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MASCULINITY PROTEST: REVEALING INFERIORITY IN MEN THROUGH NIZAR QABBANI'S *ASYHADU ALLA IMRA'ATAN ILLA ANTI*

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Abstract: Nizar Qabbani, a distinguished Arab poet from Syria, is widely recognized for his writing style, which, despite its linguistic simplicity, conveys profound meaning. Owing to this characteristic, his poetic works have garnered considerable scholarly attention within the field of Arabic literary studies. One of his notable poems, Asyhadu Alla Imra'atan Illa Anti, has frequently been examined for its thematic portrayal of love and womanhood. However, previous research has predominantly focused on the poem's content, with limited attention given to the narrative voice—specifically, the first-person pronoun "I"—through which the poem's message is articulated. This narrative persona, interpreted as a representation of the male subject, is portrayed as occupying a position of inferiority. This study aims to investigate the depiction of male inferiority within the poem. Employing a qualitative method, the research analyzes the text by collecting words, phrases, and sentences through note-taking techniques. The data are subsequently examined using a semiotic approach and content analysis, informed by Adlerian psychoanalytic theory. The findings suggest that the manifestation of male inferiority in the poem is closely linked to societal expectations imposed on men, particularly within the framework of patriarchal cultural structures.

الملخص: يعد نزار قباني، الشاعر العربي البارز من سوريا، واحدا من أكثر الشعراء تميزا بفضل أسلوبه الذي يجمع بين البساطة اللغوية وعمق الدلالة. وبفضل هذه السمة، حظيت أعماله الشعرية باهتمام واسع في دراسات الأدب العربي. وتعد قصيدته "أشهد أن لا امرأة إلا أنت" من أبراز نصوصه التي نالت اهتماما بحثيا متكررا، ولا سيما في تناول موضعي الحب والأنثوية. ومع ذالك، ركزت الدراسات السابقة في معظمها على المحتوى الموضوعي للفصيدة، مع إغفال نسبي لدور

الصوت السردي، أي ضمير المتكلم "أنأ" تتشكل من خلاله رسالة القصيدة. ويفهم هذا الصوت السردي، بوصفه تمثيلًا للذات الذكورية، على أنه يحتل موقعًا من الدونية. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى الكشف عن مظاهر الدونية الذكورية في القصيدة. وتعتمد منهجًا نوعيًا. يقوم على تحليل النص من خلال جمع الكلمات والعبارات والجمل باستخدام تقنية التدوين. وتحلل البيانات لاحقًا عبر المنهج السيميائي وتحليل المحتوى، بالاستناد إلى النظرية النفسية التحليلية الأدلرية. وتشير النتائج إلى أن تجلي الدونية الذكورية في القصيدة مرتبط ارتباطًا وثيقًا بالتوقعات الاجتماعية المفروضة على الرجل، ولا سيما ضمن البنى الثقافية الأبوية.

Introduction

Nizar Qabbani was an Arab poet born in Damascus, renowned for his poetry centered on themes of love, women, politics, and resistance. He composed his works using simple, everyday language while still conveying profound meaning. He is recognized as one of the few poets capable of developing a new poetic language that became his distinctive hallmark. He successfully broke away from literary stagnation by blending the authenticity of classical Arabic with the fluidity of colloquial expression (Abdul & Al-Ayoubi, 2023). In addition, Qabbani is regarded as a prominent poet due to his remarkable ability to articulate emotions through carefully crafted language, as evidenced by his enduring popularity and the wide translation of his anthologies into various languages. This distinctive stylistic approach has made his poetry a significant subject of scholarly inquiry, particularly within the field of Arabic literary studies (Haikal, 2021). This observation aligns with the view that many literary scholars have examined the significance of Qabbani's poetry in relation to its literary and social values (Ma, 2024).

Among his prominent literary contributions is the poem *Asyhadu Alla Imra'atan Illa Anti* (hereafter referred to as AAIIA), which appears in an anthology of the same title. The poem is particularly notable for its declarative and intimate tone, through which the speaker constructs an exclusive and almost sacred image of the beloved woman, reflecting Qabbani's distinctive poetic strategy in redefining femininity and desire. In his dissertation, Alkhalil describes the poem as one of the most delicate and emotionally resonant love poems in Arabic literature; however, the analysis does not explore its semiotic dimensions in depth {Formatting Citation}.

