

## **Religious Intertextuality in the Poem *No Reconciliation* by Amal Dunqul**

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### **Abstract:**

Modern Arabic poetry has become open to various fields of knowledge and cultures, incorporating within its folds a wide range of knowledge that shapes its material and themes. It has also come to intensify imagery and incline toward symbolism and suggestion. In an effort to keep pace with all this, literary criticism has developed mechanisms capable of encompassing it from every angle. Intertextuality is considered one of the critical mechanisms through which criticism has approached creative texts in general and poetry in particular. Perhaps one of the most distinctive features of the poetry of Amal Dunqul is its intertextuality with Arab heritage in general and religion in particular. How, then, did Amal employ religion in his texts? And what aesthetic dimension did this employment add to his poetry?

**Keywords:** Intertextuality, religion, poetry, imagery, quotation.

### **An Introduction to Intertextuality:**

Anyone who examines the theoretical and applied achievements realized in the field of literary text analysis from a linguistic perspective since the beginning of the last century, and reflects upon the conceptions that emerged since the 1960s and deepened in the 1980s with the expansion, overlap, and branching they experienced across different parts of the world, can observe the richness and complexity currently characterizing theories of literary text analysis, theories that are difficult to follow and trace<sup>1</sup>.

These theories have produced an arsenal of terms and concepts. Some remain attached to their own specialization without departing from it, while others lie on the borders of disciplines, and still others are fluid and elusive, settling in no single field and remaining unstable in nature. This led the Moroccan critic Said Yaqtin to assert that some terms and concepts have remained hybrid, with every current or tendency seeking to appropriate them and claiming to define them according to the particular framework that grants them its distinctive content. Yet once these concepts move beyond that framework, they still retain their fundamental—or “original”—signification bestowed upon them, while at the same time resisting submission and remaining beyond all forms of restriction or limitation. Perhaps one of the most important terms possessing this characteristic is the concept of intertextuality<sup>2</sup>.

It may be said that intertextuality emerged in the context of doubting the usefulness of the intellectual and philosophical foundations upon which descriptive structuralism had relied, a movement that came to an end with the events of May 1968 (student demonstrations in France). The study of the text as a linguistic object affirmed the existence of a structure, yet one without a center and incapable of closure. Consequently, new questions arose, such as: What is a text? How is it constituted? What makes a text a text? Does the text have boundaries? What is the relationship between a text and other texts already written or still in the process of formation, and what is the nature of this relationship?<sup>3</sup>

In response to these questions, new concepts related to the text were introduced. Various books present the definition of the text proposed by Julia Kristeva, according to whom it is “a mosaic of quotations, and every text is the absorption and transformation of other texts”<sup>4</sup>. As for the definition offered by Geoffrey Leech, it is as follows: “The text is not an independent entity or a unified substance; rather, it is a series of relationships with other texts. Its linguistic system, with its rules and lexicon, is drawn toward them as traces and excerpts from history. Therefore, the text resembles, in its given form, a cultural salvational army of innumerable groups of ideas, beliefs, and references that do not necessarily harmonize. The genealogy of the text inevitably belongs to an incomplete network of excerpts borrowed consciously or unconsciously”<sup>5</sup>.

These definitions of intertextuality derive from the definition of the text itself. Intertextuality is the generation of a text from other texts; it is the overlap of a text with other texts; it is the dependence of a text upon another text or other texts; and it is the interrelation of texts, that is, the entering into a relationship with other texts. There are no boundaries to the text, nor boundaries between one text and another. Although these meanings appear similar and almost express a single idea through different formulations, they differ in theory and in application. The text is inevitably governed by intertextuality, and texts generate one another, meaning that the reference point of a text lies in preceding texts. Yet such generation does not imply mere imitation; rather, it may aim at contestation

and subversion. It should also be noted that the intertextuality of a text with other texts is not necessarily confined to previous texts, for it may also interact with contemporary and present texts<sup>6</sup>.

