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Contextualization of the meaning of the story of Ashabul Fil in QS. Al-Fil perspective al-Fann al-Qashāṣī Khalafullah

Taufiqur Rohman¹; Agus Imam Kharomen²; Hayim Muhammad³

Abstract

*This study analyzes the narrative of Ashābul Fīl in Surah al-Fīl through Muhammad Ahmad Khalafullah's al-fann al-qashāṣī framework. While classical exegesis largely emphasizes the historical dimension of the event, limited research systematically applies Khalafullah's literary-narrative approach to short Makkiyyah surahs. This study addresses that **gap** by examining the aesthetic structure, symbolism, and theological meaning of QS. al-Fīl beyond historiographical concerns. Using a **qualitative-descriptive** design with a literary-hermeneutic approach, the research is based on textual analysis of the Qur'an, classical and modern tafsīr, and Khalafullah's theoretical works. Narrative structural analysis and thematic interpretation are employed to identify symbolic and theological patterns within the text. The **findings** show that QS. al-Fīl presents a dramatic structure consisting of threat, divine intervention, and the destruction of tyranny. The symbols of ṭayran abābīl and hijārah min sijjīl function as theological metaphors representing divine sovereignty and moral accountability. This study demonstrates that Khalafullah's approach enriches contemporary Qur'anic interpretation by integrating aesthetics, symbolism, and theology. **Globally**, the research highlights the Qur'an's ethical relevance in addressing injustice, authoritarianism, and moral crisis in modern society.*

Keywords: Al-Fann Al-Qashasi; Surah Al-Fil; Qur'anic Narrative.

¹ UIN Walisongo, Semarang, Indonesia, Email: taufiqurrohman57883@gmail.com, Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-9235-0038>

² UIN Walisongo, Semarang, Indonesia, Email: agusimamkharomen@walisongo.ac.id, Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5474-027X>

³ UIN Walisongo, Semarang, Indonesia, Email: hasyimmuhammad@walisongo.ac.id, Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1474-3449>

Introduction

Despite the growing interest in literary and narrative approaches to the Qur'an within contemporary Islamic scholarship, few studies have systematically applied Muhammad Ahmad Khalafullah's *al-fann al-qashāṣī* framework to short Makkiyyah surahs such as QS. al-Fil [1]. Existing research tends to emphasize either historical reconstruction, semiotic readings, or general discussions of Qur'anic storytelling without operationalizing Khalafullah's literary theory in a focused and methodologically consistent manner [2]. As a result, the aesthetic structure, symbolic depth, and theological integration of QS. al-Fil remain insufficiently explored within a unified literary-hermeneutical paradigm [3]. This study addresses this gap by offering a systematic application of *al-fann al-qashāṣī* to QS. al-Fil, thereby clarifying its narrative structure, uncovering its symbolic and theological meanings, and demonstrating its relevance for contemporary Qur'anic interpretation. Through this focused approach, the research establishes a clearer methodological contribution and strengthens the novelty of its analytical framework.

QS Story. Al-Fil (108:1-5) which tells about the nomads (The Incident of Ashab al-Fiil) occupies a unique position in the discourse of interpretation and narrative study of the Qur'an. Although it consists of only five verses, it is consistently studied for its rich symbolism, dramatic narrative, and theological implications regarding Divine power over human power. The study of this story is important for three main reasons. First, the narrative of the Qur'an (including stories, stories) has often been read from a purely historical angle, even though literary and narrative approaches can open up different dimensions of meaning [4]. Second, the narrative approach to the story of the Qur'an is gaining increasing attention in the epistemology of contemporary interpretation, in response to methodological challenges in understanding the story, a story that is not textually complemented by complete chronological data or verified historical evidence [1]. Third, the study that reviews the story of the Qur'an through the lens of *al-fann al-qashāṣī* (the art of storytelling) developed by Muhammad Ahmad Khalafullah opens up new interpretations that emphasize more aesthetic, symbolic, and moral message aspects than simply verifying historical facts [5]. Thus, research on the meaning of the story of *Ashab al-Fiil* in the perspective of the narrative art of the Qur'an is significant for the development of the science of interpretation, Qur'anic literature, and a more dynamic understanding of religion.

