

The Effectiveness of the Religious Text in the Poetry of Bashair Al-Sharad (Collection "Portrait" as a Model)

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Abstract

Abstract

This research deals with the effectiveness of the religious text in the poetry of the Iraqi poet Bashair Al-Sharad, taking her poetry collection "Portrait of a Masculine Face" (2026) and the poem "Portrait" as a model. It seeks to reveal the ways in which the religious heritage transforms into an effective semantic and aesthetic structure in the poetic text, not merely a quotation or verbal decoration. It proceeds from the hypothesis that the poet employs the religious text as a cultural memory and interpretive energy, giving the poem existential depth and a metaphysical horizon. The research adopts the descriptive-analytical method, benefiting from the concepts of intertextuality and cultural criticism. The poem "Portrait" was chosen because it represents the threshold of the collection and encapsulates its vision in the relationship between creation, art, and forgiveness. It aims to demonstrate the mechanisms of religious presence, examine the semantic transformations it causes in the poetic image, and determine the position of the experience in the contemporary Iraqi poetry scene. It also aspires to contribute to the study of Iraqi feminist poetry from a new critical perspective. It concludes that the religious text in Al-Sharad's experience is a transformative effectiveness, shaping identity, body, and memory in an open poetic context.

Keywords: : Religious text, intertextuality, contemporary Iraqi poetry, Bashair Al-Sharad, Portrait.

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Introduction

The relationship between poetry and religion constitutes one of the deepest and most complex relationships in Arab culture. Since the pre-Islamic era, poetry was the register of the Arabs and their collective memory, then Islam came to reshape this memory, making the religious text a central reference in the formation of aesthetic and ethical consciousness. Poetry in Islamic eras was not far from this transformation, but continued to invoke the Holy Qur'an, the Prophetic tradition, and the biography and religious history, whether in the purposes of praise, asceticism, and preaching, or in building the poetic image and major metaphors. With the transition of Arabic poetry to modernity, the mechanisms of this presence changed; the religious text was no longer merely material for direct quotation, but became a constructive element in shaping vision and meaning, interacting with the poetic text on multiple levels: linguistic, imagistic, rhythmic, and symbolic.

Iraqi modern poetry has given special attention to the religious heritage, as a cultural stock and collective memory, especially in the experiences of the pioneers of modernity who employed religious and mythological symbols in their texts. This employment moved from the level of revival and inclusion to the level of intertextuality and textual interaction, where the religious text becomes a partner in the production of meaning, not just a witness to it. In this context, the experience of the Iraqi poet Bashair Al-Sharad stands out as a remarkable experience in employing the religious text, as she belongs to a generation of poets who combined aesthetic sense with existential vision, and were able to formulate a special poetic experience, in which subjectivity intersects with cultural and religious references.

Bashair Al-Sharad was born in Iraq; she is a plastic artist and academic. Her poetry collection "Portrait of a Masculine Face" was published in 2026, comprising texts that range between poetry and prose poetry, characterized by an intense presence of the self, the other, and memory. The poem "Portrait" is considered the threshold of the collection and its key text, as it encapsulates the poet's vision in the relationship between art, creation, loss, and forgiveness. In this poem, the religious text becomes a mythological background for the creative act, where the painting becomes a symbol of creation, inability, and the desire for permanence. Major questions are drawn in the text: Can art contain the world? Can a human being reshape the other face without transgressing its limits? Is love a sin that necessitates forgiveness, or is it the essence of human existence?

The importance of this study stems from the fact that it approaches a subject that has not received sufficient critical attention, namely the effectiveness of the religious text in the poetry of Bashair Al-Sharad. Despite the numerous studies

that have dealt with religious and Qur'anic intertextuality in modern Arabic poetry, contemporary Iraqi feminist experiences still need precise critical approaches that reveal their aesthetic and semantic specificity. Al-Sharad's experience is distinguished by the fact that she does not invoke the religious text as an authority or a sermon, but as a space for questioning and interpretation, which makes it worthy of study.

The research problem stems from a central question: How does the religious text in the poetry of Bashair Al-Sharad transform from a cultural reference into an effective structure in the production of meaning and image? What mechanisms does the poet adopt in employing this text? To what extent does this employment reflect her existential and feminist vision? The research seeks to answer these questions through the analysis of selected models from the collection "Portrait of a Masculine Face," focusing on the poem "Portrait" as the text most representative of the poet's vision.

The research adopts the descriptive-analytical method, benefiting from the concepts of intertextuality and cultural criticism, as it believes that the religious text is not a ready-made given, but is reproduced in every reading process. The research also uses some passages from the Arabic rhetorical and critical heritage, attempting to approach Western theories with an Arab vision that does not settle for translation, but searches for the roots of these concepts in Arabic critical practice. The research aims to demonstrate the mechanisms of religious presence in Al-Sharad's poetry, examine the semantic transformations it causes in the poetic image, and determine the position of this experience in the contemporary Iraqi poetry scene, in addition to contributing to the study of Iraqi feminist poetry from a new critical perspective.

