

DECONSTRUCTION OF THE PATRIARCHAL MYTH OF ADAM AND EVE IN CONTEMPORARY ARABIC LITERATURE

By

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Abstract

This study aims to highlight Arab women's autonomy by elaborating the feminist meaning in the literary code that challenges the patriarchal myth of Adam and Eve in three contemporary Arabic literary works. Through a feminist literary criticism approach, this study reveals the form of deconstruction and criticism of the binary opposition. Hence, Eve (woman) becomes a complete subject who gives birth and not who is born. The narrative-symbolic argument of these works is based on historical-logical-scientific and theological-rationalistic thinking styles. The purpose of the deconstruction in them is to create the autonomy of women with noble dignity as human beings, as men are. The deconstruction reflects the thought of progressive muslim authors who believe in and advocate for the substantive value of the holy Koran, particularly its emphasis on egalitarianism in the myth of Adam and Eve.

Keywords: *Myth of Adam and Eve, deconstruction, patriarchy, Arabic literature, Arab women's autonomy*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyoroti otonomi perempuan Arab dengan menguraikan makna feminis dalam kode sastra yang menantang mitos patriarkal tentang Adam dan Hawa dalam tiga karya sastra Arab kontemporer. Melalui pendekatan kritik sastra feminis, penelitian ini mengungkap bentuk dekonstruksi dan kritik terhadap oposisi biner tersebut. Dengan demikian, Hawa

<https://doi.org/10.14421/ajbs.2025.090101>

<https://ejournal.uin-suka.ac.id/adab/Adabiyat/article/view/2025.090101>

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(perempuan) diposisikan sebagai subjek utuh yang melahirkan dan bukan yang dilahirkan. Argumen naratif-simbolis karya-karya tersebut didasarkan pada pendekatan historis-logis-ilmiah dan teologis-rasionalistik. Tujuan dekonstruksi ini adalah untuk membangun otonomi perempuan yang bermartabat sebagai manusia, sebagaimana laki-laki. Dekonstruksi tersebut mencerminkan pemikiran para pengarang muslim progresif yang meyakini dan mengadvokasi nilai substantif Al-Qur'an, khususnya penekanannya pada prinsip egalitarianisme dalam mitos Adam dan Hawa.

Kata Kunci: Mitos Adam dan Hawa, dekonstruksi, patriarki, sastra Arab, otonomi perempuan Arab

A. INTRODUCTION

Hassan (1995) states that the dominance of patriarchy in monotheistic religions is closely related to the interpretation of theological myth in the three holy books that tell the story of Adam's superiority and Eve's inferiority. The myth of Adam and Eve first appeared in the Torah, which later gave rise to a misogynistic view of Jewish doctrine. Among them, women are the cause of men's distress and the main cause of Israeli men's trials (Hassan and Mernissi 1995, 86). In Christianity, the virginity of the Virgin Mary is constructed into a patriarchal rule that requires the chastity of women and eliminates the position of Mother Mary as the Mother God who has given birth to the Son. The misogynistic construction of the Bible also tells of adulterous women who are the cause of the destruction of the world (Al-Sa'dawi and Izzat 2000; al-Sa'dawī 2010).

In the Islamic world, the exegetes who accept the idea of Adam's superiority with a literal interpretation of the Prophet's hadith are reflected in the *mu'tabar* interpretations of the *jumhūr* (the majority), such as *Tafsīr al-Kasysyāf* (Zamakhshyārī 1996, Al-Juz al-Awwal, 492), *Tafsīr al-Qāsyī* (Al-Qāsyī 1971, 189), *Tafsīr al-Marāghī* (Al-Marāghī, n.d., 175), *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Adzīm* (Ibn Kasīr 1991, 424). All the commentaries above interpret the word "*nafs wāḥidah*" (one soul) in the Koran as reference to Adam as the origin of mankind, and the word "*zawjahā*" is interpreted as "Eve", Adam's wife. Their views are influenced by several prophetic traditions that contain the idea of the rib being identified with the creation of women (Latifi 2020a).

Muhammad Abduh in *Tafsīr Al-Manār* (Abduh, n.d., Al-Juz al-Rābi': 327–30) represents a view that firmly rejects the interpretation of the *nafs wāḥidah* as Adam. He argues that the verse begins with the sentence *yā ayyuhā al-nās* (O humans), which means that the verse is intended for all humans on earth without distinction of religion, culture, race, nation, or gender. Adam is not popular outside the Arab world and is not identified as the first human by all of mankind. According to Abduh, the meaning of *nafs wāḥidah* in the verse is certainly a concept recognized by all mankind and not Adam (Latifi 2020a).

Observing the different opinions of the Quranic exegetes, it becomes clear that the masculinity of the story of Adam in Islam arises from the interpretation of the concept of *nafs wāḥidah*. The difference in interpretation is because the concept has a symbolic content that is metaphysico-philosophical in origin. The power of holy book language lies within this symbolic content, specifically its capacity for continuous interpretation in line with human thought and development.

