



Malay Women in Syair Putri Akal: A Ricoeur's Hermeneutic Study

(Perempuan Melayu dalam Syair Putri Akal: Suatu Kajian Hermeneutika Paul Ricoeur)

Syafira Anna Dzirin

Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Indonesia
syafira2100003002@webmail.uad.ac.id

Wachid Eko Purwanto

Universitas Ahmad Dahlan,
Indonesia
wachid.purwanto@pbsi.uad.ac.id

Yosi Wulandari*

Universitas Ahmad Dahlan,
Indonesia
yosi.wulandari@pbsi.uad.ac.id

*Corresponding author: Yosi Wulandari | email: yosi.wulandari@pbsi.uad.ac.id

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Abstract: This study examines the representation of Malay women in Syair Putri Akal using Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutic approach to strengthen the cultural identity of women that are often marginalized in historical narratives and classical literature. The background of this study is based on the importance of representing portraits of women in classical literary texts to understand the cultural roles they once held. This study aims to examine the representation of Malay women from their physical, character, and psychological images through an interpretive approach. The method used is qualitative with Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutic theory, which includes the stages of distanciation, interpretation, and appropriation, to explore the poem's symbolic meaning. The results show that the character of Putri Akal is represented as a physically beautiful woman, has intelligence and wisdom in character, and is ethereal and gentle psychologically. The symbolization of beauty and reason in the character of Malay women shows the idealism of Malay culture towards women. In conclusion, Syair Putri Akal places women as objects and as active subjects in social and cultural processes. Hence, building a more equal narrative of women's identity is relevant.

Keywords Physical, Character, Syair Putri Akal, Malay women, Psychological

Abstrak: Penelitian ini mengkaji representasi perempuan Melayu dalam Syair Putri Akal dengan menggunakan pendekatan hermeneutika Paul Ricoeur untuk memperkuat identitas budaya perempuan yang sering terpinggirkan dalam narasi sejarah dan sastra klasik. Latar belakang penelitian ini berangkat dari pentingnya menghadirkan kembali potret perempuan dalam teks sastra klasik guna memahami peran kultural yang pernah mereka emban. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk menelaah representasi perempuan Melayu dari citra fisik, karakter, dan psikis melalui pendekatan interpretatif. Metode yang digunakan adalah kualitatif dengan teori hermeneutika Paul Ricoeur yang mencakup tahapan distansi, interpretasi, dan penghayatan, guna menggali makna simbolik dalam syair. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tokoh Putri Akal direpresentasikan sebagai perempuan yang cantik secara fisik, memiliki kecerdasan dan kebijaksanaan dalam karakter, serta halus dan lembut secara psikis. Simbolisasi kecantikan dan akal budi dalam diri tokoh perempuan Melayu menunjukkan idealisme budaya Melayu terhadap sosok perempuan. Kesimpulannya, Syair Putri Akal tidak hanya menempatkan perempuan sebagai objek, tetapi juga subjek yang aktif dalam proses sosial dan budaya, sehingga relevan untuk membangun narasi identitas perempuan yang lebih setara.

Kata Kunci Fisik, Karakter, Syair Putri Akal, Perempuan Melayu, Psikis

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INTRODUCTION

The Malay ethnic group in Indonesia is one of the major ethnic groups that has great cultural and historical significance throughout the archipelago (Sitanggang et al, 2023; Soh et al, 2021; Sinaga, 2023; Firmansyah, 2023). The Malay ethnic group is located in the Indonesian region, including the islands of Sumatra, Kalimantan, and various other coastal islands, and is famous for its unique language and culture, which is an important aspect of Indonesia's national identity (Mustado et al., 2023; Batubara, 2017; Ritonga & Mita, 2023; Wiyono, 2023). One aspect of Malay culture that is interesting to study is the role of women. The role of Malay women is crucial in preserving culture,

although it often receives less attention in academic discourse (Anggraini & Attas, 2021; Dewi, 2016; Kurniawan & Suratman, 2018).