Research Questions

1. What are the mechanisms of employing the religious text in the collection "Portrait of a Masculine Face" by the poet Bashair Al-Sharad?
2. How does the religious text contribute to the formation of meaning and poetic images in the poem "Portrait"?
3. To what extent does the employment of the religious text in this experience reflect the poet's existential and feminist vision?

Research Objective

This research aims to reveal the effectiveness of the religious text in the poetry of Bashair Al-Sharad, by analyzing its mechanisms and semantic and aesthetic functions in the collection "Portrait of a Masculine Face," and showing how this text transforms from a cultural reference into an effective structure in the production of meaning and the formation of the poetic image, while determining the specificity of this experience in the contemporary Iraqi poetic context.

Research Methodology

The research relies on the descriptive-analytical method, as it is the closest to the nature of the phenomenon studied; it requires describing the presence of the religious text in the poetry of Bashair Al-Sharad, then analyzing the mechanisms of this presence and its semantic and aesthetic functions in the collection "Portrait of a Masculine Face." The research uses intertextuality tools to reveal how the poetic text interacts with religious texts, and some procedures of cultural criticism in analyzing major binaries such as sacred/profane, purity/sin, and redemption/guilt. The poem "Portrait" was chosen as a central model, with reference to other texts from the same collection such as "A Poet You Will Be," "And We Were Tested," and "Who Grants Us Forgiveness?" to ensure the integration of analysis and demonstrate the consistency of the phenomenon. The research proceeds in gradual steps: defining the theoretical framework, then selecting texts, then analyzing them on lexical, imagistic, symbolic, and intertextual levels, leading to the extraction of results and linking them to the research problem.

Previous Studies

Studies that have dealt with religious and Qur'anic intertextuality in Arabic poetry constitute an important critical asset that can be a starting point for building a clear conception of the current research topic. These studies varied between peer-reviewed articles and university theses, and differed in their methodologies, corpora, and objectives, which makes it necessary to stop at the most prominent ones and show the points of convergence and divergence with our study titled "The Effectiveness of the Religious Text in the Poetry of Bashair Al-Sharad: Portrait as a Model."

Researcher Aqila Mohammadi in her article "The Effectiveness of Qur'anic Intertextuality in the Poetry of Mufdi Zakaria," published in the Journal of the Institute of Languages at Hassiba Ben Bouali University in Chlef, Algeria (Volume 1, Issue 2, December 2019), dealt with the presence of the Qur'anic text in the poetry of the Algerian poet Mufdi Zakaria. The study focused on the level of verbal intertextuality that gives the poetic text solidity and sobriety, and on sentential intertextuality that gives the style strength and coherence, and also stopped at the Qur'anic characters invoked by the poet in his texts.

This study differs from our research in that its author did not address the semantic concepts and visions that the poet extracted from the Qur'anic text, but her approach remained confined to the verbal and structural level. She also did not pay attention to the modern techniques that the poet employed in his dealing with the Qur'anic text. As for our current study, it goes beyond the verbal level to

the semantic and symbolic structure, and searches for the concepts and transformations that the religious text causes in the poetic image, benefiting from modern critical tools such as intertextuality and cultural criticism.

Researcher Alaa Fadil Abdul Qadir Al-Bayati presented a master's thesis titled "The Effectiveness of the Qur'anic Text in the Poetry of Al-Sharif Al-Radi - A Study in Form and Content," at the College of Basic Education at the University of Kufa in 2020. This study sought to demonstrate the presence of the Qur'anic text in the poetry of Al-Sharif Al-Radi in terms of form and content, focusing on the rhetorical and semantic dimension within the framework of Arabic critical heritage.

The difference between this thesis and our research is that the researcher relied primarily on ancient rhetoric, especially the concepts of quotation and inclusion, and did not turn to modern critical methods in analyzing the text. Our study, however, takes a different path, relying on intertextuality as a contemporary critical procedure, and using some concepts of cultural criticism, and taking the poetry of Bashair Al-Sharad as its corpus, which is contemporary Iraqi feminist poetry, not the poetry of Al-Sharif Al-Radi in the Abbasid era. Thus, the study moves from analyzing form and content to analyzing the transformative effectiveness of the religious text in building the image, identity, and existential vision.