Although the symbolic expression of the Koran (*nafs wāḥidah*) provides a wide space for humanist interpretation and liberates women, unfortunately, the misogynistic hadiths (hatred of women) are preferred by the Quranic exegetes to be used as theological assumptions in the process of interpreting the Koran. In addition to the hadith about the ribs, there are other misogynistic traditions, such as the majority of the inhabitants of hell are women (Bukhārī, n.d.-a, Al-Juz al-Rābi': 136), the three causes of misfortune are women, houses, and horses (Bukhārī, n.d.-b, Al-Juz al-Šālīs: 242), and the most dangerous slander for men is women (Bukhārī, n.d.-b, Al-Juz al-Šālīs: 242).

Although efforts to interpret the humanist-egalitarian interpretation of the Koran and hadith continue to be carried out, in the Arab world, the myth of Adam and Eve, which is constructed in a patriarchal way, is continuously being produced to this day. The myth asserts that Eve was created from a man's rib and that Eve was a sinner who caused the fall of man from heaven to earth.

This myth finally had a strong influence on Arab reasoning and constructed *al-aṣl wa al-far'* (the origin and the branch) in the Arabic-Islamic knowledge, which positioned men as origins and women as

branches. For example, the Arabic-Islamic epistemology of al-Jabiriy in his book *Binyah al-'Aql al-'Arabiyy, al-aṣl wa al-far'*, the sexism of *Nahwu* (Arabic syntax) which places *mudhakkar* (masculine) as *al-aṣl*, which is universal and existed before its counterpart *muannath* (feminine) as its partial *al-far'* (branches), *mudhakkar* was above and *muannath* was below, and women were something (not human) that was foreign (Nahdiyyin 2019, 127–81).

This patriarchal Arab-Islamic reasoning not only negates and eliminates women from humanist Islamic theological and legal reasoning, but also from eschatological discourse; heaven and hell are masculinely constructed. There are 10 hadiths studied by al-Syuyutiyy which explain that women cannot see God in the hereafter as the highest pleasure, because in the world, women are hidden behind satire and in the house (Nahdiyyin 2019, 171–81). The majority of patriarchal and misogynistic Islamic literature cannot be separated from the strong influence of patriarchal theological assumptions of the myth of Adam and Eve.

Arabic literature is one of the world literatures that has a wide influence in Europe with its masterpieces. The periodization of history and development of Arabic literature has been put forward by experts covering four phases, namely: 1) the classical phase, from before the emergence of Islam to the emergence of Islam (470-750 AD); 2) the Abbasid phase, from the rise of the Abbasids to the fall of Baghdad (750-1250 AD); 3) the Turkic or Decline phase, from the fall of Baghdad to the rise of modern Arabia (1250-1800 AD); and 4) the Modern phase (*al-hadīth*) which is also called revival (*nahḍah*) or novelty (*al-jadīd*), since the emergence of modern Arab nationalism until now [1800 AD until now] (Al-Iskandari and Anany 1978; Farukh 1998).

Observing the classification above, the contemporary designation in Arabic literature refers to the last phase of the periodization made by experts, which is called the era of revival, renewal, or modernity in the development of Arabic literature. While classical Arabic literature is characterized by forms of bounded poetry and limited themes, modern or contemporary Arabic literature is characterized by prose or free poetry with more varied themes. It is a medium for conveying thoughts, ideas of

civilization, and democratic discourses that contain ideas of liberation, human rights, social problems, and Islamic politics (Muizuddin 2014).

In the context of the hegemonic patriarchal domination, contemporary Arabic literary works contain criticisms and challenges to patriarchal assumptions embedded in Islamic theology that dominate Arab Islamic culture and scholarship. Among the works that voice claims and deconstruct the masculinity of the myth of Adam and Eve are *Thalj wa Nār* [Snow and Fire] (al-Malāikah 1997), “Taktubīn al-Syi’r.. wa Auqa’ Anā ..” (You wrote the poem.. and I signed it..) in the anthology of poems *Hākadhā Aktub Tārīkh al-Nisā’* (Qabbānī 1989), and *Zīnah* [jewelry] (al-Sa’dāwī 2010). The authors of the three works are known as defenders of Arab women’s rights and advocates for humanity.

These three works are important and interesting to study because they contain strong claims against androcentrism. The work also strongly criticizes the theological justification that is used as a pretext for the perpetuation of the patriarchy that exists in the Arab world, which is reflected in the construction of the myth of Adam and Eve.

Various studies on the myth of Adam and Eve that have been carried out are divided into three categories: pro-feminism, counter-feminism, and themes outside of feminism. Among the categories of pro-feminism is Layton’s (1997) research on the positive meaning of Eve in ancient Semitic language, namely the source of life and the giver of life, but in the Torah, Eve means “originated from”. Adújar (2013) shows that the feminist reading of the story of Adam and Eve in the Koran shows egalitarian ideas. The second category, counter-feminism, emphasizes the superiority of Adam and the subordination of Eve to the expulsion from the Garden of Eden. which is depicted in the epic poems by Milton, Michael Stone, Anderson, and others (Altmann 1945; Arenberg 2015; Revard 2005; Siegel 1966). Spellberg (1996) asserts that the study of hadith and interpretation in Islam describes the biological dominance of Eve and the role of motherhood. The third category is themes outside of feminism, namely the study of Adam and Eve in the Koran related to modern science (Irwandar 2003; Muhyiddin 2006; Syahin 2004), the destruction of Adam in *Qaṣaṣ Anbiyā* is a symbol of the defeat of political

Islam (Lybarger 2008), and the story of Adam and Eve in Tirmidhi describes the life and death of Satan (Hadromi-Allouche 2012).

