

The Impact of Intertextuality in the Poetry of Ibn Harboun al-Andalusi

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Introduction

Intertextuality is one of the fundamental concepts introduced in the late 1960s as part of what came to be known as "post-structuralism." Julia Kristeva was the first to introduce this term, describing it as "a characteristic of the text that refers to other preceding or contemporary texts; they are texts created through the absorption of other texts, while simultaneously dismantling other texts in an intertextual space" (1).

Mikhail Bakhtin analyzed the phenomenon of intertextuality without explicitly using the term. Many critics and writers, including Roland Barthes, Tzvetan Todorov, and Gérard Genette, followed him in exploring this concept. They believed that such studies alone do not provide complete knowledge; instead, it is essential to understand the past and present interwoven in the text and separate each to give literary studies a fresh impetus that surpasses prior research (2).

The concept of intertextuality is directly related to the act of reading, not only the reading conducted by the critic in their interaction with the text but also the texts themselves are considered readings of previous texts (3). Intertextuality is a modern critical term that represents the interconnectedness of texts, as reflected in the etymology of the term itself, which signifies "an exchange of influence and relationships between a present literary text and other previous literary texts" (4). Intertextuality is a type of relationship that arises between a literary text and other texts (5).

Intertextuality, therefore, is an act of listening and revealing, whether by the creator or the critic who uncovers this phenomenon in a particular writer. It is both an extension and a presence, as the creator can only fully mature by assimilating prior creative works and utilizing them to serve the transcendent elements of the text, such as new visions and ideas (1).

The importance of intertextuality lies in its ability to intensify structure and expression, stimulating the reader's imagination (2). Thus, the text acts as a cultural bond that emerges from all texts and includes countless others. The relationship between the text and the reader is one of existence, as the reader's interpretation of the text grants it its artistic quality. Intertextuality coexists with poetry, giving it a new form and enhancing its communicative effectiveness (3).

Furthermore, intertextuality broadens the poem's scope, giving it a new level of connotative and suggestive power beyond its original form. Therefore, intertextuality can only be understood by separating the text from the self, recreating it, and giving it new meanings derived from the creator's culture (4).

Intertextuality is a crucial subject that both ancient and modern Arab critics have explored. The concept of intertextuality is a new term for an old literary and critical phenomenon. Textual interweaving is an essential characteristic of Arab culture, as cultural realms are formed in the Arab mind, intertwined in an astonishing and complex network (5).

Arab critics have shown great interest in intertextuality, differing interpretations, and terminology. Abu Amr ibn al-Ala (d. 154 AH) is perhaps among the first scholars to address this phenomenon. When asked, "What about two poets who agree in meaning but differ in wording, without one borrowing from or hearing the other's work?" he replied, "It is the minds of men aligning on their tongues." (1)

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In the mid-4th century, the term "literary theft" emerged among critics evaluating contemporary poets, who extensively explored the roots of this phenomenon. Al-Qadi al-Jurjani (d. 392 AH) categorized it, distinguishing between "theft, raiding, pilfering, shared content, appropriation, and transference." (2)

Ibn Waki (d. 393 AH) referred to this phenomenon solely as "theft," but he identified cases where the plagiarist's fault could be excused, such as "distilling lengthy expressions into brief ones or refining clumsy phrasing into something eloquent." (3)

Abu Hilal al-Askari (d. 395 AH) analyzed this phenomenon in depth, categorizing it as "good borrowing," "restructuring," and "exchange of meanings." He believed it could occur by coincidence, stating, "A later poet may arrive at a meaning earlier poets also expressed, without being aware of it. It came to them both similarly, by chance. I resolved not to accuse the later poet of plagiarism against the earlier one absolutely." However, he added, "I do not see an issue in 'exchange of meanings' unless it involves copying exact wording or diminishing the quality of the original." (4)

According to al-Amidi (d. 537 AH), he says: "The scholars of poetry I encountered did not consider the borrowing of meanings to be a major fault of poets, especially later ones, as this was an aspect from which neither early nor late poets were free." (1)