Dr. Rasul Ballawi in his article "Qur'anic Intertextuality in the Poetry of Yahya Samawi" dealt with the subject of intertextuality, quotation, and inclusion, and provided a theoretical rooting for the concept of intertextuality, affirming that "although intertextuality appears to be a new term, it is in fact an old concept, because whoever examines the lexicon of ancient Arabic criticism finds other critical terms that refer to the process of overlap between text and other texts, such as: quotation, inclusion, plagiarism, and taking." He also pointed out that some contemporary critics classified intertextuality into two types: apparent intertextuality, which includes quotation and inclusion, and is called conscious or intentional quotation; and unconscious or hidden intertextuality, in which the author is unaware of the presence of the text or other texts in his text, and its strategy is based on absorption, dissolution, transformation, and textual interaction.

This study differs from our study in that it focused on terminological rooting and theoretical classification of intertextuality, then applied it to a specific poet, Yahya Samawi, whereas our study does not stop at the limits of classification or rooting, but tests the religious effectiveness in the poetry of Bashair Al-Sharad in an applied manner. Also, our research corpus is broader than Qur'anic intertextuality alone, as it includes the religious text in its general sense: Qur'anic, hadith, historical, and symbolic. Our study is unique in that it approaches contemporary Iraqi feminist poetry, and links the religious text to the formation of existential

and feminist vision, focusing on the poem "Portrait" as the threshold of the collection and its key text.

From the above, it is clear that the previous studies, despite their multiplicity and importance, did not address the experience of Bashair Al-Sharad, nor did they approach the effectiveness of the religious text in her collection "Portrait of a Masculine Face" with an approach that combines intertextuality and cultural criticism. Some of them remained captive to ancient rhetoric, and others were limited to verbal intertextuality or theoretical rooting. As for our current study, it differs from them in corpus, methodology, vision, and objectives; it starts from contemporary Iraqi feminist poetry, and takes the religious text as an effective structure in the production of meaning and image, and reveals its transformations in the discourse of the self, body, memory, and forgiveness.

Theoretical Framework

Intertextuality is one of the modern terms in literature and criticism, coming from the West, and theories and concepts about it differed according to the intellectual currents and critical schools, primarily in the West. In contemporary Arabic literature, intertextuality received much attention due to its spread and circulation in Western critical studies as a result of the influence of Western schools on Arabic literature. Because this term has credibility and a place in expanding the space of meaning in the poetic text, it deepens poetry and makes it open to interpretation and explanation in the human self. Contemporary poets were influenced by the valuable meanings of the Holy Qur'an and its stories, so they employed intertextuality by weaving absent texts into present texts in their poems.

The Holy Qur'an is considered the first reference, and the sacred text to which most poets resort, as it abounds with new formulations and innovative meanings that reflect the facts of souls and the pulses of hearts. Quotation from it constitutes a different interaction, resulting in various forms that delight ears and reassure hearts.

It came in Lisan al-Arab by Ibn Manzur:

"Tanassani: meaning they contended with me and competed with me. And al-nassi: the bone of the neck. It is said: this desert is such and such land and its nawasi, meaning it connects to it.

Tanassat al-aghSan: they drew close until some of them clung to others when the wind blew.

Tanassa: tanassa al-qawm izdahamu. Tanassa al-rajulan: they raced in prominence and elevation of status.

Tanassat biladuhum: some of them were connected to others (Ibn Manzur, n.d.: 327).

Tanassa: tanassa al-qawm izdahamu (Arabic Language Academy, 2009: 926)."

This term goes back to Julia Kristeva, who derived it from Bakhtin to express that every text is an absorption and transformation of another text, and it is a mosaic in which multiple evidences interact to generate a new text (Zaytuni, 2002: 63).

The term intertextuality goes back to the word "nass" according to Arabic linguistic dictionaries. It is said: "Nassa al-rajul nassan, if he asked him about something until he extracted what he had, and nassa kulla shay' muntahahu... and nassastu al-rajul if you investigated his question about the thing until you extracted all he had... and it is said: nassnassa al-shay' harrahahu... and nassa al-sunnah means what its apparent wording indicates of rulings; and intassa al-shay' wa intasaba if it became straight and upright" (Ibn Manzur, n.d.: 97 and 98).

Arab researchers entered into the problematic of the term as a result of different translations and critical schools. Muhammad Bennis calls it "the absent text" and Muhammad Miftah calls it "textual correlation," defining it as: "Intertextuality is the correlation of texts with a modern text in various ways" (Miftah, 1992: 121). Ahmad al-Zu'bi defined it as: "A literary text includes texts or ideas prior to it through quotation, inclusion, allusion, or the like from the cultural reading of the writer, so that these texts or ideas merge with the original text and are fused into it to form a new integrated single text" (Al-Zu'bi, 2000: 11).

Dr. Muhammad Bennis believes that "the text as a complex linguistic sign, or as an isolated language, is a network containing several texts, for no text exists outside other texts or can be separated from their orbit, and these other texts are what I called the absent text. However, the other texts recovered in the text follow a path..."

