



Deconstruction of Hierarchical Relation in the Short Story ash-Shobiyyu al-A'raj by Taufiq Yusuf Awwad

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Purpose

Unlike previous studies focusing on the intrinsic aspects of Ash-Shabiyyu al-A'raj, this study examines the instability of hierarchical relations through deconstructive analysis. It criticizes the representation of hierarchical relations in this short story.

Method

This research is a descriptive qualitative study with a literary sociology approach that integrates Michel Foucault's concept of power-knowledge relations and Jacques Derrida's deconstruction theory. The research data consisted of primary data in the form of the short story Ash-Shabiyyu al-A'raj and secondary data including books, articles, and relevant previous studies collected through close reading. The collected data were then recorded, classified, and analyzed based on Foucault's concept of power relations and Derrida's deconstructive framework.

Results/findings

The findings reveal binary opposition between superior and inferior characters. However, these oppositions are deconstructed through evidence found within and beyond the text. The deconstruction is reflected in a character initially positioned as subordinate who later transforms into a courageous figure after mastering martial arts.

Conclusion

This study shows that the short story Ash-Shabiyyu al-A'raj constructs a hierarchy of power through binary oppositions. Through Derrida's deconstructive perspective and Foucault's theory of power relations, this hierarchy is proven not to be fixed due to acts of resistance.

Keywords

Ash-Shabiyyu al-A'raj, deconstruction, hierarchical relation

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Abstrak

Tujuan

Berbeda dengan penelitian-penelitian sebelumnya yang berfokus pada aspek intrinsik sastra, penelitian ini mengkaji ketidakstabilan relasi hierarkis dalam cerpen Ash-Shabiyyu al-A'raj, melalui analisis dekonstruksi.

Metode

Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian deskriptif kualitatif dengan pendekatan sosiologi sastra yang memadukan konsep relasi kuasa-pengetahuan Michel Foucault dan teori dekonstruksi Jacques Derrida. Data penelitian terdiri atas data primer berupa cerpen Ash-Shabiyyu al-A'raj karya Taufik Yusuf Awwad dan data sekunder berupa buku, artikel, serta penelitian terdahulu yang dikumpulkan melalui teknik close reading (pembacaan cermat). Data yang telah ditemukan kemudian dicatat, diklasifikasikan, dan dianalisis berdasarkan konsep-konsep relasi kuasa Foucault serta dekonstruksi Derrida.

Hasil/temuan

Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya entitas oposisi biner antara pihak inferior dan superior. Namun, penelitian ini menemukan bahwa oposisi biner antar tokoh tersebut mengalami dekonstruksi, baik dari dalam maupun luar teks sastra. Dekonstruksi relasi hierarkis tercermin pada tokoh yang pada awalnya diposisikan sebagai pihak subordinat, kemudian bertransformasi menjadi sosok yang berani setelah menguasai ilmu bela diri.

Kesimpulan

Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa cerpen Ash-Shabiyyu al-A'raj mengonstruksikan relasi hierarki melalui oposisi biner. Namun melalui perspektif dekonstruksi Derrida dan relasi kuasa Faucault, hierarki tersebut terbukti tidak bersifat tetap karena sikap resistensi.

Kata kunci

Ash-Shabiyyu al-A'raj, dekonstruksi, relasi hirarki

المخلص

الهدف

على خلاف الدراسات السابقة التي ركزت على الجوانب الجوهرية في قصة "الشاب الأعرج" (Ash-Shabiyyu al-A'raj)، تبحث هذه الدراسة في عدم استقرار العلاقات الهرمية من خلال التحليل التفكيكي، كما تنتقد كيفية تصوير هذه العلاقات الهرمية في القصة القصيرة المذكورة.

الطريقة

يُعد هذا البحث دراسة نوعية وصفية تتبنى مقاربة علم اجتماع الأدب، وتدمج بين مفهوم ميشيل فوكو حول علاقات "السلطة والمعرفة" ونظرية التفكيك لدى جاك دريدا. وقد استند البحث إلى بيانات أولية تمثلت في نص القصة القصيرة "الشاب الأعرج"، وبيانات ثانوية شملت كتباً ومقالات ودراسات سابقة ذات صلة جُمعت عبر القراءة المتأنية. وجرى بعد ذلك تسجيل البيانات وتصنيفها وتحليلها استناداً إلى مفهوم فوكو لعلاقات السلطة وإطار دريدا التفكيكي.

النتائج

تكشف النتائج عن وجود ثنائيات تقابلية بين شخصيات ذات مكانة عليا وأخرى ذات مكانة دنيا. ومع ذلك، تخضع هذه التقابلات لعملية تفكيك استناداً إلى أدلة مستمدة من داخل النص وخارجه؛ إذ يتجلى هذا التفكيك في شخصية كانت تُصنّف في البداية ضمن المرتبة الأدنى، لكنها تتحول لاحقاً إلى شخصية شجاعة بعد إتقانها للفنون القتالية.

الخلاصة

تُظهر هذه الدراسة أن قصة "الشاب الأعرج" تبني تراتبية للسلطة من خلال ثنائيات تقابلية. ومن خلال منظور دريدا التفكيكي ونظرية فوكو حول علاقات السلطة، يثبت البحث أن هذه التراتبية ليست ثابتة، وذلك بفعل ممارسات المقاومة.

الكلمات الرئيسية

الشاب الأعرج، التفكيك، العلاقة الهرمية.

INTRODUCTION

The short story *ash-Shabiyyu al-A'raj* by Taufik Yusuf Awwad (hereinafter called Awwad) portrays hierarchical relations between Khalil and the superior characters surrounding him. Hierarchical relations can influence individuals and may generate resistance to existing hierarchical structures (Alandira, 2025). They also shape rights, access and social recognition (Fathurrahman, 2025) and may emerge through processes of subordination (Wardah, 2025). This phenomenon is reflected in Khalil, whose subordinate position exposes him to oppressive power that can lead to negative behavioral changes (Hamzah, 2024). However, power itself operates within a dynamic social space rather than a static one (Kristinawati, 2025). Accordingly, Khalil is initially portrayed as subordinate and subjected to control, and symbolic pressure, but later reverses the situation by engaging in resistance. The uniqueness of this story lies in its portrayal of social hierarchy through the stigma attached to Khalil's physical condition, which affects his social position and psychological state. Khalil's experience offers a valuable of hierarchical dynamics in contemporary society.

