

Sufi Heritage in the Poetry of “Othman Loussif”

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Abstract. *The Algerian poetic text is considered an interactive text, rich in cognitive accumulation. It has deep extensions toward its external contexts surrounding it. It attempts to scrutinize its structures and the formation of its various meanings, and its artistic and aesthetic dimensions. And it relies on an approach to texts in its formation, being drawn toward the spirit of Arab heritage. Inspiring all its contents, and exploring modern horizons. This placed the Algerian poet before the necessity of benefitting from his cultural lexicon and his traditional heritage. The experience of the poet Othman Loussif was a fertile field to undergo the phenomenon of intertextuality. It appeared this phenomenon abundant in his poetic texts. Which enriched his creative experience, and deepened his artistic vision. Through weaving his poems and their representation by invoking the features and sources of intertextuality. This research paper comes as an attempt to elucidate the themes of sufist intertextuality in the poet's corpus, and to study the aesthetics of employing sufist heritage.*

Keywords: *poetic text, sufi heritage, intertextuality, Othman Loussif, aesthetics of heritage*

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“Osman Lusif” poeziyasında sufi irsi

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Xülasə. *Əlcəzair poetik mətni idrak yığımları ilə zəngin olan interaktiv bir mətn hesab olunur. Ətrafındakı xarici kontekstlərə dərin uzantıları var. Strukturlarını və müxtəlif mənalarının formalaşmasını, bədii və estetik ölçülərini araşdırmağa çalışır. Və formalaşmasında mətnlərə yanaşmaya əsaslanır, ərəb irsinin ruhuna yönəlir. Bütün məzmununa ilham verir və müasir üfüqləri araşdırır. Bu, Əlcəzair şairini mədəni leksikonundan və ənənəvi irsindən faydalanmaq zərurətindən əvvəl qoyur. Şair Osman Lusifin təcrübəsi intertekstuallıq fenomenini yaşamaq üçün münbit bir sahə idi. Bu fenomen onun poetik mətnlərində bol şəkildə görünürdü. Bu, onun yaradıcılıq təcrübəsini zənginləşdirdi və bədii vizyonunu dərinləşdirdi. Şeirlərini və onların təsvirini intertekstuallığın xüsusiyyətlərinə və mənbələrinə istinad etməklə toxuyaraq.*

Bu tədqiqat işi şairin korpusundakı sufi intertekstuallıq mövzularını aydınlaşdırmaq və sufi irsindən istifadənin estetikasını öyrənmək cəhdi kimi təqdim olunur.

Açar sözlər: *poetik mətn, sufi irsi, intertekstuallıq, Osman Lusif, irsin estetikası*

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Introduction

The contemporary poetic experience has attempted to root its themes through linking them to its heritage roots and the diversity of its sources, in form and in content, and with what it contains of a varied cultural stock, inherited, which is manifested in the total of values and civilizational and popular habits that are acquired.

The poet cannot separate from his past, rich with poetic inspiration, and what has settled in his memory and formed for him a cultural reference to which he flees, rather he seeks to fertilize it and to extend it with a contemporary human vision that responds to his ambition and expresses him, thus the poets are bound by their language and their heritage, from which they draw inspiration in order to grant the poem the element of belonging in a creative manner, and thus “the poet has established his relation with heritage through a dialectical vision which he controls, and subjects it to what he wants, and he does not surrender to the vision of heritage, but rather he employs it, and benefits from this heritage in forming the structure so that heritage may speak with what the poet wants to say, not that the poet says what the heritage wants in any aspect of it” (Al-Jiyyar, n.d., p. 227).

Research

Also, the desire of the contemporary Algerian poet to confer a kind of objectivity, and dramacity upon his emotionality, through employing the tributaries of heritage and its sources, is considered an outlet through which he expresses “the concerns of the purely individual self, in its solitude and its absurdity, in its madness and its depression, poetry expands with it to encompass neglected subjects from the reality of life, or it draws from the spring of the sufis, or from the ancient myths, or it expresses the closed horizon which has been shut before his ambitions” (Dagher, 1981, p. 8).

