

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

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Abstract: 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 liberating women, this research examines the deconstructive meanings in "Taktubīn al-Syi'r.. wa Auqa' Anā.." a poem written by Nizār Qabbānī through the lens of Jacques Derrida's deconstruction theory. This theory rejects binary oppositions and suspends meaning due to the ever-shifting contexts and perspectives within a text; consequently, the meaning of a text is never stable, and the hierarchy of the regime of meaning is destabilized by the text itself. Accordingly, this research argues that the discourse of the rib is a patriarchal myth: a woman was not created from a man's rib, but rather, it is men who emerge from a woman's womb. This reversal of the binary opposition stems from the instability of meaning within both the male subject and female object positions. This instability occurs because meaning is constantly deferred due to the presence of a strong historical trace of ancient patriarchy. Ultimately, dismantling this centralized meaning is essential to achieving egalitarian gender relations.

Keywords: binary opposition, masculinity of the rib discourse, deconstruction, trace, egalitarianism.

INTRODUCTION

To this day, the discourse of the masculine rib has become a phenomenon that shapes a common mindset establishing the objectification of women and placing them in an inferior position. According to al-Sa'dāwī (1974; 1980; 2010), the discourse of the rib first appeared in the Torah, saying that Eve or woman was created from the rib of Adam or male. This discourse was reproduced in the Gospels that women (*Ishshah*) came from a man. (Hassan 1995, 45). This particular view was then absorbed in the cultural structure and thought of Islamic commentaries through several hadiths that are considered valid. (Zayd 2004, 27).

The discourse of the rib, which was accepted by the majority of the three Semitic religious traditions, eventually gave rise to a misogynistic doctrine. In Islamic doctrine, for example, some hadiths were reported to go that most of Hell's inhabitants would be women (Bukhārī 4 n.d., 136) ; or the three causes of misfortune are women, houses, and horses (Bukhārī 3 n.d., 242); and the most dangerous slander for men is women. (Bukhārī 3 n.d., 242). In Christian teachings, the interpretation of the Gospels attaches the identity of women as destructive and negative adulterers (al-Sa'dāwī 2000, 34). In Jewish doctrine, women are the cause of men's distress and women were the main cause of trials for the Israelites. (Hassan 1995, 86). This misogyny can also be seen from several studies which reveal that the majority of Muslims, Christians, and Jews believe that women are the cause of human's fall from Heaven (al-Sa'dāwī 2003; Hassan 1995).

In the Islamic tradition, the *mufasssir* (commentators) who took the discourse of the rib with a literal interpretation of the Prophet's hadiths are found in the majority of *mu'tabar* interpretations from the *jumhūr*, including *Tafsir al- Kasasyāf* (Zamakhshārī 1996, 492), *Tafsir al-Qāsyī* (Al-Qāsyī 1971, 189) *Tafsir al-Marāghī* (al-Marāghī 2 n.d., 175), *Tafsir al-Qur'ān al-Adzīm*. (Ibn Kasīr 1991, 424). All those commentaries interpret the word *nafs wāḥidah* ('one soul') as Adam, being the first human. Then, the word *zawjahā* ('his partner') was interpreted as Eve (Adam's wife). Those commentaries included the Prophet's hadiths about the rib, which they interpreted as the origin of women (Latifi 2020a; 2025).

The belief in the discourse of the rib has survived for thousands of years without people questioning it and has spread beyond the Arabian Peninsula and the Middle East. In Arabic literary works, for example in the short story by Taufiq al-Hakim (1945; 1985), one can find the author affirming that Eve was created from Adam's rib, was a sinner, the source of negative things, and the first sinner who caused the suffering of all mankind on earth.

In today's contemporary era, particularly in social media, one can find the broad influence of the discourse of the rib in songs, both spiritual and entertainment songs. For example, in Christian wedding anthems, "*Tulang Rusuk*" ('The Rib') is one of the top ten most popular songs that is continuously produced. An excerpt from the lyrics reads as follows: *Tulang Rusuk yang kunanti, Datang mendampingi, Menjadi penolong* (The rib that I'm waiting for, has come by my side, Become my savior).

In Indonesia, the realm of more popular entertainment genre, the old *dangdut* song titled "*Kau Tercipta dari Tulang Rusukku*" ('You Were Created from My Rib'), once popular in the 1970s, has now re-surfaced and is covered by a popular singer Via Vallen. Another singer, Rita Sugiyarto, released her new song in January 2019 on her YouTube channel entitled "*Tulang Rusuk*" ('The Rib'). It is about a woman who suffers from missing her lover. She has to accept all that as she is not perfect and because she believed she was born from a man's rib.

"Taktubīn al-Syi'r.. wa Uwaqqi' Anā.." is a poem that written by Nizār Qabbānī (1989), as an Arab poet who is known as *Sya'ir al-Mar'ah* (the writer of women-themed poems). This poem comes up with challenging the discourse of the rib in a different way, so that it becomes unique and has its own characteristics. This poem offers its deconstructive thoughts on patriarchal construction by undermining the discourse of the rib. It reveals the hidden thoughts that contain historical-anthropological ideas used as a strategy to dismantle the patriarchal discourse in the notion of the rib. This was interesting, as literary works constitute a medium of knowledge with multiple meanings due to the different and complex encounters between the author, the text, and the audience, resulting in a more plural, rich, and progressive meaning.