Following him, Usama ibn Munqidh (d. 584 AH) dedicated a chapter to this, calling it "The Merit of the Preceding over the Followed." He then divided intertextuality into "inclusion," defined as "the incorporation of words from another line into a line" (2), which he seemed to reserve for verbal intertextuality. He also described another type of intertextuality, calling it "binding and unbinding," defined as "taking prose and forming it into verse, or taking verse and rendering it into prose." (3) Later, the term "borrowing" became common, with some limiting it to references from the Quran and Hadith. (4)

Mechanism of Employing Intertextuality

Among the various ways poets employ literary heritage of different types, the technique of intertextuality relies on blurring the boundaries between texts, events, or characters. This allows poets to create a new text where these references are embedded and dissolved, opening up religious, mythological, literary, and historical dimensions. This fusion makes the text a meeting point for multiple times, events, and meanings, enriching it with layers of significance. Consequently, the poem becomes an artistic creation capturing a unique, intense moment filled with richness. Intertextuality provides a new concept of writing—not merely an inscription of linguistic sounds on paper, but an existence with its own internal interactions and distinctive rules, offering a novel understanding of the term "text." (5)

Each text is, in some way, a vessel containing echoes of other texts. Undoubtedly, a poet is influenced by their heritage and builds upon it, making intertextuality unavoidable and present in every poetic text, as a person cannot escape their temporal and spatial conditions and their contents. (1) Intertextuality, depending on its application, is divided into explicit intertextuality, which includes "borrowing" and "inclusion," also referred to as conscious or intentional intertextuality. On the other hand, unconscious intertextuality (hidden intertextuality) occurs when the author is unaware of a text's presence within their writing. (2)

The sources of intertextuality are varied and diverse according to the poet's creative reservoir. Methods of employing an element of heritage within the structure of a text are also varied, which leads to the presence of absent elements in the text that are strongly present in the collective memory of readers of a particular era, to the extent that the reader finds themselves connected through contextual associations. (3) Thus, the text becomes open to the reader, who navigates it freely, relying on their knowledge to trace it back to the original elements that helped shape it. (4) Knowledge becomes a fundamental basis for the recipient's text interpretation. Every mental association evoked during the reading is due to intertextuality, making the cultural knowledge of the reader or recipient an essential and intrinsic source. (5)

Poetic sensibility leans towards enjoying the interpretation of intertextuality in a text when the connection between the two texts is subtler and more profound, allowing the reader to pause reflectively between two different meanings that converge in a single text, evoking other new meanings that bear multiple perspectives and interpretations. (6)

Types of Intertextuality

First: Religious Intertextuality

The Quran and the Hadith are the two fundamental pillars establishing intertextual relationships. Religious texts represent the most sacred section among other types, as Quranic verses have significantly influenced human and literary texts. The Islamic intellectual foundation for the Almohad state is deeply rooted in the Quran, which serves as a timeless constitution revealed by the Prophet Muhammad for all humanity, regardless of race, gender, or language. The Quran is the creator of heritage, the primary source for the Islamic nation, and a wellspring of linguistic wealth. (1)

The Quran has always been, and remains, a source of inspiration for poets due to its eloquence, clarity, structures, meanings, characters, and stories that resonate with the poets' real-life experiences and personal experiences. Additionally, the Quran is rich in artistic, rhetorical, informational, and aesthetic elements. The Quran has lived within the Andalusian poet's mind, heart, imagination, and life in all its details, providing a rich source of meanings and imagery that strengthens the poet's language. Consequently, religious references do not appear superficially in Andalusian poetry; instead, they enrich its meanings and imaginations, embodying Islamic identity. Borrowing from the Quran serves as an essential means of persuasion, frequently highlighted by poets in their work, as they place Quranic verses at the forefront of their daily lives and refer to them for their legislative and spiritual significance, adding a religious dimension to their poetry. (3)

In Andalusian poetry, intertextuality with Quranic words and meanings is widespread. The poet consciously interacts with these Quranic meanings, reflecting a profound understanding of the Quran and Hadith, which form a foundational reference and intellectual base for constructing the poem.