And the Algerian poet began to realize little by little that civilizational estrangement which he lives in his homeland, so his ordeal was the rejection of himself and the rejection of his reality, therefore we always find in this corpus an insistence upon the idea of separation from the self, “and we also sense in it the lack of conviction and satisfaction with the present reality and the striving to change it in order to foresee the future, and from that resulted the explosion that occurred in the contemporary poetic text because of the urgent desire to depart from many of the traditions that used to govern it in order to write a modern text” (Hima, 1998, p. 6).

And with this acceleration in the present of human behavior and the growth of the concept of values, heritage no longer remained as merely a set of customs and norms, but rather it went beyond that in being a bearer of luminous aspects in the life of the human and an active element in the creative process, and the heritage tributary through which the poems of the contemporary Algerian poet are formed and distinguished, who perceives his present through his past which “is considered a visionary and formative legacy that cannot be relinquished, because it is the semantic and suggestive source for

creativity, and the supporter for shaping visions and positions, and all that takes place within the framework of the spiritual and psychological communication between two positions that intertextualize within the frame of the absent that resides in the present, and this communication becomes a duty imposed by the civilizational path which makes the poet an active element in time” (Bougaroura, 1994, p. 402).

Thus, the contemporary Algerian poem has achieved a qualitative leap at the level of the artistic construction and the dealing with reality, and in the dealing with the Arab and foreign cultural heritage givens, represented in digesting these givens and assimilating the modern artistic trends and schools without the disavowal of heritage, at least with some poets, in an attempt from them to explode a poetic experience Algerian that elevates them toward wider spaces of depiction and artistic formation. Heritage, as it is defined by (Jubour Abd al-Nour), is that: “what has accumulated through ages of traditions, customs, experiences, expertises, and sciences, within a people among peoples, and it is an essential part of its social, human, political, historical, and moral constitution, and it documents its relations with past generations which have worked on forming this heritage and enriching it” (Abd al-Nour, 1984, p. 63).

The Intersection between Poetic Language and Sufi Language:

The Sufi language is an experience characterized by singularity and the departure from the familiar of lexical declarative expressions, toward the symbolism of interpretation and the multiplicity of significations and the density of symbolism, an experience that elevates the soul toward reaching the expanses of the divine presence and attaining the loci of the Absolute, and it penetrates into the infinite latent essence, a language whose title is the surpassing of the surface of the apparent, deeply entering into the inner, based on a special experience and a distinctive vision, in which every signified forms a symbol and an indication to another signified.

*I wrote to him with the understanding of the sign,
and in intimacy I searched the utterance of the expression,
a book to him from it about him to him,
it translates from the unseen knowledge of the veil (Abbas, 2002, p. 308).*

Sufi writing is the act of linguistic expression which the sufis follow, and through it they rise toward the stations of creativity, thus poetry was their habit for revealing their divine love, and an expression of the states of ecstasy which they live, and this is what is confirmed by (Adonis) “that the Sufi language is precisely a poetic language, and that the poetics of this language is manifested in that everything in it appears as a symbol, everything is itself and another thing, the beloved for example is herself, and she is the rose, or the wine, or God, it is the images of the universe and its manifestations” (Adonis, 1992, p. 23).

Indeed, the Sufi language has the ability to contain the depth and the abstraction of the significations of the meanings of the sufis, by which the ordinary language has become incapable of understanding it, as it transcends the consciousness and the familiar toward searching for the concealed recesses and exceeds the typicality of the signifier and the signified, and it has made the recipient in confrontation with an ambiguous experience difficult to be understood except by the one who has examined and studied its terminologies.

For this, the sufis turned toward finding threads of intersection between the poetic and the Sufi discourses, realizing that poetry is that which can reveal the dense semantic loads of the terms from which the Sufi lexical discourse is formed, and that it is that which is characterized by the language of emotion and the creative feeling, and that their stations and their states cannot be expressed by a

language that addresses the mind, so its meaning becomes hidden and its signification fades outside it, and this means the possibility of the multiplicity of reading in this language, such that each person reads in it himself, it is a horizon open upon the Absolute and the infinity, and a mi'raj that rises toward the visions and the upper unveilings (Hima, 1998, p. 95).