Nizār Qabbānī was born on the 21st of March 1923, in Damascus. He was the second of four brothers and one sister (Qabbānī 1983, 25). As the poet puts it, his father was not a rich man but was a lover of revolution. Qabbānī is not a descendant of the king, but he is like most ordinary people who seek sustenance with glory, consistency, and with the power of spirituality that only Allah is worthy of fear (Qabbānī 1983, 29). Nizār Qabbānī believes that literary works are one of the holy forms of worship (Qabbānī 1983, 33). His first education was in Damascus and at the age of 18, he was conferred a Bachelor of Literature, after which he pursued a master's degree in Philosophy. This formal education forms the concept of culture in his mind, both Western (French) and Eastern (Arabic) culture (Qabbānī 1983, 43). He has published numerous works, including the poetry anthologies of *Qālat Li al-Samrā'* (1944), *Anti LI* (1950), *Kitāb al-Hub* (1970), *Kullu 'Ām wa Anti Ḥabībatī* (1978), *Qāmus al-Āsyiqīn* (1981), *Hawāmisī 'Alā Hawāmisī* (1991), *Khamsūn 'Ām fī Madh al-Nisā'* (1994). He died in 1999 (Fathoni 2007, 129-130).

A survey of literature provides an overview that the study of masculinity and poetry covers at least three features, namely: hegemonic, non-hegemonic, and therapeutic (hegemonic) functions. The hegemonic form, being the most common, positions women as inferior and men as superior. Works of this category include the hegemonic masculinity of Afghan war poems (Haq 2018), the masculine dominance of the 20th century British poetry (Kennedy 2011), the pedagogical masculinity of English Renaissance poetry (Chedgzoy 2013), the masculine superiority of the love-and war-themed, 16th century Italian poetry (Barlow 2018), and the hierarchical-imperial masculinity of Horace's poems (Carter 2018). The second pattern, non-hegemonic masculinity, can be seen for example from the voice of femininity in the masculinity of Hellenism poetry (arwick 2020), the balanced masculinity voiced by female poets (Chedgzoy 2017), and the contestation of masculinity-prose and femininity-poetry in Zatlitt's work (Yazdanpanahi 2020). Meanwhile, the third pattern in the form of the therapeutic function of poetry is seen in several studies, for example, Furman & Dill which emphasizes poetry as therapy for male hegemonic masculinity (Furman et al 2012) and Thompson et al (2012) that emphasizes the therapeutic function of poetry for strengthening masculinity among disabled men.

Having looked at the existing studies related to masculinity and poetry as mentioned above, this study of Nizār Qabbānī's poetry will provide a different picture so that it can provide contributions and

novelty. In its non-hegemonic style, this poem does not provide a masculinity-femininity balance but exalts femininity that characterizes women's autonomy instead. While the existing studies take the formal object of war, love, pedagogy, imperialism, the present study takes the discourse of the rib as the formal object. The deconstruction of the discourse of the rib is important because it becomes a strategy to dismantle masculinity as one of the important tools for perpetuating the domination of masculinity for getting egalitarianism in gender relations.

METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative research design and a literature review approach. 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 that privilege singular truths and binary oppositions. Abrams (1981) argues that deconstruction challenges the assumption that a text possesses a stable structure, coherent unity, and fixed meaning. Consequently, deconstruction is widely regarded as a key perspective within post-structuralist theory.

The aim of deconstruction is not to achieve understanding (*Verstehen*) through the fusion of horizons; rather, it seeks to engage with differences that cannot be subsumed into a unified whole (Kimmerle, 2000, p. 50; Hardiman, 2015, p. 285). For Derrida, interpretation entails the suspension of meanings that have been regulated and stabilized by tradition, 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). From Derrida's perspective, to understand is precisely to suspend meaning. Meaning is continually deferred through the emergence of alternative possibilities of signification, and therefore can never attain a final or definitive status.

Several key principles characterize deconstruction. First, deconstruction examines the contamination of binary oppositions—pairs of opposing meanings that are structured hierarchically by privileging one term over the other. Through deconstructive reading, these oppositions are reversed and destabilized in order to expose their inherent interdependence and challenge their hierarchical arrangement. Second, deconstruction is particularly concerned with what has been marginalized. Within binary oppositions, dominant discourses occupy the center, while alternative voices are relegated to the margins. However, the marginal is never entirely excluded or stable; rather, it possesses the capacity to unsettle and transform the dominant discourse from within. In this sense, the text itself 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, as its meaning is constituted through its relationships with other terms and contexts, thereby rendering it vulnerable to self-deconstruction. Fourth, there is nothing outside the text. In deconstructive theory, textual meaning emerges through traces and contextual networks—including political, historical, religious, economic, and cultural dimensions—that are embedded within the text itself and contribute to the production of meaning (McQuillan, 2000; Hardiman, 2015).

In *De la grammatologie*, Derrida introduces the well-known French 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 Derrida refers to as *différance*. According to Derrida, it is impossible to maintain a strict distinction between these positions because a sign simultaneously signifies continuity and discontinuity (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 the concept of *différance*, Derrida suspends the fixed meanings embedded within binary oppositions, arguing that every tradition, order, or system of values constitutes a regime of meaning organized hierarchically. The deconstruction of such regimes destabilizes the established structures of meaning upon which traditions are founded. In *De la grammatologie*, Derrida explains that deconstruction does not destroy structures from the outside; rather, it operates from within, drawing

upon the strategic and subversive resources already present in the existing structure. Thus, the possibility of deconstruction is embedded within the work itself (Derrida, 1997, p. 24).