Responding to this gap, Utami conducted an interpretive analysis of AAIIA by

applying three of the four stages of textual interpretation proposed by Michael Riffaterre. Her findings highlight the narrator's profound admiration for a woman who embodies both gentleness and strength of character. The poem portrays the woman as a transformative presence in the speaker's life, while the male figure is depicted as being shaped by this relationship (Utami, 2012).

Building on a similar analytical approach, Rahim argues that AAIIA is intertextually linked to Qabbani's broader poetic works and incorporates thematic elements from the classic tale of Layla and Majnun. Similarly, Hayati and Syafaah observe that the poem emphasizes the essential traits of the woman idealized and deeply loved by the poet (Hayati & Syafaah, 2022). Using a genetic structuralism approach, Zuhriyah argues that Arab societal views on the portrayal of women significantly influenced the creation of AAIIA (Zuhriyah, 2014). Furthermore, Zamroni and Thoriq, through their application of Van Dijk's discourse analysis, found that AAIIA portrays the woman as the most beloved wife—nurturing, devoted, and steadfastly present through both joy and hardship (Zamroni & Thoriq, 2022). Meanwhile, Mahfudhoh and Firdausi identify elements of intimacy, passion, and commitment within the poem, which together conhayatistruct a multidimensional concept of love encompassing romantic, companionate, and enduring forms (Mahfudhoh & Firdausi, 2023). In a related interpretation, Pambudi concludes that the poet consistently positions the figure of the woman as the soul or essence of his poetry, a portrayal that is also evident in AAIIA (Pambudi, 2023).

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that previous studies have predominantly focused on the depiction of women and love, with little attention given to the character of the "I" (the narrator), who is believed to represent the male figure. Unlike conventional portrayals of masculinity, this poem presents a male character who appears emotionally dependent on a female figure. This depiction aligns with the argument of Famelsi and Basri, who suggest that feelings of inferiority may lead men—particularly husbands—to experience insecurity, inadequacy, and hesitation, thereby impairing their decision-making abilities. Therefore, this study aims to explore patterns of male inferiority in the poem AAIIA by drawing on Alfred Adler's theory of masculinity protest (Famelsi & Basri, 2017). Eirik further notes that Adler was among the early critics of Freud's theory of gender, although similar critiques had previously been raised by feminist scholars (Eirik, 1998).

Gender paradigms constructed by society are often assumed to reflect individual experiences. However, the lived realities of men and women within patriarchal societies frequently diverge from these constructions (Adler, 1956). Masculine and feminine traits

are not inherent or natural attributes; rather, they are shaped by social norms and expectations. These constructed roles affect not only women but also men. This condition gives rise to what Adler terms *masculine protest*, a concept that reflects men's internal struggle to fulfill socially imposed standards of masculinity. Men often experience significant pressure to appear dominant and assertive in accordance with patriarchal norms. This process typically begins in childhood, as boys are conditioned to adopt masculine traits in order to maintain their perceived superiority as males (Adler, 2013).

This study, therefore, seeks to address the existing gap in scholarship on Nizar Qabbani's poem AAIIA by shifting the analytical focus from the representation of women to the construction of the male subject, particularly the narrative voice. It aims to identify and analyze patterns of male inferiority within the poem. In doing so, the study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of gender dynamics in Arabic poetry and offers a fresh perspective on Qabbani's poetic discourse beyond conventional readings of love and femininity.

Method

This study employs a descriptive-analytical approach, which involves describing the literal facts identified in the data and subsequently conducting an analytical process (Ratna, 2021). Through this approach, the study aims to systematically describe and interpret various elements within the literary text in order to obtain a deeper understanding of the research object.

Data collection was conducted through library research, followed by observation and note-taking techniques. The data were obtained through careful and repeated readings of the poem that serves as the object of the study. The process then continued by recording relevant parts of the text that correspond to the research focus. Data analysis was carried out through heuristic and hermeneutic readings. Heuristic reading is used to identify the linguistic meaning of the poem, while hermeneutic reading serves as a continuation of this process to reveal deeper underlying meanings. The hermeneutic, or retroactive, reading is conducted by considering literary conventions, particularly the aspect of indirect expression (Sangidu, 2007). Furthermore, the data were analyzed using content analysis based on Alfred Adler's concept of masculine protest. The results of the analysis are presented descriptively in order to address the research problems.