Therefore, the contemporary poet found in this experience a fertile space for enriching his poetic experiences and enriching it with a Sufi touch, and a refuge to which he resorts from the bitterness of the material reality which hurts his being, and a salvation from an alienation that dwells his exhausted delicate self.

The Sufi poet has become aware of discovering threads of intersection with the poetic discourse, and he saw that there is no harm in employing the potentials of poetry to express his experience — especially the chaste poetry —, “so it became for them a cognitive reservoir and a tool for producing knowledge, because it builds the imagination, and generates an affective knowledge” (Hima, 2008, p. 120), and this is what led the Sufi poets to “practice the re-coding of language in poetry in the past through removing the first sensory and worldly significations of words that are connected with the domains of sex, wine, and the states of the self, in order to insert them into new symbolic systems” (Fadl, 1995, p. 192).

And the contemporary poet has expressed his impetuous desire to search for the metaphysical, and to liberate himself from the fetters of the body and the release of his soul toward the sacred, and about his rejection of reality, and rebellion against all the social rules, and his attempt to find an equivalent for it, so he finds in the expanses of the horizons of Sufism shades that extend to the soul security and serenity, and in the terminologies of the sufis and their vocabularies a flowing resource and a new title that establishes for a contemporary language through which he reveals his ecstasies and his sufferings, aspiring toward a sincere sensory experience by which he transcends toward the Absolute with its transparent spiritual dimensions, and merging with the truth, using a Sufi lexicon for his themes, thus annihilation, union, incarnation, divine love, and the unity of existence are terms through which the poet expressed his Sufi illuminations and his spiritual experience, so that an intermingling arises between them, and he resembles the experience of the sufi who rebels against material life, as both of them are longing for freedom in order to extend their imagination and to re-produce the process of artistic imagination contemplated in a poetic texture that attracts the feelings, and the similarity occurs between them in terms of the vision of life and the universe and the human self.

And perhaps the poet (Adonis) is among those who pointed to the great similarity between the two discourses, and that the Sufi discourse is rich with creative possibilities that benefit the Arab poetry, citing the experience of the Arab poet (al-Niffari) which is considered a purely Sufi experience, he says: “...thus the text of (al-Niffari) appears as a complete rupture with the heritage in its various forms and manifestations, and through this rupture he renews the poetic language at the same time, he writes history with the vision of the heart and the ecstasy of the language, and he elevates the poetic writing to a level that was not known before him, in the most splendid and strangest of what the language produces” (Adonis, 1989a, p. 86).

Also, among the aspects of similarity is the multiplicity of significations between the two discourses, as their poetry has revolted against the prevailing concept about it, with the emergence of a special lexical lexicon that erodes the singularity of the apparent meaning and its stability, and awakens the latent inner meaning and the interpretive capacity to solve the obscurities of expressions filled with semantic loads, due to the reliance of each of them on metaphor, since “metaphor takes the word out of its real limits, and the relations that it establishes between the word and the reality are probabilistic relations by which the meaning becomes multiple, which generates a difference in understanding that

leads to a difference in opinion, and from here metaphor does not allow giving a final answer” (Adonis, 1989b, p. 75).

Thus, through this Sufi poetic experience, indicative dimensions emerge that symbolize what they suggest to, as “the term or the word no longer has the same meaning that we know, rather it takes on other significations behind the words, which almost becomes an emptying of the meaning of the word and pouring another meaning into it, where the signification becomes doubled in a way that exceeds its conventional limit” (Eid, 2003, p. 279).