Research on *ash-Shabiyyu al-A'raj* by Taufik Yusuf Awwad has previously been conducted from various perspective. Afifah & Reko (2026) analyzed the subjective limitations of the main character using Žižek's theory, emphasizing the character's internal conflict and subjectivity. Afifah (2025) examined the influence of social and environmental aspects on the behavior of the main character through Max Weber's sociology of literature theory. Meanwhile, (Hidayah et al., 2022) interpreted the conceptual meaning of the short story through philosophical and social studies based on Sigmund Freud's ideas. In addition, So Nawawi & Ahsana AS (2021) focused their analysis on the psychological condition and inner conflict of the main character through Freud's psychoanalytic theory. These studies indicate that previous research has primarily focused on the psychological, subjective, and sociological dimensions of the main character. However, the short story also demonstrates practices of power that construct dominant and subordinate positions, which can be examined through Foucault's approach. Nevertheless, this approach alone is insufficient to explain the instability of hierarchy, since hierarchical relations are not static. Therefore, this research used Derrida's deconstruction theory is employed to dismantle binary oppositions within hierarchical relations and to show that superior and subordinate positions can be interchangeable. Thus, Foucault's approach and Derrida's deconstruction theory are used to explain both the mechanisms of power and the instability of hierarchical meaning in the short story.

This study employs Derrida's deconstruction theory and Foucault's power-knowledge approach to analyze hierarchical relations in the short story *ash-Shabiyyu al-A'raj*. Foucault's power-knowledge approach is first used to explain the hierarchical relations experienced by Khalil through practices of subordination and control that position him as the inferior character. However, identifying these mechanisms alone is insufficient to explain the shifting positions of superiority and inferiority in the short story. Therefore, Derrida's deconstruction is employed to dismantle these binary oppositions and demonstrate that hierarchical relations are not fixed. In this context, meanings that have long been considered inferior can be understood as important elements that carry multiple interpretations and are not entirely subordinated (Zullyansyah, 2025). This shows that the meaning structure of the short story can shift and open up space for alternative interpretations (Zaimah, 2024). This phenomenon of power relations in *ash-Shabiyyu al-A'raj*, aligns with the principle of deconstruction proposed by Derrida, which seeks to dismantle the structure of binary oppositions and challenge such structures by showing that hierarchies that appear natural are actually unstable and open to question (Sitorus, 2024). In this way, Foucault identifies the mechanisms of power, while Derrida deconstructs the hierarchical meanings produced by those mechanisms.

Based on these considerations, this study examines how hierarchical relations among the characters are constructed, maintained, and deconstructed through the reversal of bi-

nary opposition in Taufik Yusuf Awwad's short story *ash-Shabiyyu al-A'raj*. It aims to reveal the hierarchical structures embedded in the narrative and demonstrate the process through which these structures are subsequently deconstructed. Drawing on Foucault's approach and Derrida's theory, this study argues that hierarchical relations in *ash-Shabiyyu al-A'raj* are dynamic rather than static.

METHOD

This study analyzes *ash-Shabiyyu al-A'raj* by Taufik Yusuf Awwad through Derrida's deconstruction of binary opposition and Foucault's concept of power-knowledge. Therefore, this research is descriptive in nature and employs a textual analysis design concerning power relations, while applying Foucault's critique approach and Derrida's deconstruction theory to dismantle the binary oppositions underlying hierarchical relations within the short story. Foucault's concepts are operationalized through the identification of disciplinary power, subjugated knowledges, technologies of the self and counter-conduct. Meanwhile, Derrida's deconstruction analysis is conducted to unravel binary opposition. Through this analysis, meaning is understood not as a fixed structure, but as a construction that continuously shift and negates itself.

The data used in this study consist of primary and secondary data. The primary data consist of the short story *Ash-Shabiyyu al-A'raj* by Awwad, obtained from the Noor Book website and published by Lebanon Library in 2002 (Awwad, 2002). The secondary data consist of previous studies and other scholarly sources relevant to the object of this study. Meanwhile, the theoretical works of and Foucault serve as the theoretical framework and analytical instruments employed in this research. Furthermore, the data in this study were collected through a close reading technique of the short story *ash-Shabiyyu al-A'raj* by Taufik Yusuf Awwad. The data collection process was carried out by repeatedly reading the text to understand the story structure, narrative context, and the relationships among the characters in the short story. The units of analysis include narration, dialogue, monologue, and character descriptions that reflect power relations, marginalization, binary opposition, and forms of resistance. The selection of data was based on quotations representing practices of power, the subordinate positions of characters, conflicts of meaning, and forms of deconstruction toward binary oppositions. Relevant data were then documented by marking specific parts of the text and subsequently organized according to analytical categories derived from Derrida and Foucault.

The data analysis procedure was carried out through the stages of identification, classification, and interpretation. In the identification stage, the study marked textual elements that demonstrate practices of power, subordination, marginalization, and conflicts of meaning. The classification stage was conducted by grouping the data into analytical categories such as power relations, binary opposition, *différance*, and undecidability.

RESULT/FINDING AND DISCUSSION

In this study, power relations are represented through Khalil's position as the inferior party, while Uncle Ibrahim and the street thugs occupy superior positions. Khalil's inferiority in relation to Uncle Ibrahim is constructed through a familial hierarchy that requires him to obey and respect his uncle as the elder family member. Meanwhile, in his relationship with the street thugs, Khalil is positioned as inferior because of his physical disability, whereas the thugs are portrayed as possessing stronger and more able-bodied physiques. Khalil's physical disability becomes the defining marker of his identity, to the extent that he is more commonly referred to by the derogatory epithet *the Lamé One* than by his actual name. This epithet functions not merely as a nickname but also as a form of labeling that reduces Khalil's identity to his physical impairment, thereby reinforcing his subordinate position within the existing power relations.