This research is categorized as pro-feminism but differs from the research style that has been stated above. The pro-feminist research that has been carried out examines the egalitarian nature of the story of Adam and Eve in the Koran, and the meaning of Eve which initially has a positive connotation, while these three Arabic literary works emphasize the deconstruction and rejection of the patriarchal myth of Adam and Eve with arguments supported by historical, economic, and scientific facts to enforce the autonomy of Eve (women).

This research is important because the three literary works reverse the binary opposition that has been patriarchally constructed, turning Eve from a full object, into a full subject. With a feminist literary criticism approach and hermeneutic method, this study aims to elaborate and reveal the feminist meaning contained in the literary code in three contemporary Arabic literary works to create women's autonomy, as a whole humane subject and not as a mere subordinate.

This study analyzes three contemporary Arabic literary works, namely: 1) The poem *Thalj wa Nār* [Snow and Fire] (1997) by Nāzik al-Malāikah, 2) The poem "Taktubīn al-Syi'r.. wa Auqa' Anā.." (You wrote the poem.. and I signed it..) in the anthology of poems *Hākadhā Aktub Tārīkh al-Nisā'* [This Is How I Write a History of Women] (1989) by Nizār Qabbānī, and 3) the novel *Zīnah* [jewelry] (2010) by Nawāl al-Sa'dāwī. The three were chosen as research material objects because they have the same theme: criticism and challenge against the patriarchal myth of Adam and Eve. The data are in the form of words, phrases, or sentences taken from the three literary works above.

The research approach is feminist literary criticism, namely the process towards the liberation of women from androcentrism conventions that have so far determined how women should speak and be discussed (Latifi 2003, 164). According to Ruthven (1984), this process is called deconstructing androcentrism. In literature, the discourse of feminism is related to Feminist Literary Criticism, which is the study of literature that focuses its analysis on women, emphasizing how female readers bring

perceptions and hopes into their literary experience (Latifi 2003, 164–65; Showalter 1985, 3).

Kolodny (Latifi 2003, 167–68; Showalter 1985, 151–57) suggests that the aims of feminist literary criticism are not only to reinterpret literary works with a feminist perspective as a new tool but also to understand and interpret fictional stories written by women. Moreover, the way we evaluate literary works must contain an integral aesthetic of our assessment of humans (including women) in a humanistic manner.

The data collection method employs a heuristic method, involving a careful and repeated reading of literary works (Endraswara 2013, 180) or also called the “listening” method by listening to significant linguistic units in selected literary texts with standards on the theoretical concepts referred to (Faruk 2012, 168–69).

The data analysis is carried out using the hermeneutic method. It is applied using descriptive exposure to each data functionally and relationally with the main characteristic of unitization. Furthermore, this analysis is carried out on each feature, theme, concept, or element (Latifi 2020b; Siswanto 2010, 81). Through the feminist literary criticism approach and the hermeneutic method, the data were analyzed to reveal the androcentrism criticism of the myth of Adam and Eve in contemporary Arabic literature and to highlight the creation of the autonomy of Arab women.

B. DECONSTRUCTION ANALYSIS OF THE PATRIARCHAL MYTH OF ADAM AND EVE IN CONTEMPORARY ARABIC LITERATURE

1. Eve (Woman) Gives Birth, Not is Born

Deconstruction is seen in the three data sources. The first data is the poem [Snow and Fire] (Al-Malāikah 1997, Al Mujald al Tsāniy: 483–85).

تسأل ماذا أقصد؟ لا، دعني، لا تسأل // أترى أتقبل؟ لا أغضب؟ لا اضطراب؟ //
لا، بل سأثور عليك... سيأكلني الغضب وستذهب يا آدم لاتسأل عن حواء //
وإذا ما أنت ذهبت وابقيت الشوقا // عصفورا عطشاننا لا يعلم ان يشقى وإذا ما أنت
ذهبت... فماذا يتبقى؟ // لا، لاتسأل... دعني صامته منظوية // أترك أخباري

وأناشيدى حيث هي أتركنى أسئلة وردودا منزوية // يا آدم لا تسأل... حوآؤك مطوية
// آدم مثل الثلج، وحوآء نارية

(// You're asking what I want? No, leave me, don't you ask // Do you think I'll take it? I won't be angry? I'm not shaken? // No, but I will rebel against you... You will eat my anger // When you leave, Adam, don't ask questions about Eve // When you leave, you will remain longing // Like a thirsty sparrow unable to dream of water // And when you leave... then what will stay? // No, don't ask... leave me folded in silence // Leave my stories and songs as they are // Leave me a cornered collection of riddles of rejection // O Adam don't ask questions... Your Eve is folded // Adam is like snow and Eve is fire //.)