In the last five years there have been a number of relevant studies on the study of stories, stories of the Qur'an and narrative or literary approaches to them. For example, Haris (2022) conducted a semiotic analysis of QS. al-Fil

verses 1,6 use the theory of Roland Barthes, and find that the symbolism of the "abbles" and the stone "*sijjil*" can be read as symbols of Divine intervention in the social, political context of man [6]. A theoretical study by Jurnal Al, Munir said that the verses of the story in the Qur'an have their own characteristics and significant proportions, namely about 1,600 verses out of the total 6,200 verses of the Qur'an are story verses that show the urgency of understanding the narrative about them [7]. Meanwhile, the study of the implementation of Khalafullāh thought in the context of the Qur'anic story (Muasharah, 2024) shows that the literary approach to the Qur'anic story provides a new understanding that focuses on message and aesthetics, not just historiography [8]. However, little research specifically examines the story of Ashab al-Fiil from the perspective of *al-fann al-qashāṣī*, so there is relatively open research space in this area.

Based on the review above, there are several research gaps that need attention. First, most of the current research still uses historical, semiotic or structural linguistic approaches to QS. al-Fiil, but not many have specifically adopted the methodology of *al-fann al-qashāṣī* in its entirety as provided by Khalafullāh, that is, understanding the story of the Qur'an as a literary work that has aesthetic, pedagogical, and spiritual purposes [5]. Second, existing studies tend to be general to the stories of the Qur'an as a whole or the stories of specific prophets, whereas the story of Ashab al-Fiil has not been the main focus within the framework of *al-fann al-qashāṣī*. Third, existing research still rarely combines symbolic-narrative analysis with social-contemporary context and theological implications in an integrated manner (semiotic + narrative + contextual). The research I submitted is different because it specifically focuses on the story of Ashab al-Fiil in QS. Al-Fiil, and using the framework *al-fann al-qashāṣī* Khalafullāh as the main methodological umbrella, thus has a more specific and systematic interpretive contribution to a short but meaningful surah.

The objectives of this research are: (1) To describe the narrative, symbolic, and aesthetic structure of the story of Ashab al-Fiil in QS. al-Fiil from the perspective of *al-fann al-qashāṣī* Khalafullāh; (2) Explain the theological, moral, and social meaning of the story based on a literary narrative approach; and (3) Offering an interpretation that enriches the understanding of the interpretation of the Qur'an with a narrative literary framework. His scholarly contributions include: expanding the study of tafsir using narrative literary approaches that are relatively under-applied to surah, short stories such as al-Fiil; deepen the understanding of the meaning of the story of Ashab al-Fiil not only as a historical account but as a medium of teaching monotheism and divine justice; and opens up interdisciplinary research pathways between the

study of literature, the Qur'an and contextual theology. Thus, this research is expected to be a new reference for interpreters, scholars of Islamic literature, and practitioners of Islamic education in understanding the story of the Qur'an in a more holistic manner.

This article is organized into five main sections. Part 1 is an introduction that includes background, literature review, research gaps, objectives and contributions, and writing systematics. Part 2 discusses the theoretical foundations, including the concept of *al-fann al-qashāṣī*, the account of al-Qur'an in a literary perspective, and its relevance to the account of Ashab al-Fiil. Part 3 analyzes the story of Ashab al-Fiil in the Qur'an. al-Fil according to the framework of Khalafullāh, encompasses narrative structure, symbolism, and contemporary relevance. Part 4 compares the results of the analysis with the classical interpretation and highlights the contribution of the literary approach to the understanding of the story. Section 5 summarizes the research findings and provides suggestions for future research.

To strengthen the academic structure and clarify the analytical direction of this study, the research questions must be explicitly formulated. Therefore, this study addresses the following questions: How does Khalafullah's *al-fann al-qashāṣī* framework interpret the narrative structure of QS. al-Fil? What symbolic and theological meanings emerge from this literary-narrative approach? And how does this approach contribute to contemporary Qur'anic interpretation? The explicit formulation of these questions provides a clearer methodological focus, sharpens the problem statement, and reinforces the coherence and scholarly rigor of the research.