The representation of Khalil's inferiority is constructed not only through descriptions

of his social and physical condition, but also through the linguistic choices employed in the narrative, such as the emphasis on his weak bodily attributes and the use of vocabulary that marks him as an object of pity and dependency. The narrative structure that positions Khalil as the recipient of actions reinforces his subordinate position within the power relation. In contrast, Ibrahim's dominance is constructed through the use of imperative speech, which linguistically signifies control over actions and the interactional space. However, the stability of this opposition is disrupted by a mutually dependent narrative structure, in which the superior character meaning can only be established through Khalil's "inferiority" as a contrasting marker. Thus, the text does not merely represent social hierarchy, but also linguistically deconstructs the instability of that hierarchy through narrative strategies and lexical choices in the short story.

Hierarchical relation in *ash-Shabiyyu al-A'raj*

From the reading of the short story *ash-Shabiyyu al-A'raj*, forms of hierarchical relations caused by entities of domination and power can be identified. In the concept of power relations, power is divided into two dimensions: the mind and the body. The power relation of the mind in *ash-Shabiyyu al-A'raj* is represented through the stigma of obedience imposed by the uncle upon Khalil, as well as the stigma created by street thugs that positions Khalil as an inferior figure. Meanwhile, the power relation over the body is represented through Khalil's willingness to devote his body in service to his uncle.

Michel Foucault conceptualizes power relations through several interconnected concepts. First, disciplinary power operates through surveillance and regulation (Capodivacca, 2024), Second, subjugated knowledge refers to marginalized experiences or voices suppressed by dominant systems (Malandrino, 2019), Third, technologies of the self refer to the practices through which individuals regulate themselves by performing certain actions in order to achieve an ideal condition (Hernández-Ramírez, 2017), Lastly, counter-conduct refers to small forms of resistance carried out by individuals who are governed by power (Odysseos, 2016). The application of Foucault's concepts in this short story is as follows:

Disciplinary Power

كَانَ عَلَيْهِ أَنْ يَصِلَ، اسْتَقْبَلَهُ الْعَمَّ إِبْرَاهِيمُ، حَسَبَ الْعَادَةِ، هَاشًا يَوْجُهُ، وَرَاءَ قُنْدِيلِ الزَّيْتِ الضَّئِيلِ
الْمُتَمَوِّجَةِ اضْطَّلَعَهُ عَلَى جُذْرَانِ الْكُوخِ، قَائِلًا: أَأَنْ مَيِّ لِأَرَى، هَاتِ الْجَسَابَ!

The narrative above shows that the hierarchical structure is not built through direct violence; instead, Ibrahim constructs it through stages of regulating, supervising, and shaping Khalil's daily behavior. Ibrahim's statement represents disciplinary power through the mechanism of routine. This is indicated by the phrase (حَسَبَ الْعَادَةِ as usual), which symbolizes that disciplinary power operates through repeated habits, thereby forming Khalil as a compliant subject who remains under Ibrahim's system of control. Furthermore, the word الْكُوخ (the hut) serves as evidence of a controlled space for Khalil, which is under Ibrahim's authority as his uncle.

Khalil's life with his uncle places him in a subordinate position under his uncle's authority. The uncle perceives himself as superior because he is older than Khalil. This assumption unconsciously gives rise to arbitrary behavior and enables him to control Khalil's body through the hierarchical structure he possesses. The uncle manipulates Khalil's mind through the statement that he is already old and therefore has retired from "begging," which he considers to be a form of work. Consequently, the task of begging is entirely transferred to Khalil, while the earnings must be handed over to the uncle each day with a target of fifty cents. This statement shapes Khalil's mindset to obey his uncle's commands. Such obedience emerges because Khalil feels that he must respect his uncle as the only family member he has left after the death of his parents.

Subjugated Knowledge

يا الله هذا شيءٌ كثيرٌ

The narrative above is uttered by Khalil when he receives a beating from Ibrahim for failing to collect coins according to the target. This statement signifies a bodily experience of burden and pressure endured by him; however, it is ignored by Ibrahim as the dominant figure. The utterance can be understood as a form of *subjugated knowledge*, as it represents a subjective experience positioned as inferior within a hierarchical power structure. Khalil's groaning not only reflects physical workload but also indicates that power has shaped Khalil's consciousness as a subject who accepts and internalizes his subordinate condition.

In fact, every human being has the right to freedom over themselves. The stigma imposed upon Khalil, reinforced by the domination of power within familial relations, ultimately shapes him into someone who is always obedient to his uncle. Khalil briefly resists his subordinate position when he realizes that he is merely being used as a tool to generate money for his uncle. However, his resistance remains internalized within himself, as it is overpowered by his belief that he must obey his uncle as an elder figure. Furthermore, the power relation over thought is also represented through the street thugs who consider themselves superior to Khalil. This perception emerges because Khalil suffers from a physical disability and cannot walk normally, leading the street thugs to oppress him through the stigma of "the Lamé Boy" as someone weak and powerless. In this context, similar to *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, discourse in the text is connected to a particular historical context (Djohar, 2013).

Technologies of the Self

سَتَكُونُ بَعْدَ الْيَوْمِ تَاجِرًا ... كَمَا تُرِيدُ الْحُكُومَةُ!

The sentence above is spoken by Ibrahim to Khalil after punishing him for failing to obtain 50 cents that day. Although Khalil had already explained that he was expelled by the authorities and was no longer allowed to beg on the streets, resulting in him earning only 2 cents, the punishment was still imposed. This utterance can be understood as a representation of *technologies of the self*, as it shows how the individual is directed to construct his identity in accordance with the will of the dominant figure (Ibrahim), which is then internalized by Khalil as part of his self-consciousness in order to comply with it.

Counter-Conduct

أَمَّا هُوَ فَلَا يُجِيزُ التَّرْتَرَةَ. يَبْقَى صَامِتًا كَالْأَلْحَرَسِ، لَوْلَا ابْتِسَامَتُهُ الْحَزِينَةُ، وَلَوْلَا عَيْنَاهُ النَّاطِقَتَانِ بِأَلْفِ لُغَرٍ وَلُغَرٍ مِنَ الْعَارِ الطُّفُولَةِ الْمُفْهُورَةِ، وَلَوْلَا يَدُهُ الْمَمْتَدَّةُ نِصْفَ امْتِدَادٍ، الْمَغْلُولَةُ بِعُبُودِيَةِ الْفَقْرِ، الرَّاجِفَةُ، الْمَمْصُوصَةُ كَوْرَقَةِ الْخَرِيفِ، لَوْلَا ذَلِكَ لَطَنَهُ النَّاسُ صَنَمًا.