The religious orientation of Andalusian poetry in the Almohad era is fundamentally rooted in faith in God and promoting good while forbidding evil, with the poet's religious identity reflecting their deep cultural and religious knowledge. The poet reworks religious texts into poetic form in alignment with their intended purpose, using religious intertextuality as an expressive tool to achieve this goal. (1)

One of the most significant techniques Ibn Harbut uses in intertextual relationships is condensation, which makes the text a brief reference to another. For instance, Quranic verses that convey ideas relevant to the poet's intent are condensed and focused. Condensation is more apparent than other techniques, as illustrated by his line:

"How many a tyrant did you swiftly confront, like a meteor descending from the sky."

The poet provides a condensed reference to the Quranic terms "tyrant" (مارد) and "meteor" (شهاب) without altering their words or meanings. The Quran says, "And a safeguard against every rebellious devil" (Surat al-Saffat, Verse 7), and "Except one who snatches, and follows him a piercing flame" (Surat al-Saffat, Verse 10). This intertextuality relies on contrasting meanings, symbolizing a tyrannical ruler or oppressor who lacks mercy, likened to a rebellious devil. Using the term "meteor," a large stone thrown at devils in the sky, the poet draws a profound influence from the Quran, borrowing its ideas and words. He then expands on them with greater detail and precision, using these religious terms to impact the audience psychologically, drawing attention to the oppression and cruelty of a ruler who has followed in the footsteps of Satan.

The poet continues to rely on conciseness in building intertextual relationships, drawing from multiple poetic lines and merging them with Quranic verses in a new formulation. This fusion brings together the meanings of both texts with a clear, intensified significance. For instance, he says (1):

"I resemble it when you settled there, a barren land where the clouds arrived."

"And what Allah has sent down from the sky of water, giving life to the earth after its death, spreading therein every kind of creature, and controlling the winds and the clouds that are controlled between the sky and the earth—these are signs for a people who reflect" (Quran, Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 164) (2).

The poet seeks to depict his suffering by referencing this Quranic verse, using the terms "barren" and "clouds." "barren" refers to dry, lifeless land, while "clouds" symbolize mercy and rain descending from the sky. The poet here portrays and praises the honored one as resembling rain that revives the earth after its death, symbolizing God's vast mercy. His arrival represents mercy and deliverance from oppression, suffering, poverty, hunger, and disease caused by a tyrannical ruler whose self-interest prevails.

The poet also relies on another mechanism for constructing intertextual relationships: the mechanism of expansion. This means that the subsequent text interacts with the previous one, revolving around its idea and expressions, then elaborating and clarifying it in greater detail and depth. For example, he says (5):

"The earth shone with your light, leaving no darkness in the horizon."

The poet drew inspiration for the opening of this line from the Quran, where Allah says: "And the earth will shine with the light of its Lord, and the Book will be placed, and the prophets and witnesses will be brought forth, and judgment will be made between them with justice, and they will not be wronged" (Quran, Surah Az-Zumar, verse 69) (6). Here, the poet expresses his joy at the arrival of the honored one, comparing him to the light that fills the earth. This light is not the divine light of Allah but rather the light of justice and kindness spread among the people without discrimination or oppression. No one in his realm remains oppressed, powerless, or fearful of the ruler's entourage

By incorporating these religious elements, the poet creates a spiritual atmosphere for the reader, leading them to follow his steps and understand the poet's psychological suffering. The poet utilizes the mechanism of Quranic transformation to express his emotional state. He says (1), "We found in the scent of Joseph what we did not expect—a refutation of fire."

The poet employs the transformation mechanism, invoking Quranic words and structures with precision in his poetry, aiming to create a profound effect on the listener. The Quran holds significant value and impact on the hearts of listeners, and the poet uses various styles—sometimes directly and at other times relying on allusions. "Indeed, I find the scent of Joseph" (Quran, Surah Yusuf, verse 94) (2). The scent of the beloved does not wait for permission, does not knock on doors, is not stopped by barriers, and cannot be halted by storms. It rushes through the air to embrace the lovers, tickling their souls. It is as if the beloved's scent, lost before, is suddenly found, sensed by the heart before the nose and soul.