The second data is the Poem ”.وأوقع أنا..“ (A woman writes the poem... and a man signs it) in the anthology of poems هكذا أكتب [This Is How I Write a History of Women] (Qabbānī 1989).

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.. // ليس لي القدرة على تعليمك أي شيء.. // فنهداك دائرتا معارف.. // وشفتك هما خلاصة تاريخ النبيل // إنك امرأة مكتفية بذاتها // زيتك منك.. // وقمحك منك.. // ونارك منك.. // وصيفك وشتاؤك.. // وبرقك وورعدك.. // ومطرك وثلجك.. // وموجك وزيدك.. // كلها منك.. // هكذا أنت منذ ثلاثين سنة // منذ ثلاثمئة سنة.. // منذ ثلاثة آلاف سنة.. // إعصار محبوس في زجاجة.. //

(Women never came out of a man's rib.. // Men do come out of a woman's pond.. // Like fish which comes out of a pond of water // Men are branches of women // Like irrigation canals from rivers.. // Men revolving around the sun of the two eyes of women.. // But the male depicts staying in place.. // I can't teach you (woman) anything.. // Your two breasts are centers of knowledge // Your two lips are a summary of the history of wine // You are a complete woman in your existence // Your oil is from you.. // Your grain is from you.. // Your fire is from you.. // Your summer and your winter.. // Your lightning and thunder.. // Your rain and snow.. // Your waves and foam.. all are from you.. // What am I going to teach you, lady? // You are who you are, since 30 years ago // Since 300 years ago // Since 3000 years ago.. // Like a storm caught in a glass //.)

The third data source is the Novel زينة [jewelry] (al-Sa'dāwī 2010, 242, 164–65, 184–85).

حين قرأت بدور الصفحات الأولى من كتاب التوراة تعجبت لتكون هذه هي كلمة الله؟ كلمات لا يمكن أن تدخل العقل؟ وصنع الربّ الإله من الضلع التي أخذها من آدم امرأة وأحضرها إلى آدم، فقال آدم، هذه الآن عظم من عظامي ولحم من لحمي، هذه تُدعى امرأة لأنها من امرئ أخذت (al-Sa'dāwī 2010, 163–64). وقالت بدرية: اقربي قليلا في علم الكون الجديد، سيعود الزمن إلى الوراء مع تغير حركة الكواكب، والأرض حول الشمس، لم يخلق الكون في ستة أيام ولا المرأة أنت من ضلع آدم، بل جاء آدم من رحم امرأة، أصبح العقل هو المستقبل وليس الخزعبلات (al-Sa'dāwī 2010, 242)

فتحت التوراة وقرأت: وقال الربّ لآدم هل أكلت من الشجرة التي أوصيتك أن لا تأكل منها، فقال آدم المرأة التي جعلتها معي هي التي أعطتني من الشجرة فأكلت، فقال الربّ الإله للمرأة ما هذا الذي فعلت، فقالت المرأة الحية التي أغرتني. تقول لنفسها ما هذا الكلام؟ (al-Sa'dāwī 2010, 164–65). أنا أكلت من الشجرة يا بدور وأكل معي كل المبدعين والمبدعات في كل مجالات المعرفة، من الفلسفة إلى الأدب والفن والعلم. قامت على أفكارهم كل ما نعيشه من تقدم، لم نأكل في حياتنا لئلا نأكل هذه الشجرة، إنما لذة المعرفة، لذة الحياة، إنما الحياة الحقيقية الحية (al-Sa'dāwī 2010, 184–85).

(When Badūr read the first pages of the Torah, she was shocked. Was this the word of God? Words that didn't make sense? God made a woman from Adam's rib and brought her to Adam. Adam said, "Now this bone and flesh is one of my bones and flesh". This is called a woman (*imra'ah*) because she was taken from a man (*imri'in*). // Badriyah said: Ages will return backwards along with changes in the movement of the planets, and the Earth around the sun. The universe was not created in six days, you are not a woman from Adam's rib. However, it was Adam who was born from the womb of a woman. Reason will be the future, a joke will not //.)

(// She (Badūr) opened the Torah and read it: God said to Adam, "Did you eat the fruit of the forbidden tree that I had given you my warning about?" Adam said, "This woman caused it; she gave me the fruit from the tree, so I ate it". Allah, the God, said to the woman, "What have you done?" Then the woman replied, "The snake seduced me." She (Badūr) whispered, "What is this word?" // I have eaten from the (forbidden) tree, Badūr, as have male and female creators in all fields

of knowledge, from philosophy to literature, and from art to science. The various advances that we enjoy are built on their thinking. In this life, we have never eaten anything more delicious than this fruit from the tree. It is the deliciousness of knowledge, the deliciousness of life. This is an essential and dynamic life. //)

It is important to put forward the deconstructive idea of the myth of Adam and Eve in the three contemporary Arabic literary works above. After all, the true mission of the presence of all religions is to provide “value” amid the crisis of human civilization and to build a more humane and dignified life order. The patriarchal culture that is perpetuated with theological justification must be rejected and deconstructed to reconstruct a more humanist and progressive religious discourse so that the mission of religion as a guide and guidance in life can be achieved.

