

The Poetics of Openness: Generic Intertextuality in Contemporary Arabic Poetry (Selected Models)

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Received : 17/06/2025 Accepted : 20/10/2025 Published : 24/12/2025

Abstract

This study examines the phenomenon of “generic intertextuality” as a major aesthetic strategy in contemporary Arabic poetry, tracing the transformation of the poetic text from “generic purity” to a “poetics of openness.” The research seeks to reveal how contemporary poets (Darwish, Adonis, and Saadi Youssef) have employed techniques beyond the scope of traditional lyricism, such as “narrative storytelling,” which has granted the poem a temporal and epic dimension, and “dramatic structure,” which has broken the dominance of the single voice in favor of polyphony and the conflict of masks.

In this study, we seek to demonstrate that this intertextuality is not merely a formal addition, but rather an “existential necessity” imposed by the nature of fragmented modern experience, whereby the poem has become an “interstitial space” in which visual composition intersects with theatrical dialogue and novelistic description. Through the poetic models selected for this study, we show how the “poetics of openness” has redefined the concept of “poeticity” by shifting it from the level of the verse line and external rhythm to the level of “total vision” and complex scenic construction, thus rendering contemporary Arabic poetry a trans-generic text capable of absorbing the contradictions of historical, political, and philosophical reality with high artistic flexibility and distinguished linguistic proficiency.

Keywords: Generic Intertextuality, Poetics of Openness, Generic Purity, Contemporary Arabic Poetry.

First: Introduction

The phenomenon of genre intertextuality (Inter-genre) is regarded as one of the most significant modernist features that have distinguished contemporary Arabic poetic discourse, as the poem has moved from the concept of “generic purity,” which prevailed in classical criticism, to the concept of the “open text” or the “inclusive text.” The poetics of openness here does not merely signify the borrowing of tools from other arts; rather, it is a philosophical vision that sees the poem as a dialogic space in which the illusory boundaries between poetry, narrative, and drama are shattered. Civilizational and social transformations have compelled the contemporary poet to search for more flexible expressive forms capable of containing complex human experience, which has led to the emergence of the “narrative poem,” “poetic drama,” and the “poem of visual composition.” This study seeks to examine these structural and aesthetic transformations

while analyzing the manner in which the contemporary poem has assimilated elements foreign to it and recast them within the crucible of a new “poeticity.”

Second: Problematic

The problematic of the study revolves around the following question: How has the “poetics of openness” contributed to reshaping the aesthetic identity of the contemporary Arabic poem? This question gives rise to the following subsidiary questions: What are the justifications for invoking narrative, dramatic, and visual elements into the space of the poem? Has this intertextuality enriched “poeticity,” or has it dissolved the characteristics of the poetic genre? And how may contemporary poetic models be read in light of this genre intertextuality?

Third: Theoretical Study (The Concept of Genre Intertextuality)

For many centuries, “genre theory” constituted a regulatory framework for the creative process, establishing the boundaries between what is poetic, prose, and dramatic. Yet modern and postmodern literary practice has demonstrated the inadequacy of these rigid forms to accommodate complex human experience, leading to the emergence of “genre intertextuality” as a conscious act that breaks traditional boundaries in favor of an open “textuality.”

First Section: Defining the Concept Linguistically and Terminologically

1. The linguistic concept: Linguistically, *interpenetration* is derived from the root “دخل”, meaning the entry of one thing into another such that they intermingle and become as one part. In the literary context, it signifies the borrowing by one literary genre of the techniques of another genre.

2. The terminological concept: Genre intertextuality is defined as a state of “aesthetic hybridity” in which structural and stylistic features belonging to different literary genres (such as the intersection of the novel with autobiography, or poetry with narrative) come together within a single textual space, resulting in a “trans-generic” form or an “inclusive text” (Architext), as Gérard Genette conceives it (Genette, 1982).

The intertextuality of literary genres is not merely an artistic juxtaposition, but rather a process of “acculturation” within the same text. Critics maintain that the contemporary poem has benefited from the “death of traditional genres” in order to construct a new form characterized by fluidity and expansiveness. Since the emergence of the “prose poem” and free verse, the poetic text has become capable of absorbing techniques of the “novel,” such as narration, description, and polyphony, as well as techniques of the “theatre,” such as conflict and interior monologue, and even techniques of the “visual arts” through the use of white space and the distribution of the poetic line. This openness has produced what is termed the “hybrid text,” which transcends old scholastic classifications (تيري ايغلتون 1995), and addresses the consciousness of the modern reader, who seeks totality and compositional complexity rather than simplicity and isolated lyricism.