He says: "Any text requires the existence of other texts prior to it or contemporaneous with it" (85: 1998).

And Abdul Mun'im Muhammad Faris Sulayman says: Intertextuality is a term that goes back to its linguistic root (nass), and the authors of linguistic dictionaries listed a group of meanings that explain this root. It came in Lisan al-Arab that al-nass: raising you the thing. Nass al-hadith yanussuhu nassan: he raised it, and everything that is shown is nass (11: 2005).

Roland Barthes, the Western researcher who developed this term, says in defining intertextuality: "Every fabric of quotations, references, and echoes, and these are ancient and modern cultural languages, and every text belongs to intertextuality, and this should not be confused with the origins of the text. The search for the sources of its influence is an attempt to achieve the myth of the prophecy of the text, for the quotations of which the text is composed are of unknown source, but they are read, so they are quotations without quotation marks" (Al-Zu'bi, 2000: 12).

Marc Angenot proposed a concept of intertextuality closer to Barthes' concept, saying: "Every text coexists in one way or another with other texts, and thus becomes a text within a text as intertextuality, and thus the word also belongs to everyone because it indicates an idea available in every cultural study" (same source: 13).

Muhammad Miftah points out that "intertextuality for the poet is like air, water, time, and place for a human being; there is no life for him without them and no living for him outside them" (1985: 125).

The religious text is one of the most important tributaries on which Arab poets relied in building their creative texts, as a living cultural memory and a semantic stock that does not run out. The Holy Qur'an, in particular, has remained the first reference from which contemporary poets draw, because it represents "renewed richness and giving for thought and feeling, in addition to the attachment of contemporary poets' culture to it in influence, understanding, and quotation" (Jarbu', 2004: 134). This presence has moved from the level of direct quotation and traditional inclusion to more complex levels, where the religious text has become an effective structure in the production of meaning and the formation of the poetic image, not just verbal decoration or external citation.

The discussion of "the effectiveness of the religious text" requires standing at the concept of effectiveness itself, as indicating the ability of the invoked text to cause semantic and aesthetic transformations in the present poetic text. When the religious text is employed consciously and artistically, it does not remain a passing text invoked for blessing, but becomes a generating energy for meaning, interacting with the poet's experience and vision of existence. Hence the need arises for a theoretical framework that controls concepts and defines mechanisms.

The Theoretical Framework

The concept of "intertextuality" is the central concept on which the discussion of the effectiveness of the religious text in poetry is founded. The Arabs knew the root of this term in their dictionaries; it came in *Lisan al-Arab* that "tanassat al-aghSan: they drew close until some clung to others when the wind blew," and "tanassa al-qawm: they crowded," and "tanassa al-rajulan: they raced in prominence and elevation of status" (Ibn Manzur, n.d.: 327). These linguistic meanings carry in their folds the seeds of the modern concept; they indicate closeness, overlap, and interaction between multiple elements to form a new unity.

Terminologically, the term is attributed to Julia Kristeva, who derived it from Bakhtin to express that "every text is an absorption and transformation of another text, and is a mosaic in which multiple evidences interact to generate a new text" (Zaytuni, 2002: 63). The translations and names of the term varied among

Arab critics; Muhammad Bennis calls it "the absent text," and Muhammad Miftah calls it "textual correlation," defining it as "the correlation of a text with texts prior to it or contemporaneous with it" (Miftah, 1992: 121). Ahmad al-Zu'bi defines it as "a literary text includes texts or ideas prior to it through quotation, inclusion, allusion, or the like from the cultural reading of the writer, so that these texts or ideas merge with the original text and are fused into it to form a new integrated single text" (Al-Zu'bi, 2000: 11). Muhammad Bennis emphasizes that "any text requires the existence of other texts prior to it or contemporaneous with it" (Bennis, 1998: 85).

If intertextuality in its modern concept intersects with ancient Arabic critical terms such as quotation, inclusion, plagiarism, and taking, the fundamental difference between them lies in that intertextuality goes beyond mere conscious invocation; it includes unconscious overlap, absorption, transformation, and textual dissolution. Contemporary critics classified intertextuality into two types: apparent intertextuality, which includes quotation and inclusion, and is called conscious or intentional quotation; and unconscious or hidden intertextuality, in which the author is unaware of the presence of the text or other texts in his text, and its strategy is based on absorption, dissolution, transformation, and textual interaction (Ballawi, 2019).

In the context of employing the religious text specifically, the levels of intertextuality and its mechanisms vary. There is verbal intertextuality that invokes specific Qur'anic words and phrases to give semantic density to the poetic image. There is sentential intertextuality that invokes a complete Qur'anic sentence or part of it, preserving its structure or modifying it. There is referential or absorptive intertextuality, which is the highest degree of reading because it is based on rewriting the religious text according to personal experience, mentioning something and remaining silent about another, referring to the memory of the recipient with indirect indications (Wasil, 2011: 109). Dialogic intertextuality also represents a deeper stage, where the poet enters into a dialogue with the religious text, not as an authority to which he submits, but as an interlocutor he questions, interprets, and reshapes.