Result and Discussion

Men in Patriarchal Culture: Between Privilege and Social Pressure

Patriarchy is a system in which men hold dominant power within social, economic, political, and cultural structures. As a result, this system often places women in subordinate positions, where their roles and rights are frequently restricted. In many Arab countries, patriarchy is not merely a social construct but is also legitimized through interpretations of religious law, longstanding traditions, and deeply rooted social norms. Interpretations of verses related to polygamy, divorce, disobedience (*nusyuz*), the hijab, and testimony are often used to justify the marginalization of women. Such interpretations ultimately undermine the inherent dignity and humanity of women (Latifi & Udasmoro, 2020).

In patriarchal societies, men undeniably enjoy greater advantages and opportunities compared to women. They are more likely to occupy leadership positions and have broader access to economic resources. Consequently, men tend to receive greater respect and recognition within social structures. These privileges, however, have direct implications for women. In the workplace, women are often underestimated, particularly in leadership roles. Moreover, they frequently bear a double burden due to domestic expectations, requiring them to work harder to gain societal recognition (Banani & Febriyanti, 2024).

Nevertheless, such privileges are not always beneficial for men. This is evident in the societal expectations imposed upon them to embody specific traits associated with masculinity. Like gender, masculinity is a social construct that shapes collective perceptions of what it means to be a "real man." This mindset is often internalized as a compulsory identity for men. This phenomenon arises from the differentiation of gender roles, perpetuated by a sexist cultural framework. Physical differences between men and women are frequently used as the basis for assigning traits deemed appropriate for each gender. As a result, patriarchal culture tends to assume that men inherently possess masculine traits, while women are expected to exhibit feminine characteristics (Larasati & Astuti, 2019).

Men are expected to fulfill various social roles, such as being leaders, breadwinners, emotionally resilient, and socially assertive. In this regard, Connell and Messerschmidt introduced the concept of hegemonic masculinity, which refers to the dominant form of masculinity that requires men to be strong, competitive, and emotionally restrained, as emotional expression is often perceived as a sign of weakness. These expectations significantly affect men's psychological well-being. The cultural pressures of patriarchy

can lead to stress, dissatisfaction, and mental health issues. Moreover, patriarchal systems restrict the diversity of masculine expressions and hinder men from developing healthy interpersonal relationships due to the fear of being perceived as weak (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

This reality is also reflected in the narrator of the poem AAIIA, who is believed to represent a male figure, namely Nizar Qabbani. He was an Arab poet and diplomat from Syria who demonstrated a talent for writing romantic poetry from an early age. He was raised in a well-off Arab middle-class family. His father was a chocolate entrepreneur who was also actively involved in resisting the French occupation, while his mother devoted herself entirely to the family. Consequently, Qabbani was largely raised by his mother and had limited emotional interaction with his father (Alkhalil, 2005). This pattern is common in patriarchal societies, where child-rearing and domestic responsibilities are typically assigned to women, while men are expected to focus on public affairs.

At the age of 15, Qabbani experienced a tragic event: his sister, Wisal, took her own life after being forced to marry a man she did not love. For Qabbani, this was a deeply complex tragedy. On one hand, it caused profound emotional trauma; on the other, it significantly influenced his literary development. This event became a major catalyst in shaping his role as a vocal advocate for women's emancipation (Assadi, 2023).

In patriarchal Arab societies, men hold the highest authority. Within the family, the father exercises control over other members, and his decisions are often considered absolute. Other family members, especially women, are typically not permitted to express their opinions. Thus, the father's authority as the head of the family becomes unquestionable. In Qabbani's case, his sister's suicide can be interpreted as a form of escapism, resistance, and helplessness. The loss of her autonomy demanded a tragic form of compensation, even at the cost of her own life (Ibrahim, 2016).

