



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN BUSINESS & SOCIAL SCIENCES



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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v13-i6/17405>

DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v13-i6/17405

Received: 12 April 2023, Revised: 13 May 2023, Accepted: 23 May 2023

Published Online: 07 June 2023

In-Text Citation: (Zabidin & Eldesoky, 2023)

To Cite this Article: Zabidin, M. A. R. bin, & Eldesoky, E. M. A. (2023). Quranic Intertextuality in Naguib Mahfouz's Novel: "Hadrah Al Muhtaram" As an Example. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 13(6), 283 – 290.

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Vol. 13, No. 6, 2023, Pg. 283 – 290

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INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN BUSINESS & SOCIAL SCIENCES



www.hrmars.com

ISSN: 2222-6990

Quranic Intertextuality in Naguib Mahfouz's Novel: "Hadrah Al Muhtaram" As an Example

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Abstract

The Holy Qur'an is irrefutably considered one of the most important sources from which ancient and contemporary novelists drew inspiration and projected them into their creative works due to its connection to people's conscience and its great influence on their souls due to its sanctity. The present study has started from the realization that Naguib Mahfouz's novel is believed to be highly intertextual with the Quranic texts and that readers who are unfamiliar of this type of intertextuality may misunderstand and misinterpret a text that contains intertextual references to the Quran. Therefore, the study aims to investigate the Quranic intertextuality in Naguib Mahfouz's 1975 novel "*Hadrah al Muhtaram*" for the purpose of comprehending the reason behind its utilization in the texts. The researcher's hypothesis is that by revealing such potential intertextual features, it will be possible to read, understand, and interpret Naguib Mahfouz's literary works more effectively. The study found that Naguib Mahfouz is deeply influenced by Islamic culture and inspired by the Holy Quran as evidenced by the significance presences of Quranic verses that the novel imbibed at the levels of events and narration in order to enrich the fictional texts to produce new connotations in line with the contexts. The result of the study also indicates that novel writing is in dire need of such literary vitality from the overlap and mixing of texts mechanism known as intertextuality since it is a significant and practical tool for both text creators and readers.

Keywords: Intertextuality, Holy Quran, Naguib Mahfouz & Literary Work

Introduction

It is no secret that the Holy Qur'an is unique in its systems, miraculous in the harmony of its vocabulary and contexts, and distinguished by the specificity of its connotations and wonderful by the fertility of its concept. For this reason, the Holy Qur'an is one of the sources from which the writer draws inspiration (Safa, 2021:710).

Qur'anic intertextuality means that the writer quotes some verses from the Holy Qur'an to highlight his literary works because of their beauty and splendor in their formulation, and that he takes the lesson from the Holy Qur'an, and cites it even with one word (Abdullah, 2022:33).

With that being stated, the objective of this study is to investigate Quranic intertextual elements for the purpose of comprehending the reason behind its utilization in the texts. The premise of the study is that readers who are unfamiliar with this form of intertextuality may misunderstand and misinterpret texts that incorporate intertextual references to the Quran. By exposing these potential intertextual elements, it is hoped to assist and guide the readers to comprehend, and interpret Naguib Mahfouz's literary works more effectively.

Intertextuality

One of the most significant literary phenomena is intertextuality. Generally speaking, it may be described as the influence and presence of earlier texts in the structure of the present text. In addition, it actually demonstrates the internal relationships between one text and other related writings (Booker, 1996: Halliday, 2003: 361).

Intertextuality, according to De Beaugrande and Dressler (1981:10), focuses on the elements that make it easier to use a text based on prior knowledge of texts. Intertextuality, according to them, is "the way in which the production and reception of a given text depends upon the participant's knowledge of other texts".

Therefore, it can be said that intertextuality is the intricate connections between texts that are seen as essential to the production or interpretation of a text.

Intertextuality with Al Quran

Religious textuality is the first source that the writer employs in his literary creativity, as there is no text devoid of being influenced by ancient or contemporary texts. It is formed through his life experiences and readings of different and previous references, including the fictional text, which is characterized by the ability to contain heritage texts and transform them into an artistic and intellectual act. So, the writers drew inspiration from the Holy Qur'an and the noble hadith of the Prophet for that purpose, and this is what is called religious intertextuality (al Za'bi:37).