Second Section: The Philosophical and Critical References of Genre Intertextuality

The classical conception of genres was founded on the principle of “purity” (Purity), a principle reinforced by Aristotle in his book *Poetics* (أرسطو 1952). However, major critical

transformations undermined this principle, as may be observed in the propositions of both Jacques Derrida and Mikhail Bakhtin. Bakhtin called for the dialogicity of discourse, as he viewed the novel by its very nature as an “unfinished” genre that absorbs the rest of the genres (Bakhtin, 1981). The concept of “dialogicity” and “polyphony” paved the way for legitimizing genre intertextuality as an urgent necessity of expression.

As for Jacques Derrida, he advanced his well-known thesis “The Law of Genre” (The Law of Genre), affirming that every text carries within itself the seeds of departing from its own genre, as he stated: “The moment a limit is set for the genre, it is immediately transgressed” (Derrida, 1980).

Third Section: The Justifications for Generic Intertextuality in Contemporary Literature

There are several reasons that have driven writers toward breaking generic boundaries in contemporary Arabic literature, among them:

- **The complexity of reality:** Pure lyric poetry or the classical novel is no longer capable of representing a fragmented and complex reality.
- **The tendency toward experimentation:** The search for unconventional artistic forms that provoke the recipient’s astonishment.
- **The openness of the arts:** Literature has been influenced by cinema, the visual arts, and music, which has made the text a “cross-artistic space.”

The intertextuality of literary genres is not merely classificatory chaos, but rather an expression of the “freedom of the text” and its rebellion against pre-existing rules. The text has shifted from a “closed structure” to an “open horizon” (قطوس بسام، 2001), which requires the contemporary critic to employ flexible reading tools that move beyond the following traditional questions: (What type of text is this?) toward epistemological questions: (How does this text function?).

Fourth Section: Levels and Mechanisms of Generic Intertextuality in Contemporary Arabic Poetry

Generic intertextuality in poetry does not occur arbitrarily; rather, it is realized through specific technical mechanisms:

1. **Technical borrowing:** as when the modern poem borrows “cinematic montage” or “flashback” (Flashback) from the novel.
2. **Hybridity (Hybridity):** through the merging of two genres in order to produce a third type, such as the “prose poem,” which combines the rhythm of poetry with the flow of prose.
3. **Absorption:** whereby the dominant genre (most often the novel) absorbs minor genres (letters, memoirs, journalistic reports) and employs them within its own structure.

Fifth Section: Applied Models of Genre Intertextuality in Contemporary Arabic Poetry

First: The Interpenetration of Narrative and Poetry (The Model of Mahmoud Darwish)

The manifestation of “narrative poeticity” in the experience of Mahmoud Darwish, particularly in his later phase, constitutes a genuine embodiment of the “poetics of openness”; narrative has no longer remained merely an intrusive element or an ornamental technique, but has instead become a “structure” upon which the entire body of the poem is built. In collections such as *Mural*, *State of Siege*, and *Do Not Apologize for What You Have Done* (محمود درويش 2001م), we find that Darwish, with exceptional artistic brilliance, succeeded in dissolving the essential differences between “poetic rhythm” and “narrative flow,” transforming the poem from a mere fleeting emotional utterance into a “narrative text” that traverses time and memory (صلاح فضل ، 1992م).

This intertextuality reflects the poet’s desire to move beyond the narrowness of individual lyricism toward the expansiveness of the epic horizon, where historical narrative, myth, and lived diaries are summoned and fused into a language that preserves its poetic density despite its inclination toward precise narrative description.

A deeper analysis of this intertextuality reveals an intelligent employment of novelistic techniques, such as “multiple narrators,” “dramatic monologue,” and “artistic flashback” (Flashback). In the text *Mural* (محمود درويش 2005م), the poet does not always speak in his direct voice, but rather gives voice to death, life, and history through a fully integrated scenic construction containing complication, conflict, and a poetic resolution. This “narrative growth” within the poem grants the recipient a sense of temporal and spatial extension, thereby breaking the monotony of the independent verse line. Darwish here does not narrate in order to inform, but rather narrates in order to create a “poetics of discovery”; narrative for him is a means of reordering the scattered fragments of identity, whereby the story becomes the vessel that protects the self from dissolution amid the major existential and political struggles the poet experienced throughout his creative journey.

Moreover, the “rhetoric of narrative” in Darwish is manifested in transforming “daily prose” and “ordinary language” into highly charged poetic material through the technique of “enjambment” and reliance on the dynamic verbal sentence that propels the text forward. Borrowing the language of the novel enabled Darwish to free himself from the constraints of the “central rhyme” in favor of the “organic unity” and internal dynamism of the text, producing poems that resemble short novels in their density, yet surpass them in their suggestive capacity and the power of their figurative imagery. This genre intertextuality ultimately led to the generation of what may be termed the “contemporary epic poem,” a poem that does not merely praise the self or lament the land, but rather undertakes the “construction of a world” that breathes through narrative and soars through poetry (خفاجي محمد 1992), thus making Darwish’s experience the most important laboratory for studying the dissolution of boundaries between literary genres in modern Arabic literature.