Malay women are important in continuing traditions and cultural values in everyday life (Roza et al., 2023; Saripaini et al., 2022; Sy, 2019). Malay women actively participate in various aspects of life, including economics, culinary arts, and education, especially in passing on Islamic principles and Malay culture to future generations (Kusnadi & Aziz, 2019). However, women are often depicted as powerless individuals and have a lower status than men, but this implies that the position of women influences the substance of literary works (Anggraeni & Attas, 2022; Nugroho et al., 2023; Atem, 2016; Ahmad & Ahmad, 2024). The representation of women in literary works is based on the role and nature of women. This representation is depicted through women's thoughts, hearing, sight, touch, and feelings (Sugihastuti in Putri et al., 2024).

The problem is the lack of representation of Malay women specifically raised in classical literary studies, especially those that depict them wholly and positively. Most previous studies only present women in literary texts as symbolic objects or complementary characters (Srikandi, 2019; Abror & Afrianti, 2025; Busthomy & Khotimah, 2023). Contrary to the assumption that women are often positioned lower than men, *Syair Putri Akal* presents a different representation. This classic text from Riau presents female characters with intelligence, wisdom, and agility in thinking when facing life's challenges (Pudjiastuti, 1995). This is contrary to the typical stereotype of women in old Malay literature.

Previous studies on women in classical Malay poetry can be grouped into several thematic focuses. Some studies emphasize women's moral and religious qualities, portraying them as patient, polite, gentle, and morally upright, especially from an Islamic perspective (Idayanti et al., 2017). Others focus on female characters idealized physical beauty and appearance, including body shape, facial features, and overall attractiveness (Wulandari & Winda, 2019; Hidayatullah et al., 2023). Another line of research explores women's roles in leadership, public life, and self-development, highlighting their ability to defend themselves, acquire knowledge, and act as leaders within society (Resmanti & Wirajaya, 2022). However, these studies do not specifically address the symbolic representation of Malay women in classical literature nor analyze these portrayals using a hermeneutical approach rooted in cultural symbolism.

Thus, the research gap lies in the absence of an explicit and in-depth representation of Malay women in existing classical poetry research. Yusop (2024) raises the identity and individuality of Malay women in the *Hikayat Syamsul Anuar*. However, the object used is not poetry, and the approach differs. Thus, the novelty of this study lies in the object studied in the form of the *Syair Putri Akal*, which has not been widely discussed in studies of Malay women's representation. The approach used is Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutics, which is different from the feminist or semiotic approach commonly used in previous studies. Then, this study focuses on Malay women, not just women in poetry, thus bringing this study closer to the dimensions of culture and ethnic identity.

The research title, *Malay Women in Syair Putri Akal: A Hermeneutical Study of Paul Ricoeur*, was carefully chosen to emphasize the specific scope and novelty of the approach used. This title was born from an effort to explore the representation of Malay women in classical texts rarely studied in depth through a hermeneutical perspective. The focus on *Syair Putri Akal* and the selection of Paul Ricoeur's approach show that this research does not merely continue existing studies, but offers a new reading that explores the text's symbolism, cultural context, and the structure of meaning in depth. Therefore, this research offers uniqueness compared to previous studies with study problems specifically examining Malay women who are depicted from their physical image, character, and psyche in *Syair Putri Akal* with Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutical approach that focuses on observing symbols, structures, and contextual meanings in the text.

According to Paul Ricoeur, hermeneutics is the concept of interpreting rules that focuses on interpreting specific texts or groups of symbols (Mulyani et al., 2024; Manshur & Munawaroh, 2023; Fitriyah & Djazilan, 2020). This study examines the representation of Malay women in *Syair Putri Akal* using Paul Ricoeur's humanistic approach with three main stages: (1) objectivation of the text structure

as the basis for interpretation, (2) discovery of meaning through exploration of the symbols contained in the narrative, and (3) philosophical reasoning that uses symbols as a reflective medium to explore deep understanding of cultural identity (Lihin, 2022; Najib, 2023). Hermeneutics aims to find the true meaning of symbols and eliminate ambiguity (Abnisa, 2023; Prasetyo, 2023; Rokhmah, 2014). Through a hermeneutic approach in analyzing poetry, interpretation becomes more flexible. It can be considered valid by the stages of the hermeneutic method and the interpretation carried out by the author (Nurhidayat et al, 2022; Pelata et al., 2023). This research is expected to produce more profound and more relevant interpretations of the context of women in Malay culture.