Derrida rejects the conventional semiotic conception of the sign as a division between the signifier and the signified. Such a rigid distinction implies that each element exists as an independent and self-contained substance. In contrast, deconstruction proposes the concept of the *trace*, an elusive and imperceptible phenomenon that functions as a formative force within writing and continuously operates across an extensive network of signification (B. Leitch, 1983, as cited in Jabrohim, 2012, p. 213). According to Derrida (Culler, 1983, pp. 85–86), to engage in deconstruction is to reverse the hierarchical arrangements embedded within existing systems of opposition. Beyond this initial reversal, deconstruction seeks to destabilize and displace classical binary oppositions altogether. As Derrida emphasizes, “The practitioner of deconstruction works within the terms of the system, but in order to break it.”

The data were collected heuristically, namely reading carefully and repeatedly, (Endraswara 2013, 180) also called the *simak* (‘careful reading’) method by paying attention to significant linguistic units in the poem with reference to the theory chosen (Faruk 2012, 168-169). The data include the verbal expressions in the form of words, phrases, or sentences that contain deconstructive ideas on the masculinity of the rib, their implications, and the image of women depicted. The data were selected according to the parameters and criteria that have been determined referring to the assumptions of the deconstructive theory. The data source is Nizār Qabbānī’s poem entitled “Taktubīn al-Syi’ra.. wa Uwaqqi’ Anā ..” as found in his poetry anthology entitled *Hākazā Aktub Tārīkh al-Nisā’* (Qabbānī 1989).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Taktubīn al-Syi’ra.. wa Uwaqqi’ Anā .. consists of five stanzas, each containing approximately 12–16 lines. The first stanza presents the lyrical speaker’s critique of the traditional belief that woman was created from man’s rib. Instead, the poem emphasizes that man is born from the womb of a woman, thereby challenging patriarchal narratives of origin. The second stanza highlights the speaker’s inability to teach women anything, owing to women’s historical autonomy and their extensive influence across various spheres of life. The third stanza underscores the necessity of liberating African and Arab women from the negative values and social constructs that have subordinated and marginalized them. The fourth stanza reflects on the enduring legacy of patriarchy, portraying it as a cultural system that has persisted for thousands of years. Finally, the fifth stanza affirms the strength, autonomy, and independence of women’s femininity, emphasizing its potential to foster equality and egalitarian social relations.

This poem provides criticism, rejection, challenge, and deconstructive thoughts on the discourse of the rib to proclaim women’s existence and being that is very elevated and autonomous. This poetry flows with common vocabulary, natural syntax, easy- to-understand language, and less complex rhymes. Nevertheless, it demonstrates considerable poetic innovation with philosophical elements for creative purposes and forms of action for it’s social and political criticism. Even with that it dared to break everything that was considered sacred and taboo.

Drawing upon Derrida’s deconstructive framework, the analysis proceeds through several stages: (a) identifying binary oppositions and the marginalization of women; (b) examining the instability of male subjectivity and female objectivity; (c) 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; (d) exploring the *trace* as *différance*, which enables the deferral and destabilization of binary meanings; and (e) dissolving the center of binary oppositions within gender relations in order to envision a more egalitarian social order.

a. Mapping Binary Oppositions

The poem is structured around a series of binary oppositions. Among the binary oppositions represented in the poem are the following:

الرجل >> المرأة, العقل >> العاطفة, الأب >> الأم, الوالد >> الطفل, الأصل >> الفرع, المتحرك >> الثابت, الثقافة
>> الفطرة

Man >> woman, reason >> emotion, father >> mother, parent >> child, origin >>
branch, movement >> stability, culture >> nature.

Generally, these different concepts are interpreted oppositionally and positioned against one another, resulting in contradictory meanings. This oppositional perspective can be understood as a legacy of Western colonial thought that continues to be reproduced in contemporary contexts to serve colonial-imperial interests. It conceals oppressive power hierarchies by privileging one pole while subordinating the other. The first pole is regarded as positive and positioned as the subject, superior, dominant, civilized/advanced, and the bearer of truth (man, reason, father, parent, origin, movement, culture). Meanwhile, the second pole is constructed as negative and positioned as the object, inferior, controlled, and underdeveloped (woman, emotion, mother, child, branch, stability, nature).

In this study, the marginalized subject within the regime of meaning produced by binary opposition is women. In social realities, including the realms of politics, economics, society, culture, and religion, women have often been positioned as secondary, marginal, and domestic beings. Consequently, women occupy the second pole of the binary opposition, constructed as objects, subordinated subjects, inferior beings, and confined to the private/domestic sphere. Meanwhile, men are positioned within the first pole of the binary opposition as subjects, centers, superior figures, and representatives of the public sphere.

The degradation of women's position, which has persisted for thousands of years within patriarchal constructions and ideologies, is depicted in the poem. The textual data indicates that for approximately three thousand years, women have been represented through stereotypes of being primitive, emotional, aggressive, and sources of negativity. Therefore, women are portrayed as a storm trapped within glass, reduced to mere bodies objectified by men and interpreted through the lens of instinct. The following excerpt illustrates this representation.

خليك بدائية كما أنت // خليك مزاجية كما أنت // خليك هجومية كما أنت // هكذا أنت منذ ثلاثين سنة // منذ ثلاثمائة
سنة // منذ ثلاثة آلاف سنة // إحصار محبوس في زجاجة // جسد يتحسس رائحة الرجل بالفطرة // ويهاجمه
بالفطرة // وينتصر عليه بالفطرة // (نزار قباني: 1989).

