's own title
Generation of children	Man as progenitor	Woman bears: man signs the hospital papers	The fourth stanza's parallel

Scriptural Counter-Readings

Some hold that the rib account in the Torah is a symbolic expression asserting that woman is the only proper helper on whom man could rely, and that the social context of the Torah's revelation was a strongly patriarchal society placing Israelite women very low (Carmody, 2006). Others hold that the original Torah has not been recovered, so it is possible that the rib notion was a human

construction rather than a divine one (Carmody, 2006; al-Sa'dāwī, 1974, 1980). Even were the rib present in the original, the verse would remain a symbolic expression rather than a theological justification, possessing historicity and therefore contextual rather than universal force.

Read as a complete *Weltanschauung*, in which verses stand in relation to one another, the scriptures emphasise the egalitarian creation of male and female. In the Torah, the two creation descriptions at 1:1–2:4a and 2:4b–25 state that man and woman were created through God's direct action and as the highest form of creation (Carmody, 2006). In Christian scripture, Genesis 1:27 holds that man and woman were created in the image of God (Ruether, 2006). In Islam, the Qur'an affirms that men and women are made from one soul, *nafs wāḥidah*, and that both carry out the mission of vicegerency on earth, as at *Luqman* 28, *al-An'am* 98, *al-Zumar* 6, *al-A'raf* 89, and *al-Nisā'* 1.

There are, accordingly, commentators within Islam who reject the rib reading, though they remain in the minority. In *Tafsīr al-Manār*, 'Abduh firmly rejects reading *nafs wāḥidah* as Adam and women as a secondary creation from Adam's rib. His reason is that the verse opens with *yā ayyuhā al-nās*, "O mankind," and is therefore addressed to all human beings; Adam is not a name recognised universally as that of the first human. *Nafs wāḥidah*, on 'Abduh's reading, must therefore denote a concept recognised by all humans rather than a proper name (Abduh, n.d.; Latifi, 2020b).

The poem thus breaks a discourse that has served as the principal theological justification for the perpetuation of patriarchy. Its aesthetic philosophy is that poetry does not wait for what is expected but for what is unexpected. For millennia the inferiority of women under patriarchy has stood as fact; what the poem says is that the shackles can be broken by destroying the structure that supports them and replacing it with a humanist structure placing women as autonomous

subjects alongside men. Having declared the masculinity of the rib a falsehood, the poem reverses the hierarchy: the words lake, river, and sun connote women and mark them as origin, source, centre, and estuary.

The deconstructive movement extends to the masculine-patriarchal claim that men own knowledge and lineage. The fourth stanza instructs the reader not to believe what a man says of himself (that he writes the poems and makes the children) asserting instead that it is women who write poems while men sign them, and women who bear children while men sign the papers at the hospital.

The poem's title asserts precisely this: "You (women) write the poem, and I (men) sign it." Women carry out the process of thinking, conceptualising, and creating; men legitimise and appropriate the work, claim it, and call it their own. Read closely, Qabbānī's poem is distinctive even among poems by male poets who advocate women's freedom, because it directs its address explicitly to men as the actors actively involved in forming cultural masculinity and establishing patriarchal culture.

The Trace of Ancient Matriarchy as Différance

The poem reveals the presence of the trace, through which meaning is continually deferred. Meaning is never certain, complete, or definitive, because traces continuously emerge expressing facts, perspectives, and alternative possibilities; the certainty of hierarchical opposition must therefore be destabilised. In this case the traces of ancient matriarchy articulated by the poem function as a textual deconstruction of the patriarchal discourse underlying the rib myth.

The relevant passage declares that the addressee's breasts are two encyclopaedias, that her lips are the distillation of the history of wine, that she is a woman sufficient unto herself; that her oil is from her, her grain from her, her fire from her, her summer and winter, her lightning and thunder, her rain and snow, her waves and her foam, all from her; and asks what the speaker could possibly teach such a woman.

The passage refers explicitly to history. Women's breasts are represented as the centre of knowledge and their lips as the summary of the history of wine. In the development of human civilisation women emerged as its foundation, associated with the discovery of agriculture and the development of farming that replaced the hunting era, a period discussed as ancient matriarchy, particularly in relation to the Neolithic (Stone, 1976; Ahmed, 1992). The poem states that women produce oil, grain, and fire, and that they can meet the challenges of the seasons. The lyrical speaker therefore asserts that men can no longer teach women anything, because women have become autonomous subjects capable of defining themselves.