Sources reach something close to a consensus in considering Julia Kristeva the scholar who uncovered intertextuality. She herself did not invent it independently, but rather derived it from the efforts of Mikhail Bakhtin through his notion of dialogism. However, its actual emergence and recognition among researchers occurred through Kristeva, as the concept appeared in her studies between 1966 and 1967 in the journals *Tel Quel* and *Critique*. It subsequently spread through numerous critical writings, including those of Roland Barthes, Michel Arrive, Michael Riffaterre, Gerard Genette, and Littman. Nor did it remain confined to France; rather, it migrated to America and later reached Arab critics, assuming many forms throughout this journey<sup>7</sup>.

This prompted some researchers to argue that intertextuality is a term adopted by semiologists such as Roland Barthes and others. It is a term carrying highly specific meanings that differ from one critic to another. Its general principle is that texts refer to other texts just as signs refer to other signs rather than directly to the objects concerned. Thus, the artist writes and paints not from nature itself, but from the means employed by predecessors in transforming nature into text. Consequently, the intertextual text is one that infiltrates another text in order to embody meanings, whether the writer is conscious of this or not<sup>8</sup>.

The term intertextuality was also adopted beyond the field of semiology. It moves freely and independently, transcending in some way both general and specialized disciplines, major and minor alike. It is employed by the poetician, the semiotician, the pragmatist, and the deconstructionist despite the differences and contradictions among these disciplines. It is also investigated by scholars of sociolinguistics, anthropology, psycholinguistics, and philosophy, as well as by those engaged in discourse analysis and theories of the text. Within each field, one encounters schools of thought, tendencies, and numerous similarities and divergences<sup>9</sup>.

Nor should we overlook its both recent and far-reaching historical roots. Whoever contemplates the history of the circulation of intertextuality will notice that, in its beginnings with Julia Kristeva, it was connected to literary thefts as represented in the writings of Comte de Lautreamont. Later, with Michael Riffaterre, it became associated with allusion. As for Antoine Compagnon, although he chose quotation as the subject of his book *The Second Hand*, he broadened the scope of intertextuality and linked it to several forms, including repetition, quotation, proverbs, direct discourse, indirect discourse, imitation, criticism, opposition, parody, source, influence, commentary, and other forms, among which the refrain appears as a particular case of repetition. In the same context, Marc Angenot questioned the manifestations and forms of integration that intertextuality

assumes between texts, restricting them to four fundamental forms: quotation, allusion, opposition, and parody<sup>10</sup>.

While previous critical approaches shared an emphasis on the multiplicity of forms of intertextuality, despite their tendency to focus on its most explicit and prominent manifestations, Gerard Genette was the scholar who succeeded in presenting a comprehensive conception of the various intertextual relations and the forms subsumed under them. Through his proposal of the concept of transtextuality, he managed to remove much of the ambiguity that had characterized descriptive critical discourse. Thus, it became possible to distinguish between what pertains to textual samples, interpretation, commentary, literary genre, and the other categories associated with intertextuality and textual relatedness<sup>11</sup>.

Most scholars agree that Gerard Genette provided a convenient framework for analyzing narrative texts, particularly throughout his various writings. They likewise agree, to a large extent, on the comprehensiveness of his applied framework concerning intertextuality. Consequently, the discussion shifted from intertextuality to transtextuality, placing us before new attempts to diagnose and classify the various types of textual relationships within the text<sup>12</sup>. Gerard Genette, after having considered poetics in 1979 as concerned with the architecture of the text, revised this view in 1982. The subject was no longer merely the architecture or architectonics of the text as the sum of general formulas or transcendentals—that is, the modes of discourse, types of utterances, and literary genres found in each text individually. Rather, the new subject became *transtextualité*, or the textual transcendence of the text. Gerard Genette identified five types of transtextuality:

- **Intertextuality:** It carries the meaning of intertextuality as defined by Julia Kristeva, and according to Gerard Genette it specifically refers to the presence of one text within another through quotation, plagiarism, and similar forms.
- **Paratext:** According to Genette's definition, it is found in titles, subtitles, prefaces, epilogues, images, and publishing statements.
- **Metatext:** It is the relationship of commentary linking one text to another, speaking about it, sometimes without explicitly mentioning it.
- **Hypertextuality (derived textuality):** It lies in the relationship connecting text "B" as a later text (*hypertexte*) to text "A" as an earlier text (*hypotexte*), a relationship based on transformation or imitation.
- **Architextuality:** This is the most abstract and implicit pattern; it is a silent relationship that assumes a paratextual dimension and is connected to genre (poetry, novel, etc.)<sup>13</sup>.