Nāzik al-Malāikah (1923-2007) is an Iraqi-born female poet who wrote the poem *Thalj wa Nār*. In it, she challenged the myth of Adam and Eve with symbolic-metaphoric expressions, namely: “آدم مثل الثلج، وحواء نارية” (Adam is like snow and women are fire). Snow connotes passivity, cold, freezing, inertness, and stillness. Fire connotes activity, heat, forming, moving, and changing things. This poem talks about anger, denial, and the I-lyric’s claim for Adam’s domination over Eve, because the reality in Eve’s history has many potentials and powers that Adam did not recognize. Adam desperately needed Eve, even though he did not want to admit it.

The idea of I-lyric’s anger on patriarchal Adam is contained in the series of lines: // You’re asking what I want? No, leave me, don’t you ask // Do you think I’ll take it? I won’t be angry? I’m not shaken? // No, but I will rebel against you... You will eat my anger // When you leave, Adam, don’t ask questions about Eve // When you leave, you will remain longing // Like a thirsty sparrow unable to dream of water // And when you leave... then what will stay? // No, don’t ask... leave me folded in silence // Leave my stories and songs as they are // Leave me a cornered collection of riddles of rejection // O Adam, don’t ask questions... Your Eve is folded // Adam is like snow and Eve is fire // (Al-Malāikah 1997).

The symbolic expressions in this poem contain three meanings. First, the domineering Adam is portrayed as inferior, symbolized by “snow, a thirsty sparrow, a subject who continues to yearn for Eve”.

Second, Eve's superiority is symbolized by "a fire that is powerful and moving, has various histories and songs". Third, the patriarchal culture that degrades women is symbolized by the condition of Eve, who is "folded, cornered, a collection of puzzles, rejection, and silence".

Nāzik al-Malāikah is known as a pioneer of free poetry in Iraq and in the Arab world, both in terms of form and theme. Her effort in writing free poetry is also an effort to set herself free from various forms of shackles and traditional ties that imprison humanity. One of these shackles is the patriarchy that dominates the lives of Arab women. It discriminates them, deprives them of freedom, and eliminates their basic human rights. That is why, in many of her free poetry works, Nazik gives a voice of rebellion and voices of femininity to deconstruct masculinity (Bazi' 2018; Hanawy 2019).

In 1953, Nāzik al-Malāikah attended the Baghdad Women's Association conference with the theme "*al-Mar'ah Baina Ṭarafaini: al-Salbiyyah wa al-akhlāq*" (women between two ends: passivity and morality). In the forum, she criticized the problems of modern-contemporary women and the patriarchy of Arab society. She demanded the liberation of women from stagnation and passivity. The conference was influential in Baghdad and became an actual issue in the newspapers in Baghdad (Majīd 2007). It is said that she continues to voice her criticism of patriarchy in her works and lectures.

In 1989, the poem "Taktubīn al-Syi'r.. wa Auqa' Anā.." (You wrote the poem..and I signed it..) was written by Nizār Qabbānī (1923-1999). He got the nickname *Syā'ir al-Mar'ah* (poet on women), who was born in Damascus. The literary code as the deconstruction keyword is "المرأة لا تخرج من ضلع الرجل أبدا..// هو الذي يخرج من حوضها" (Women never came out of a man's rib // Men do come out of a woman's pond). The poet's claim on the mythical masculinity contained in his poetry has three meanings. First, the rib is a discourse of lies made by men. //It is a lie that a man created Eve from his rib // it was the man who came out of a woman's pond //. Second, the superiority of women in history. Third, the shackles of patriarchy that now degrade women. It is said in the poem: You are who you are, since 30 years ago // Since 300 years ago // Since 3000 years ago..// Like a storm caught in a glass //.

There is a keyword “history” that Nizār Qabbānī wrote in many of his poems, both explicitly and implicitly. For him, literature is an attempt by new thinking to break something and destroy old history (Qabbānī 1981, 75). Liberating Arab women must begin with tearing down the history made by men (Qabbānī 1981, 42–43). Many threats that shackle women include history, language, morality, and religion (Qabbānī 1983, 86). For this reason, the problems of men and women cannot be separated from historical, social, economic, and political facts (Qabbānī 1981, 30).

The poet believes that historical facts confirm that women were the first owners of civilization and historical wealth (*turāth*) that shaped the earth for thousands of years (Qabbānī 1993). That is why, in the poem, the words “pond”, “origin”, “estuary”, and “sun” are attached to women. It is a symbolic expression that emphasizes the superiority and autonomy of women. The poem says: // You are a complete woman in your existence // Your oil is from you.. // Your grain is from you.. // Your fire is from you.. // Your summer and your winter.. // Your lightning and thunder.. // Your rain and snow.. // Your waves and foam.. all are from you.. // Women are *beings* in their full existence, men are branches, women are the origins, men revolve around women, and women are suns that keep shining (Qabbānī 1989).