The purpose of this study is to describe and analyze the representation of Malay women in *Syair Putri Akal* comprehensively using Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutic approach. This study specifically aims to reveal the physical image, character, and psyche of female characters in the text and interpret the symbolic meanings contained therein based on the narrative structure and cultural symbols representing Malay women's identity. This study contributes to theoretical, practical, and cultural aspects. On a theoretical level, it expands the scope of classical Malay literature studies by applying Aul Ricoeur's hermeneutics, an approach rarely used in interpreting classical *syair*. This method enables a deeper exploration of symbolic meaning and narrative structure, offering interpretive depth often overlooked in feminist or structuralist analyses (Fajria et al., 2025; Bahardur, 2021). On a practical level, the findings of this study provide a representative image of Malay women as strong, intelligent, and wise figures. This can serve as a reference for gender studies grounded in local cultural values and enrich literary or cultural education materials at both secondary and tertiary levels. This aligns with Amina Wadud's opinion (Setyawan, 2017) that understanding women's heritage from a cultural and religious perspective can be a strength in fighting for equality and dignity. On a cultural level, this research contributes to preserving classical Malay literature by highlighting female representation that has often been marginalized. It also provides a foundation for strengthening Malay cultural identity and reviving public interest in classical texts as valuable sources for understanding women's roles and values in traditional society.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutics to understand the representation of Malay women in *Syair Putri Akal* (Risnita et al., 2024; Jailani, 2023; Romlah, 2021; Prayogi et al, 2024; Hidayatullah et al., 2023; Teguh et al, 2023). This approach was chosen because it can provide a deeper interpretation of the literary text by considering the context, characters, and symbols contained in the text. Data collection was carried out using a literature study technique, which involved in-depth reading of the *Syair Putri Akal* text, as well as recording parts that were considered relevant, such as character descriptions and symbols related to women (Adlini et al., 2022; Nashruddin et al., 2024; Sari et al., 2024; Darmalaksana, 2020; Wardana & Wulandari, 2024; Sa'diyah et al., 2021).

This study's primary data source is the *Syair Putri Akal* text, which consists of 514 stanzas (Pudjiastuti, 1995). In addition, this study uses other relevant literature to enrich the context of interpretation. For data analysis, this study follows three main stages in Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutics: *distanciation*, which is to distance oneself from the text, so that the text can be understood as a stand-alone work; *interpretation*, which is to interpret the meanings contained in the text; and *appropriation*, which is to relate the meaning to the current context (Abraham, 2017; Nugraha, 2021; Tabarok et al., 2025). With this approach, the study aims to reveal how Malay women are depicted in *Syair Putri Akal*.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Syair Putri Akal is an old Malay literary work that is more than just a story that combines plot, love, and struggle. More than that, this poem contains complex symbols that reflect the identity of Malay women in terms of their physical, character, and psyche. The depiction of Malay women in *Syair Putri Akal* will be explored in detail in this study using Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutic theory.

Hermeneutic theory includes three steps in the form of distanciation (symbol), interpretation (meaning), and appropriation (interpretation). The following are research results on Malay women's physical, character, and psychological aspects in Syair Putri Akal.

Physical Aspects of Malay Women in the Syair Putri Akal

Physical appearance includes aspects of beauty, body shape, appearance, and other related things, as stated by Sugihastuti in [Wulandari & Winda \(2019\)](#). Malay culture represents women as attractive in terms of physical, character, and psyche. In Syair Putri Akal, the physicality of Malay women is represented in the following verses.