The quotation above represents a silent and implicit form of resistance toward the oppressive conditions experienced by Khalil. Counter-conduct does not always appear in the form of open rebellion, but may also emerge through attitudes, expressions, or forms of selfhood that do not fully submit to mechanisms of power. The phrase صَامِتًا كَالْأَلْحَرَسِ signifies a form of resignation, while at the same time functioning as a rejection of the behavioral patterns operating within his social environment. Thus, Khalil does not become an active subject who follows the rhythm of Ibrahim's desires. Moreover, his silence constitutes a form of passive resistance against the situation that controls and degrades him.

The relationship between Khalil and his uncle forms the binary opposition of old-young based on the *powerful-powerless* element reflected in the relationship between Khalil and Ibrahim as his uncle as shown in **Table 1**. Ibrahim possesses greater capacity and authority (*powerful*) to control and influence Khalil, thereby positioning him as an

inferior subject.

Table 1. Binary Opposition in the Short Story *ash-Shabiyyu al-A'raj*

No	Characters	Event
1	Khalil >< uncle	The uncle, who considers himself older, feels entitled to treat Khalil according to his own wishes
2	Khalil >< street thugs	Four street thugs who do not have any physical disabilities.

However, Khalil (*powerless*) actually has the potential to escape from the structure constructed by his uncle. The textual marker can be seen in the diction “feels entitled” to treat Khalil according to his own wishes. Meanwhile, the relationship between Khalil and the street thugs represents the *dominant-marginal* element, in which the thugs perceive themselves as superior figures and consequently subordinate Khalil as someone considered weak and inferior. The oppositional marker is reflected in the narrative emphasis on the physical condition of the thugs, who do not have physical disabilities like Khalil. The narrative of the binary opposition is as follows:

Binary opposition between Khalil and his uncle

The narrative of Uncle Ibrahim's condition depicted as being older than Khalil.

شَحَاذٌ مُتَقَاعِدٌ فِي الْخَمْسِينَ أَوِ الْخَامِسَةِ وَالْخَمْسِينَ مِنْ عُمُرِهِ، كَسِيحٌ، مَقْصُوفُ الظَّهْرِ، مُلْتَوِيٌّ الدَّقَنِ إِلَى الشِّمَالِ، بَارِزُ الْأَسْنَانِ: كُنْةٌ مِنَ الْخَرْقِ وَالْعِظَامِ الْمُحَطَّمَةِ مُلْقَاةٌ فِي زَاوِيَةِ الْكُوْخِ

The narrative of Ibrahim possessing power over Khalil.

لَأَنَّ الْعَمَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ رَجُلٌ قَاسٌ لَا يَعْرِفُ الرَّحْمَةَ. يُجِبُّ أَنْ تَرْجِعَ يَدُهُ مِنْ يَدِ الْأَعْرَجِ الصَّغِيرِ بِخَمْسِينَ قِرْشًا كُلَّ مَسَاءٍ

The narrative of Khalil's attitude as a result of Ibrahim's influence on his mind.

وَكَانَ الْأَعْرَاجُ يَعْرِفُ مَا يَجِبُ عَمَلُهُ فِي مِثْلِ هَذَا الْمَوْقِفِ: كُلَّ قِرْشٍ يَنْقُصُ عَنِ الْخَمْسِينَ بَعْصًا وَالْعَصَا مُعَلَّقَةٌ فِي الْخَائِطِ،

The narrative of violence being normalized due to a culture of obedience toward elders.

وَالْأَعْرَجُ يَعْدُ الْعَصَى بِصَوْتٍ عَالٍ: وَاجِدٌ، إِثْنَانِ، ثَلَاثَةٌ ... خَمْسَةٌ ... تِسْعَةٌ، وَهُوَ يَخْنُقُ الصُّرَاحَ خَنْقًا. فَإِذَا صَرَخَ ضَوْعُ الْعِقَابِ، وَالْذُمُوعُ تَسِيلُ عَلَى خَدَّيْهِ، وَخَدَاهُ يَتَجَعَّدَانِ، وَعَيْنَاهُ تَتَوَارِيَانِ وَرَاءَ صُورِ الْأَلَمِ الْفُظِيْعَةِ الْمُرْتَسِمَةِ عَلَى وَجْهِهِ، وَفَمُهُ يَنْدَلِقُ، وَدَمُهُ يَقُورُ فِي أَوْدَاجِهِ وَيُوشِكُ أَنْ يَقْفِئَهَا تَقْفِيًّا، وَهُوَ مَا يَزَالُ فِي الصَّرِيَّةِ لِعَاشِرَةِ مِنَ الْحِسَابِ

The four narratives above reveal a binary opposition between the characters Khalil and Ibrahim (his uncle). This binary can be seen in the representation of power relations, where Ibrahim dominates Khalil's life and compels him to submit throughout his life. The binary opposition between Khalil and his uncle positions Khalil as a subordinate figure, while Ibrahim holds dominant power as the uncle (the only older family member). The binary opposition is indicated in the phrase *فِي الْخَمْسِينَ أَوِ الْخَامِسَةِ وَالْخَمْسِينَ* which reflects the uncertainty surrounding Uncle Ibrahim's age. However, within this uncertainty, the phrase *مِنْ عُمُرِهِ* confirms that Ibrahim is older than Khalil. The particle *مِنْ* which functions as *li-tab'idh* (indicating partiality or partitive meaning), emphasizes that Ibrahim's age is significantly greater than Khalil's. Ibrahim is around 50–55 years old, while Khalil is 18. From the perspective of “physical weakness,” both share physical disabilities, albeit in different conditions. However, Khalil submits to Ibrahim much like a child who respects an person. Furthermore, the demand for Khalil to provide 50 cents every day and the punishment imposed on him represent a practice of power domination between the powerful and the oppressed.