And proceeding from these linguistic and thematic intersections in the theme of the two discourses, the two experiences have united in the mode of expression which is based on suggestion and ambiguity, and the contemporary poets have sought to transcend the communicative language by creating a second language within the language, which is based on symbol and indication. And if the sufis have turned toward this language out of the incapacity of the traditional language to represent the significations of the meanings carried by the Sufi discourse, due to what it contains of depth of depiction and precision of image, then the contemporary poets have proceeded from the reality of modernity which seeks the continuous surpassing of the old, and the breaking of the monotony of the familiar styles, thus poetry, like Sufism, is but an intuitive contemplative tendency that rebels against the laws of reason and logic in its seeking for the essence of life and its truth, and the search for a world more perfect and more transcendent than the world of reality.

For this, the Algerian poet has turned, following the steps of other contemporary Arab poets, toward forming his modernist language and toward adopting the Sufi discourse with what it carries of significations by which he elevates his poetic text to the ascents of Sufi poetics, so some of them inclined toward representing this discourse as a theme and a language, and as a reference by which he resists his defeated present at times, and as a pleasure by which he journeys toward the worlds of depths in search of his mirage-like self deeply rooted in history and myth and beauty, and as he adopts this Sufi tendency he thereby deepens his symbolic indications and enriches the semantic structure in his discourses and widens the spaces of his suggestions and his interpretations.

Sufi Intertextuality in the Poetry of Othman Lousif:

Othman Lousif is considered among the Algerian poets in whose poetry the Sufi tendency has manifested, as he has relied on inner contemplations through unveiling and transcendence and diving into its dark layers with a poetic language that shatters the referential significations of words, “for what produces language is the taking out of words from their established nature to a new nature, this departure is the creation of what is called the gap or the space of tension, and the creation of a distance between the sedimented language and the innovative language” (Abu Deeb, 1991, p. 38).

The poet Othman Lousif says in the Diwan *The Rose Said*:

*I grope in you the truth, white,
the radiance of the soul and the flowing tremor,
I grope the pulse of nothingness,
and I read in the dawn of your eyes
the icon of God, exhaling with murmurings,
and overflowing with love,
and the fierce ecstasy,
Ah... O woman, the universe blossoms
in her ladunni overflow,
and the color greens
in her pure fire (Loussif, 2000, p. 55).*

Thus, this union in love between the poet and the woman realizes his gnostic awareness, as his verses translate what he endures of the burning pangs of longing toward the soul, and when he departs from his world which he rejects and turns away from, he transcends toward spaces more noble in purity, embracing the orbits and the mirrors, searching for his true self, and for his ultimate end, which he did not find except in a woman in whose overflow the universe blossoms, and in whose eyes he perceives the truth of God, for love is “everything in the Sufi path, the universe was created by love, and is perceived by love, and God, Glorified be His Majesty, is not perceived by sights nor encompassed by minds, but the Sufi kindles the torches of love in his heart and his inner being and his soul, thus he mounts the greatest ascent which connects him to his Lord” (Ibn Arabi, 1980, p. 224), and as the poet describes his woman in a material manner (the dawn of your eyes, the icon of God, overflowing with love), then it symbolizes significations other than those commonly known among humans in the sensory world.

And just as the attachment of the Sufi to the divine essence carries him toward the Absolute and the elevation from materiality to the pure spiritual world, likewise we find in the union of the poet with the woman and his celebration of her a separation from the earthly world and an attachment to the paradise of femininity, and to the unseen world, thus the poet Othman Lousif embraces the hidden world through divine love, employing the material and the sensible in depicting the abstract spiritual, because “divine love does not invade the hearts except after they have been imprinted with the traces of the sensory language” (Al-Khatib, n.d., p. 67), and through it he surpasses the painful material reality, seeking the stations of the divine light radiating from his depths, which grants him comfort and psychological security.

The Sufi experience is an active element in the poetics of Othman Lousif, which he has employed in a striking and dense way, due to what the two experiences carry of positions of rejection and sacrifice, and what melts within them of conflicts and emotional charges, and what his Sufi language has carried of deep significations that express a particular vision that calls for contemplation in order to grasp its essence, because “poetry is the language of perceiving what cannot be perceived, and this language is what has founded this contemporary Arab Sufi experience and practiced it in a unique manner” (Adonis, 1989b, p. 198).