Table 1
Table of Symbols of the Physical Aspects of Malay Women in the Syair Putri Akal

No	Poetry Verses	Stanza	Distanciation (Symbol)	Interpretation (Meaning)	Appropriation (Interpretation)
1.	His Majesty had a daughter with his noble sister The beauty is beyond description The daughter of Intellect is named	3	How nice	Good, friendly, beautiful (about appearance)	The indescribable beauty of Princess Akal symbolizes Malay women as figures who are so beautiful that they cannot be described in words.
2.	The beauty of the princess is beyond compare Her face is radiant Her face is square, her neck is long, her waist is slim, and her chest is broad	4	The beauty;	Beautiful, pretty (about a woman's face);	This verse describes the ideal physical image of a Malay woman, with facial beauty and body proportions often considered to be among their superior qualities.
			Face;	The front part of the head;	
			Advance;	The front part of the head, from the top of the forehead to the chin and between the other ears;	
			Neck;	The part of the body that connects the head to the rest of the body;	
			Waist;	The part of the body between the stomach and chest;	
			Chest	The front part of the body between the stomach and neck	
3.	It was famously reported that the master's daughter had indescribable beauty and wisely bestari hard to find	9	His face	Face, facial features	Paras Putri Akal symbolizes Malay women with extraordinary facial beauty that is difficult to describe in words. The beauty of Malay women is combined with wisdom and specialness to depict a woman whose physical and spiritual beauty are balanced.
4.	The news reached the land of Damascus The princess's face is too beautiful His devout deeds are too scrutinizing	10	His face	Face, facial features	Putri Akal symbolizes the extraordinary beauty of Malay women's faces; however, in Malay culture, women are not only valued based on beauty alone but

	His long mind is too clever				also measured by moral values, such as obedience to God and intelligence. This illustrates the balance between outer and inner beauty.
5.	Caumil is incredibly beautiful like a statue with a radiant face does not wear earrings and a necklace The elegance of a king is not lost a bit	372	Beautiful	Beautiful, beautiful (about a woman's face)	Putri Akal is depicted as a Malay woman who has natural beauty, true beauty that comes from within, and does not depend on external decoration. The elegance of Malay women is depicted as still radiating even in simplicity.
6.	His face was finished according to His Majesty Little is no longer different like splitting young areca nuts There are no minor flaws	347	His face	Face, facial features	This verse describes a Malay woman with such perfect physical beauty that someone in a high position, such as a king or leader, even appreciates her. She is described as having a fresh, healthy, and beautiful beauty like a young betel nut that has been split.

The symbol of the word *elok* indicates a very high standard of beauty, illustrating that Putri Akal's physical appearance as a Malay woman is considered perfect and attractive (Mohamed, 2015). In Malay culture, beauty is often seen as an important value, reflecting external beauty and the moral qualities possessed. The physical beauty of a Malay woman is also reflected in her beauty symbol, which depicts extraordinary beauty that words cannot measure. This beauty radiates from her face, which is depicted in the word symbol *wajah*. This word symbol not only depicts physical beauty, but also the positive aura that Malay women radiate (Situmorang et al., 2019). In Malay culture, an oval or long face shape is often considered a symbol of beauty. The final line of the verse describes the ideal proportions of a Malay woman's body using symbols such as *muka* (face), *kepala* (head), *pinggang* (waist), and *dada* (chest). The word *parasnya* also reflects the physical beauty of Putri Akal, portraying her as a wonderful Malay woman. Her beauty is described as indescribable beyond words. In Malay culture, beauty is highly valued regarding appearance and the deeper qualities it represents.

The word *cantik* further emphasizes this ideal, suggesting that the beauty of a Malay woman is not merely physical, but a natural radiance that comes from within. The physical comparison of Putri Akal with the statue indicates a detailed and ideal Malay woman's face with perfect beauty. The beauty of Malay women radiates light and enchanting charm, even without additional jewellery or makeup. Malay women are known for their natural beauty, which does not depend on the help of jewellery or makeup, thus reflecting the values of elegance and simplicity that are highly valued in Malay culture. In addition, Malay women are depicted as having such perfect physical beauty through the symbol of the word *paras*, which is recognized by ordinary people and appreciated by someone with a high position, such as a king or leader. The beauty of Malay women is also depicted as freshness, health, and beauty, like a split young betel nut.