Furthermore, in the two narratives, the phrase *لَا يَعْرِفُ الرَّحْمَةَ* and in the 3 narratives, the

phrase *يَجِبُ عَلَيْهِ* represent the impact of power domination that produces superior and inferior positions. This condition enables Ibrahim (the superior figure) to act arbitrarily through unreasonable punishments and commands. Both expressions employ *fi'il mudhari'* (present tense verbs), indicating the present time (*time hāl*), which signifies that Naguib Mahfouz represents violent behavior that has been continuously practiced for a long time. Consequently, both characters understand the roles they must perform within such circumstances. In the 4 narrative, the phrase *يَعْرُجُ الْأَعْرَجُ بِصَوْتٍ عَالٍ* represents the violence and oppression experienced by Khalil. Even while being beaten, Khalil is the one who counts the blows in order to comply with Ibrahim's rules. Narratives two through four are the consequences of the hierarchical relation established in the first narrative, which ultimately deprives Khalil of freedom over both his body and mind.

The representation of power domination in the short story of Khalil is still frequently found in the present day. This form of domination subordinates certain groups or individuals, as those in power perceive themselves to be superior and deserving of respect. Such conditions continue to occur in relationships between parents and children, elders and younger individuals, teachers and students, and so on.

Binary opposition between Khalil (Si Pincang) and the four street thugs

The narrative of Khalil's condition while being oppressed by street ruffians.

دَنَا مِنْهُ وَرَاءَ الْمَدْرَسَةِ اللَّعَازِ ارِيَّةَ، فِي ذَلِكَ الطَّرِيقِ الْمُؤْجَشِ، ثَلَاثَةُ صَبْيَانٍ، الْكَبِيرُ فِيهِمْ مِنْ سِنِّهِ. وَمَا كَادَ يَرَاهُمْ مُقْبِلِينَ نَحْوَهُ حَتَّى خَافَ، كَأَنَّ الْهَامَا. نَزَلَ عَلَيْهِ بِأَنَّهُمْ يُرِيدُونَ بِهِ شَرًّا وَكَانُوا يُعْتُونَ وَيَلْوَحُونَ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ فِي الْفَضَاءِ، وَرَ عِيْمُهُمْ ذُو الْقَنْبَارِ الطَّوِيلِ الْمَشْفُوقِ بَيْنَ الْفَخَذَيْنِ، يَنْفُخُ بِأَنْفِهِ كَالْحَيَوَانِ، وَقَفَتِ الْأَعْرَجُ عَلَى رِجْلِهِ الصَّحِيحَةِ، وَأَدَارَ وَجْهَهُ صُنْدُوقِيهِ إِلَى حَائِطِ الْمَدْرَسَةِ، وَانْتَظَرَ. فَقَدَّمَ الرَّعِيمُ وَنَظَرَ يَمِينًا وَشِمَالًا، وَلَمَّا تَبَيَّنَ مِنْ أَنَّ أَحَدًا لَا يَرَاهُ، صَفَعَ التَّاجِرَ الصَّغِيرَ عَلَى وَجْهِهِ صَفْعَةً طَاشَ لَهَا دِمَاعُهُ فِي رَأْسِهِ. وَهَجَمَ الثَّلَاثَةُ عَلَى الصُّنْدُوقِ، وَنَهَبُوا أَكْثَرَ مَا فِيهَا، وَأَطْلَقُوا سِيفَانَهُمْ ح، يَزْدَرِدُونَ الْحُلِيَّاتِ، وَيَلْتَفِتُونَ إِلَى الْأَعْرَجِ بِنَكِي، وَيَقْفَهُونَ هَارِيزِينَ

The narrative of Khalil experiencing bullying from street ruffians.

ذَاتَ يَوْمٍ أَطْبَقَ الْعُلَمَانُ الْأَسْرَارُ عَلَى خَلِيلٍ فِي حَيِّ "الْكُرَاوِيَا". وَأَخَذُوا يَشْدُونَ بِشَعْرِهِ، وَأَمْسَكَهُ أَحَدُهُمْ بِرِجْلِهِ الْعَوَّاءَ يَذْفُهَا بِحَجَرٍ وَيَضْحَكُ عَلَيْهِ قَائِلًا: يَا أَعْرَجُ يَا أَعْرَجُ ...

The narrative above shows a binary opposition between Khalil and the street thugs in terms of power relations. This power relation is reflected in Khalil's inferior position compared to the thugs. Khalil has physical limitations, such as a frail, prematurely aged body despite being only 18 years old. In addition, his lame leg causes him to drag his right foot when walking. In contrast, the street thugs have no physical disabilities, allowing them to act as they please. The bullying that Khalil receives from the four thugs represents a form of power domination between the weak and the powerful. Khalil is unable to avoid or resist their harsh treatment due to his physical weakness and his lack of knowledge of martial arts.

In the first narrative, the phrase *فِي ذَلِكَ الطَّرِيقِ الْمُؤْجَشِ* describes the place where Khalil first experienced oppression from street ruffians. The word *المؤجش* used by Naguib Mahfouz, represents all the painful experiences endured by Khalil. He experiences bullying because of his physical condition, which causes him to be positioned as inferior by non-disabled characters. Furthermore, in the second narrative, the phrase *يَا أَعْرَجُ يَا أَعْرَجُ* used as a nickname for Khalil, reflects an inappropriate act of bullying. This is because he has a proper name that should be used to address him. Both narratives represent a dominant–marginal hierarchical relation that harms Khalil's social body as a

human being.

The representation of power domination between Khalil and the street thugs continues to occur in the present day. Many people still perceive themselves as more superior than others; when they encounter those who are weaker, subordinate behaviors such as oppression, bullying, and demands for submission tend to arise. Furthermore, marginalizing treatment between the weak and the strong can occur within dominant power relations.

The deconstruction in this study can be seen in **Table 2** through the representation of Khalil, who was initially positioned as an inferior figure, attempts to escape from that condition. This analysis is related to the concept of *différance* proposed by Derrida concerning the instability of meaning and the idea that meaning is never static. Likewise, the hierarchical relations in the short story demonstrate the reversal of the inferior position as a form of securing his existence and survival in life.