Method

This research uses a qualitative, descriptive approach with a hermeneutic analysis method of Qur'anic literature, because the main purpose of the research is to interpret the meaning and narrative structure of the story of Ashabul Fiil in QS. al-Fil based on the framework of *al-fann al-qashāṣī fil Qur'an* developed by Muhammad Ahmad Khalafullāh. This approach is based on an interpretive paradigm, which is to understand texts as cultural and religious products that contain moral, aesthetic, and spiritual messages. The research design is library research, because the main data sources come from texts, texts of the Qur'an, classical and modern interpretations (e.g. *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*, *al-Marāghī*), as well as the works and theoretical works of Khalafullāh such as *al-Fann al-Qashāṣī fil Qur'an al-Karīm*. In addition, supporting literature is also used in the form of a book on interpretation methodology, scientific journal articles 2019–2025 that discuss the Qur'anic literary approach, and relevant dissertations or theses. The research population

included all scholarly works and commentaries that alluded to the story of *Ashabul Fiil*, while the research sample was selected by purposive sampling based on relevance to the theme of *al-fann al-qashāsi*, the author's scientific authority, and the diversity of interpretive perspectives. Data collection is carried out through documentation and text analysis, with stages: (1) identification of key verses and terms in QS. al-Fil; (2) collection of relevant commentaries and literature; (3) classification of data based on symbolic, structural, and moral themes; and (4) interpretation of texts with hermeneutic and comparative techniques. To maintain objectivity, triangulation of sources is carried out through the comparison of the results of the interpretation of the *Khalafullāh* with the views of classical and contemporary *mufasir*, as well as validation of interpretation through repeated readings and limited discussions with experts in the study of the Qur'an in the academic environment. Data analysis was carried out by content analysis and contextual, thematic analysis, which emphasized the relationship between the form of language, moral message, and literary function of the Qur'anic story.

Results and Discussion

1. The Concept of Al-Fann Al-Qashasi

The concept of *al-fann al-qashasi* is an idea introduced by Muhammad Ahmad Khalafullah in his dissertation entitled *Al-Fann al-Qashasi fil Qur'an al-Karim* (1947), which was later published as an influential book in the study of modern Qur'anic literature [9]. According to Khalafullah, the stories in the Qur'an (*al-qashash al-qur'ani*) cannot be understood solely as factual historical reports, but as divine literary works (divine *adab*) that function to convey moral, spiritual, and theological messages through narrative [8]. He argues that the truth in the Qur'an is not chronological truth, but the truth of meaning, which is the truth that lies in the values of faith and ethics that are to be conveyed to humans [10]. Thus, the literary approach is not intended to deny the historicity of the story, but to affirm its moral and educational function.

Khalafullah emphasized that aesthetic elements such as imagination, drama, dialogue, and symbolism are rhetorical devices that the Qur'an uses to arouse the spiritual and intellectual awareness of its readers [11]. Imagination, in the view of Khalafullah, serves as a means of presenting meanings, abstract meanings in concrete form that are easily digestible [8]. The dramatic elements in the Qur'anic story create tension and emotions that reinforce its moral message [12]. Meanwhile, symbolism exists as an aesthetic form that bridges the gap between literal and metaphorical meanings, as can be seen in the story of *Ashabul Fil* which depicts the destruction of the armies not as a mere military event, but as a symbol of Divine power over human pride [8]. Through this

approach, the story of the Qur'an becomes an effective means to inculcate the values of monotheism, justice, and obedience to Allah in a beautiful and heartwarming form.

Furthermore, Khalafullah criticized the traditional interpretation of tafsir that overemphasizes historical and chronological aspects, so that it tends to ignore the artistic and rhetorical dimensions of sacred texts [11]. He offers a hermeneutical-literary approach that places the Qur'anic story as a form of artistic expression that has its own narrative structure [13]. The main purpose of the story, according to him, is not to record the facts, the facts of the past, but to form the awareness of faith and deepen the spiritual sense of the people [14]. Thus, *al-fann al-qashasi* combines two main elements: *al-ma'nā al-akhlaqī* (moral message) and *al-jamāl al-lughawī* (the beauty of language) [15]. These two elements are the foundation for reading that views the story of the Qur'an as a living text, not a historical archive, but a revelation that is always actual and relevant to human life [16].

This concept then had a far-reaching influence on the development of modern Qur'anic literary studies and paved the way for interdisciplinary approaches to interpretation, including Qur'anic semiotics, stylistics, and narrative [17]. By emphasizing the beauty of language and narrative power, Khalafullah shows that aesthetics in the Qur'an are not just ornaments, but an integral part of the divine message to be conveyed [18]. *Al-fann al-qashasi's* approach teaches that in order to understand the deepest meaning of the Qur'anic stories, the reader must combine artistic sensibility with spiritual acumen [19]. So, in the context of this research, the concept is the methodological key to interpreting QS. *Al-Fil* is not only a record of historical events, but as a symbolic narrative of Divine power and the destruction of human tyranny.