Expressions of Masculine Inferiority in Asyhadu Alla Imra'atan Illa Anti

In Arab societies where the majority of the population adheres to Islam, religious interpretations, traditions, and legal frameworks can give rise to misogynistic perspectives that consistently position women as inferior (Latifi & Udasmoro, 2020). However, in 1978, Nizar Qabbani composed the poem AAIIA, which presents a contrasting perspective. The lyrical subject, representing a male figure, is instead positioned in a state of inferiority. The patterns of male inferiority within the poem can be identified through the following analysis:

Datum 1:

أشهد أن لا امرأة
أتقنت اللعبة إلا أنت
واحتملت حماقتي
عشرة أعوام كما احتملت
واصطبرت على جنوني مثلما صبرت
وقلمت أظافري
ورتبت دفاتري
وأدخلتني روضة الأطفال
إلا أنت
(Qabbani, 1999)

I bear witness that no woman...
has mastered the game like you...
and endured my foolishness...
for ten years as you did...
and patiently bore my madness as I did...
and trimmed my nails...
and organized my notebooks...
and enrolled me in kindergarten...
except you

Datum 1 represents the opening section of the poem AAIIA, consisting of nine lines. The first line contains the phrase أشهد أن لا امرأة, which undergoes enjambment and extends into the subsequent lines, from the second to the ninth. This enjambment serves to elaborate on the various qualities admired by the lyrical subject in the woman described in the poem. Meanwhile, the phrase إلا أنت is repeated as a rhetorical device to reinforce the narrator's testimony that only one woman holds such a meaningful place in his life. Both the enjambment and the recurring declaration أشهد أن لا امرأة appear throughout the poem to emphasize the depth and exclusivity of the narrator's admiration.

In the second line appears the phrase أتقنت اللعبة. The verb أتقن, meaning "to perfect" or "to master," indicates that the subject—the woman—is highly skilled and proficient in a particular domain. The word اللعبة typically connotes something associated with children's play or toys (Media, 2010). Therefore, the phrase can be interpreted to suggest that the narrator perceives the woman as a maternal figure who intuitively understands and responds to what he enjoys—much like a mother who knows what her child loves.

The third and fourth lines contain the word احتملت, which can be interpreted as the ability to endure or remain patient, while عشرة أعوام is used symbolically to represent the age of puberty or early maturity. Based on this, the lines suggest that the woman treats the narrator as a child who does not yet understand the world. He appears emotionally dependent on her presence and portrays her as someone who patiently tolerates his ignorance, much like a mother who endures her child's lack of knowledge until maturity. In the fifth line, the expression واصطبرت على appears, which conveys a deeper level of patience, including the restraint of anger (Media, 2010). This line further characterizes the woman as someone who possesses extraordinary patience in dealing with the narrator's emotional instability or "madness."

The sixth and seventh lines contain the phrases وقلمت أظافري and ورتبت دفاتري, which literally translate to "she trimmed my nails" and "she arranged my notebooks." These expressions reinforce the earlier depiction. In addition to highlighting his ignorance, the narrator reveals a sense of helplessness and an inability to care for himself. In the eighth line, the phrase وأدخلتني روضة الأطفال appears. The term روضة الأطفال refers to "kindergarten," symbolizing the earliest stage of formal education, where a child begins to explore the external world (Solang et al., 2024). In this context, the line emphasizes that the woman introduces the speaker to a new, comforting, and joyful world for the first time.

Based on the analysis above, Datum 1 illustrates that the lyrical subject, representing a male figure, is portrayed as childlike and not yet capable of functioning independently, thus requiring assistance from others. This narrative constructs the idea that the narrator is highly dependent on the presence of a woman in his life. Such a portrayal stands in contrast to traditional notions of masculinity. While men are commonly characterized as independent, the narrator in this section is depicted as dependent (Adler, 2013). This part of the poem suggests that men, too, may rely heavily on women, to the extent that they appear unable to navigate daily life without their support.

This portrayal can be interpreted through the concept of masculinity protest. According to Adler, masculinity protest emerges as a psychological response to feelings of inferiority, particularly when individuals perceive themselves as lacking power, autonomy, and control (Rostami & Eslamieh, 2018). In this context, the depiction of the male narrator as childlike and dependent reflects an underlying sense of inferiority within relational dynamics. Rather than asserting dominance, the narrator implicitly acknowledges his reliance on the woman, thereby revealing a tension between socially

constructed ideals of masculine independence and the emotional reality experienced by the male subject (Larasati & Astuti, 2019). Through this tension, the poem exposes the fragility of masculine identity and illustrates how masculinity protest manifests not only through overt assertions of power but also through confessional expressions that reveal vulnerability and dependence.