Be primitive as you are.. // Be as moody as you are.. // Be as offensive as you are..
// It's how you have been for 30 years // And since 300 years ago.. // And even
since 3000 years ago.. // A storm trapped in a glass.. // A body that senses the
scent of men by nature.. // And destroys them by nature.. // And conquers them by
nature.. //

The marginalization of women's position in both Eastern and Western societies is an undeniable reality resulting from various factors, one of the most significant being patriarchal culture. Patriarchy produces gender inequalities manifested in forms of subordination, stereotyping, marginalization, physical and psychological violence, and the double burden of labor experienced by women. One of the fundamental causes sustaining patriarchal structures is the rib myth, which initially emerged through interpretations of the Torah.

The patriarchy shackling women dated back thousands of years. In the poem, however, have mentioned a specific date (3,000 years ago). By associating it with the discourse of the rib that first appeared in the Torah, then "3000 years ago" is the estimated birth of the Torah as the first book to introduce the discourse of the rib in the story of Adam and Eve who was in heaven and then expelled to earth.

Because women are positioned within the second pole of binary opposition, deconstruction creates a space to foreground and restore attention to women as marginalized subjects. Therefore, the binary opposition that marginalizes women is subsequently deconstructed by the poem itself through its rejection of masculine-patriarchal oppositional thinking that subordinates women. Deconstruction

emerges from the instability of meanings within binary oppositions that were previously considered fixed and stable.

b. The Instability of Meaning and Position within Binary Opposition: Masculine Subjectivity versus Feminine Objectivity

Derrida's theory of deconstruction (1973; 1997) reveals the instability of meaning within binary oppositions, particularly between the first pole (subject, positive, masculine) and the second pole (object, negative, feminine). For thousands of years, patriarchal ideology, shaped by various historical and cultural factors, has operated to reinforce the position of masculine subjectivity while weakening the position of women, rendering them increasingly marginalized, inferior, and ultimately constructed as objects. However, from a deconstructive perspective, such positions are never fully stable. The text itself disrupts the opposition that sustains the subject–object hierarchy by exposing the instability of meaning underlying these categories.

This poem demonstrates several manifestations of instability in meaning and position within the binary opposition between masculinity (subject) and femininity (object). Men, who have been culturally positioned as masculine and superior subjects, are represented as questioning this position by acknowledging their limitations and inability in various aspects. Similarly, women, who have been marginalized, discriminated against, and subordinated for centuries, are revealed to possess various forms of strength and capability (whether consciously recognized or not), thereby unsettling the stability of the binary opposition. The seemingly fixed structure of binary opposition that has endured for thousands of years is gradually challenged and questioned, as demonstrated in the following textual data.

لا تصدقي أن رجال يمكنه تغيير امرأة... // ليس لي القدرة على تعليمك أي شيء... // ليس لي القدرة على
ترويضك... // ليس لي القدرة على كسر عاداتك... // ليس لي القدرة على تغيير طبيعتك... (نزار قباني: 1989).

Never buy that a man can change a woman.. // I have no power to teach you..
I have no power to train you... // I have no power to break your habits.. // I have
no power to change your nature..

The data above clearly demonstrates the instability of binary opposition that has established masculine subjectivity and feminine objectivity as a single, dominant truth within gender relations. The five textual excerpts are located in the opening lines of each of the poem's five stanzas, emphasizing that men are, in fact, unable to transform women, unable to teach them anything, unable to train them, unable to destroy their habits, and unable to change their nature. The entire poem portrays the positive qualities and various strengths possessed by women, positioning men as acknowledging their own limitations and powerlessness in relation to women.

Because deconstruction is rooted in postmodern thought, it rejects the notion of a singular and absolute truth (centered on men within binary opposition) that is assumed by Western modernist thought. Before reversing the binary opposition through deconstructive intervention, the poem first reveals the instability of meaning within the gender categories of masculinity and femininity that have been constructed as oppositional. This process is further discussed in the following subsection of this study.

c. The Reversal of the Binary Opposition of the "Rib" Myth: Woman Is Not Created from Man; Rather, Man Is Born from Woman's Womb

Until the present day, the constraints of patriarchy continue to be reinforced through various discourses, one of which is religious discourse. Based on numerous studies, within the Abrahamic religious traditions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam), the "rib" discourse regarding the origin of women continues to be reproduced and remains one of the factors contributing to the persistence of patriarchal ideology within religious discourse, despite ongoing efforts to develop humanistic, egalitarian, and gender-justice interpretations of religion.

This masculine "rib" discourse asserts that Eve was created from Adam's rib. Various studies indicate that this discourse first emerged through interpretations of the Torah, was subsequently transmitted into

interpretations of the Bible, and later influenced interpretations of the Qur'an. Interpretations derived from these interconnected sacred texts have shaped the beliefs of the majority of religious communities across the world.

As a form of deconstructive and postmodern resistance discourse, this poem possesses strong critical power because the culmination of its deconstruction appears in the first stanza. The first stanza of the poem asserts that the "rib" discourse is a masculine-patriarchal myth that contains ideological assumptions rather than absolute truth. This myth represents a patriarchal regime of power that lacks a foundation in scientific reasoning and humanistic ethics. The following data demonstrates this argument.