The poet says in the verses of the following passage from the poem (*The Deified Woman*):

*My Lady... my Lady!
Ah! how wondrous is love
when lightning brings us together
in a flash of the soul... to the soul
or the heartbeat... to the heart
how wondrous is the light
when meanings overflow upon two lovers
and the impossible unveils!* (Loussif, n.d., p. 30)

The poet resorts to re-working some of the meanings of the sufis, in a glowing passage with vocabularies toward which his soul longs, as he implores God for indwelling in his female, and his path to that begins with love which makes his heart beat and liberates him from the slumber of the sinful reality and the deep concerns of the self, and elevating with his soul toward moments of unveiling, where he calls in his previous poetic passage the saying of al-Hallaj:

*Your spirit has been molded into my spirit just as
amber is blended with fragrant musk,
so if something touches you, it touches me,
thus you are me, we do not part* (Abbas, 2002, p. 316).

The text of the poet, dissolved in the two verses, its signification almost settles in the mind of the recipient, as our poet has drawn upon expressions and meanings in order to employ them in a new linguistic deviation within an indicative intertextuality, which enables him to intensify his significations, through structures and a clear style in which images inspired from heritage are manifested, and filled with Sufi expressions open to reading and interpretation by the recipient.

And in another passage the poet affirms through it that this woman is nothing but a connection toward a more exalted and higher aim to which the spirits of humans do not ascend. Othman Lousif says:

*I remember you
in every prayer
so I bow... in reverence
I close my eyes from awe
I glorify with your praise
and I supplicate
to your two infinite eyes
O image of God
Ah! O woman of rituals
and supererogations
O a spiritual idol
and a worshipped one
who forgives none except the one who is maddened
into fainting in its sanctuary (Loussif, 1999, pp. 35–36).*

The poet does not stop at the limits of a single signification of the woman, rather he reproduces from her multiple gnostic conceptions, forming a symbol of multiple visions that slips from between the hands of the reader, so at one time she is the blond houri, and at another the slender princess, and the saint, and the woman of rituals, thus transcending her conventional image in his imagination, for the woman in the view of the sufis is not that body that arouses temptation and awakens sensory desire, “rather it is the search for the infinite beauty that exists beyond the multiple sense... so that she becomes a pure, clear beauty that indicates the source of absolute beauty, and the giver of beauty and its creator” (Basyuni, 1969, p. 177).

As for the Diwan (*Ghardaia*), the term of wine is manifested within the frame of the Sufi breath that transforms the self of the poet and his soul from a state of boredom to a state of joy, and it forms an important artistic feature that recurs not in its material sensory form, but rather it transforms into a symbol that carries various significations. The poet says:

*Sufficient for you that sobriety has produced my sadness,
so how then of the state of intoxication, and intoxication is more worthy,
I would deny passion if you were not, since passion made
your eyes for me an eye that lowers and sees (Loussif, 1995, p. 23).*

The presence of this term in the Diwan (*Ghardaia*) refers to the signification of the homeland, where he embodied something non-perceived into something perceived to facilitate the process of communication, thus after the hardship of sobriety heavy with sadness he falls into an intoxication that awakens his buried passion in order to find his comfort with a female who is not a woman, for this symbolic woman was from his world, he lived with her and the union between the lover and the beloved was realized, and this refers to the union with *Ghardaia*, and then the union with the homeland, and through this linking between the Sufi spirit and the state of intoxication the poet moves toward wider worlds and more spacious horizons.

And in another passage the poet expresses that ecstasy which overwhelms him under the effect of the beauty of Oran and its captivating charm. He says in the poem (*Oran*):

*I was in the surge of intoxication searching for myself,
I became intoxicated by the scent of peach and anise,
I became intoxicated... I, the living dead,
I called from outside the universe: Oran... Oran!* (Loussif, n.d., p. 59).