In 2009, the novel *Zīnah* [jewelry] (2010) by Nawāl al-Sa’dāwī (1931-2021) was published. This novel, written by the Egyptian female writer, tells the story of the patriarchal shackles experienced by Egyptian women who live in the contemporary world due to the theological assumptions of the myth of Adam and Eve in the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic holy books. Nawāl al-Sa’dāwī’s claim through her literary mark is “ولا المرأة أنت من ضلع آدم، بل جاء آدم من رحم امرأة” (it is not a woman who was born from Adam’s rib, but Adam who was born from a woman’s womb). Her criticism and claim on the patriarchy of the myth of Adam and Eve is theological-logical-scientific. This can be seen in the quote from the novel: “Read the development of new science, women were never born from Adam’s rib, Adam was born from a woman’s womb, reason will be the future, a joke will not”.

The mythical Eve has persuaded Adam to eat the forbidden fruit, and the cause of man’s fall on earth is dispelled with a very positive

interpretation by the novel *Zīnah*. It is said in the novel, “I have eaten from the (forbidden) tree Badūr, and so have the male and female creators in all fields of knowledge, from philosophy to literature, from art to science. The various advances that we enjoy are built on their thinking. In this life, we have never eaten anything more delicious than the fruit from this tree. It is the deliciousness of knowledge, the deliciousness of life. This is the essential and dynamic life.” (al-Sa’dāwī 2010).

In the novel, Nawāl al-Sa’dāwī’s critique is presented with theological-scientific arguments. The author criticizes the irrational understanding of religion and contradicts science. In the novel, the author criticizes the patriarchal construction of theology in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, which uses the myth of Adam and Eve as the theological justification for the perpetuation of patriarchal assumptions that oppress women. For Nawāl al-Sa’dāwī (1974; 1980; 2000; 2010), all assumptions of patriarchal theology are unreasonable and unreliable. The logic of deconstruction says that Adam was born from a woman’s womb because all humans must be born from a mother. The novel says, “reason is the future”, that is, the author invites us to understand theology in a logical-scientific manner.

The three contemporary Arabic literary works above have a common theme and purpose. All three of them provide rejection and criticism of the construction of androcentrism of the myth of Adam and Eve in the Arab world. The three writers share the fundamental beliefs that the inferiority of Arab women is not a natural reality but a product of patriarchal construction. In contrast to the early days of human history, women were very superior and glorified. The three works aim to deconstruct patriarchal theological myths that have persisted for thousands of years, since the emergence of the Torah. Furthermore, the three works reconstruct the egalitarian, humanist, and progressive discourse of Arab women. In sounding their criticism, these three works have different forms. Nāzik al-Malāikah’s criticism is symbolic-metaphoric, Nizār Qabbānī’s is historical-economic, while Nawāl al-Sa’dāwī’s combines theological, logical, and scientific approach

It is important to notice that the deconstruction carried out by the three Arab literary figures is a strategy to posit Arab women to have an

equal stance with men. The essential difference between men and women is designed to complement each other. For thousands of years, especially in the Arab world, the myth of Adam and Eve, which originated from the Torah, has been interpreted patriarchally and used as a theological legitimation that men (represented by Adam) are superior, justifying their oppression of women (represented by Eve) because of their inferiority.

This idea of binary opposition was then disputed by the Arab literary figures through reversal. Eve, who was initially positioned as an object and born (from the rib), now becomes the subject that gives birth. This is supported by the historical evidence and rational theology. This reversal of interpretation and binary positioning is a strategy to walk towards egalitarianism. It must be noticed that in ancient times in the Arab world, women were in a superior position. There was a clear matriarchy long before the patriarchy emerged.

If the historical evidence says that women were ever more prominent, glorious, and superior compared to men for thousands of years, it means that women were ever in the position of men in the current patriarchal era. Since both genders have ever been in the same position in society (in different times), it is important for us to build equality now. This gender equality is emphasized in the Koran, and even in all religions, that men and women both have noble worth and dignity as human beings.

Myth is a way of explaining something that expresses the form *sui generis* of human consciousness and free thoughts (Panikkar 1979, 4–5), an expression of unconscious desires that is more or less inconsistent (Ahimsa-Putra 2016, 79). In Islamic literature, there is a view which explains that some of the stories in the Koran happened and some are only symbolic (Naqrah 1971). Many Muslim intellectuals believe that the myth of Adam and Eve in the Koran is a symbolic story that can be interpreted in various ways: to explain the relationship between modern humans and science, the nature of humans as free beings who are free to choose, or the symbolism of humans when they were not conscious (in heaven) and after they were awake (faced challenges and develop science to strengthen their existence on earth (Iqbal 2021; Panikkar 1979, 41; Syahin 2004; Ṭaha 1969, al-Ṭab'ah al-Rābi'ah:87–89).