وباطلة دعاوى كل الرجال الذين يتوهمون، // أنهم صنعوا المرأة من أحد أضلاعهم.. // المرأة لا تخرج من ضلع
الرجل أبدا.. // هو الذي يخرج من حوضها.. // كما تخرج السمكة من حوض الماء // وهو الذي يتفرع منها،
// كما تتفرع السواقي من النهر... // وهو الذي يدور حول شمس عينيها.. // ويتصور أنه ثابت في مكاتبه
// (نزار قباني: 1989).

Void is the claim of all men who imagine // They made a woman from one of
their ribs.. // A woman never comes out of a man's rib.. // It is man who comes
out of her womb.. // Like fish comes out of the pond // He is the one who split
from her // Like streams branched out of a river.. // He who revolves around
the sun of her eyes.. // Thinks that he is dwelling in his place..//

The data above demonstrates that the notion of the male "rib" as the origin of womanhood is a myth that should be critically questioned rather than accepted as an unquestionable truth. Instead, the poem presents an alternative perspective in which women are the ones who give birth to men; women become the origin, while men are positioned as the branch. Like a fish emerging from the water of a pond, women are portrayed as a stable and sustaining force, whereas men are represented as continuously moving around them.

The data further illustrates that the hierarchical and oppressive binary opposition, in which the first pole is constructed as the subject-superior and the second pole as the object-inferior, must be destabilized due to the inherent instability of meaning. The subversion of binary opposition occurs through its reversal, whereby the position previously constructed as subject-superior is repositioned as object-inferior. Within the context of this study, the masculine discourse of the "rib" that marginalizes women is challenged, reversed, and dismantled. Women are not created from men's ribs; rather, men are born from women's wombs.

Until today, the Arab mindset believes and constructs those men are the origin and women are the branches. This is due to the patriarchal interpretation of the story of Adam and Eve in the Semitic religions, giving rise to the concept of *al-asl wa al-far'* (origin and branch) in the Arab-Islamic sciences which positions men as origin and women as branch. For example, the Arab-Islamic epistemology of al-Jabiriy in his book *Binyah al-'Aql al-'Arabiyy, al-asl wa al-far'*, the sexism of the *nahwu* science places *muḥakkkar* (male) as *al-asl* which is universal and comes first, while *muannaṣ* (female) as *al-far'* (branch) which is partial and comes later. *Muḥakkkar* is above and *muannaṣ* is below, and the female being is between the intelligent and the unintelligent. Woman is something (not human) that is foreign (Nahdiyyin 2019).

The deconstruction of this poem challenged the masculinity of the Arab-Islamic mindset which is influenced by the assumption of the patriarchal theology of the rib discourse. The poem refusal is voiced deconstructively not only through a negation of the rib, even further, the poem emphasizes that it is men who are born from women. In the poem, the words "حوض" (womb), "شمس" (sun), which are attached to women are a number of symbolic expressions that emphasize the superiority and autonomy of women. For this poem, woman is being in full existence, while man is the branch, woman is the origin, man revolves around woman, and woman is the sun that dwells and shines.

The first stanza clearly illustrates what kind of appropriation of nature the poem has done through words and the tearing of thoughts. In deconstruction theory, poetry has the main task of initiating a movement towards a change from the silence of language, the silence of books, and the silence of history. Deconstruction of thought is the key to driving and changing the situation. It destroyed the

oppressive rib masculinity and then replaces it by reversing the existing logic: it is not women who are subordinate but women who are superior. //A woman never comes out of a man's rib//It is man who comes out of her womb//.

Some suggest that the discourse of the rib in the Torah is a symbolic expression asserting that women are the only proper helper men could rely on. The social context of the revelation of the Torah was a very patriarchal society that placed Israelite women very low and on the same level as animals (Carmodi 2006). However, there are also views that the original Torah has not been found so far, so it is very possible that the idea of the rib was not a God's idea but a human construction (Carmodi 2006: al-Sa'dāwī 1974: 1980). However, even if the "rib" was in the original Torah, still the verse was a symbolic expression (instead of justification-theological) that has historicity so that it is contextual and not universal.

However, if the scriptures are understood as a complete *weltanschauung* that the verses are related to one another, one will find that in essence the scriptures emphasize the egalitarian creation of male and female. In the Torah, two verse descriptions about creation, namely 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 (Carmodi 2006). In Christian scripture, the Book of Genesis 1:27 says man and woman were created in the image of God as partners of God and helpers of creatures (Ruether 2006). In Islam, the Koran confirms that men and women are made from one soul (*nafs wāḥidah*) and both carry out the mission of God's caliphate (vicegerent) on earth, for example, as in QS. *Luqman*: 28; *al-An'am*: 98; *al-Zumar*: 6; *al-A'raf*: 89; *al-Nisa'*: 1 (al-Qur'an al-Karim).

That's why, despite being unpopular, in Islam there are also commentators who reject the idea of the rib, for example 'Abduh. In *Tafsir al-Manār*, 'Abduh firmly rejects the notion of *nafs wāḥidah* (one soul) regarding the origin of mankind as referring to Adam, and women were secondary creation made from Adam's rib. The reason for 'Abduh's refusal is because the verse begins with *yā ayyuhā al-nās* ('O mankind') which means it is intended for all human beings. In fact, Adam is not a popular name whom the whole humanity recognized as the first human. Therefore, according to 'Abduh, the *nafs wāḥidah* in the verse must be "a concept" (not a proper name) recognized by all humans and "not Adam". (Abduh n.d; Latifi 2020b).