The poet wanders at times and sips from the draught of his beloved which overflows upon him with purity and clarity, thus it makes him feel an ecstasy that transports him from death to life and to the summit of the heights, making from wine a means for elevation and swimming within the realms of the Absolute dominion, for he did not manage to resist his love for her, so he got lost in the depths of intoxication to limits he did not know their ends, searching for his self which dissolved in Oran, in its enchantment and its beauty, thus it melted within his being, where he found himself in it, and by that the annihilation and the total dissolution were realized in Oran which turned into a symbol filled with significations of love and ardent longing.

And the poet seeks to ascend to where the souls become purified from their impurities, toward a world filled with the unseen where truths are explored. He says:

*Ascending, ascending to where fades away
in its passion the innermost of the souls,
where the souls are stripped from every impurity,
drinking wine without cups,
immersed in a spring of pure purity,
gathering from the delights of apples* (Loussif, n.d., p. 69).

It is a wine without cups, pure, surrounded with spiritual purity, reaching him to the stage of arrival in which he delights with every beauty, placing him in a state of ecstasy, distancing him from the perceptible toward the non-rational, and by it the ray of reason withdraws from the self, thus it is in all that the secret of life and the inner of truth, and it is “thereby an activation of the unconscious which makes the self rise above the fixed material realities and penetrate the world of ideals and the Absolute” (Heema, 1998, p. 99). This Absolute which the poet always longs to embrace and to ascend to its degrees, and to unite with it resembles the state of intoxication because of what it contains from separation from the sensory world, and in it he finds the refuge to which he flees and by which he becomes purified from every impurity that stains him.

The poet says in the poem (*The Flood*):

*And I rolled in the blazing fire for ages,
Ah! who will extinguish my burning thirst and my wandering,
O ray of the breeze, rather my echoes,
and give me to drink from the wine of the souls,
and wipe away the fire and the sorrow from my forehead,
and narrate to me from the secrets of the spirits* (Loussif, n.d., p. 72).

Thus, the poet depicts his intense suffering in a desire for love and knowledge and rest, as his journey was long, and his longing increased as a fire of passion, and his thirst has prolonged until his throat rusted from dryness (who extinguishes my burning thirst), so his thirst is a continuous and eternal sensation (in the blazing fire for ages), it is a thirst produced by (the fire and the sorrow), and nothing extinguishes his burning thirst except the wine of the souls, and by drinking it he attains his aim and

the secrets of reality become unveiled before him, and the poet here finds in wine the only refuge to escape from reality and from the deprivation which he lives, and to probe the depths of the self.

And wine has a distinguished position in the literary heritage of the sufis, as it was for them “a symbol among the symbols of the Sufi ecstasy” (Heema, 1998, p. 98), thus it is in all that the secret of life and the inner of truth, and this is what we find in the saying of our poet:

*You filled my cup with wine
that reveals clarity
I learned to sing for the glory of life
and to triumph* (Loussif, 2000, p. 27).

And we also find that wine has come to express other things: escaping from reality, surrender without any resistance, and thus wine transforms into “a means among the means of overcoming the psychological concerns which the individual suffers in this afflicted age” (Heema, 1998, p. 100), so the numbing of the mind became the only refuge for salvation from a frightening obsession, and we find it acquiring new significations in such as his saying:

*Let the cup sparkle and rejoice
you are from the essence of the Truth
from my essence
a sign that God shaped from a glow* (Loussif, 2000, p. 82).

Thus, after we have seen wine carrying the signification of escaping from reality, we find it carrying the signification of compensating the spiritual emptiness. As for the Diwan “Ghardaia”, the symbol of wine is manifested within the frame of the Sufi breath which transforms the self of the poet and his soul from a state of boredom to a state of joy, “for wine, its mention dispels worries and sorrows and prepares for its drinker the causes of joy and delight, its seal intoxicates the companions and its ripeness revives the dead... and by that it is an activation of the unconscious which makes the self rise above the fixed material realities and penetrate the world of ideals and the Absolute” (Heema, 1998, p. 99). This Absolute which the sufis always long to embrace and to ascend to its degrees, and union among the sufis resembles the state of intoxication because of what it contains of separation from the sensory world, and in it the person finds the refuge to which he escapes seeking relief from the burdens of reality.

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