Datum 2:

أشهد أن لا امرأة..
قد أخذت من اهتمامي..
نصف ما أخذت..
واستعمرتني مثلما فعلت..
وحررتني مثلما فعلت..
(Qabbani, 1999)

I bear witness that no woman...
has taken from my attention...
half as much as she has...
has colonized me as she has...
has liberated me as she has…

Datum 2 comprises lines eight to twelve, found in the second section of the poem. Similar to Datum 1, this section also employs enjambment (Pambudi, 2023). This series of statements suggests that the narrator's attention is entirely absorbed by the woman; no one else is capable of capturing or diverting his focus. The phrases واستعمرتني and وحررتني are typically used in political or colonial contexts (Utami, 2012). However, in this poem, they function metaphorically to express the woman's psychological and emotional dominance over the narrator. He feels that he no longer possesses sovereignty over himself, as his entire being—both body and soul—has been overtaken by her presence.

From these expressions, it becomes evident that the woman is portrayed as the dominant figure, capable of subduing the man according to her will. This portrayal stands in contrast to dominant societal discourses, which often position men as superior to women in both public and domestic spheres (Alkhalil, 2005). Nevertheless, the narrative constructed in this poem suggests that there is nothing inherently problematic about a man experiencing vulnerability or being dominated by a woman. Rather, it affirms the essential presence of women as equal and integral members of society.

This representation can also be understood within the framework of masculinity protest in Adlerian psychology. The male narrator appears to confront his vulnerability by acknowledging the woman's power over him. Such a portrayal reflects a symbolic tension between societal expectations and the emotional experiences of the male subject (Adler, 2013). Consequently, the poem illustrates how masculine identity becomes unstable when the male figure recognizes the strong presence and influence of the woman within the relationship.

Datum 3:

أشهد أن لا امرأة
تعاملت معي كطفل عمره شهران..
إلا أنت..
وقدمت لي لبن العصفور،
والأزهار، والألعاب،
إلا أنت..
قد جعلت طفولتي..
تمتد للخمسين.. إلا أنت
(Qabbani, 1999)

I bear witness that no woman
treated me like a two-month-old baby...
except you...
And offered me bird's milk,
And flowers, and toys,
except you...
You made my childhood...
extend to fifty...except you

Datum 3 represents the third section of the poem AAIIA. As in the previous sections, this part also employs enjambment (Pambudi, 2023). In the second line, a simile is used to compare the woman's treatment of the narrator to the care given to a two-month-old infant. This stage falls within the so-called golden period of child development. The age range from two weeks to two years is considered a critical period for personality formation, during which the foundations of adult character begin to develop. At this stage, caregivers are expected to provide heightened attention and foster the child's sense of confidence (Suryana et al., 2022).

Thus, the line suggests that the woman treats the narrator with exceptional care—nurturing, guiding, and fulfilling his needs while also instilling a sense of confidence. Such treatment makes the speaker feel safe and comfortable in her presence.

The fourth and fifth lines contain the words "milk of birds," "flower," and "toys," which carry metaphorical meanings. The "milk of birds," particularly that of a sparrow, symbolizes something unattainable or impossible, while "flowers" and "toys" represent joy and delight (Media, 2010). These expressions suggest that the woman is capable of providing both the impossible and sources of happiness. When the tenth and eleventh lines are combined, they form the sentence قد جعلت طفولتي تمتد للخمسين, in which the word خمسين refers to the age of fifty, symbolizing an extended period of time. This sentence can be interpreted as the woman's ability to prolong or restore the narrator's childhood—a time associated with love, affection, and protection—into adulthood.

From this analysis, it can be concluded that Datum 3 reinforces the message conveyed in Datum 1. Men do not always wish to appear strong, bold, or resilient. At times, they desire to break free from societal expectations (Famelsi & Basri, 2017). The poem suggests a longing for a return to childhood—a phase characterized by freedom, play, and the absence of pressure to embody idealized masculine traits.

Datum 4:

أشهد أن لا امرأة..
تقدير أن تقول إنها النساء.. إلا أنت
وإن في سرتها..
مركز هذالكون
أشهد أن لا امرأة..
تتبعها الأشجار عندما تسير.. إلا أنت..
ويشرب الحمام من مياه جسمها الثلجي.. إلا أنت..
وتأكل الخراف من حشيش إبطها الصيفي.. إلا أنت
أشهد أن لا امرأة..
إختصرت بكلمتين قصة الأنوثة
وحرضت رجولتي علي.. إلا أنت..
(Qabbani, 1999)

I bear witness that no woman...

can claim to be woman... except you
And that in her navel...
lies the center of this universe
I bear witness that no woman...
is followed by trees when she walks... except you...
And doves drink from the icy waters of her body... except you...
And sheep graze on the summer grass of her armpit... except you
I bear witness that no woman...
has summarized the story of femininity in two words
And stirred my masculinity against me... except you...