Table 1 highlights several symbolic words-*eloknya*, *cantoknya*, *wajah*, *muka*, *kepala*, *pinggang*, *dada*, and multiple instances of *parasnya* and *cantik* found across six verses of Syair Putri Akal. These words reflect the physical aspects of Malay women, including their beauty, posture, and appearance. A single feature does not represent Utri Akal's beauty, but through the harmony of her entire form. Terms such as face, neck, waist, and chest depict an ideal bodily proportion, as appreciated in Malay cultural ideals. The repetition of *parasnya* emphasizes that her beauty is ineffably flawless in every aspect.

Beyond physical appearance, this also reflects the values of inner elegance and natural simplicity that radiate from within the ideal Malay woman.

Aspects of Malay Women's Characters in the Syair Putri Akal

In the study of Malay literature, Syair Putri Akal is not only a work that describes the physical beauty of Malay women, but also implies deep and complex aspects of the character of the Malay woman. The character aspect focuses on tangible actions and social judgments influenced by cultural values, customs, and social norms. This poem reveals the importance of balancing beauty and character in defining a woman's identity in Malay culture. Syair Putri Akal is a mirror that reflects the hopes and values held by Malay society towards women. The following aspects of Malay women's character are depicted in Syair Putri Akal.

Table 2
Table of Symbols of Aspects of Malay Female Character in the Poem Putri Akal

No	Poetry Verses	Stanza	Distanciation (Symbol)	Interpretation (Meaning)	Appropriation (Interpretation)
1.	Yellow and white have managerial properties. It is complete with seven forms. Being seen as intimate is too basic His wit is very sharp and perfect.	5	His Intellect <hr/> His Nature	Thinking power (to understand something and so on) <hr/> Basic character (carried since birth)	This verse describes the idealization of Malay women who are judged not only by their physical beauty but also by their noble qualities and intelligence.
2.	It was famously reported that the master's daughter had indescribable beauty and wisely bestari hard to find	9	Bestari wise	Wise	Malay women are depicted as figures who are not only physically beautiful but also have wisdom and high self-esteem.
3.	Dayang wai go whatever you do Got a young jeweller's son We empower fairies So that the statue was brought here	81	Empower	The ability to do something or the ability to act	Putri Akal, a Malay woman, is described as having emotional intelligence and the ability to strategize to achieve big goals.
4.	The daughter of a wise person perfect Intellect and eyesight too understanding of words and meaning Everything mentioned is affected	206	Wise	Always use your common sense (experience and knowledge); be wise, sharp-minded	This verse depicts Putri Akal as a wise, intelligent, well-mannered Malay woman. Malay women are also depicted as having broad insight and excellent communication skills.
5.	As for the patient, young princess It is empowering to hear the news Disheartened Submitted to Allahu Akbar	251	Be patient	Resistant to trials (not getting angry quickly, not giving up quickly, not getting heartbroken quickly); steadfast	This stanza describes Malay women as having patience, calm, and deep faith.

The symbol of the symbol Akalnya depicts Princess Akal as beautiful and intelligent. In Malay women's culture, intelligence is considered a highly valued quality. Intelligent women are seen as able to make good decisions and play an active role in society. Her sharp Intellect shows the ability to think critically and wisely and be good at making decisions, reflecting the importance of intelligence in Malay women (Maymunah, 2021). The beauty of Malay women is described in this verse with a yellowish white skin colour, reflecting the impression of being clean, bright, healthy, and charming. This beauty

is combined with the adjective symbol for the seven *laksana* qualities: beauty, gentleness, politeness, intelligence, elegance, wisdom, and loyalty (Wulandari & Winda 2019).