2. An analysis QS. Al-Fil Perspective of Al-Fann Al-Qashasi's Approach

a) Textual Narrative Analysis

Surah *al-Fil* is one of the short Makkiyyah surahs but has a very high rhetorical and narrative power [20]. As a short Makkiyyah surah consisting of only five verses, QS. *al-Fil* demonstrates a highly concentrated narrative and rhetorical structure [21]. From the perspective of Khalafullah's *al-fann al-qashāsī*, the surah should not be read merely as a historical report about the army of Abraha, but as a divinely constructed literary narrative designed to evoke moral and theological awareness [22]. The dramatic structure unfolds in three major stages: (1) the emergence of threat, (2) divine intervention, and (3) the destruction of tyranny. The opening verse "*Alam tara kayfa fa'ala rabbuka bi-aṣḥāb al-fil*" employs a rhetorical interrogative (*istifhām taqrīrī*) that

immediately engages the audience emotionally and cognitively. This stylistic device does not simply inform; it dramatizes the event and invites reflective participation. The second stage introduces divine intervention through the imagery of *ṭayran abābīl*, culminating in the final verse where the enemy is rendered “*ka ‘aṣṣīn ma’kūl*” (like devoured straw). The omission of detailed chronology, names, and historical specifications is not a deficiency but a deliberate artistic strategy that shifts attention from empirical detail to moral meaning [23]. Thus, the surah’s compact structure reflects a unified narrative movement from tension to divine resolution.

The dramatic structure of QS. Al-Fil is organized into three main stages: threat, divine intervention, and destruction of the enemy. The first stage, the threat, appears in the first sentence:

الْمَ تَرَ كَيْفَ فَعَلَ رَبُّكَ بِأَصْحَابِ الْفِيلِ

(Have you not noticed how your Lord has acted against the elephant army?).

This verse not only opens the story, but also builds narrative tension with a rhetorical style of questioning (*istifhām taqrīrī*), which demands the reader to reflect on the extraordinary event. This form of question is not just rhetoric, but rather a dramatic tool that engages the reader emotionally in the story, creating an atmosphere of surprise and curiosity [24]. The question contains a dramatic element, because it not only tells something that has happened, but also invites the reader to re-experience the miracle of the event imaginatively.

The second stage, divine intervention, is described through the descent of an army of birds called *ṭayran abābīl*, as stated in the third verse:

وَأَرْسَلَ عَلَيْهِمْ طَيْرًا أَبَابِيلَ

(and He sent them birds, flocks, flocks).

In classical interpretation, the *abābīl* is often understood as a small bird that comes in groups and throws a stone at the Abrahamic army with a stone from the *sijjīl* [25]. However, in the view of the concept of *al-fann al-qashasi*, this element is not only interpreted literally, but symbolically. He considered that the birds were representations of the *quwwat* of Allah (the power of Allah) working beyond the reach of human logic. In the framework of *al-fann al-qashasi*, this element is the dramatic culmination of the story, when Divine intervention is present to uphold the truth and destroy tyranny [14]. This symbolism not only brings the event to life, but also presents a strong narrative

aesthetic aspect. Khalafullah called it a "divine drama" that depicts the struggle between human pride and power [8].

The third stage in the dramatic structure of QS. Al-Fil is the destruction of the enemy, which is described in the last verse:

فَجَعَلَهُمْ كَعَصْفٍ مَّأْكُولٍ

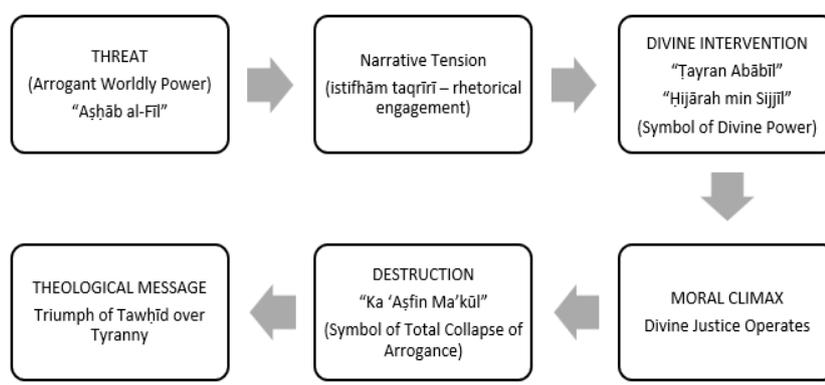
(so He made them like leaves, leaves that caterpillars eat).