An Overview on Hadrah al Muhtaram Novel (1975)

Like many of Naguib Mahfouz's novels, the "*Hadrah al Muhtaram*" series was first published in the "Al-Ahram Daily" newspaper in Cairo and later published in book form in 1975. It was translated by Dr. Rashid Al-Anani, an Egyptian writer, critic, and academic, specializing in modern Arabic literature, in 1986 (El-Enany, 1990:18)

One of the most important things to notice is that Naguib Mahfouz introduces the protagonist of the novel, *Othman Bayyumi*, as an employee in the Archives Department. From the first moment he set foot in the department, *Bayyumi* revealed his dreams and aspirations to reach the position of general manager (Sulaiman, 1996:179).

Bayyumi reduces his life to his job, and values success and quality of life in relation to whether or not he gets his promotion. Not only is the Director-General God, the Blue Room is Heaven. He faces many obstacles on his road, and most of them are. as a result of his imitated desire to become Director-General, in other words the Blue Room and the Director-General are his mediators (Saugestad, 2005:141). As a result, he ignores all other facets of his life and even neglects his deepest emotions in order to advance to a more senior position.

Finally, the decision to appoint him came to him while he was on his bed of illness, and he passed away without warm love, without offspring, and without ruling from his administration. He failed to live his life and enjoy it the way that everyone with a heart does.

In this novel, we see how the job and the state apparatus have become the gods of the modern era, and the employee who believes in promotion on the sacred path of the job is a celibate monk in the temple of the job to serve the state. It can be said that Naguib Mahfouz attempts to describe the government job system in Egypt. All this leads us to say that the novel itself sheds light on the reality of Egyptian worker's lives, regarding the aspirations of some of them to reach prestigious positions with large salaries.

Methodology

This research attempts at evaluating some text that comprise Quranic intertextual phrases taken from Naguib Mahfouz's novel "*Hadrah al Muhtaram*" (1975). The selected texts that are supposed to be untextualized with prior sentences will be analysed. Moreover, both quantitative and qualitative methodologies will be applied to the data. The quantitative technique can be essentially described as a mean that is employed to make an accurate data gathering (Creswell, 2002:13). The qualitative approach, on the other hand, can be described as a method of data collecting that frequently depends on interpretation, that is to say, data generally requires a number of explanations (Alhojailan, 2012:39).

Data Analysis and Discussion

As previously indicated, the data used in this study was obtained from "*Hadrah al Muharam*", a novel written by Naguib Mahfouz (1975). It is important to note that the quantitative approach provides the reader with a clear picture of the data that was gathered. Table 1 indicates the total numbers and percentage of intertextuality in the aforementioned literary work.

Table (1)

Total Numbers and Percentage of Intertextual Elements in Naguib Mahfouz's Novel "Hadrah al Muhtaram" (1975)

Intertextual Elements	Number of Intertextual Elements	Percentage
Intertextuality With the Holy Quran (التناص مع القرآن الكريم)	12	35.29%
Detail After Summarization (التفصيل بعد الإجمال)	7	20.59%
Intertextuality With Arabic Proverbs (التناص مع الأمثال العربية)	5	14.71%
Interpretation of the Equivocal Texts (تفسير المبهم)	5	14.71%
Extracting Opinions by Combining Divergent Statements (استخلاص الرأي بالجمع بين المقولات المتباعدة)	3	8.82%
Intertextuality With the Hadith of The Noble Prophet (التناص مع الحديث النبوي الشريف)	2	5.88%
Total	34	100%

This table shows that (Intertextuality with the Holy Qur'an), which is employed in the novel "*Hadrah al Muhtaram*" 12 times at a rate of (35.29%), is the most commonly utilised intertextual mechanism as compared to other kinds of intertextuality.

Findings and Discussion

Naguib Mahfouz, employs multiple Qur'anic verses in the novel to form a template for us that contains a lot of revelations, which prompts the attentive reader to try to decipher the aesthetic associations that are made by all the contexts in which such employments occur.

Example 1

- Mahfouz (2008: 12)

"وفاضت روح الرجل وهو حزين. وضاعفت الأم نشاطها مؤملة أن يجعل الله من ابنها كبيرا من الأكبر، أليس الله بقادر على كل شيء؟ ولولا وفاة الأم بغير توقع لأكمل عثمان تعليمه في المدارس العليا".

His father died as a sad man. But his mother worked twice as hard, hoping that God would make a great man of her son. **Was not God all-powerful?** If it had not been for the unexpected death of his mother, Othman would have completed his higher education (El-Enay, 1986:32).