The symbol of the wise phrase *bestari* represents Malay women who have wisdom (Rosiana et al. 2024). In this verse, Putri Akal, a Malay woman, has an extraordinary reputation because she is widely known. This reflects that, in Malay culture, women are considered role models and earn society's respect when they possess high moral values, not just physical beauty. The beauty and wisdom of Malay women create a special combination, making them a figure full of honour that is difficult to obtain. In addition to wisdom, the ingenuity of Malay women is reflected in the symbol of the word *perdayakan*. This verse shows the clever use of tactics or strategies to achieve goals. These efforts are carried out in a wise and considerate manner. This illustrates the ingenuity of Malay women in solving problems or achieving something in a structured and planned way (Lemiyana et al., 2024).

Wisdom is expressed again in Syair Putri Akal's verse with the wisdom symbol. This is reinforced by the following line, which reflects the balance between intelligence (reason) and morality (*budi*) possessed by Putri Akal as a depiction of Malay women. This intelligence is also reflected in the following line of the verse, which states that Putri Akal has communication skills, broad insight, and can convey ideas and opinions clearly and accurately. In addition to wisdom, intelligence, and cleverness, Putri Akal, a Malay woman, is also depicted as a patient character. This can be seen in the symbol of the word *sabar*. This patience creates calmness in Putri Akal so that Malay women can reach a high level of faith and *tawakal*, as reflected in this verse.

The symbol of reason describes Malay women as having intelligence. The symbol of wisdom represents the figure of Malay women who have wisdom. Intelligence is also expressed in Syair Putri Akal's verse in the empowerment symbol. The patience of Malay women is also depicted in the symbol of patience. These characters are summarised in the seven *laksana* traits, with the symbols of their traits referring to a combination of beauty, gentleness, politeness, intelligence, elegance, wisdom, and loyalty.

The Psychic Aspect of Malay Women in the Syair Putri Akal

In the context of Syair Putri Akal, the psychic aspect and the character aspect describe two different dimensions of the representation of Malay women. The psychic aspect refers to women's mental, emotional, and spiritual conditions in the poem that are influenced by personal experiences and biological factors. The psychic aspect focuses on the internal conditions of individuals that are not always directly visible. The following are the psychic aspects of Malay women in Syair Putri Akal.

Table 3
Table of Symbols of the Psychic Aspects of Malay Women in the Poem Putri Akal

No	Poetry Verses	Stanza	Distanciation (Symbol)	Interpretation (Meaning)	Appropriation (Interpretation)
1.	As for the patient, young princess It is empowering to hear the news Disheartened Submitted to Allahu Akbar	251	Submitted	To hand over control of someone or something to someone else	Submission to God (<i>tawakal</i>) reflects that Malay women rely on their strength and have high spirituality.
2.	Listening to the king's hymn crown The princess who paced silently Not answering a word Her compassion is placed in her heart	344	Bow	Facing face down, leaning forward and downward (about the head)	Putri Akal, as a Malay woman, is described as a figure who is good at positioning herself, careful, and wise in taking a stance.

3.	Because the daughter of a sensible person Trust in Allah very much Knowledge is running out Do not use amulets and wards	345	Tawakal	Surrender yourself to the will of Allah SWT.	This verse represents Malay women's noble values, namely not relying on material or mystical things but rather on developing intellectual and spiritual potential.
4.	After the daughter saw her son, her heart was sad, she remembered her father and mother and then her tears fell.	348	Tears	Water that flows from the eyes (when crying and so on)	Malay women are depicted through this symbol as figures who have gentleness, sincerity, and are full of love. This reflects the values of Malay culture, where women are considered the guardians of close family relationships.
5.	After being around daughter bandages her son herself while being breastfed His heart was beyond compare	350	Bandage	Bandaging (gently, cloth, etc.)	In this verse, tears can be associated with the compassion and gentleness of a Malay woman, especially in her role as a mother.
6.	Sit down, it is said that the martyred princess Every day takes care of your child Love and affection in the chest A little is not given differently	354	Affection	Love, compassion	This expression describes love as a feeling and a strong emotional urge to protect, care for, and give the best to one's child.