So that, this poem broke the discourse of the rib which has become an important device which are generally used as the theological justification for the perpetuation of this patriarchy. It's philosophical thought in aesthetics is that poetry is not to wait for what is expected but rather poetry is waiting for the unexpected. For thousands of years, the inferiority of women under patriarchy has become a fact.

What the poem says is how the thousand-years-old shackles can be broken by destroying the patriarchal structure that supports them, and then replaced with a new humanist structure that places women as autonomous subjects as men. That's why, after declaring that the masculinity of the rib is a lie, the poem reverses the hierarchy. The words "lake", "river", "sun" which are connoted to women are symbolic expressions that emphasize women's superior potentials. Women are the "origin", "source", "center", and "estuary" for men.

Deconstruction (Derrida, 1997) is grounded in the understanding that truth is plural rather than singular, as meanings are continuously shaped by emerging contexts and perspectives. Consequently, meaning can never be regarded as fixed or absolute. Therefore, the binary opposition of the "rib" discourse (men as the originators versus women as the created beings), which perpetuates the subordination of women, is criticized, challenged, and questioned because it contains traces of patriarchal ideology and Western capitalist-imperial power structures.

The poem's deconstructive movement is also evident in its challenge to the masculine-patriarchal claim that men are the owners of knowledge and lineage, whereby descendants are traditionally associated with the father or grandfather. The poem reverses this binary opposition by exposing the instability of such claims: it challenges the assumption that men are the creators of poetry (as a symbol of knowledge and wisdom) and the sole originators of children. Instead, the poem reverses this hierarchy by presenting women as the creators of poetry (symbolizing knowledge and wisdom), while men merely sign their names; women are the ones who give birth to children, while men only provide their signatures in the hospital. The following data illustrates this deconstructive reversal.

فلا تصدقي ما يقوله الرجل عن نفسه، // بأنه هو الذي يصنع القصائد.. // ويصنع الأطفال.. // إن المرأة هي التي تكتب الشعر.. // والرجل هو الذي يوقعه.. // والمرأة هي التي تنجب الأطفال.. // والرجل هو الذي يوقع في مستشفى لوالدة.. // (نزار قباني: 1989).

Just don't buy what a man says about himself // That he is the one who writes poems.. // And who makes children.. // It is women who write poems.. // And man is the one who put his signature.. // Woman is the one who bears children.. // And man is the one who signs the papers..//

The title of Nizār Qabbānī's poem "Taktubīn al-Syī'r.. wa Uwaqqī' Anā.." asserts that the dominance of women-subordinating masculinity is a discourse of lies created by men, as it is women who had actually achieved the fullest being and existence. The discourse of the rib is constantly trying to hide what really happened. The title of the poem translates "*You (women) wrote a poem, and I (men) signed it.*" It is women who carried out the process of thinking, conceptualizing, and creating. Men then legitimized and seized the works or actions carried out by women, claimed it, and called it theirs and their own works.

If one looks closely, Nizār Qabbānī's poem is unique compared to the poetry written by any other male poets, even though they fight for women's freedom. Both explicitly and implicitly, this poem has directed the message to men as actors who are actively involved in the formation of cultural masculinity and establish a patriarchal culture.

Derrida (1973; 1997) explains that meaning is never singular or fixed; rather, meaning is plural and constantly in the process of becoming. Every hierarchical and oppressive opposition inevitably reveals its own fractures due to the multiple possibilities of meaning contained within the text, which emerge from diverse and continuously shifting perspectives. Therefore, a text always contains a challenge to the stability of meaning assumed within binary oppositions. Furthermore, the text performs deconstruction by disrupting the hierarchical and oppressive meanings produced by binary structures.

The reversal of the binary opposition embedded in the masculine "rib" myth, which has become one of the foundations sustaining patriarchy within religious discourse and subsequently influencing the continuation of patriarchal structures in political, economic, social, and cultural discourses, represents a significant deconstructive act. This reversal occurs because masculinity is not the only naturalized reality that defines human culture; therefore, the assumption that patriarchy is essential, universal, and a natural law originating from the earliest stages of human existence is fundamentally questioned.

d. The Trace of Ancient Matriarchy as Différance: The Deferral of Meaning within Binary Opposition

This 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; therefore, the certainty of hierarchical binary oppositions must be destabilized. The *trace* that defers meaning and disrupts binary opposition subsequently reverses the meaning of the binary opposition within the masculine "rib" discourse. In this context, the existence of ancient matriarchal traces articulated by the poem functions as a textual deconstruction of the patriarchal discourse underlying the rib myth. The following data demonstrates this process.

فنهذاك دائرتا معارف.. // وشفقتك هما خالصة تاريخ النبيد // إنك امرأة مكتفية بذاتها // زينتك منك.. // وقمحك منك // وبنارك منك.. // وصيفك وشتاؤك.. // وبرقك وورعدك.. // ومطرک وتلجك.. // وموجك وزيدك.. كلها منك.. // ماذا أعلمك يا امرأة ؟ // (نزار قباني: 1989).

For your breasts are the center of knowledge.. // And your lips are the epitome of the history of the wine // You are self-sufficient beings // Your oil is from yourselves.. // and your grain is from you ..// Your fire is from yourselves.. // Your summer and winter.. // And your lightning and thunder.. // And your rain and snow.. // And your waves and your foam ... are all from you.. // What shall I teach you, women?