This metaphorical style shows the way the Qur'an closes the story with a powerful visual image, which at the same time becomes a dramatic climax and a moral resolution. In literary narratives, the closing of this kind of story serves to provide a deep emotional effect to the reader. With the analytical approach of al-fann al-qashasi the use of the metaphor "leaves eaten by caterpillars" is not only to indicate physical destruction, but also the moral and spiritual destruction of human pride. Symbolically, the enemies of Allah are not only destroyed physically, but they lose their dignity and existential meaning before Almighty God [26].

QS. Al-Fil has a distinctive dramatic power. In this surah, the Qur'an does not mention any chronological details: who was the leader of the elephant army, when exactly the event occurred, or what the *abābīl* bird looked like. The omission of historical details is not a shortcoming, but an artistic strategy. Thus, the reader's focus is not diverted to empirical facts, but rather directed to permeate their moral and symbolic meaning. According to Khalafullah, this is one of the main characteristics of al-fann al-qashasi: the story is composed not to present a factual chronology, but to bring spiritual value to life through aesthetic and dramatic power [14]. The simple yet intense structure of the story reflects the distinctive style of the Qur'anic narrative that is full of meaning and multi-interpretation.

The dramatic movement of QS. al-Fil may be summarized in the following conceptual scheme:

Figure 1. Dramatic Structure of QS. al-Fil



b) Symbolic Interpretation

Furthermore, the narrative element in QS. Al-Fil can be analyzed from three main aspects: the narrator (narrator), the plot (plot), and the symbolic characters [27]. First, from the narrator's side, the Qur'an positions itself as a ḥakīm (omniscient narrator) who speaks directly to the Prophet Muhammad and the reader. The style of rhetorical question in the first verse shows God's position as the main narrative subject. According to Khalafullah, this technique gives a direct and personal impression, making the reader feel that he is being addressed by God Himself [28]. Second, from the aspect of plot, this surah forms a classic dramatic pattern: *tanshī'ah* (recognition of threats), *taḥawwul* (change of situation through God's intervention), and *natījah* (the result of the destruction of the enemy) [29]. This three-stage structure shows how the Qur'an uses a simple but effective story pattern to instill a moral message. Third, from the character aspect, this story does not explicitly feature human figures, but presents two "symbolic characters": the army as a symbol of the arrogance of human power, and the abābīl bird as a symbol of divine power [30]. Thus, QS. Al-Fil contains a symbolic drama depicting the confrontation between earthly forces and divine forces.

Then it must also be underlined the aspect of visual symbolism in QS. Al-Fil that the symbol of "bird" in many pre-Islamic Arab cultures symbolized a sign of destiny or celestial intervention [14]. In the context of the Qur'an, this symbol changes its meaning to a representation of Allah's mercy and power that transcends material causes [31]. Likewise, the term *sijjīl* (hard or burnt stone) is understood symbolically as a manifestation of divine punishment or energy that cannot be understood by humans [32]. Thus, the symbols are not only aesthetic elements, but also theological vehicles that convey the message of *tawḥīd* (the oneness of God) and divine justice. Khalafullah asserts that to understand these symbols literally means to ignore the beauty and depth of meaning that the literary style of the Qur'an [8]. Therefore, he invites readers to

approach the stories of the Qur'an with aesthetic sensitivity and contextual understanding.