The second stanza thus elaborates the first. With clear language and diction, it states that the existence of women is autonomous and foundational to civilisation. Oil, wheat, fire, summer and cold, lightning and thunder, rain and snow, waves and foam, all belonging to women, are symbolic expressions describing a strength that is productive and innovative. The view deconstructs the general representation of women as derivative, subordinate, and non-existent.

This aligns with empirical-scientific findings that early human history took the form of matriarchal community for thousands of years, so that women were the founders of civilisation. Before the emergence of class systems and slavery, the rise of patriarchal culture, and the arrival of world religions, female deities appeared and were believed to be givers of life and glory. Archaeological evidence confirms traces of matriarchal communities and cultures across millennia (Engels, 2011; Reed, 2011). In the early history of humankind, women were believed to be the origin of life, *aṣ l al-ḥ ayāh*.

In ancient Egypt, historical, anthropological, and archaeological evidence indicates a high degree of female autonomy, extending to the representation of the divine as female. The elevation of women to the level of deity reflects their social position and role (al-Sa'dāwī, 1974).

The evidence can be re-examined in temples, palm-leaf writings, sculptures, paintings, and carvings. This is also why, in Arabic, the words for soul, spirit, sky, and sun are grammatically feminine (al-Sa'dāwī et al., 2000; Latifi et al., 2019).

The matriarchal evidence from ancient Egypt is corroborated by Lewis H. Morgan's anthropological findings on prehistoric society. According to Engels, Morgan identified three principal stages in human history. The Age of Savagery began with the appearance of the first humans roughly one million years ago. The Age of Barbarism was marked by the practice of agriculture some eight thousand years ago and by the emergence of the first urban communities in Egypt, India, and China. The Age of Civilisation was built on private property, marked by metalworking and trade, represented by Rome and Greece some three thousand years ago (Engels, 2011).

Savagery was built on collective ownership and cooperative relations with equality in all aspects, including relations between men and women; in these aged women were influential and honoured. Barbarism brought drastic change as society was transformed from an equal community into an oppressive class system serving the ruling group. It was here that women declined from a position exalted across hundreds of thousands of years in primitive communities to a degraded status in civilised patriarchal societies. The transformation from matriarchy to patriarchy took place gradually across five thousand years within the Age of Barbarism. The highest prestige of women occurred in the early days of agriculture, when they were called Goddess of the Motherland and Goddess of Fertility. Veneration of women as Mother Goddess flourished for hundreds of thousands of years, when the Age of Savagery positioned women as social mothers. That was the peak of matriarchy, at the beginning of the Age of Barbarism (Engels, 2011).

These findings enrich the perspective from which women's selfhood and the gender problems ensnaring them can be seen. In line

with empirical evidence of women's autonomy across hundreds of thousands of years, the poem's deconstruction finds its full space, inviting reflection on a cultural order long inherited and shaping perceptions of reality in gender relations.

Derrida holds that there is nothing outside the text; contexts are themselves texts, and texts are constituted by contexts. The strong female autonomy articulated in the poem, particularly through the explicit reference to history, emphasises the importance of foregrounding the traces of ancient matriarchy within human history, long before the emergence of patriarchy. The trace, which becomes the source of the deferral of meaning, is often mysterious and cannot be fully revealed. The deconstruction of masculine dominance rests on the existence of these long-concealed traces; meaning is thereby deferred, and the singular, superior, masculine-centred notion of truth rejected.

The Dissolution of the Centre

Derrida emphasises that the reversal of binary opposition is necessary for eliminating the central position. As a form of postmodern thought, deconstruction promotes plurality of meaning and rejects the notion of a centre and of a unified, singular meaning attached to the dominant pole. It attends to marginalised positions in the pursuit of equality, justice, and egalitarianism.

If masculinity, historically functioning as the centre of power, has been destabilised, and if the traces of ancient matriarchy also reveal the strength and dominance of femininity, then that feminine power should not become a new ideology establishing another superior centre. The poem therefore concludes with a stanza emphasising that women should exist as they are, neither as objects of representation nor as dominant subjects occupying a new central position within another binary hierarchy.

The fifth stanza addresses the woman as queen of chaos, of madness, and of non-belonging, and instructs her to remain as she is;

she is the tree of femininity that grows in darkness and requires neither sun nor water; so be yourself.