Explicitly, the data above refers to history. Women's breasts are represented as the center of knowledge, while women's lips are portrayed as the summary of the history of wine. In the historical development of human civilization, women emerged as the foundation of civilization because they were associated with the discovery of agriculture and the development of farming practices that replaced the hunting era. This historical period is often discussed as ancient matriarchy, particularly in relation to the Neolithic era (Stone, 1976; Ahmed, 1992). The poem explicitly states that women produce oil, grain, and fire. Women are also portrayed as capable of overcoming the challenges of various seasons, including heat and cold, lightning and thunder, waves and foam. Therefore, the lyrical speaker asserts that men are no longer able to teach women anything because women have become autonomous and independent subjects, capable of defining themselves and achieving full existence.

The poem said that the patriarchal discourse of the rib is a lie deliberately made by men because historical facts confirm that women do have high autonomy and are the foundation of civilization. The second stanza of the poem reads: I have no power to teach you [women]// For your breasts are the center of knowledge// And your lips are the epitome of the history of the wine// You are self-sufficient beings// Your oil is from yourselves// And your grain is from you// Your fire is from yourselves// Your summer and winter// And your lightning and thunder// And your rain and snow// And your waves and your foam.. are all from you// What shall I teach you, women?//

The second stanza of the poem provides a further explanation from the first stanza which says that women are the "origin", "estuary", "lake", and "sun" which predated even humans. With clear language and diction, the poem states that the existence of women is autonomous as the cornerstone of civilization. The words oil, wheat, fire, summer and cold, lightning and thunder, rain and snow, waves and foam that belong to women are symbolic expressions that describe the strength and excellence of women who are productive and innovative. The poet's view has deconstructed the general view which usually portrays the image of women as derivative, subordinate, and non-existent objects.

The poem's view is in line with the empirical-scientific findings that early human history on earth was in the form of matriarchal community for thousands of years, so that women were the founders of civilization. Before the emergence of class systems and slavery, the rise of patriarchal culture, and the arrival of world religions, female goddesses appeared and were believed to be the givers of life and glory. Archaeological evidence confirms the traces of matriarchal communities and matriarchal cultures over thousands of years. (Engel 2011, Reed 2011). In short, in the early history of mankind, it was believed that women were the origin of life (*aṣl al-ḥayāh*).

In ancient Egypt, historical, anthropological, and archaeological evidence shows the high autonomy of women who have fully achieved their beings and even surpassed men so that the image of gods was represented as women. The high degree of women to reach the level of gods or even God reflects the high position and social role of women in society. (al-Sa'dāwī 1974). Empirical evidence can be reexamined from temples, writings on palm leaves, sculptures, paintings, and carvings that still exist today. That is why, in Arabic the words "soul", "spirit", "sky", "sun" are categorized as female gender [*muannaṣ*] (al-Sa'dāwī 2000, Latifi et al 2019).

The historical fact in matriarchal ancient Egypt is justified by the anthropological-scientific findings by Lewis H. Morgan about prehistoric society. According to Engels, Morgan explained the emergence of three main stages in human history. First, the age of Savagery, which began with the appearance of the first humans, the hominids of the anthropoid branch, about one million years ago. Second, the Barbarism, which was marked by the practice of agriculture, about eight thousand years ago, and the emergence of the first urban communities in Egypt, India, and China. Third is the Age of Civilization, was built on private property ownership marked by metal processing and trade, represented by Rome and Greece, about three thousand years ago (Engel 2011).

The Savagery was built on collective ownership and cooperative relationships with full equality in all aspects, including the relations of men and women. In this age of Savagery, women were very influential and glorified. The Age of Barbarism was a time of drastic change as the structure of society was transformed from an equal community into an oppressive class system serving the ruling group. It was at this point that women experienced a decline from their hundreds of thousands of years of exalted position in primitive communities to a degraded status in the civilized patriarchal societies. This period

of transformation from matriarchy to patriarchy took place gradually over five thousand years in the Barbarism. The highest prestige of women occurred in the early days of agriculture so that they were called the Goddess of Motherland, the Goddess of Fertility, and others. Women veneration as Mother Goddess has flourished for hundreds of thousands of years, when the Age of Savagery placed women as social mothers. That was the peak of matriarchy, in the early stages of the Age of Barbarism (Engel 2011).

The findings of the historical philosophy of historical materialism written by Engels based on Morgan's research are very interesting. They could enrich our perspective in seeing the nature of women's selfhood and the gender problems that ensnare them. In line with the findings of empirical facts that provide scientific evidence of women's autonomy for hundreds of thousands of years in the Age of Savagery to the beginning of the Age of Barbarism. The poem's view of deconstruction finds its full space, inviting us to reflect on the cultural order that has been around for a long time, which we inherit and has shaped our perception of reality in the patterns of gender relations.

Derrida (1973; 1997) argues that there is nothing outside the text; contexts are themselves texts, and texts are also constituted by contexts. Text and context are inseparable. Therefore, Derrida rejects a strict separation between the signifier and the signified. The strong female autonomy articulated in the poem, particularly through the explicit reference to "history" in the data above, emphasizes the importance of foregrounding the traces of ancient matriarchy within human history, long before the emergence of patriarchy in the world. Derrida explains that the *trace*, which becomes the source of the deferral of meaning, is often mysterious and cannot be fully revealed. The deconstruction of masculine dominance within binary opposition is based on the existence of these traces of ancient matriarchy, which have long remained concealed; thus, meaning is deferred and the singular, superior, masculine-centered notion of truth is rejected.

e. The Elimination of the Center of Binary Opposition: Toward Gender Egalitarianism

Derrida emphasizes that the reversal of binary opposition is essential for eliminating the central position. As a form of postmodern thought, deconstruction promotes the plurality of meanings and rejects the notion of a center, as well as the idea of a unified and singular meaning that is often attached to the dominant pole of binary opposition. Deconstruction gives attention to marginalized positions in pursuit of equality, justice, and egalitarianism.