Within the *al-fann al-qashāṣī* framework, narrative elements function symbolically rather than merely literally. The “birds of *abābīl*” represent divine power operating beyond human calculation, while the “stones of *sijjīl*” symbolize the manifestation of divine justice. Likewise, the metaphor “like eaten straw” signifies not only physical destruction but also moral humiliation and existential collapse. These symbolic components transform the historical episode into a universal moral allegory concerning the fragility of arrogant power before divine sovereignty [33]. Khalafullah emphasizes that Qur'anic storytelling communicates through aesthetic and symbolic density, therefore, literalist readings risk overlooking the deeper theological intentionality embedded within the narrative form [34]. The surah's phonetic rhythm and concise linguistic patterns further reinforce its symbolic intensity, demonstrating the inseparability of aesthetic beauty (*al-jamāl al-lughawī*) and spiritual message [35].

c) Theological Implications

Theologically, QS. al-Fil affirms the principle of divine sovereignty and moral accountability in history. The destruction of the army of the elephant signifies the ultimate triumph of *tawhīd* over oppressive worldly authority. In this reading, the surah articulates a theology of history in which God's justice operates consistently against tyranny [36]. Khalafullah's approach does not deny the possibility of historical reference, rather, it reorients emphasis toward the moral and spiritual purpose of the narrative [37]. The story becomes a theological declaration that no human power, regardless of its magnitude, can transcend divine will. Thus, the surah serves as a reminder that history is ultimately governed by ethical and spiritual laws established by God [38].

d) Contemporary Relevance

From a contemporary perspective, QS. al-Fil retains profound ethical and social relevance [39]. Through its symbolic structure, the narrative transcends its historical setting and becomes a paradigm for understanding modern manifestations of arrogance, structural oppression, and moral corruption [40]. The “army of the elephant” may be interpreted as a recurring symbol of exploitative political or economic power, while the divine response symbolizes the moral mechanisms that inevitably dismantle injustice. In this way, the surah functions as both spiritual reassurance and social critique. Khalafullah's *al-fann al-qashāṣī* approach enables a dynamic reading of the text one that preserves theological integrity while allowing symbolic reinterpretation across contexts [41]. Consequently, QS. al-Fil emerges not merely as a past event but as a

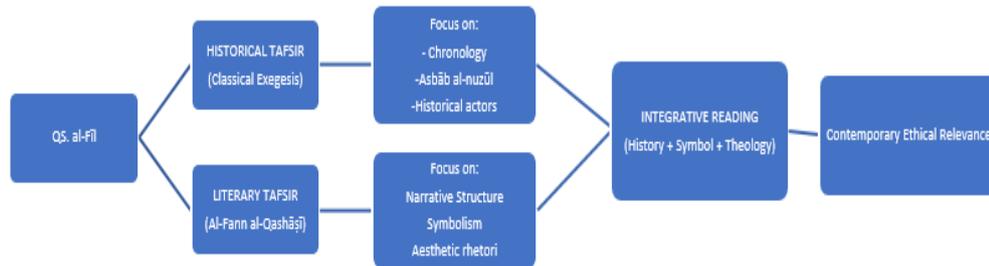
transformative moral narrative that continues to speak to global ethical challenges.

3. A New Paradigm of Story Interpretation: The Contribution of al-Fann al-Qashāṣī to QS. al-Fīl

This research offers a new paradigm in the interpretation of QS. al-Fīl through the approach of al-fann al-qashāṣī by showing that the story of the Qur'an does not have to be understood factually and historically only, as explained by classical commentators such as al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Kathīr, and al-Qurṭubī which place the events of *'Ām al-Fīl* as concrete evidence of Allah's protection of the Kaaba, but can be read as a symbolic and aesthetic narrative that conveys a universal message about the destruction of tyranny and the enforcement of divine justice [42] In the perspective of the approach of *al-fann al-qashāṣī*, QS. al-Fīl represents the ilāhī manners of Divine literature that use narrative drama, phonetic rhythms, and symbolic imagination to carry out the functions of ta'dīb wa ta'hdīb, which is moral education and purification of the soul through the beauty of language [43] This reinterpretation does not reject historical facts, but expands the meaning of the story so that it is not imprisoned by the chronology of the past, but rather lives in various social and spiritual contexts of modern man as a critique of the arrogance of power, moral degradation, and the loss of transcendent consciousness [44] By integrating historical and narrative dimensions, the al-fann al-qashāṣī approach offers a complementary model of interpretation that balances facts and meaning, form and message, aesthetics and theology so as to present a more complete understanding of QS. al-Fīl as a Divine text that is not only informative, but also transformative, educational, and spiritual. Thus, this method is an important methodological contribution in enriching the study of contemporary interpretation and opening new horizons in the hermeneutics of the Qur'anic story.