The analysis of the three contemporary Arabic works above can be seen in the following chart:

Data	Literary	Hermeneutics		Objectives
	Keywords (deconstruction)	Literary Sign (deconstruction)	Form (deconstruction)	
Data 1 (the poem of Nazik)	آدم مثل الثلج، وحواء نارية	سأثور عليك سيأكلني الغضب أترك أخباري وأناشيدي	Symbolic- metaphoric; patriarchy silences the rebellion and resistance of women who have a high status in history	1. Bringing up counter discourse 2. Affirming women's autonomy in history 3. Deconstru cting the patriarchal sexism of Arab- Islamic reasoning
Data 2 The poem of Nizar	هو (آدم) الذي من يخرج حوضها(حواء)	امرأة مكتمية بذاتها هكذا أنت مند ثلاثة آلاف سنة.. إعصار محبوس في زجاجة..//	Symbolic- historical- economical; patriarchy buries the history of the matriarchy and prehistoric women's economic superiority.	4. Affirming the rational and objective gender vision and mission of Islam.
Data 3 The novel of Nawāl al- Sa'dāwī	جاء آدم من رحم امرأة	علم الكون الجديد، العقل هو المستقبل شجرة العلم والمعرفة	Logical- scientific; patriarchy eliminates the rationality of Islamic theology and objectivity of scientific findings on the strength	

2. The Autonomy of Woman: Based on Historical-Scientific and Theological-Rationalistic Thinking

These three criticisms of contemporary Arabic literary works have a strong basis, both theological (religious dogma or the Koran) and rational (according to the evidence of scientific findings). In the Koran, there is not a single verse about ribs, because all humans are created from one soul [*nafs wāhidah*] (Q.S. 31: 28; 6: 98; 39: 6; 7: 189; 4: 1). The notion of Eve as a sinner is not contained in the Koran because Adam and Eve were both seduced by Satan (Q.S. al-Baqarah: 35-39; al-A'rāf: 19-25). The Koran also does not say that Adam was the first human being, and it is very possible that Adam was not the name of a human being, but a concept. Adam literally can also mean land (Hassan and Mernissi 1995). This is the value and idea of equality of mankind in the Koran, including the full equality of men and women.

The idea of the superiority of the quality of femininity in history, which is voiced by the three works above, also finds rational-scientific support. Archaeological evidence confirms the strong traces of matriarchal culture over thousands of years (Engels 2011; Latifi and Udasmoro 2020; Reed 2011). Therefore, in early human history, it was believed that women were the origin of life (*aṣl al-ḥayāh*). In the history of ancient Egypt, historical, anthropological, and archaeological evidence shows the high autonomy of women, so fully humanized, and even surpassing men, that gods were often imagined as women (al-Sa'dāwī 1974, 155). Empirical evidence can be examined 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 feminine (*muannath*) (Al-Sa'dawī and Izzat 2000, 184, 17; Latifi and Udasmoro 2020).

The findings of the historical, anthropological, and archaeological evidence that show the high autonomy of women are interesting as it aligns with the depiction in the three literary works under discussion. They provide the same basis for the claim that the patriarchal construction of the myth of Adam and Eve contradicts Islamic theology, historical facts,

and scientific findings. The Koran explains the equality of human dignity in both creation and quality. The differences that occur are caused by social construction. The superiority of female femininity is also in line with objective scientific findings.

The true mission of the presence of all religions is to provide "value" amid the crisis of human civilization to build a more humane and dignified life order. One form of value system crisis that is thousands of years old, as a result of historical processes that move with changes and developments in society, is the decline in the dignity of women in a patriarchal culture. It was in this oppressive patriarchal setting that world religions emerged and underwent an initial formation phase (Latifi 2020b).

In historical fact, the emergence of world religions with their holy figures always showed doctrines with the mission of justice, love, and strengthening human dignity, including the dignity of women. This reality can be seen in the footsteps of Gautama Buddha Siddhartha, Lao Tzu, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad pbuh. However, in subsequent developments, the doctrines and ritual systems of the world's religions were constructed in a patriarchal manner in line with the development of patriarchal culture, which dominates nearly the entire world (Sharma 2006).

It is this patriarchal culture that has a stronger influence on the patriarchal construction of world religions. Brahmanism featured male temples and gave rise to the dominance of male gods. Buddhism has a patriarchal social organizational structure that requires the submission of female priests. Hinduism and Tantric Buddhism have never fundamentally opposed patriarchal society. Taoism was formed in the dominance of men in Confucianism, where God Shang Ti is the highest male god who is identified with the sky or heaven. The Han Dynasty used religion to regulate society with a system of the Three Obediences for women (Young 2006, 9–10). The formation of old religions with a patriarchal pattern influenced each other in developing male domination, which was very strong during times of external threat, such as grazing, migration, or war (Young 2006, 12).

In monotheistic (Semitic) religions, patriarchal culture which constructs masculine religious doctrines is closely related to theological myths in the three holy books, which tell the story of Adam and Eve. This myth has a strong influence on the domination of men over women in the interpretation of all holy books, both the Torah, the Bible, and the Koran (Hassan and Mernissi 1995). Hassan (Hassan and Mernissi 1995, 43–44) explains that in Islam, Christianity, and Judaism share three theological assumptions that uphold male domination: men were God's main creation, women were the main cause of the fall from the Garden of Eden, and women were created for men.