The effectiveness of the religious text is not limited to the level of intertextuality alone, but extends to modern stylistic techniques such as defamiliarization and paradox. Defamiliarization, as a departure from the familiar in language, constitutes a basic tool in formulating the Sufi and religious poetic text; "defamiliarization, to be poetic, should follow..." (Al-Sad, 2007: 7), which makes poetic language more capable of containing religious and emotional experience. As for paradox, especially dramatic and pictorial paradox, it allows the poet "to determine the fates of his imaginary creatures to which he gives life and spirit" (Miowek,

1993: 158-157), which explains the use of contemporary poets for it in their religious and Sufi texts.

In conclusion, the theoretical framework of this research is based on the concept of intertextuality as an entry point for analyzing the effectiveness of the religious text, benefiting from the concepts of defamiliarization and paradox. It proceeds from the hypothesis that the religious text, when employed consciously and artistically, transforms from a rigid cultural reference into an effective structure in the production of meaning and the formation of the poetic image, which requires an approach that combines precise textual analysis with theoretical awareness of the mechanisms of intertextuality and its transformations.

Section One: Religious Presence in the Poetry of Bashair Al-Sharad: Mechanisms and Manifestations

Introduction

The religious text in the poetry of Bashair Al-Sharad constitutes a structural presence that cannot be reduced to the category of verbal decoration or external citation. It is not material quoted for blessing or cultural display, but a semantic space that interacts with the poet's existential experience, and engages with her vision of the self, body, memory, and forgiveness. Bashair Al-Sharad belongs to a generation of contemporary Iraqi poets who have realized that the religious text can be a tool for questioning, not submission, and a means for interpretation, not indoctrination. Hence, approaching the religious presence in her poetry collection "Portrait of a Masculine Face" (2026) requires moving from the question "What did the poet invoke from the religious text?" to the deeper question: "How did she reshape this text, and what semantic transformations did she bring about in it?"

First: The Religious Text as Cultural Memory and Interpretive Energy

The effectiveness of the religious text in the poetry of Bashair Al-Sharad cannot be understood in isolation from the theoretical framework of intertextuality. The religious text, in this experience, is not just a prior reference invoked for documentation, but an "absent text" present in the fabric of the poem, working on two parallel levels: the level of semantic reference, and the level of aesthetic formation. An academic study that dealt with the effectiveness of the Qur'anic text in Sufi poetry indicated that "the contemporary poet turned to the Holy Qur'an and began to invoke it as part of the semantic structure of the poetic text, so Qur'anic references are linked to the poetic text organically, structurally, and semantically, and this is a new variation on the same position and confirms that the process is not just a process of quotation, but rather a process of exploding latent energies in the text that one poet after another discovers, each according to his current poetic position" (The Effectiveness of the Qur'anic Text in Enriching Sufi

Poetry, 2016: 17). This description applies to Al-Sharad's experience remarkably: the religious text for her is not quoted, but is "part of the semantic structure of the poetic text," and is "an explosion of latent energies" in the religious text itself.

Second: Evidence from the Poetry Collection

Religious presence in the collection "Portrait of a Masculine Face" is remarkably evident from the first texts. In the poem "A Poet You Will Be," the poet opens her text with a discourse reminiscent of divine annunciation:

"No cave for me, no path scratches my wing
I am the daughter of light,
Born when the sun performed ablution in my blood,
God inside me is a dawn that does not fade
Under the Sidrat al-'Ishq I stood,
And intimacy shaded in my steps
Stars gaze like shining earrings
And planets sleep in my palm
Hanging from my hand like prayer beads
But a mischievous star dodged the orbit,
Laughed in the sky..
And the glow trembled on her lips
The knowers shouted: 'The space has manifested
Phoebus approached with his majestic power
He held her between his arms and raised her to him
Kissed her forehead..
Then wrote on her forehead the prophecy of poetry:
'A poet you will be'" (Al-Sharad, 2026: 5)

This text establishes a poetic consciousness that knows itself as a heavenly choice, not merely human manufacture. The poet "daughter of light" who "the sun performed ablution in her blood," and "God inside her is a dawn that does not fade," and "Sidrat al-'Ishq" under which she stands, and "prayer beads" hanging from her hand – all these elements form a fabric of religious references that combine to form the image of the poet/priestess/prophetess. But this employment does not stop at the limits of invocation, but reaches its peak in the prophecy "A poet you will be" which recalls the discourse of revelation and annunciation, to establish a poetic legitimacy derived from the sacred.