Datum 4 represents the fourth section of the poem AAIIA. In the second line appears the phrase أشهد أن لا امرأة تقدير أن تقول إنها النساء. This sentence contains the term النساء with the definite article *al-jinsiyah*, a grammatical marker used to emphasize specificity and general truth within the noun it accompanies. Thus, the line conveys that the narrator perceives the woman as possessing strong self-confidence and openly affirming her identity as a "woman," embracing the qualities associated with femininity.

When the third and fourth lines are combined, they form the sentence وإن في سرتها مركز هذا الكون. The word سرتها serves as a semantic cue for the phrase مركز هذا الكون (the center of the universe). This phrase alludes to the sun, a central life-giving force. When associated with سرتها, the meaning shifts metaphorically to the womb, located beneath the navel. Just as the sun sustains life in the solar system, the womb is portrayed as the origin of life itself. Thus, the line establishes a symbolic parallel between the sun and the womb as central sources of existence.

In the sixth line, the phrase تتبعها الأشجار عندما تسير appears. The word الأشجار symbolizes lush and fertile nature, suggesting that even nature is drawn to the woman's presence. In the eighth line, the phrase ويشرب الحمام من مياه جسمها الثلجي is found. The word مياه (water) represents the essential source of life, while pigeons symbolize a return to safety and peace. This imagery suggests that the woman embodies a source of serenity and life for those around her. In the tenth line, the phrase تأكل الخراف من حشيش إبطها الصيفي appears. The word الخراف (sheep) refers to beings that require guidance, while حشيش إبطها الصيفي evokes imagery of nourishment, coolness, and fertility (Media, 2010). These expressions collectively portray the woman as a central, sustaining, and independent figure upon whom others depend.

In the thirteenth line, the phrase إختصرت بكلمتين قصة الأنوثة appears. The term قصة الأنوثة (the story of womanhood) refers to qualities such as love, affection, and devotion. The narrator suggests that the woman embodies and expresses this essence in a profound

and concentrated form. In the fourteenth line, the phrase وحرضت رجولتي علي appears. The verb حرض (to evoke or to summon) and the noun رجولتي (my masculinity) indicate that the woman has the power to awaken the narrator's latent masculine identity, which had been suppressed by his sense of inferiority.

From this analysis, it is evident that the form of masculinity protest that emerges involves a surrender of control within the male self. This is reflected in a shift of dominance, where men no longer occupy positions of authority. The narrator's masculinity undergoes transformation, resulting in internal tension. Masculinity, typically associated with control and authority, is challenged by the force of femininity. As in the previous data, Datum 4 reveals a pattern of introverted masculinity protest. Rather than asserting dominance, the narrator positions himself in a state of awe and submission as a form of compensation for his inferiority.

Datum 5:

أشهد أن لا امرأة
قد غيرت شرائع العالم إلا أنت..
وغيرت..
خريطة الحلال والحرام
(Qabbani, 1999)

I bear witness that no woman
has ever changed the laws of the world except you...
and changed...
the map of what is permissible and forbidden.

Datum 5 is derived from lines six to ten of the fifth section of the poem. Similar to the previous data, this section also demonstrates enjambment (Hayati & Syafaah, 2022). The phrase شرائع العالم, found in line seven, symbolizes the social rules and norms governing society. Meanwhile, the phrase خريطة الحلال والحرام, appearing in line nine, contains the word خريطة, which metaphorically refers to a guiding framework. When combined with الحلال and الحرام—terms denoting what is permissible and forbidden—the phrase represents a moral and legal compass upheld by society (Media, 2010). This suggests that the woman possesses the power to reshape established norms and cultural traditions (Assadi, 2023).

From this analysis, it is evident that Datum 5 reflects a form of masculinity protest that emerges when the male figure experiences an identity crisis triggered by the presence of a dominant and transformative female figure. Through the narrator's acknowledgment that the woman can alter social rules and moral boundaries, the poem illustrates a sense of submission and loss of control in the face of feminine power that transcends traditional constructions of masculinity (Rostami & Eslamieh, 2018). When the woman becomes the center of meaning and desire, destabilizing the boundaries between the lawful and the forbidden, the male figure is no longer the guardian of norms but instead undergoes profound internal conflict. In this context, masculinity protest is manifested through excessive glorification, functioning as a compensatory response to the narrator's sense of inferiority and perceived threat.