The integrative relationship between historical and literary tafsīr may be conceptualized as follows:

Figure 2. Integrative Hermeneutical Model of QS. al-Fil



4. Research Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged to maintain scholarly transparency. First, the research is based entirely on library research and textual analysis without incorporating empirical field data or reception studies, which may limit insight into how contemporary Muslim communities interpret QS. al-Fil through literary approaches [45]. Second, the interpretation developed in this article relies predominantly on Muhammad Ahmad Khalafullah’s al-fann al-qashāṣī framework, thereby prioritizing one specific methodological lens while not fully exploring alternative literary or hermeneutical models [46]. Third, although classical tafsīr works are consulted for comparison, this study does not conduct an exhaustive and systematic comparative analysis of all major classical exegetical traditions [47]. These limitations do not diminish the validity of the findings; rather, they delineate the scope of the research and provide directions for further scholarly development, thereby strengthening the academic credibility of the study.

Future research should move beyond general recommendations and develop more specific scholarly trajectories built upon this study. First, a comparative analysis between Khalafullah’s al-fann al-qashāṣī framework and structuralist narrative theory would provide deeper methodological dialogue between Islamic hermeneutics and modern literary criticism [48]. Second, the application of this literary-narrative approach to other short Makkiyyah surahs could test its broader interpretive consistency and expand its analytical scope [49]. Third, integrating this framework with digital humanities or corpus-based

Qur'anic studies may open new interdisciplinary possibilities, particularly in mapping narrative patterns and symbolic structures across the Qur'an [50]. Such directions would not only refine the theoretical foundation of literary tafsir but also demonstrate the long-term scholarly contribution and sustainability of this research within contemporary Qur'anic studies.

5. Scholarly Contributions

This study makes three significant scholarly contributions to contemporary Qur'anic studies. First, at the methodological level, it demonstrates the systematic applicability of Khalafullah's *al-fann al-qashāṣī* framework to the analysis of short Makkiyyah surahs, thereby expanding the operational scope of literary approaches within tafsir studies. Second, at the interpretive level, it recontextualizes QS. al-Fil beyond a purely historical reading by uncovering its symbolic, theological, and ethical dimensions through narrative analysis. Third, at the theoretical level, this research contributes to the enrichment of Qur'anic literary studies by integrating aesthetics, symbolism, and theology into a coherent hermeneutical model, thus reinforcing the relevance of literary paradigms in modern Qur'anic interpretation.

Conclusion

This study set out to answer three principal research questions concerning the narrative structure, symbolic-theological meaning, and contemporary contribution of Khalafullah's *al-fann al-qashāṣī* framework in interpreting QS. al-Fil. First, regarding the narrative structure, the analysis demonstrates that QS. al-Fil follows a coherent dramatic pattern consisting of threat, divine intervention, and the destruction of tyranny. Through Khalafullah's literary lens, this structure is not merely a chronological recounting of historical events, but a carefully constructed narrative designed to convey moral and spiritual awareness. The rhetorical opening, symbolic climax, and metaphorical resolution reveal the Qur'an's aesthetic strategy in shaping theological consciousness. Second, in relation to symbolic and theological meanings, the study finds that elements such as *ṭayran abābīl* and *ḥijārah min sijjīl* function not only as literal references but as theological metaphors representing divine sovereignty, moral accountability, and the inevitable collapse of arrogance. The story thus embodies the triumph of tawḥīd over worldly power and affirms the operation of divine justice within human history. Third, concerning its contribution to contemporary Qur'anic interpretation, the application of *al-fann al-qashāṣī* demonstrates that literary analysis enriches tafsir by integrating aesthetics, symbolism, and theology into a unified hermeneutical model. Rather than opposing classical exegesis, this

approach complements it by expanding interpretive horizons beyond historical factuality toward transformative moral discourse. In conclusion, QS. al-Fil emerges as a compact yet profound example of Qur'anic narrative artistry in which beauty (*jamāl*) and truth (*ḥaqq*) converge. Understanding the surah through a literary-aesthetic perspective deepens spiritual insight while preserving theological integrity. Therefore, *al-fann al-qashāṣī* proves to be a significant and constructive framework for advancing contemporary Qur'anic studies.

Author Contributions

Taufiqur Rohman: Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing – review & editing, Supervision, Project administration. **Agus Imam Kharomen:** Methodology, Writing – review & editing, Investigation. **Hasyim Muhammad:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing – review&editing, Investigation.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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