In the text "And We Were Tested," the Husseinī tragedy transforms into a major semantic structure:

"And We Were Tested
To be stones,
Dripping from their roses the blood of the sacrificed

We knew no path but mourning
 We grew up on consolation,
 And grew old on wailing,
 We are the children of blood,
 Barefoot on the path of Taff,
 We are born every Ashura,
 And we die every Ashura,
 Then we are resurrected...
 From this shrine
 And from this tomb,
 We answer the call:
 Hussein... Hussein" (Al-Sharad, 2026: 71-72)

Here the poet invokes the Qur'anic word "And We Were Tested" to place it in a Karbala context, forming a double semantic sign: Abrahamic trial, and Hussein's trial. The repetition "We are born every Ashura and die every Ashura then are resurrected" transforms the Hussein's memory from a historical event into a renewed existential structure, and from elegy to resurrection. Thus the religious text transforms from a historical reference into an effective energy in shaping collective identity.

In the poem "Who Grants Us Forgiveness?", the religious text transforms into a space for existential questioning:

"I dream of rain,
 Of the very gentle rain...
 Before me is the rain of love if
 It sprays on my throat,
 And I keep trembling
 Like a bird that missed the summer
 Is it right for us to spend the night on the seats of passion,
 As poetry spends the night in the mouth of its rebellious poem?
 Can we!
 And is the heart asked about its sin if it complains?
 Ah, from a question
 That melts the heart, and exhausts it...
 We remain, the last of lovers,
 We console the guard in his loneliness,
 And we count his dogs
 As we count our kisses,
 We spell love:
 Letter by letter,

Lip by lip,
 And we sleep in the moon's numbness" (Al-Sharad, 2026: 57)
 And in the following passage from the same poem, the poet reaches the peak of the question:

"O my heart that I planted as a necklace on your chest,
 Its streets are of tent,
 And its walls are of confused
 Sighs? Yes!
 And I sleep in the camps of this insomnia
 And I prolong the veils from the houses of friends
 ...Civil? Maybe
 And all of us are civil,
 Because we love
 And believe that love alone
 Is the most beautiful of sins
 So who grants us forgiveness?" (Al-Sharad, 2026: 58)

Here love transforms from a human value into a "beautiful sin," in a reversal of traditional religious classification, but a reversal that does not negate the need for forgiveness, but redefines it as an existential demand, not a jurisprudential one. The question "So who grants us forgiveness?" becomes an open poetic structure, transcending direct religious discourse to a broader human horizon.

The study we cite confirms that "contemporary poets were influenced by the valuable meanings of the Holy Qur'an and its stories, so they employed intertextuality by weaving absent texts into present texts in their poems" (The Effectiveness of the Qur'anic Text in Enriching Sufi Poetry, 2016: 28). This is achieved in Al-Sharad's poetry, where the religious text becomes an "absent text" present in the fabric of the poem, providing it with renewed semantic and aesthetic energy.

Third: Towards a Preliminary Classification of Employment Mechanisms

The mechanisms of employing the religious text in the poetry of Bashair Al-Sharad can be classified, based on the previous models, into three levels:

The First Level: Verbal Intertextuality. It is manifested in invoking specific Qur'anic words, such as "And We Were Tested," "Sidra," "Dawn," "Performed Ablution," and "Prayer." These words are not invoked with their abstract lexical meaning, but are charged with new semantics that interact with the context of the poem.

The Second Level: Allusive Intertextuality. It is manifested in indirect references to religious texts without literal invocation, as in the reference to the cave and prophecy in "A Poet You Will Be," the reference to Karbala and Taff in "And

We Were Tested," and the reference to sin and forgiveness in "Who Grants Us Forgiveness?".

The Third Level: Dialogic Intertextuality. It is manifested in transforming the religious text from an authority to which one submits into an interlocutor that is questioned and interpreted, as in the question "So who grants us forgiveness?" which opens the text to an open interpretive horizon.

Thus it is revealed that the religious text in the poetry of Bashair Al-Sharad is not just raw material invoked for documentation, but an effective structure that reshapes the poetic experience, and opens the poem to new semantic horizons.

Section Two: Stylistic Mechanisms of the Effectiveness of the Religious Text in "Portrait": Defamiliarization, Paradox, and Intertextuality

Introduction

If the first section dealt with monitoring the presence of the religious text in the poetry of Bashair Al-Sharad and classifying its employment mechanisms, this section seeks to move from the level of monitoring to the level of stylistic analysis, as the latter is capable of revealing how the religious text transforms from invoked material into an effective structure in the heart of poetic discourse. Defamiliarization, paradox, and intertextuality are not just accidental techniques, but are productive mechanisms that combine to form the poetic language in "Portrait of a Masculine Face," and define its relationship with the religious reference. These mechanisms cannot be understood in isolation from the theoretical framework that controls their procedural limits, so we begin this section with a brief review of the most important concepts before moving to applied analysis.