Table 2. Deconstruction in *ash-Shabiyyu al-A'raj*

No	Event
1	Fighting against the four street thugs
2	Opposing his uncle and freeing him self

In addition to the meaning of *différance*, this short story also demonstrates resistance as part of the system of power relations proposed by Foucault. Khalil's resistance is reflected in his rebellious attitude toward the subjects who oppress, bully, and regard him as weak. The markers of deconstruction can be seen in the following narratives:

Si Pincang fights against the four street thugs

وَدَنَا زَعِيمُهُمْ ذُو الْفَتَبَارِ الْمَشْفُوقِ بَيْنَ الْفَجْدَيْنِ. دَنَا بِبَطْنٍ، بِرِبَاطَةِ جَاشٍ، وَهَمَّ بِإِدْخَالِ يَدِهِ فِي الصُّنْدُوقِ. فَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْأَعْرَجِ إِلَّا أَنْ جَمَعَ كَفَّهُ الْيَمْنَى وَأَمْسَكَ بِالْيَسْرَى نَاصِيَةً خَصْمَهُ ثُمَّ ضَرَبَهُ بُوْكَسًا عَلَى يَافُوقِهِ انْطَرَحَ تَحْتَهُ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ، وَقَدْ سَبَقَ رَأْسُهُ رَجُلَيْهِ. فَهَجَمَ الثَّلَاثَةُ الْآخَرُونَ، فَشَدَّ خَلِيلٌ رِجْلَهُ الصَّجِيحَةَ عَلَى بِلَاطِ الرَّصِيفِ كَالرَّصَاصِ وَانْهَالَ عَلَى الثَّلَاثَةِ: لِهَذَا ضَرْبَةً عَلَى أَنْفِهِ، وَلِذَاكَ ضَرْبَةً عَلَى خَصْرِهِ، وَلِلثَّلَاثِ ضَرْبَةً عَلَى خَصِيَّتَيْهِ - كَمَا عَلَّمَهُ كَرِيمٌ فَمَا صَمَدُوا لَهُ لَحْظَةً حَتَّى تَفَرَّقُوا هَارِبِينَ.

Fighting against his uncle and freeing himself

وَرَفَعَ الْعَصَا إِلَى الْفَوْقِ، بِكَلْتَا يَدَيْهِ، وَانْهَالَ بِهَا عَلَى وَجْهِ الْعَمِّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ عَلَى شَارِبِيهِ ضَرْبَةً، وَأَتْبَعَهَا بِالثَّلَاثِيَّةِ وَالثَّلَاثَةِ عَلَى الْجَبِينِ وَالذَّقَنِ، قَبْلَ أَنْ يَسْتَطِيعَ عَمُّهُ صِيَاخًا. وَلَمَّا أَفَاقَ الْعَمُّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ عَاجَلَهُ الْأَعْرَجُ بِضَرْبَةٍ رَابِعَةٍ وَخَامِسَةٍ... دُونَ حِسَابٍ أَيْضًا. وَكَانَ الْعَمُّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ تَحْتَ الْعَصَى الْمُتْرَاكِمَةِ عَلَيْهِ، يَغْوَى غَوَاءَ الْكَلْبِ أَصَابَهُ الصَّيَادُ خَطَأً، وَيَتَمَلَّمُ، وَيَجِدِفُ، وَيَحْرُكُ يَدَيْهِ وَأَصَابِعَهُ فِي الْهَوَاءِ، يُحَاوِلُ النُّهُوضَ، وَلَكِنْ عَنِيًّا، إِنَّهُ كَسِيحٌ. وَكَانَ يَلْحَقُ بِالْأَعْرَجِ مِنْ زَاوِيَةٍ إِلَى زَاوِيَةٍ فِي الْكُوخِ لَعَلَّهُ يَنْزِعُ الْعَصَا مِنْهُ، فَيَنَاولُهُ حَامِلُهَا الضَّرْبَةَ عَلَى يَدِهِ، وَعَلَى بَطْنِهِ، فَيَشْتَدُّ غَوَاؤُهُ وَيَخْتَلِطُ بِقَصَفَاتِ الرَّعْدِ فِي الْخَارِجِ وَقَهَقَاتِ تِنْكَاتِ الْكَازِ عَلَى سَطْحِ الْكُوخِ، فِي تِلْكَ اللَّيْلَةِ اللَّيْلَاءِ.

Both narratives above demonstrate the significance of power relations that are deconstructed within the text of the short story *ash-Shabiyyu al-A'raj*. Khalil, known as the *Lame One* (Si Pincang), is so widely identified by this label that few people even know his real name. He experiences subordination, being placed in an inferior position by Ibrahim (his uncle) and by the street thugs. The marker of the deconstruction of hierarchical relations (dominant-marginal) is illustrated in the first narrative, in the sentence *فَمَا صَمَدُوا لَهُ لَحْظَةً حَتَّى تَفَرَّقُوا هَارِبِينَ*. It explains the condition of the street ruffians, who became

frightened after realizing that *Si Pincang* was more skilled in martial arts than they were. The use of the *fi'il māḍī* (past tense verb) in the sentence symbolizes Khalil's effort to position himself as a human being worthy of respect, just like other people. Furthermore, the marker of the deconstruction of the hierarchical relation (powerful-powerless) is illustrated in the second narrative through the sentence *فَيَنْأَوِلُّهُ حَامِلَهَا الضَّرْبَةَ عَلَى يَدِهِ* as a symbol that Khalil also possesses the power to resist Ibrahim's wrongdoing. The word *فَيَنْأَوِلُّهُ* is a *fi'il muḍāri'* in the present tense (*al-hāl*) and functions as *lil musyārah baina itsnain*. The word illustrates Khalil's act of retaliating against Ibrahim's treatment toward him.

Khalil is a subordinate character in the short story, who then undergoes a process of deconstruction after gaining the opportunity to acquire knowledge of martial arts taught by Karim, which fosters self-confidence and courage within him. The deconstruction of power relations in the story emerges from the knowledge that develops within Khalil. This aligns with Foucault's concept, which positions "knowledge" as a foundation for resisting traditions of power domination. Thus, the concept of knowledge plays a role in fostering Khalil's mimicry through his experiences and learning from Karim (Rohazi, 2025).