These patterns maintain close interrelations. As the Moroccan critic Said Yaqtin affirmed in more than one study, transcendence constitutes one of the manifestations of textuality and literariness. Accordingly, intertextuality no longer represents more than a specific

mode among the various forms of textual interaction, namely the actual presence of one text within another through quotation or plagiarism, as previously explained<sup>14</sup>.

### **Employment: The Aesthetics of Religious Intertextuality**

It is the interweaving of selected religious texts—through quotation or incorporation—with the Quran, the Prophetic Hadith, sermons, or religious narratives, within the original poetic text, in such a way that these texts harmonize with the context and fulfill an intellectual, artistic, or both intellectual and artistic purposes simultaneously<sup>15</sup>. Religious heritage is considered one of the most important sources from which contemporary poets draw the substance of their poetry, due to its close connection with people's emotions, its profound influence on their souls, and the sacredness it possesses.

Among these poets is Amal Dunqul, who employed this heritage in such a way that Qur'anic structures formed a distinctive aspect of intertextuality in his poem *No Reconciliation*. Salah fadl believes that among the various uses of heritage, the employment of Qur'anic texts in poetry is one of the most successful methods. This is due to an essential characteristic in such texts that coincides with the nature of poetry itself: namely, that the human mind is inclined to memorize and constantly recall them. Human memory in all ages scarcely preserves any text unless it is religious or poetic, and it preserves it not merely for what it says, but also for the manner of expression and the form of discourse. Hence, the employment of religious heritage in poetry constitutes a powerful reinforcement of its poeticity and supports its permanence within human memory<sup>16</sup>.

Presenting the poetic text *No Reconciliation* as “commandments” represents a departure from the traditional intentionality of the poet and an investment in the intentionality of a higher religious system. This is reflected in the semiological structure of the poem, which is divided into ten sections, each constituting a commandment. It also frames and directs the language of the text in a manner consistent with the inspired intertextual system, where the prohibitive form “Do not reconcile” predominates, adorning the entire poem. This confirms that intertextuality frames the totality of the text, and that adopting a higher religious system—whether Qur'anic or otherwise—constitutes a stripping away of centrality and focalization, so that sacredness in this text becomes a production not of divine transcendence, but of another form of transcendence. Thus, the sanctified and untouchable becomes capable of reformulation and reproduction within a human poetic genre<sup>17</sup>. The deeper dimension of this process only becomes evident when the text merges this level of discourse with a simple and ordinary language usually classified in opposition to sacred language. Yet the authority of productivity, together with the intertextuality of systems, grants poetry this reconciliation between texts differing in framework and structure.

The poem *No Reconciliation* overflows with a vast number of contemporary projections and likewise carries many paradoxes and events representative of its era. It also constitutes a true image of the psychological introspection and inner vision of Amal Dunqul.

The poem may also be regarded as a form of prophecy, for the future vision of our poet corresponded with the reality and perception of his society concerning this reconciliation. Here, the role of imagination shines forth, deriving the essence and truth of things as conceived by the poet's soul. Yet this is a conception mixed with those abundant emotional currents struggling within his consciousness, affirming the richness of the human experience he suffers through. This could not have been achieved without imagination, for "imagination is but one of the tools for expressing vision; it works by transforming reality to the extent that helps unveil the truth of that reality"<sup>18</sup>.

Amal Dunqul chose "The Ten Commandments" as a principal title, thereby creating a lexical parallel with the Ten Commandments shared by the three religions: Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. Through this, he sought to grant his text a degree of sacredness and to remind everyone, without exception, of those religious and moral commandments that had been forgotten, especially since two of them prohibit killing. He intentionally employed this artistic structure so that intertextuality would begin from the very title of the poem.

Thus, Amal Dunqul invokes Qur'anic discourse in this poem through a number of verses, despite the differences in their contexts, circumstances, and implications. In his statement:

"Will my blood become water before your eyes?  
Do you forget the stained cloak..."