First: The Conceptual Framework of Stylistic Mechanisms

Defamiliarization is one of the most prominent mechanisms adopted by the poet in employing the religious text. It means departing from the familiar in language to what is unexpected, seeking greater semantic and aesthetic density. Critics defined it as "the creator's use of vocabulary, structures, and images in a way that goes beyond what is customary and familiar, so that it achieves what it should be characterized by of uniqueness, creativity, power of attraction, and captivation" (Weis, 2005: 7). This definition applies to what Al-Sharad does when she defamiliarizes the religious word from its original context to place it in a new poetic context.

Paradox is another mechanism based on contrast and apparent contradiction between two levels of meaning. The critic indicated that paradox "is based on a person's pretense of being contrary to what he is; the owner of paradox may say something but in reality means something completely different" (Ashri Zayed, 2008: 130). It thus allows the poet to transform religious discourse from the realm of assertion to the realm of questioning and interpretation.

Intertextuality remains the comprehensive concept that links these mechanisms; some scholars define it as "a re-representation of previous texts within a new text that merges the absent and the present, and is produced by the writer according to a creative perspective" (Murad, 2025: 89). Religious intertextuality is defined as "the interference of religious texts (Qur'an, hadith, sermons, proverbs) in the structure of the literary text, where they are employed to serve the artistic or semantic context" (Murad, 2025: 95). These definitions confirm that intertextuality is not just quotation, but a productive process that reshapes the previous text in light of the present text.

Second: Defamiliarization in Employing the Religious Word

Defamiliarization in Al-Sharad's poetry is remarkably evident in her treatment of words with religious loading. In the poem "Portrait," the poet opens the text with an existential question related to the limits of the creative act:

"I know that this whole world / this world driven to nothingness / with its billions and expanse / is unable / to incline a specific space / a small white area the size of a painting" (Al-Sharad, 2026: 92).

Here the "painting" transforms from an artistic subject into a symbol of the creative act itself, and the word is defamiliarized from its material meaning to a metaphysical meaning. Defamiliarization reaches its peak in the concluding question:

"So why, in the midst of this precise cosmic failure / did I have to copy your face?" (Al-Sharad, 2026: 92).

The act of "copying" carries in religious heritage the connotations of creation and formation, two acts that were linked in religious consciousness to the limits of human representation. Thus the poem is defamiliarized from visual art to the religious question, and the "painting" becomes a mirror for the relationship of the self with the other (divine/human), and where the "masculine face" is reduced to a threshold between annihilation and immortality.

Studies have indicated that "defamiliarization, to be poetic, should follow..." (Al-Sad, 2007: 7), which is achieved in this text; defamiliarization does not appear forced or excessive, but is a semantic necessity imposed by the nature of the poetic experience.

Third: Paradox between the Religious Text and the Subjective Experience

Paradox in "Portrait" operates on two interrelated levels: linguistic paradox, and dramatic paradox. In the poem "Who Grants Us Forgiveness?", the poet reaches the peak of paradox when she declares:

"And all of us are civil, / because we love / and believe that love alone / is the most beautiful of sins / so who grants us forgiveness?" (Al-Sharad, 2026: 58).

Defamiliarization here is achieved in transferring "love" from the realm of virtue to the realm of "sins," but it is a "beautiful" sin. This reversal of traditional religious classification does not negate the need for forgiveness, but redefines it as an existential demand, not a jurisprudential one. Critics have noted that "dramatic paradox is achieved when the observer knows what the victim does not know" (Mioweeek, 1993: 158-157). Here the poet knows that love is a "sin," but she chooses this sin consciously, and demands forgiveness at the same time. This double consciousness is what makes the paradox structural, not superficial.

A study "Gender Resistance in Iraqi Feminist Poetry" indicated that "writing the feminine body is represented as an achievement of gender identity stemming from a feminist cognitive awareness in building a positive feminine identity whose subject is difference, in which the woman's being is not separate from her body" (Hassan and Wadi, 2024: 3). This description applies to what Al-Sharad does; she does not reject religious discourse, but reshapes it from a feminist existential perspective, insisting on her right to love and forgiveness, and transforming the question "Who grants us forgiveness?" into an open poetic structure that transcends direct religious discourse.

Fourth: Qur'anic and Dialogic Intertextuality in "And We Were Tested"

Intertextuality reaches its peak in the text "And We Were Tested," where the poet invokes the Qur'anic word "And We Were Tested" to place it in a Karbala context:

"And We Were Tested / To be stones, / Dripping from their roses the blood of the sacrificed / We knew no path but mourning / We grew up on consolation, / And grew old on wailing, / We are the children of blood, / Barefoot on the path of Taff, / We are born every Ashura, / And we die every Ashura, / Then we are resurrected... / From this shrine / And from this tomb, / We answer the call: / Hussein... Hussein" (Al-Sharad, 2026: 71-72).