The psychic aspect of Putri Akal as a Malay woman with high spirituality is depicted with the symbol of surrender. This symbol depicts a Malay woman who always puts her trust in Allah SWT. In this verse, Putri Akal is a Malay woman who is patient while facing life's trials. This patient's nature shows emotional maturity within herself (Mahmor & Hashim, 2015). Other expressions in this verse reflect Malay women who are wise in responding to situations without overreacting. Putri Akal is also described as not easily shaken under challenging situations. The calmness possessed by Putri Akal as a Malay woman leads her to the stage of tawakal or surrender to God. for situations that occur beyond her control. Calmness as a sign of emotional maturity is also described in the verse with the symbol of submission. This verse describes Malay women as good at positioning themselves in certain situations, wise in taking a stance, and not rashly responding or reacting. Putri Akal, a Malay woman, is described as having emotional intelligence because she is not effortlessly expressive but manages to express herself calmly and wisely.

The high spirituality of Malay women is symbolized by the word tawakal. This expression reflects deep faith and an attitude of surrender to God (Rohmatin, 2019). This verse also mentions that Putri Akal is a Malay woman who is intelligent, has reason, and has wisdom. Putri Akal is also represented as having extensive knowledge and rejecting the use of mystical or superstitious things to face life's challenges. In addition to high spirituality and emotional calm, affection in the role of a mother is also represented in this verse. The word tears symbolizes this. This verse shows the gentle, emotional, and loving side of Putri Akal, who has deep love for her child, respect for parents, and awareness of the importance of family. A mother's affection is also reflected in the symbol of a bandage. This verse describes a mother's deep affection and empathy, which is manifested through real actions in caring for and protecting her child. The psychic aspect of a mother's affection is also reflected in the symbol of affection. This expression describes affection as a feeling and a strong emotional drive to protect, care for, and give the best to the child. This is a reflection of the noble values that are upheld in Malay society.

The psychological aspect of Malay women found in the verses of *Syair Putri Akal* is emotionally calm, symbolized by the word *bow*. The high spirituality of Malay women is also depicted through the symbols of the words *surrender* and *tawakal*. In addition, the psychological aspect of Malay women in the form of a mother's affection is reflected in the symbols of *tears*, *bandage*, and *affection*. This reflects that the psychological aspect of *Putri Akal* as a Malay woman contains noble values upheld in Malay society.

The results of the study on *Syair Putri Akal* show that the character of *Putri Akal* in this text represents an ideal Malay woman from her physical image and character to her psyche. The poem's structure displays the journey of the character *Putri Akal*, who faces various challenges with reason and precision. This shows that the text explicitly places women as subjects with the leading role. The interpretation is based on three stages of Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutics. First, the objectification of the text structure shows that *Syair Putri Akal* uses the narrative of the main character's journey, symbolizing Malay women's beauty, thinking power, and tranquillity. Second, symbolization is found in the text divided into physical images, for example, beauty, character images in the form of intelligence, and psychic images in the form of tranquillity and high spirituality. This shows the power of symbolic meaning in building the personality of Malay women. Third, these symbolic codes are interpreted within the framework of classical Malay culture that upholds Islamic and customary values. *Putri Akal* is described as a woman who is not only physically beautiful but also has a noble character and is knowledgeable. This strengthens the view that classical Malay texts do not always place women in an inferior position.

The result of this research is consistent with [Idayanti et al., \(2017\)](#), who describes women from an Islamic perspective through the Prophet Allah's poem *Ayub*, [Wulandari & Winda \(2019\)](#), who describe the ideal physical appearance of *Siti Zubaidah* in the poem entitled *Syair Siti Zubaidah* including her beauty, body shape and appearance, [Hidayatullah et al. \(2023\)](#) which describes the ideal physical appearance of *Siti Zubaidah* in the poem entitled *Syair Siti Zubaidah* including her beauty, body shape and appearance, and [Resmanti & Wirajaya \(2022\)](#), who explain the representation of women in *Syair Ardan* as they develop their abilities in self-defense, knowledge, and their role in society or the public sphere as leaders. These studies generally describe women in each poem with physical, character, and psychological images. However, this study has a novelty by explicitly examining the representation of Malay women through *Syair Putri Akal* which is still rarely studied using Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutic approach with research results that cover all three aspects of physical, character, and psychological at once, and present women as allegorical figures that represent the symbolic meaning of Malay culture in the form of female figures who overcome the trials of life wisely. [Yusop \(2024\)](#) explicitly discusses Malay women's identity and individualism. This research is new because it uses a different object, not a tale, but a poem. The results of the author's research also have specific aspects in the form of physical image, character, and psyche of Malay women.