He further says (3), "Then the prayer with peace follows it, on behalf of the Messenger who fulfilled the measure of the messengers, the one whose law completed the virtues not found in past nations."

"Establish the prayer, give charity, and whatever good you send forward for yourselves, you will find it with Allah. Surely, Allah is All-Seeing of what you do" (Quran, Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 110) (4).

"Establish the prayer, give charity, and obey the Messenger so that you may be shown mercy" (Quran, Surah An-Nur, verse 56) (5).

"O my son, establish the prayer, enjoin good, forbid evil, and be patient with whatever befalls you. Indeed, that is among the matters requiring determination" (Quran, Surah Luqman, verse 17) (6).

Through the mechanism of expansion, the poet successfully integrates religious terminology, creating a musical rhythm with words like "prayer," "peace," "Messenger," "law," and "virtues," suggesting that life is moving toward its end, and humans must engage in righteous deeds. The verse encourages the Prophet to remind Muslims to establish prayer and perform good deeds, which form the foundation of the Unifier's state—its foundation is the enjoining of good and forbidding evil in hopes of pleasing Allah and His Messenger.

Second: The Intertextuality of Poetry (Pre-Islamic and Islamic)

The Andalusian poet interacts with previous Arabic poetry or with contemporary poets, invoking, recalling, and mimicking their works. The poet uses these references to express his struggles, reworking them in a new form that aligns with his intended purpose. This process involves deconstructing their syntactical and semantic structures and redistributing them within the space of the present text. It is impossible to study a poetic text without examining other poetic texts because "a work of art is understood in relation to other works of art, based on the connections we establish between them. The countercontext is not the only one created in balance and contrast with a particular model; rather, every work of art is created in this way" (1).

We notice that our poet has drawn from poets of the pre-Islamic era, the Islamic period, the Umayyad era, and the Abbasid period. Poetry is the product of a culture that blends and interacts with the creator's mind. However, "the manifestations of artistic creativity are never devoid of semantic or stylistic genes that connect the present text to a previous one. The connection between them may be intentional and conscious, with the creator absorbing the experiences of previous poets. Creative experiences intersect in semantic and psychological contexts, sharing similar motives and functions. This intersection and similarity become evident in the moment of creativity when the poet's memory is illuminated by textual flashes stored in their living memory. The connection between the present creative text and the previous one may differ from the collective unconscious, where absorption may be unintentional. Yet, it flows from the depths of cultural heritage" (2).

The challenge lies in "the poet's ability, while embedding the poetry of others into his work, to make that embedded verse an integral part of his poem's structure. It also depends on the poet's skill in conveying the intended meaning to the audience, which the poet assumes has an understanding of the verses he has incorporated" (3).

Intertextuality with Arabic poetry is one of the mechanisms employed by the Arab poet to enrich his text by blending it with various artistic experiences that were shaped by the factors of time and place, undergoing processes of formation, transformation, and development. These experiences reflected the concerns of their era, with all its tragedies and intellectual and civilizational changes, thus entering the heart and memory of the recipient because of their humanity(1). "This means using its elements in an artistic, suggestive manner and employing them symbolically to carry the contemporary dimensions of the poet's vision so that the poet overlays the traditional elements with his personal suffering, transforming these elements into contemporary, heritage-based symbols. Thus, the elements of tradition become authentic threads in the fabric of the poetic vision, not something alien or imposed from the outside"(2).

His line (3):

"He spread the wings of guidance,

And there is no wing in truth."

This seems to intertextually connect with the lines of the poet Dhī al-Rumah (4):

"A variety of written things that are beyond their worth...

When their burden was a lamenting journey through the two sanctuaries."

Do you not see the camels of May as if they were...

The ruins of a faded branch bending under their weight?"