The story of Adam's superiority and Eve's subordination appears first in the Torah and then causes the emergence of misogynistic views in Jewish doctrine. Among other things, women are the cause of men's distress (Khan in Hassan and Mernissi 1995, 86), and women are the main cause of trials for the people of Israel (Siddiqui in Hassan and Mernissi 1995, 86). In Christianity, Mother Mary's virginity is constructed into a patriarchal rule which requires the chastity of women and the loss of Mother Mary's position as mother god. The misogynistic construction of the Bible also includes narratives about adulterous women who are portrayed as having brought about the destruction of the world (al-Sa'dāwī 2010; Al-Sa'dawī and Izzat 2000).

Even though the symbolic expression of the Koran (*nafs wāḥidah*) provides a broad scope for humanist-democratic interpretation, it is unfortunate that misogynistic hadiths are preferred by the interpreters of the Koran and serve as theological assumptions for them in the process of interpreting the Koran. Apart from the hadith about ribs, other misogynistic traditions also appear, for example: the majority of the inhabitants of hell are women (Bukhārī, n.d., Vol.4: 136), the three causes of misfortune are women, houses, and horses (Bukhārī, n.d., Vol.3: 242), and the most dangerous slander for men is women (Bukhārī, n.d., Vol.3: 242).

Fatima Mernissi (1994) conducted research on the above misogynistic hadiths by using various main references, including the Book of Ijabah by Imam Zarkasyi which contains various corrections by Aisyah (the wife of the Prophet Muhammad) on misogynistic hadiths that

contradict the behavior of the Prophet Muhammad which upholds women, Asqalani's work (about the biographies of the Prophet's companions), and Nasa'i's Sunan, which contains another version of the hadith that contradicts the misogynist hadith.

In their analysis, Mernissi (1994) explains that Abu Bakrah and Abu Hurairah, who are known to have narrated misogynistic hadiths, apparently have a weak memory and have lied in testimony of adultery so that they were whipped by the caliph Umar Bin Khatab. Mernissi also criticized Imam Bukhārī, that although Imam Bukhārī was known to be careful in narrating hadiths, the misogynistic hadiths he narrated turned out to lack accuracy, because he did not feel the need to include some of Aisyah's very important criticisms and corrections as well as hadiths another, different version of the misogynistic ideas he chronicles.

In line with this view, Ahmad Amin also emphasized the significance of the contextualization of hadith. In his book *Fajr al-Islam*, he quotes a hadith from Abu Sa'id al-Khudri that the Prophet said: "Do not write anything from me, keep the text of the Koran safe, and whoever writes other than the Koran from me must be removed." The Prophet's reason was that it would not bind humans, because the Prophet was aware that everything would change as time and circumstances changed (Engineer 2007, 191–92).

Based on the explanation above, it is not wrong to criticize misogynist hadith because understanding religion is a process that never stops. A comprehensive understanding of religious texts by considering various sides through common sense and the development of the times is a priority. This is important for developing a balanced understanding of certain religious texts which seem ahumanist, by emphasizing the esoteric values of the Koran which uphold universal humanist values.

In religious discourse, patriarchal construction is caused by internal and external factors. Internally, it is related to the irrational interpretation of religion, the loss of contextuality, and the orthodoxy of religious education. External factors are related to economic factors with the pattern of ancient and modern capitalism, and political factors, and the politicization of religious fundamentalism (Latifi 2020a; Latifi and Udasmoro 2020). The bias of the language of scripture and religion is due

to the context of the emergence of world religions in a dominant and hegemonic patriarchal culture (Al-Sa'dawi 1980; Latifi, Udasmoro, and J 2019; Sharma 2006).

Patriarchy is a form of oppression. For this reason, holy figures as religious bearers always teach religious doctrines and practices against all forms of shackles that oppress mankind. They uphold human values such as love, justice, and brotherhood and fight for the fate of women. This reality is seen in the footsteps of Siddhartha Buddha Gautama, Lao Tzu, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad pbuh.

C. CONCLUSION

Literary works have the power to deconstruct old culture with a new perspective in viewing and rearranging human culture so that it becomes humanist and egalitarian. The three contemporary Arabic literary works produced by Iraqi, Damascus, and Egyptian writers show progressive and visionary ideas for the enforcement of the autonomy of Arab women (in particular) and those outside of Arabia (generally), as well as men who have the same dignity and worth dignified as a human being.

The myth of Adam and Eve, which is generally patriarchal, is suspected, rejected, and criticized by the three contemporary Arabic literary works. Eve, who was generally believed to be born from Adam's rib, has been deconstructed by reversing her binary opposition, portraying Adam as born of a woman. The beliefs of the three writers are strongly correlated with the findings of historical, scientific, and economic facts that before the emergence of patriarchy, women were highly respected and held high positions with intact human dignity. Through deconstruction in their symbolic, historical, and theological-scientific expressions, these three contemporary Arabic literary works fight for the independence of Arab women and restore their degraded human dignity.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to thank *Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat* (LPPM) UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, which has funded this research in 2022.

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