Second: Dramatic Structure and Polyphony (The Model of Adonis and Saadi Youssef)

The element of “dramatic structure and polyphony” (Polyphony) in contemporary Arabic poetry represents a qualitative shift from the “monologic poem,” dominated by the singular self of the poet, to the “choral poem,” in which visions and pronouns enter into conflict (بنيس محمد 1985م). This generic transformation is not merely a borrowing of theatrical form; rather, it is a response to the complexity of modern consciousness, which no longer contented itself with the voice of the harmonious lyrical “I,” but has come to seek the “other” and “contradiction” within the same text. In this context, the experiences of Adonis and Saadi Youssef stand out as among the most important aesthetic laboratories that have employed dramatic techniques (conflict, mask, dialogue, multiple narrators) to move the poem from the narrowness of lyrical utterance to the expansiveness of comprehensive human scenicity.

1- Adonis: Epic Structure and the Conflict of Masks:

In his major collections, especially *The Book of Transformations and Migration in the Regions of Day and Night* and **The Book** (1988 أدونيس), Adonis moves beyond the concept of the short lyric poem toward the “open text” that is expansive enough to encompass history, philosophy, and myth. The dramatic structure in Adonis relies on the technique of the “mask” (The Mask), whereby the poet does not speak in his direct voice, but rather summons historical figures (such as Saqr Quraysh, al-Mutanabbi, or al-Niffari) and turns them into mirrors that reflect the crises of the present. This multiplicity of voices creates a state of mental “theatricalization,” in which we find ourselves before a dramatic conflict between two temporalities: the temporality of the summoned heritage figure and the temporality of the contemporary poet. This intertextuality leads to the fragmentation of vocal centrality in the poem, transforming it from “recitation” into “confrontation,” and from “statement” into “questioning,” thereby granting the text an existential density that compels the reader to participate in interpreting this intense dramatic conflict between the constants of the past and the transformations of the present.

Moreover, Adonis employs what may be termed the “extended dramatic monologue,” in which the poetic self splinters into multiple selves that debate among themselves, transforming the poem into a quintessentially dialogic space (Dialogic) according to Mikhail Bakhtin’s perspective (ينظر باختين م 1991، ص 45).

Adonis’s recourse to fragmenting the poetic line and distributing speech along the margins of the page in his monumental work *The Book* (أدونيس 2011م) represents the culmination of the interpenetration of the “poetic,” the “theatrical,” and the “historical”; here, the reader is not reading a poem but rather witnessing a textual “performance” in which sources, narrators, and commentaries multiply, thereby creating a complex dramatic structure that exceeds the boundaries of a single literary genre and settles in the domain of the “trans-generic text” that absorbs all intellectual and aesthetic contradictions.

2- Saadi Youssef: The Drama of the Everyday and the Cinematicity of the Scene:

By contrast, Saadi Youssef offers a different model of drama, namely the “drama of details” or the “cinematicity of the shot,” which opens onto everyday reality and fleeting particulars. In collections such as *Under the Mural of Faiq Hassan* or *Paris Poems* (سعدى يوسف 2002م), we find that the poem is constructed as a short “theatrical scene” (Sketch) or a condensed “cinematic shot,” in which the poet recedes behind the poetic camera, allowing things and voices to speak for themselves.

Polyphony in Saadi Youssef is manifested in giving voice to the “marginalized,” to “places,” and to “things”; the café speaks, passersby exchange truncated dialogues, and the poet confines himself to the role of the “director” who arranges these voices within the frame of the poem. This structure breaks the hegemony of the Romantic “I” and replaces it with an “I” that observes and watches, thereby granting the text a dramatic realism of high intensity despite the apparent simplicity of its language. (صالح فخري 2005م)

The dramatic mode in Saadi Youssef also relies on the technique of “truncated dialogue” and the multiplicity of pronouns (I, he, you) within a single poem, which creates a kind of alienation (Alienation) that prevents direct emotional immersion and instead prompts critical reflection.

The transition from the narrator’s voice to the character’s voice within the poetic text generates a continuous dramatic movement resembling “cinematic montage,” whereby the lyrical flow is interrupted in favor of “action” or “movement.” In this sense, the poem in Saadi Youssef becomes a “place” for human gathering rather than merely a mirror of the self; it opens onto the language of the street, the conversations of taverns, and the voices of exile, which makes his “poetics of openness” assume a democratic character that grants expression to all that is human, transforming the poem into a symphonic space in which rhythms and visions multiply.