From this example, Ibn Harbūn of Andalusia leaned towards using the technique of transformation, as he succeeded in shifting the meaning by employing it differently from the original text. He established his intertextual relationships based on the first text, adapting it to his emotional state. Ibn Harbūn drew from what suited his inner feelings, grounding the poetic narrative in the reality of life and existence (5) and what he wished to express through this intertextual reference.

His statement (1):

"And matters were made decisive by what the minds and noble families had advised."

The poet Ibn Hayyus said (2):

"A majesty has settled in the enemies' hearts for you, and it will vanish from their gates."

The poet Jarir said (3):

"And Taim is humbled at the gates of the deceivers, and Taim does not find its way to the gates of the tent."

The intertextual relationship with the meaning mentioned by Ibn Hayyus and Jarir appears clear in his poetry. Our poet likely uses embedding, a method of condensation. The poet resorts to citing meanings expressed by the poets before him. Such intertextuality falls under the realm of approaching images and meanings.

His statement (4):

"It is monstrous when the enemy hears of it; misfortune crawls towards it like a snake."

The poet Hassan ibn Thabit said (5):

"It creeps into the body like a slow crawl, just as a snake crawls through the tender skin."

The poet has skillfully borrowed the word "dabb" and its plural "dabeeb" from the pre-Islamic poet, which means a slow movement or a disease that spreads gradually within the body. Ibn Harbun has excelled in capturing the meanings and words of pre-Islamic poetry and brilliantly employed them in his own. Through his incredible talent, the poet skillfully blends both meanings via embedding. He borrowed the idea and words without modification, development, or addition, instead contenting himself with rethinking the concept

Third: Historical Intertextuality

The material of history, with its events and characters, merges with the collective memory of humanity, which carries experiences and knowledge that form the poet's culture and foundation for creativity. Human memory, experiences, and knowledge are materials the mind summons, consciously or unconsciously, and projects onto reality(1).

Historical intertextuality means "that the poet employs certain historical events and figures in their poetry, and the purpose of this may be to deepen their perspective and philosophy on beliefs and ideas they hold"(2).

Our poet, like others, presents history in their poetry, sometimes in the form of references to events that occurred and became immortalized in human memory, and at other times through historical figures whose names evoke well-known qualities and actions(3).

When we examine historical intertextuality, we find that the poet invokes events that have passed with time and have become famous among people. However, recent or contemporary events that the poet has experienced remain within the realm of personal experience and do not reach the level of being historical (4).

This form of intertextuality is characterized by recalling various human characters, intending to use them within the poem's structure to evoke emotions and meanings. By doing so, the suggestive and impactful power of the text is enhanced. To enrich the process of evoking characters and projecting their traits onto the poet's experience, "these characters should embody individual and collective traits within the poetic context. If they lose this capacity within the poetic framework, they lose their symbolic existence and, consequently, their desired impact"(5).

"The role of the character becomes more important, as the poet expresses through it a comprehensive dimension of their experience. The character works in harmony with the other tools the poet employs to convey the other dimensions of the experience in an organic union. These other tools may include other heritage characters, poetic techniques, or both combined" (1).

Ibn Harboun, the Andalusian, often employed the technique of condensation in historical intertextuality. Each name or historical event represents a condensation of a historical period with all its positive and negative events. He says (2):

"God is present in the scene of the pledge of allegiance,

For religion and the world are in this scene.

The Shariah supported its foundations,

With a supporter of the righteous and the guiding.

He filled the hearts of the believers with love,

And they clung to the firm and unyielding bond.

This is the glorious pledge led by the

Heavenly command, guided by you."

The historical intertextuality is evident here as the poet reminds Muslims of the pledge of Imam Ali (peace be upon him), known as the Pledge of Ghadir, in which Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) declared Imam Ali as his successor. The poet employs the technique of condensation effectively, praising the one being praised and taking pride in the caliphate of Imam Ali, stirring memories of Imam Ali's caliphate among the Muslims, and emphasizing the teachings of Islam brought by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). These include prayer, fasting, pilgrimage to the Kaaba, and enjoining good and forbidding evil, all depicted in the most beautiful poetic forms and noble meanings, praising the poem's subject through the finest praise.