The poem holds in high regard the quality of femininity, a quality bound to reproductive functions, so that women possess bodily experiences shaping their mental and intellectual responses to the environment, experiences men have never had. Women's bodies and minds, the poem states, have features that respond quickly to phenomena. The stanza emphasises the superiority of female femininity through the symbolic expression of women as queens of abundance, madness, and isolation, and holds that the cornerstone of human civilisation is women. The image of the tree of femininity elevates that superiority: a great tree able to grow without water or sun. Yet though the tree grows strong, it stands in darkness. It becomes invisible and unrecognised, because the tree of femininity that has been strong for hundreds of thousands of years has been covered by the dark veil of patriarchy.

With deconstruction the poem unveils the tree that was covered in darkness. It is the darkness shrouding the tree that the poem deconstructs, since the tree itself has existed from time immemorial: so be yourself. The tree of femininity that is solid, autonomous, natural, independent, and in full being is the existence of women themselves. Women's dignity as human beings have been inherent since ancient times, since the first woman appeared on earth. Arab women held a high position in history, subsequently obscured and lost through patriarchal culture.

Although the poem emphasises the strength of femininity and matriarchal perspectives, it also offers a deconstructive critique of any emphasis that would produce a new opposition placing women as the dominant pole and central authority. The ethical aim articulated at the close is egalitarian gender relation. Despite the discovery of strong traces of ancient matriarchy, the poem continues to emphasise the importance of eliminating the centre to prevent the formation of

another binary hierarchy. Women should neither be diminished nor elevated above others, because women are noble and dignified human beings equal to men. This humanistic and egalitarian relation represents the ethical aim of deconstruction: the dissolution of the centre within binary opposition. Figure 5.4 presents the full movement.

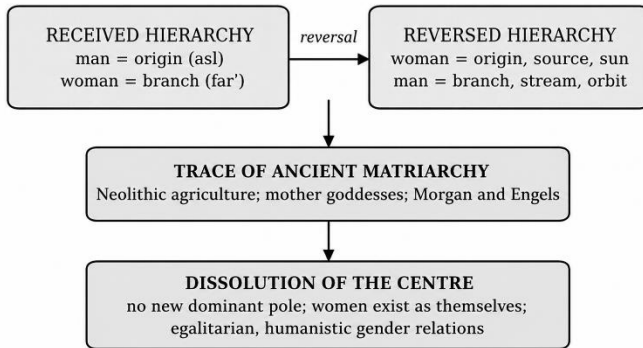


Figure 5.4. The reversal of the hierarchy, the trace that enables it, and the dissolution of the centre.

Discussion

Three aspects of these findings warrant further consideration.

Why the Culmination Comes First

Poems that argue typically build toward their strongest claim. This one does not. The most radical assertion (that the rib account is void and that man emerges from woman) appears in the first stanza, and the remaining four elaborate, historicise, and finally qualify it.

The structure is consistent with the deconstructive procedure rather than incidental to it. Deconstruction does not accumulate evidence toward a conclusion; it locates the point at which a structure undoes itself and works outward from there. Placing the reversal first establishes the instability immediately, after which the historical

material of the second stanza supplies the trace that explains why the structure was unstable, and the fifth stanza supplies the ethical constraint that prevents the reversal from becoming a new dogma. Read this way, the poem's organisation is itself an argument about how deconstruction proceeds.

The Refusal to Install a New Centre

The most philosophically demanding feature of the poem is its final move. Having established the historical priority and autonomy of women, it declines to convert that priority into a claim of superiority. This is what distinguishes the poem from a straightforward inversion.

A simple inversion would leave the structure of binary hierarchy intact while exchanging the occupants of its poles and would therefore reproduce the oppression it opposes with a different beneficiary. The poem's insistence that women exist "as themselves," neither diminished nor elevated, refuses that exchange. In Derridean terms, the reversal is a necessary first step but not the endpoint; displacement of the opposition itself is required.

There is a tension here that the poem does not fully resolve, and it should be named. The fifth stanza's celebration of femininity as a distinct quality grounded in reproductive experience sits uneasily alongside the rejection of any new centre. To ground women's autonomy in an experience man have never had is to make a claim about difference that risks re-essentialising the very categories the analysis has destabilised. The poem holds these together by insisting that difference need not imply hierarchy, but the argument for that separation is asserted rather than demonstrated.

The Male Poet and the Address to Men

A further feature deserves comment. The poem is written by a man, in the voice of a man, addressed to a woman, and (as the analysis has shown) directed at men as the agents who construct and maintain patriarchal culture. The speaker's repeated admission of powerlessness is therefore not a concession made by an individual but

a dismantling of the position from which masculine authority conventionally speaks.