Thus, the results of this study answer the objectives outlined in the introduction, namely to reveal the representation of Malay women in classical poetry through a hermeneutic approach. This representation provides a complete picture of Malay women's physical image, character, and psyche. In addition, this study fills the gap in the study of classical Malay literature, which has so far not raised women as active subjects in texts with a deep symbolic and cultural perspective. This study also presents novelty, because it raises *Syair Putri Akal* as an object that is rarely studied and uses Ricoeur's approach, which differs from the more common feminist or semiotic approaches. Therefore, these results contribute to the discourse of classical Malay literature and strengthen the position of women as an important part in the construction of Malay culture through literary works.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the representation of Malay women in *Syair Putri Akal*. Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutic approach focuses on three main aspects: physical appearance, character, and psyche. The findings reveal that the physical image of Malay women is conveyed through eleven symbolic expressions across six verses, depicting ideal beauty standards in Malay culture. These include

symmetrical facial features, a proportionate figure, and natural elegance without dependence on adornments, showing that physical beauty is not merely aesthetic, but also a symbol of cultural honour and value. The character aspect is reflected in symbols such as *akalnya* (Intellect), *bijak bestari* (wise and learned), *perdayakan* (strategic intelligence), and *sabar* (patience), portraying Malay women as intelligent, strategic, patient, and morally upright. These qualities demonstrate that Malay culture values women's wisdom and integrity, not just appearance. Meanwhile, the psychological aspect is represented through symbols like *tunduk* (modesty), *tawakal* (spiritual surrender), *air mata* (tears), and *kasih sayang* (motherly love), illustrating spiritual depth, emotional maturity, and nurturing affection, especially in the role of a mother.

Ricoeur's hermeneutics provides a strong interpretive framework through its three main stages: distanciation (analyzing structure and symbols), interpretation (deriving meaning within cultural context), and appropriation (relating meaning to lived experience and social values). The analysis proves that Syair Putri Akal presents women not merely as narrative objects, but as active subjects who embody values, meaning, and cultural roles. Thus, this study fulfils its objective of comprehensively describing and interpreting the representation of Malay women through symbolic cultural expressions in Syair Putri Akal. The findings reinforce the idea that classical Malay literature can portray women as figures of elegance, intelligence, spirituality, and compassion far beyond the passive roles often assumed in past studies. The implications of this research are both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, it demonstrates that Ricoeur's hermeneutic method effectively reveals symbolic depth in classical Malay texts, offering a promising approach for future literary and cultural studies. Practically, the research serves as a reference for education, especially in literature and gender studies with a local cultural lens, and supports efforts to strengthen Malay cultural identity by highlighting women's roles in heritage texts.

DECLARATIONS

Author contribution	: Syafira developed the research idea and chose Syair Putri Akal as the main object of the research. She conducted an in-depth literature review, applied Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutic method, and analyzed the data according to three hermeneutic stages: distanciation, interpretation, and appropriation. She also wrote and revised the manuscript to ensure academic coherence, originality, and cultural relevance in the representation of Malay women. Wachid Eko Purwanto provided advice during the preparation of the research method and provided critical input on the structure and clarity of the manuscript. All authors contributed to the final approval of the article. Yosi Wulandari provided significant guidance in the research development framework and theoretical foundation. She also reviewed the interpretation of symbolic meaning and ensured the accuracy and depth of the hermeneutic analysis.
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