3- Comparative Table: Features of Dramatic Intertextuality in Adonis and Saadi Youssef

Aspect of Comparison	The Dramatic Structure in Adonis	The Dramatic Structure in Saadi Youssef
Type of Voice	Epic, mythic, philosophical voice.	Everyday, realistic, detailed voice.
Dramatic Device	The historical mask, intertextuality, intellectual conflict.	The scenic shot, everyday dialogue, montage.
Linguistic Level	Dense, abstract language inclined toward “vision.”	Sensory, concrete language inclined toward “observation.”
Function of Multiplicity	Destabilizing historical consciousness and constructing a new identity.	Humanizing the poem and engaging with lived reality.
Effect on the Reader	A reader who participates in deciphering philosophical codes.	A reader who watches the scene and infers its significance.

Research Findings

The issue of genre intertextuality (Generic Intertextuality) constitutes one of the most prominent modernist features in the works of the three poets Mahmoud Darwish, Adonis, and Saadi Youssef. Although they all share in breaking the “purity of the literary genre,” each of them possesses a distinctive mark in the way he integrates arts and genres within the poetic text. The following are the most important findings reached by the research:

1- Mahmoud Darwish: *Mural* and the Lyric Epic

The poem in Darwish developed from simple lyricism into the “open text,” and among the most important findings reached are:

- Borrowing dramatic structure: Darwish succeeded in transferring the poem from the “single voice of the poet” to “polyphony” (البوليفونية), especially in his later collections such as *Like Almond Blossoms or Further*, where he employed theatrical dialogue and monologue.
- Narrative tendency: The poem in his work was transformed into a “narrative poem” that absorbs the techniques of the novel (character, place, time), which made the poetic text capable of documenting both autobiography and collective biography.
- The visual and plastic dimension: Darwish employed space (whiteness) on the page to express silence or perplexity, which brought the poem closer to the visual arts.

2- Adonis: The Trans-Generic Text (Writing)

Adonis represents the culmination of destabilizing traditional boundaries, and the research findings concerning his experience may be summarized as follows:

- The concept of “writing”: Adonis moved beyond the term “poem” toward “writing,” which brings together poetry, philosophy, and history. In his monumental work *The Book*, we find an interpenetration of the poetic text, the historical margin, and critical commentary.
- Mystical and cognitive fusion: The language of mysticism intersected with the language of criticism, producing a “hybrid” text that is difficult to classify within the category of pure poetry.
- Shattering the pillar of poetry: He did not merely engage in genre intertextuality, but turned the poem into a field for the collision of prose with poetry, and of the old with the modern, in order to create a total consciousness that transcends “individual lyricism.”

3- Saadi Youssef: The “Diaries” of the Poem and Life

Saadi Youssef is the pioneer of the “poem of details,” and genre intertextuality in his work is distinguished by:

- a- The interpenetration of poetry and cinema: Saadi adopted the technique of cinematic “montage,” through which the reader moves between rapid visual shots, making the poem appear like a hybrid cinematic strip.
- b- The daily poem (reportage): He introduced the techniques of journalistic work and autobiographical writing (diaries) into the heart of the poetic text, transforming the ordinary and fleeting event into dense poetic material.
- c- The fluidity of language: He was distinguished by his ability to merge the language of everyday prose into metrical forms, thereby creating a state of “acculturation” between colloquial language (in its pragmatic sense) and elevated poetic language.

Comparative Table of the Results of Genre Intertextuality

Poet	Dominant Literary Genre (Borrowed)	Purpose of Intertextuality
Mahmoud Darwish	Epic, novel, theater	Transforming subjective concern into a major human tragedy
Adonis	Philosophy, history, mysticism	Constructing a comprehensive cosmic vision and shattering ready-made forms
Saadi Youssef	Cinema, autobiography, diaries	Humanizing the poem and adhering to the details of lived reality

Studies have demonstrated that genre intertextuality in the work of these poets was not merely an “artistic ornament,” but rather an epistemic necessity; modern consciousness cannot be expressed through a rigid poetic form, but instead requires a “composite” text capable of containing the complexities of the age. This gave rise to what is known as the “hybrid text,” which requires a recipient who participates in interpretation rather than remaining merely a listener.

- Transcending stereotypical forms: The study demonstrated that the contemporary poem succeeded in demolishing the “walls of genres,” which led to the emergence of hybrid texts combining the density of poetry, the expansiveness of narrative, and the vitality of drama.
- Enriching meaning through plurality: “Polyphony” (Polyphony) contributed to liberating the poem from subjective singularity, transforming it into a “field of dialogue” that reflects the complexities of identity and the contemporary human condition.
- The cinematicity of the poetic scene: The research revealed the borrowing of visual and cinematic techniques (such as montage and the condensed shot), especially in the work of Saadi Youssef, which enhanced the “sensory quality” of the text and its ability to register everyday details.
- The mask as a dramatic device: The study concluded that the use of the “mask” in Adonis was not merely a summons to heritage, but rather a mechanism for generating dramatic conflict that conceals the poet’s voice behind historical figures in order to deepen the philosophical vision.

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