Here, the intertext evokes the Qur'anic verse:

"And they brought his shirt with false blood upon it. He said: 'Rather, your souls have enticed you to something, so patience is most fitting. And Allah is the One sought for help against what you describe'"<sup>19</sup>.

Amal Dunqul introduces Joseph's shirt in order to remind his brothers (the Arabs) of the sin they committed through their participation in the crime and their silence regarding it. What worsened the matter further was their refusal to acknowledge this guilt and their attempt to falsify the blood in order to shield the enemy (Israel). He then says:

"Do not reconcile over blood... even with blood!  
Do not reconcile! Even if they say: head for head!  
Are all heads equal?"

This poetic context evokes the Qur'anic verse:

"And We prescribed for them therein: a life for a life, an eye for an eye, a nose for a nose, an ear for an ear, a tooth for a tooth, and for wounds is legal retribution..."<sup>20</sup>

Intertextuality here appears to rely on a different mechanism manifested in a transformative relationship based on negation. It may be observed that negation assumes two forms: the first is partial negation, in which only one part of the reference text is negated; the second

is total negation, in which the inserted passage is wholly negated and the meaning of the text reversed<sup>21</sup>. The poet transcends the Qur'anic indication of legal retaliation (*qiṣāṣ*) and maintains that heads are not equal. Thus, he rejects revenge that ends merely with retribution against the killer, for the treacherous Jassas cannot equal King Kulayb in glory and status. Likewise, in the contemporary context, he sees that the Zionists do not occupy the same position enjoyed by the Arabs.

He then says:

“And remember:

(if because your heart belongs to the women clad in black  
and to their children whom the smile abandons)  
that your niece al-Yamāmah,  
a flower wrapped, in the years of youth,  
in garments of mourning...”

The word *wrapped* (*tatarbal*) in its poetic context evokes the Qur'anic verse:

“And He made for you garments to protect you from the heat and garments to protect you from your violence”<sup>22</sup>.

The garments protecting from heat are clothes made of cotton, linen, and wool, while the garments protecting from violence are coats of armor made of plated iron, chain mail, and the like. Likewise, the verse:

“Their garments will be of tar, and fire will cover their faces”<sup>23</sup>

means that their clothes will be made of tar, while fire scorches their faces. Amal Dunqul employed the word *tatarbal* to signify the concealing garment worn by al-Yamāmah, through which she defends her father's vengeance. Moreover, it is a garment of mourning blackened like tar, while the fire of revenge burns within her.

He further says:

“Do not reconcile, even if the stars warn you  
and their soothsayers cast prophecies before you...”

Here there is an invocation of the Prophetic Hadith narrated by Ibn Abbas, in which the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

“Whoever acquires a branch of knowledge from the stars has acquired a branch of sorcery”<sup>24</sup>.

Reported by Sunan Abi Dawud, with an authentic chain of transmission.

Likewise, there is the Hadith narrated by Yahya ibn Yahya from Zayd ibn Khalid al-Juhani:

“The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, led us in the dawn prayer at al-Hudaybiyyah after rainfall during the night. When he finished, he turned to the people and said: ‘Do you know what your Lord has said?’ They replied: ‘Allah and His Messenger know best.’ He said: ‘This morning some of My servants became believers in Me and some disbelievers. As for the one who said: We have been given rain by the فضل and mercy of

Allah, he is a believer in Me and a disbeliever in the stars. But as for the one who said: We have been given rain because of such-and-such a star, he is a disbeliever in Me and a believer in the stars”<sup>25</sup>.

Reported by Sahih Muslim.

In confirmation of the saying, “The astrologers lie even if they tell the truth,” if the poet adopts a certain mode of expression and degree of freedom, he does so deliberately and intentionally. In this poem, Amal Dunqul employs Qur’anic signifiers in their literal meanings, yet redirects them through a new semantic structure when he says:

“Then I saw: my ignoble cousin,  
standing there, gloating with his vile face.”

This evokes the Qur’anic verse:

“Cruel, and after all that, ignoble”<sup>26</sup>.