Table 3 shows that the concept of the Lame Boy (Khalil) is emphasized through Khalil's condition, role, and abilities in the short story. This emphasis demonstrates that Khalil is given a more prominent position in the narrative. The concept is presented as follows:

Table 3: The Concept of Lame Boy is Emphasized More Than Other Characters

No	Lame Boy Character	Other Characters
1	The title of the short story defines Khalil's (Si Pincang's) condition	-
2	Si Pincang provides for his uncle	-
3	Si Pincang possesses excellent martial arts skills	-

Title of the Short Story

الصَّبِيُّ الْأَعْرَجُ

The title of the short story represents the condition of Si Pincang. Thus, the voice of Si Pincang becomes a priority for the author. Taufik Yusuf Awwad expresses the idea of giving voice to those marginalized in literature. He also critiques the notion that groups or individuals in a marginalized or inferior position can reverse their circumstances especially when they strive to become knowledgeable and capable. In this short story, Khalil takes action by learning martial arts so that he can free himself and live without oppression or domination from others.

Khalil Provides for His Uncle

اَدْنُ مِنِّي لِأَرَى، هَاتِ الْحِسَابَ

The sentence above is a remark from the uncle to Khalil, after Khalil returned from his work as a street performer. The statement symbolizes that the Lame One (Si Pincang) plays an important role in his life. Given the uncle's physical condition, being confined to his bed, Khalil is the nephew who is forced to become the backbone of his life.

The Lame One possesses martial arts skills

يَمْكُثُ عِنْدَهُ سَاعَةً وَيَذْهَبُ إِلَى كَيْسِ الْفَحْمِ وَيَتَمَرَّنُ عَلَى الْبُوكْسِ. بَقَرَجُ يُعَمِّرُ قَلْبَهُ، فَتَلْمَعُ عَيْنَاهُ، يَبِينُ غُبَارُ الْفَحْمِ الْمُتَطَايِرِ، لَعْمَانًا بَسَامًا وَقَدْ يَحْدُثُ أَنْ تَتَخَدَّشَ كَفَاهُ وَيَسِيلُ مِنْهُمَا الدَّمُ، فَلَا يَحْفِلُ لِحَرْحٍ وَيَسْتَمِرُّ

عَلَى اللَّكِّمِ، وَكَرِيم :
وَأَقْفَ أَمَامَهُ يُدْخِنُ سِيكَارَتَهُ مُعْجَبًا بِهِ لَمَّا كُنْتُ فِي عُمْرِكَ كُنْتُ أَكْسَرَ أَكْبَرَ رَأْسٍ فِي رِفَاقِي، وَكَانَتْ
مِنْ أَوْلَاهَا إِلَى آخِرِهَا تَقُولُ : فَلَانُ «النَّاصِرَةُ»

The narrative above represents one of the exceptional qualities possessed by Lame One (Si Pincang). Besides being considered “important” through the literary themes written by Taufik Yusuf Awwad, the character of *Si Pincang* also plays a significant role in the narrative as a “message” and “critique” that the author intends to convey to the readers: that “everything that has shortcomings also possesses strengths and advantages.” This is demonstrated by the character Khalil in the short story *ash-Shabiyyu al-A'raj*. He is a poor character with a physical disability. His desire in life was merely to be free from his uncle's daily beatings. As a result, he meets Karim and learns martial arts after enduring bullying from street ruffians. Ultimately, he develops martial arts skills superior to those of other characters. The relationship between Khalil and his uncle reveals undecidability in the positions of dominance and subordination, which are not fixed, as shown in Table 4.

Has a family

وَلَا أَحَدَ يَعْرِفُ مَنْ أَبُوهُ وَأُمُّهُ وَأَيُّنَ مَسْكَنُهُ نِكْرَةً مِنَ النِّكَرَاتِ، شَحَادٌ مِنْ مَلَائِكَةِ الدُّنْيَا، فَذَقْنَتْهُ الْحَيَاةُ
قَذْفًا، كَالْمَارِ عَلَى رَصِيفٍ يَبْصُقُ بَصَقَةً ثُمَّ يَدُوسُهَا وَيَتَابَعُ الطَّرِيقَ

Has a place to live

لَأَنَّ الْأَعْرَجَ لَيْسَ وَحْدَهُ فِيهِ، بَلْ هُوَ تَحْتَ حِمَايَةِ الْعَمِّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ

Table 4. Undecidability Between Lame One and His Uncle

No	Khalil	Uncle
1	His mother and father's whereabouts are unknown. With his uncle, Khalil does not live completely alone.	The uncle needs Khalil to work and hand over the earnings from his work. In fact, the uncle requires Khalil to give 50 cents every day and will beat him if the amount is less than 50 cents.
2	Si Pincang has no home unless he lives with his uncle.	
3	Si Pincang is taught and trained to become a merchant by his uncle	

Khalil taught trading by his uncle

وَأَصْبَحَ خَلِيلٌ تَاجِرًا، لَقْنَهُ الْعَمُّ إِبْرَاهِيمُ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ اشْتَرَى لَهُ صُنْدُوقَةً صَغِيرَةً وَذَلَّهُ عَلَى دُكَّانِ حُلُوبَاتٍ
فِي النَّاصِرَةِ، وَأَوْصَاهُ أَنْ يَمْلَأَ مِنَ الدُّكَّانِ كُلِّ صَبَاحٍ صُنْدُوقَتَهُ هَذِهِ يَقْطَعُ الْكَاتُو، وَيَدُورُ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ تَاجِرًا

Khalil plays an important role in his uncle's life

هَا هُوَ يَرْجِعُ إِلَى الْكُوخِ بِقَرَشَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ. هَا هُوَ ذَاهِبٌ لِثَمَانٍ وَأَرْبَعِينَ عَمَّا تَسْلَخُ جِلْدُهُ سَلْخًا ... وَغَدًا ،
وَبَعْدَ غَدٍ خَمْسُونَ عَصَا! كُلُّ يَوْمٍ خَمْسُونَ عَصَا

Undecidability is used to reveal the inconsistency of meaning that contains contradictory interpretations (Salsabila, 2023). The narrative above demonstrates undecidability in the relationship between Khalil and Ibrahim, particularly in determining their positions as dominant and subordinate subjects. Although Khalil is structurally placed in an inferior position through the exercise of power domination by Ibrahim (his uncle), their relationship cannot be understood as a stable or absolute hierarchy. Thus, the binary opposition of

dominant–subordinate is not final but is always in an unstable condition and open to contestation. This indicates that the meaning and position of subjects within the text are never singular or fixed, but always open to shifts in interpretation. These findings are in line with Derridean deconstruction, which emphasizes that binary oppositions in texts are never stable because each element is interdependent and contains the potential to reverse the hierarchical structure.