Datum 6:

أشهد أن لا امرأة..
تجتاحني، في لحظات العشق، كالزلزال
تحرقني.. تغرقني..
تشعلني.. تطفئني..
تكسرني نصفين كالهلال..
أشهد أن لا امرأة..
تحتل نفسي أطول احتلال..
وأجمل احتلال
(Qabbani, 1999)

I bear witness that no woman...
Overwhelms me, in moments of passion, like an earthquake
Burns me... Drowns me... Ignites me... Extinguishes me...
Breaks me in two like a crescent moon...
I bear witness that no woman...
Occupies my soul with the longest occupation...
And the most beautiful occupation

Datum 6 comprises the first to the eighth lines of the sixth section of the poem AAIIA. In the second line, the phrase تجتاحني، في لحظات العشق، كالزلزال appears. This line contains a simile that likens العشق (intense longing or passion) to الزلزال (an earthquake). An earthquake is a sudden shift in the Earth's crust that causes tremors on the surface, with varying intensity (Media, 2010). Similarly, longing or desire generates emotional

tremors within the heart, fluctuating in strength. This parallel establishes a connection between natural and emotional turbulence. Thus, the line conveys that the narrator experiences a constant longing for the woman; in her absence, he is overwhelmed by emotional instability and an intense desire to reunite with her (Banani & Febriyanti, 2024).

In the following lines, the poem reads: تحرقني تغرقني تشعلني تطفئني تكسرنeirik ي نصفين كالهلال. This sequence of verbs portrays the narrator's complete emotional surrender and vulnerability in response to the woman's presence. It illustrates both his dependence on her and the fragility he experiences in her absence.

In the eighth and ninth lines, the poem states: تحتل نفسي أطول احتلال وأجمل احتلال, which translates to "she occupies my soul with the longest and most beautiful occupation." The verb احتل (to occupy) can also be interpreted as "to take over" (Media, 2010). This line reinforces the preceding imagery of helplessness, suggesting that the woman exerts a profound influence over every aspect of the narrator's being. She is not merely an object of admiration but a powerful presence capable of shaping and directing his inner world (Zamroni & Thoriq, 2022).

In this excerpt, Qabbani presents a subtle yet incisive form of masculinity protest. The narrator is portrayed as having lost control over himself due to the emotional and existential dominance of the woman. Through metaphors of catastrophe—such as "shaking like an earthquake," "burning," "drowning," and "being split in two like a crescent moon"—masculinity is no longer depicted as stable and dominant, but as fragile, fractured, and subdued by the force of love (Ibrahim, 2016). This total surrender culminates in the narrator's acknowledgment that the woman continuously occupies and shapes his inner being. These expressions create a tension between suffering and beauty, ultimately revealing that the male figure is no longer the controlling subject but the object of feminine power. Here, masculinity protest emerges not through overt resistance, but through a confessional recognition of the woman's superiority, which destabilizes the foundation of male identity.

Despite these findings, this study acknowledges several limitations. The analysis focuses on a single poem, providing a relatively narrow basis for drawing broader conclusions about the manifestation of male inferiority in relation to societal expectations. As such, it remains uncertain whether the patterns identified are specific to this poem or reflect a broader tendency in Qabbani's poetic works or in wider cultural discourses on

gender relations. Therefore, further research is needed to examine a broader corpus of his poetry or other literary texts in order to verify and compare these findings.

Conclusion

Nizar Qabbani is one of the most prominent modern Arab poets, widely recognized for works that place love and women at the center of poetic expression. One of his notable poems, AAIIA, not only conveys the emotional depth of love but also encapsulates complex layers of meaning related to gender dynamics, particularly masculinity. The poem can be interpreted as a representation of masculinity protest.

Rather than expressing protest through aggression or dominance—traits often associated with hegemonic or toxic masculinity—the male narrator reveals vulnerability. He expresses awe toward a woman portrayed as so extraordinary that she disrupts and reshapes his masculine identity. In this context, masculinity protest emerges in an introspective and reflective form. It is evident in the narrator's acknowledgment that male identity is not solely defined by strength, control, or superiority, but also by fragility, emotional submission, and a sense of inferiority in the presence of dominant feminine power.

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