If masculinity, which has historically functioned as the center of power, has been destabilized, and if the traces of ancient matriarchy also reveal the strength and dominance of femininity, then such feminine power should not become a new ideology that potentially establishes another superior center. Therefore, the poem concludes with a stanza emphasizing that women should exist as they are—not as objects of representation and not by transforming themselves into dominant subjects that occupy a new central position within another binary hierarchy. The following data illustrates this argument.

أنت ملكة الفوضى، والجنون، وعدم الإنتماء // فظلي كما أنت.. // أنت شجرة الأنوثة التي تكبر في العتمة.. // ولا تحتاج إلى شمس وماء.. // فظلي كما أنت.. // (نزار قباني: 1989).

You're the queen of abundance, of madness, of isolation // So, stay as you are.. //
You are the tree of femininity growing in the dark.. // That needs no sun nor wate..r
// So be yourself..//

The poem highly regards the quality of femininity, a quality that is only experienced by women related to reproductive functions so that women have bodily experiences that shape and construct their mental and intellectual values in responding to the environment, where the experience of femininity has never been experienced by men. The poem stated that women's bodies and minds have features that can respond quickly to existing phenomena. The poet's ideas and thoughts are seen in the last stanza of the poem. //I have no power to change your nature// You're the queen of abundance, of madness, of isolation// So, stay as you are// You are the tree of femininity growing in the dark// That needs no sun nor water// So be yourself//.

The stanza emphasizes the superiority of female femininity, which is seen in the symbolic expression that women are queens of abundance, of madness and of isolation. The poet believes that the cornerstone of human civilization is women. The main idea of the power of female femininity also

resonates in the following lines. You are the tree of femininity growing in the dark// That needs no sun nor water// So be yourself//. It is a thought that elevates the superiority of female femininity which is like a big tree that can grow without the need for water and sun. However, even though the tree grows strong, it is still in darkness. It becomes invisible and unrecognizable 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 of femininity that was being covered in darkness. It is the darkness that shrouds the tree of femininity that the poem deconstructs and destroys, as the poem believes that the tree has exist from time immemorial until the end of time: // So be yourself//. The tree of femininity that is solid, autonomous, natural, independent, and has full being is the existence of women themselves. Women dignity as human beings has been inherent in her since ancient times, since the first woman appeared on earth. The poem states that women are the first human beings credited with laying the foundations of and building civilizations. Arab women have a high position in history, but then obscured and lost by the patriarchal culture.

Although the poem emphasizes the strength of femininity and matriarchal perspectives, it also provides a deconstructive critique if such emphasis produces a new opposition that places women as the dominant pole and central authority. Therefore, the data above also articulates the ethical aim of egalitarian gender relations. At the end of the poem, particularly in the fifth stanza, the poem emphasizes that women should exist as themselves.

//فظلي كما أنت..// أنت شجرة الأنوثة التي تكبر في العتمة..// ولا تحتاج إلى شمس وماء..// فظلي كما أنت..//
(نزار قباني: 1989).

So, stay as you are ..// You are the tree of femininity growing in the dark.. // That
needs no sun nor water.. // So be yourself..//

The data above demonstrates that although the strength of femininity and matriarchy within women is symbolized as a tree of femininity that grows abundantly without requiring sunlight or water, the poem remains critical in its deconstructive process by preventing the emergence of a new binary opposition that positions women as the dominant pole and central subject, which could potentially become oppressive. Therefore, despite the discovery of strong traces of ancient matriarchy, the poem continues to emphasize the importance of eliminating the center in order to prevent the formation of another binary hierarchy, even when women possess historical traces of matriarchal power. The poem articulates the idea that women should “become themselves” and exist “as they are.” Women should neither be diminished nor elevated above others, because, essentially, women are noble and dignified human beings equal to men. This humanistic and egalitarian relationship represents the ethical aim of deconstruction: the dissolution of the center within binary opposition.

CONCLUSION

Nizār Qabbānī's poem “Taktubīn al-Syī'r.. wa Uwaqqī' Anā..” offers various deep reflections that invite us to rethink and reflect on the existing patriarchal cultural construction in binary opposition in our life and culture, correlating with the discourse of masculinity rib, which many people even understand as something given, in the way religious doctrine is generally understood. The poem presents different thoughts with a deconstructive style to reconstruct a more humanist cultural construction that can restore women autonomy as a humanbeing. There are two important ideas can be drawn in the deconstruction thought of the poem. First, the oppressive discourse of the rib in binary opposition is a lie that hides a patriarchal ideology that oppresses women to enforce male domination. The patriarchal ideology therein has shaped and created a reality that has left women behind and experience radical human degradation for thousands of years. Second, the radical deconstruction of the poem operates through the reversal of the binary opposition of the “rib” myth as a strategy to strengthen women's humanity. The discovery of ancient matriarchal traces functions as a *trace* that produces *différance*, thereby deferring and destabilizing fixed meaning. The instability of meaning within the binary opposition between masculine subjectivity and feminine objectivity renders the masculine “rib” myth a false and constructed truth. This unstable binary opposition is ultimately dismantled in order to establish a new egalitarian relation and eliminate the center within binary structures.

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