He also refers to the Pledge of Imam Ali al-Ridha (peace be upon him), saying (3):

"If I was not present at the Pledge of Ridha,

I am, in sincerity of heart, a witness."

The historical intertextuality is visible here as the poet reminds Muslims of the Pledge of Imam Ridha (peace be upon him), employing the condensation technique effectively. The poet means here that he was not physically present at the Pledge of Ridha in his time, but he believes in the doctrines and teachings brought by Imam Ridha (peace be upon him).

The poet also refers to the allegiance of Caliph Abu Ya'qub, known as the Commander of the Believers, when he says:

"She came to you, trailing her dress for the appointed time, shining brightly with the fortune of the fortunate." (1)

Here, the poet celebrates the allegiance to Caliph Abu Ya'qub, which occurred in the middle of Jumada al-Akhirah in the year 563 AH (2). It is described as "the beginning of this year, when Allah softened hearts with sincere intentions leading to happiness and good tidings, with sound opinions and pure souls renewing their pledge and declaring the rightful name of our master. This was completed by the unanimous agreement of the monotheists, may Allah honor them" (3). "With the agreement on the happy opinion and the right action, the views of the monotheists were united... in renewing the allegiance of the pledge of satisfaction and the name of Imam Abu Ya'qub" (4). Once the new pledge was completed in this manner, Caliph Abu Ya'qub was named Commander of the Believers. He issued a pardon for prisoners, ordered the removal of the remnants of fear from workers, and ensured their safety from danger. He issued decrees for the general welfare and blessings throughout the lands of Morocco and Andalusia. The benefits grew, prosperity spread, taxes and revenues increased, and the construction of splendid homes and gardens flourished in the capital. The occasion also led to an increase in poets' praises and congratulations (5).

In another instance, the poet mentions a historical event in which Muslims take pride in their victory in battle, saying:

"You were reminded again of the Yarmouk, its tremor still resonating, and no one among you can turn away from it or ascend." (6)

Here, the poet makes clear historical allusion to the Battle of Yarmouk, which took place in 15 AH, between the Muslims and the Romans (the Byzantine Empire). It is considered one of the most important battles in world history, marking the beginning of the first wave of Muslim victories outside the Arabian Peninsula and signaling the rapid spread of Islam in the Levant. The battle occurred four years after the death of the Prophet Muhammad (7).

The poet has employed historical intertextuality by evoking some historical names immortalized in history, as seen in his saying (1):

"If you had come to my aid, it would not have healed me,

Mudar, the son of Adnan, or Yarib."

Here, the poet mentions a historical figure, Mudar ibn Adnan, the 19th grandfather of Prophet Muhammad, who was born and died in Mecca. Al-Tabari and Ibn Sa'd narrated that Mudar ibn Adnan was Abu Qada'a (2). The name Mudar in Arabic signifies toughness and manliness. Mudar ibn Adnan lived around 1300 BC, though some say 1500 BC (3).

In conclusion, intertextuality is an ancient phenomenon in Arabic heritage. Pre-Islamic poets noticed it but did not accept it. Later, poets from the Islamic era adopted it, understood it, and initially disagreed on its interpretation, calling it by various names. Some considered it plagiarism, others saw it as inclusion or quotation, some viewed it as unintentional borrowing, and some deemed it improper. We observe that our poet, Ibn Harboon, fills his poetry with intertextuality from the Qur'an, pre-Islamic and Islamic poetry, and historical events. He also employs ancestral figures in his texts, but only if these figures have a famous and well-known story associated with them. The poet then mentions these figures, whether praising or criticizing them. These figures and their intertextual relationships between the absent and present texts transform the old meaning into a new one intended by the poet, making it suitable for artistic use and as poetic material. Therefore, Ibn Harboon resorted to it, interacting and engaging with it, often through allusion, suggestion, and evocation, aiming to stir the fighting spirit in a state that is waging wars and battles to spread Islamic principles, thus completing the poetic image.

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