Here there is an allusion to Jassas, whom the poet considered a symbol of the Jews. In doing so, he does not contradict the Qur’anic text so much as establish a form of correspondence and identification between past and present. The difference lies in the addressees, for he directs the discourse toward a present reality in time, even though it extends from a past event whose nature does not differ from one era to another.

He also says in the eighth commandment: “Prayer so that the seasonal rain may descend.”

Here there is an invocation of the Hadith narrated by Abd Allah ibn Zayd:

“The Prophet went out to the place of prayer to seek rain, turned toward the qiblah, reversed his cloak, and prayed two rak‘ahs”<sup>27</sup>.

Reported by Sahih al-Bukhari.

Just as this study approaches intertextuality with religious heritage on the formal, artistic, and thematic levels—given the sacred quality carried by this heritage, through whose guidance the poet seeks illumination and whose infinite significance extends across all times and places while interpreting many issues concerning humanity—it is likewise present at the level of the individual word derived from the religious lexicon. Among such expressions are, for example: “truth fills your heart,” “the defiled breeze,” “the sacred soil,” “the bird of death,” “a sinful whim,” and “He is not a lord to kill me by His will...”

From the foregoing, it becomes evident that the first thing attracting the attention of the scholar while examining the poetic corpus of *No Reconciliation* is that its author, Amal Dunqul, was extremely keen on presenting the meanings of vengeance, blood, and revenge contained in the ancient commandments of Kulayb. His concern was directed toward benefiting from religious and historical heritage, and from everything that shaped his conviction in rejecting reconciliation. In attempting to draw upon this heritage, he evokes the events of the historical Basus War together with elements of religious heritage in a dramatic artistic manner through which he absorbs absent texts and interacts with them cautiously, while imbuing them with some of his own modern perceptions and vision that

seek to point toward solutions to the Palestinian issue from the perspective of power and vengeance. Intertextuality, from its modernist perspective, endows this poem with artistic value and immense aesthetic energy, making it suitable for every time and place, deriving its continuity from history and its sacredness from religion.

### Conclusion:

In this study, we attempted to explore a literary world and arrived at a number of conclusions that may be summarized in the following points:

- Intertextuality in poetic discourse and literary texts constitutes an aesthetic phenomenon and a high artistic value. In the poetry of Amal Dunqul, it is an eminently stylistic phenomenon based on enriching the poetic text with different textual genres that are integrated and dissolved into the new text in order to confer upon it a captivating aesthetic dimension.
- Intertextuality in the poem *No Reconciliation* cannot be identified in a fixed manner as a reference text unless our interpretive horizon expands and our vision broadens toward its structure. This, in turn, can only be achieved by linking it to the deconstruction of its smaller units, thereby enabling the mapping of the extra-textual sphere toward the textual data with which it interacts.
- Amal Dunqul's poem *No Reconciliation* overflows with historically and religiously active significations, which the poet employed within a political dimension framed in a dramatic form through which immense aesthetic energy flows.
- Although the text of *No Reconciliation* is a rewriting through the technique of intertextuality, it still bears Amal Dunqul's distinctive artistic touch that sets him apart from other poets.
- Amal Dunqul's recourse to heritage texts or historical symbols is not the sole criterion in the formation of this artistic tableau. Rather, there are multiple dimensions and aspects innovated by his poetic genius in order to make the dramatic scenes expressive within their new context and unique character, far removed from ambiguity, while remaining consistent with human reality in all its contradictions.
- Amal Dunqul employed heritage intertextuality in the form of garments or masks through which he temporarily concealed the past so that we perceive only the present; yet this simultaneously constitutes a return to the past according to the perspective that shaped his particular vision of that heritage, with its events, history, and figures.
- Qur'anic structures in the poem *No Reconciliation* form a distinctive aspect of intertextuality. Amal Dunqul drew inspiration from Qur'anic verses and Prophetic Hadiths, making them a source from which he derived his images, forms, and

models. Nevertheless, he adapts them to his new reality, and this is what distinguishes him from other poets.

- The poet's employment of cultural systems through this artistic creativity demonstrates his intellectual depth, vast knowledge, and elevated thought in expressing his national anxiety and patriotic consciousness with courage, boldness, and freedom, while disregarding or transcending all forms of censorship.

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