This has a rhetorical consequence worth noting. A claim about male incapacity to define women carries a different force when made from within the masculine position than when made from outside it, because it cannot be dismissed as special pleading. Whether this constitutes an advantage or a further instance of masculine appropriation (a man once again writing the terms on which women's autonomy is to be recognised) is a question the poem raises and does not settle. The title itself, which describes women writing and men signing, is uncomfortably close to a description of what the poem does.

Limitations of the Reading

Beyond the methodological limitations noted earlier, two interpretive cautions apply. First, the historical narrative of a matriarchal prehistory drawn from Morgan and Engels, and elaborated by Stone and Reed, is not the current consensus in archaeology; it functions in the poem and in this analysis as a counter-narrative destabilising the assumed universality of patriarchy rather than as an established historical account. Second, the reading offered here is one deconstruction among possible others. The theory itself precludes any claim that this reading exhausts the text.

Practical Implications

The analysis carries implications for several fields of practice.

For Qur'anic and Scriptural Pedagogy

The chapter indicates that the rib discourse enters Islamic thought through the interpretive tradition rather than through the Qur'anic text itself, and that a minority interpretive line (represented by 'Abduh) reads *nafs wahidah* as a concept rather than a proper name. Teaching that presents the majority reading as the only reading therefore misrepresents the interpretive record. Making the plurality of readings visible is not an innovation but an accuracy.

For Literary Education

Arabic literary curricula frequently treat Qabbānī through his love poetry. The present analysis suggests that his engagement with gender is philosophically substantive and can be taught as such, providing a route by which literary study contributes to gender education rather than running alongside it.

For Gender Advocacy

The finding that the rib discourse operates as unexamined assumption rather than consciously held doctrine has a practical consequence. Advocacy addressed to explicit belief will miss its target, because the assumption is not held at the level of belief. What the poem models instead (surfacing the assumption, dating it, and demonstrating its instability) is a more promising approach.

For Popular Culture

The circulation of the rib motif through dangdut and devotional song identifies popular culture as a principal site of reproduction, and therefore as a site where counter-narrative would have proportionate reach. The scholarly critique and the popular circulation currently operate in separate registers.

Future Research

Several directions would extend the present work.

First, extending the analysis across Qabbānī's corpus would establish whether the deconstructive procedure identified here is characteristic of his poetics or specific to this poem. His collections spanning five decades offer material for a developmental account.

Second, comparative analysis with women poets addressing the same theme would test the question raised in the discussion concerning the male poet's position. Whether the deconstruction proceeds differently when undertaken from the marginalised position is an empirically answerable question.

Third, reception research would establish how readers encounter the poem. The analysis here concerns the text; whether its deconstructive force is registered by readers, and by which readers, is unknown.

Fourth, systematic study of the rib motif in Indonesian popular music would document a site of reproduction that the present chapter identifies but does not analyse. The dangdut and devotional repertoire is extensive and largely unexamined.

Fifth, comparative work on interpretive traditions would clarify the minority position. 'Abduh's rejection of the rib reading has parallels in other reformist commentary and mapping that line systematically would establish how substantial the counter-tradition is.

Conclusion

Nizār Qabbānī's poem "Taktubīn al-Syi'r.. wa Uwaqqi' Anā.." offers reflections that invite a rethinking of the patriarchal cultural construction embedded in binary opposition, and specifically of the discourse of the masculine rib, which many understand as given in the way religious doctrine is generally understood. The poem presents its thought in a deconstructive style, toward the reconstruction of a more humanist cultural formation capable of restoring women's autonomy as human beings.

Two principal findings emerge. First, the oppressive discourse of the rib within binary opposition is a falsehood concealing a patriarchal ideology that oppresses women to enforce male domination. That ideology has shaped a reality in which women have been left behind and have experienced radical human degradation across millennia. Second, the radical deconstruction the poem performs operates through the reversal of the binary opposition of the rib myth as a strategy for strengthening women's humanity. The discovery of ancient matriarchal traces functions as a trace producing *différance*, thereby deferring and destabilising fixed meaning. The instability of

meaning within the opposition between masculine subjectivity and feminine objectivity renders the rib myth a constructed rather than a given truth. That unstable opposition is ultimately dismantled to establish a new egalitarian relation and to eliminate the centre within binary structures.

The wider significance of the reading lies in its final refusal. It would have been simpler for the poem to answer millennia of subordination with an assertion of feminine supremacy, and the historical material it invokes would have supported such an assertion. That it declines to do so, insisting instead that women exist as themselves and that no pole should occupy the centre, is what distinguishes deconstruction from inversion. The ethical aim is not to win the opposition but to dissolve it.

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