Here intertextuality is achieved on two levels: a verbal level by invoking the Qur'anic word "And We Were Tested," and a referential level by alluding to Karbala and Taff. A scholar indicated that "intertextuality is considered an interference of religious texts in the structure of the literary text, where they are employed to serve the artistic or semantic context" (Murad, 2025: 95). The repetition "We are born every Ashura and die every Ashura then are resurrected" transforms the Hussein memory from a historical event into a renewed existential structure, and from elegy to resurrection.

A study "Modern Techniques in Iraqi Feminist Poetry" indicated that "intertextuality" is one of the most prominent techniques "employed by poets to create a unique feminist poetic text, competing with the masculine text" (Muhammad,

2025: 6). This is what we see in Al-Sharad's employment of Husseini intertextuality; she does not merely invoke the religious text, but makes it part of her vision of collective identity and bodily memory.

Fifth: Towards a Classification of Stylistic Mechanisms

Based on the previous analysis, the stylistic mechanisms of the effectiveness of the religious text in "Portrait" can be classified into three interrelated levels:

The First Level: Semantic Defamiliarization. It is manifested in transferring the religious word from its original context to a new poetic context, as in "the painting," "copying," and "forgiveness."

The Second Level: Structural Paradox. It is manifested in creating tension between traditional religious discourse and subjective experience, as in the reversal of "love" into a "sin," and the question about forgiveness.

The Third Level: Dialogic Intertextuality. It is manifested in invoking the religious text not for blessing, but for dialogue, questioning, and interpretation, as in "And We Were Tested" and "Who Grants Us Forgiveness?".

Thus it is revealed that the stylistic mechanisms in "Portrait" are not just formal techniques, but are productive tools that reshape the religious text in light of the poetic experience, and transform it from a rigid reference into an effective structure in the heart of poetic discourse. A study indicated that "feminine writing is considered one of the starting points of post-feminism in rewriting and discovering the body" (Hassan and Wadi, 2024: 3), which explains Al-Sharad's resort to defamiliarization, paradox, and intertextuality as mechanisms for resisting masculine religious discourse, and re-establishing a new relationship between the feminine self and the sacred text.

Results

The research reached the following results, which are consistent with the three research questions:

-The mechanisms of employing the religious text in the collection "Portrait of a Masculine Face" are manifested in three interrelated levels: Verbal Intertextuality, achieved by invoking specific Qur'anic words such as "And We Were Tested," "Sidra," "Dawn," "Performed Ablution," and "Prayer," with recharging them with new semantics that interact with the context of the poem. Allusive Intertextuality, achieved in indirect references to religious texts without literal invocation, as in the reference to the cave and prophecy in "A Poet You Will Be," to Karbala and Taff in "And We Were Tested," and to sin and forgiveness in "Who Grants Us Forgiveness?". Dialogic Intertextuality, achieved in transforming the religious text from an authority to which one submits into an interlocutor that is questioned and interpreted, as in the question "So who grants us forgiveness?" which opens the text to an open interpretive horizon. These mechanisms reveal

that the religious text in Al-Sharad's experience is not raw material invoked for documentation, but an effective structure that reshapes the poetic experience.

-The religious text in the poem "Portrait" contributes to the formation of meaning and poetic images through transforming the "painting" from an artistic subject into a symbol of the creative act itself, and through the defamiliarization of the act of "copying" from its material meaning to a metaphysical meaning linked to the limits of human representation. This contribution reaches its peak in the concluding question: "So why, in the midst of this precise cosmic failure / did I have to copy your face?" where the religious text becomes a mythological background for the creative act, and the "painting" becomes a mirror for the relationship of the self with the other (divine/human). Thus the religious text gives the poem interpretive depth, and transforms the poetic image from the level of description to the level of existential questioning.

-The employment of the religious text in Al-Sharad's experience reflects an existential and feminist vision based on redefining the relationship between the feminine self and the sacred text. In the poem "Who Grants Us Forgiveness?", love transforms from a human value into a "beautiful sin," in a reversal of traditional religious classification, but a reversal that does not negate the need for forgiveness, but redefines it as an existential demand, not a jurisprudential one. The question "So who grants us forgiveness?" becomes an open poetic structure that transcends direct religious discourse to a broader human horizon. Thus the poet reshapes religious discourse from a feminist existential perspective, insisting on her right to love and forgiveness, and transforming the religious text from a rigid masculine reference into a space for questioning and interpretation, expressing a resistant feminine identity, and an existential vision that believes that love alone is "the most beautiful of sins."

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