The findings of this study differ from previous studies that primarily emphasized psychological aspects, subjectivity, and literary sociology in general. Nevertheless, this study expands the scope of literary sociology by focusing on the representation of hierarchical structures that undergo deconstruction through shifts in power positions among the characters. The novelty of this study lies in the integration of Derrida's deconstruction and Foucault's power relations to interpret the disabled character as a subject whose social identity is shaped through negotiations of power and the instability of meaning. In this study, the disabled character is represented by Khalil, who is labeled *the cripple* by the surrounding characters due to his physical condition.

The power relations in this study embedded in the hierarchical binary oppositions that position Khalil as socially inferior. Consequently, this unequal hierarchy is manifested through confrontational acts, including oppression, bullying, and violence against Khalil. Deconstruction plays a role in identifying binary oppositions within a text and demonstrating that these opposing elements are not fixed (Kurniasih, 2024). Furthermore Wardani (2019), argues that binary opposition represents a dualism consisting of two opposing poles. This interpretation is reinforced by Hidayat et al. (2025) who explain that binary opposition conveys opposing meanings that signify the domination of one party over another. This study extends these ideas by showing that domination does not operate directly, but rather through social mechanisms that position Khalil's disability and poverty as inferior identities reproduced by the social environment. This finding also indicates the presence of the "Big Other", which constructs differences within the hierarchical structure (Herza, 2023). Within social hierarchies, Foucault argues that power permeates everyday human life, encompassing the body, actions and attitudes, ideas, and daily practices (Foucault, 1980). This is consistent with the findings of the present study regarding the operation of power relations.

In this study, binary opposition is demonstrated through the existence of hierarchical relationships between the characters in the short story, namely between Si Pincang and his uncle, and between Si Pincang and the street ruffians. Ibrahim's treatment of Khalil reflect a hierarchical form of domination within the family, exercised through authority, control and the expectation of obedience. This unequal power relation positions Khalil as a subordinate figure whose actions and identity are shaped by his uncle's authority (Behar, 2025). Power is also manifested through the production of social discourse, such as the labels "weak" and "disabled". This labeling is represented in the character of Khalil, who is frequently referred to as "the Lame One" (*Si Pincang*) because of his physical disability and is perceived as weak by the superior characters in the short story (Ula, 2022). After meeting Karim and learning martial arts, Khalil strives to free himself from the inferior position he has long occupied. Through his martial arts training, he is able to defend himself against the street ruffians who constantly bully him. Moreover, he gains the courage to confront his uncle and resist the oppression he has endured for years. As a result, the power relations in the short story undergo a deconstructive reversal, as Khalil's subordinate position shifts into one of agency and power.

In addition to the aesthetic elements found in literary works, the social context also plays a role in the emergence of certain works, such as the short story *ash-Shabiyyu al-A'raj*. From the perspective of the sociology of literature, literature is shaped by the social context experienced by the author or their surroundings. Therefore, literature can be understood as a representation of society conveyed through literary language. The subordinate condition experienced by Khalil (the Lame One) is still found in the present day. Many individuals or groups perceive themselves as superior to others. This perception can

give rise to forms of oppression, bullying, and violence (Ndi, 2020). In fact, assumptions of subordination or marginalization can affect the receiving subject, leading to responses that may be either positive or negative. This is because subordinate and marginal positions are socially constructed rather than inherent or authentic. Therefore, power domination is subject to change at any time, in any place, and for anyone.

This study demonstrates that power relations in *ash-Shabiyyu al-A'raj* are not static but rather operate through the interdependence between superior and inferior characters in maintaining their respective social positions. These findings expand deconstructive readings of Arabic literature by showing that binary oppositions in the short story not only construct social hierarchies, but also reveal how marginal characters play a role in sustaining the authority of dominant figures. From a Foucauldian perspective, this study reveals that disability in the short story is represented not merely as a physical condition, but as a social identity shaped through practices of power, stereotypes, and poverty. Therefore, this study contributes to contemporary Arabic literary studies by demonstrating how disabled characters in modern Arabic short stories are represented as part of social constructions and power relations, rather than merely as symbols of individual weakness. Through the theoretical frameworks of Foucault and Derrida, this study reveals that hierarchical structures are produced through interdependent relations among between superior and inferior, thereby offering a new reading of power dynamics in modern Arabic literature.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the short story *ash-Shabiyyu al-A'raj* constructs a hierarchy of power through binary oppositions that reveal the tension between Khalil as an inferior figure and Ibrahim and the street thugs as superior figures. Through Derrida's deconstructive approach, the short story demonstrates the undecidability of meaning within the social hierarchical structure presented in the narrative. Furthermore, the short story represents individuals positioned as inferior while also revealing the potential for resistance against established structures of domination. In this study, Khalil's resistance is represented through the martial arts he learned from Karim as a form of *counter-conduct*, enabling him to challenge the dominant power structure and reject the oppression that had long been imposed upon him.

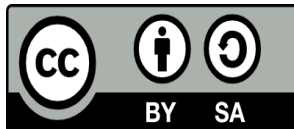
However, this study is limited to the analysis of a single short story, namely *ash-Shabiyyu al-A'raj*, so the findings cannot be generalized to all of Taufiq Yusuf Awwad's works. This study employs Foucault's approach by focusing on the identification of *disciplinary power*, *subjugated knowledges*, *technologies of the self*, and *counter-conduct*. Meanwhile, Derrida's theory is applied to deconstruct hierarchical binary oppositions through the concepts of binary opposition, *différance*, and *undecidability*. Therefore, future studies may develop this research by comparing other works by Awwad or other modern Arabic literary works. Future research may also integrate historical or postcolonial approaches to broaden the interpretation of constructions of power, identity, and resistance in the short story.

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Received (17-06-2026)

Accepted (08-08-2026)

Published (30-09-2026)