Obviously, the underline text أليس الله بقادر على كل شيء intertextualizes with the Quranic Verse:

﴿وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ تَرَى الْأَرْضَ خَاشِعَةً فَإِذَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْهَا الْمَاءَ اهْتَزَّتْ وَرَبَتْ إِنَّ الَّذِي أَحْيَاهَا لَمُحْيِي الْمَوْتِ إِنَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ﴾ (فصلت:39)

«And among His other signs is the earth that you see barren; but when We send down rain upon it, it stirs to life and its yield increases. Surely, **He has power over all things**» (Malik, 2001: 628)

From the context of this text, we realize that *Othman Bayyumi* came from humble origins and grew up in the poor *al-Husseini* neighborhood of hardworking parents. His father was a cart driver, and his mother worked in every profession to support her children. After the death of his father while he was in the second year of high school, his mother assumed the responsibility of the father toiling day and night at work, hoping that God would make him a great man, but with great regret, his mother died unexpectedly, so he could not complete his studies. Naguib Mahfouz's evocation of the Qur'anic text in the text of the novel comes as an indication that everything that takes place in *Othman Bayyumi's* life is by the will of God, Glory be to Him, and nothing deviates from His cosmic will.

Example 2

- Mahfouz (2008: 29)

"اجتاحه حزن وذهول كأن ذلك لم يكن متوقعا. لم يجد ما يقوله.

- ترزي بلدي ...

كان يعلم بأن ذلك آت لا ريب فيه. لا يحاور دفعه ولا أمل له في منعه كالموت".

A sense of grief and bafflement overwhelmed him as if the news was something he could not have expected. He was lost for words.

"A tailor"

He knew this was something **inevitable**. (El-Enany, 1986:54).

If we look at the aforementioned text, we will find that Naguib Mahfouz has employed the Qur'anic text to confirm the meaning that he wants to communicate to the readers. This was represented in his use of a phrase referring to a Quranic verse from Surat Al-Baqarah:

﴿ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ﴾. (سورة البقرة: 2)

«This is the Book (the Qur'an) in which **there is no doubt**» (Malik, 2001: 115)

When *Omm Husni* informed *Bayyumi* that a man (the tailor) had come to ask for the hand of his lover *Sayyida*, a feeling of sadness and confusion surrounded him, as if the news was something he had not expected before, but in fact he expected it. Naguib Mahfouz's evocation of this Qur'anic verse by referring to it and employing it in the context of the previous text indicates the extent to which *Othman Bayyumi* expected such an event that he would have no desire whatsoever to marry a woman so as not to disrupt his delicate plan and hinder his aspiration to a prestigious position in the government.

Example 3

- Mahfouz (2008: 103)

نحن نمضي واحداً في أثر واحد، هل تذكر المرحوم سعفان بسويوني؟ كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَانٍ، وَلَكِنَّ الْعَمَلَ الطَّيِّبَ يَبْقَى إِلَى الْأَبَدِ."

We pass away one after another. Do you remember the late *Sa'fan Basyuni*? **Men go, but their good deeds remain forever** (El-Enay, 1986:142).

﴿كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَانٍ وَيَبْقَى وَجْهُ رَبِّكَ ذُو الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ﴾ (سورة الرحمن: 26-27)

«All that exists on the earth will perish, but the Face of your Rabb will remain full of Majesty and Glory» (Malik, 2001: 715)

From the text, it is clear that *Hamza al-Suwaifi* decided to stop working due to his health issues. *Sa'fan Basyuni*, the former head of the archives department, who had recently passed away, came to his mind as he vowed, he will soon follow in his footsteps. He also added: (Men go, but their good deeds remain forever). It can be said that what he meant by that is everyone on earth will inevitably die, but the good effects he left between generations will remain as long as life remains.

Example 4

- Mahfouz (2008: 18)

"انقبض قلبه وتوجع وهمس: - اللهم اهْدِنِي سَوَاءَ السَّبِيلِ، فكل ما أفعل من وحيك."

His heart contracted with pain and he murmured, "**Guide me, O God, onto the straight path, for all I do is done at Your inspiration**". (El-Enay, 1986:39).

﴿وَلَمَّا تَوَجَّهَ تَلْقَاءَ مَدْيَنَ قَالَ عَسَى رَبِّي أَنْ يَهْدِيَنِي سَوَاءَ السَّبِيلِ﴾ (سورة القصص: 22)

«As he made his way towards Madyan, he said: "Soon my Rabb shall guide me to the Right Way"» (Malik, 2001: 513)

The foregoing gives us a clear indication that Naguib Mahfouz evokes this Qur'anic verse with a little modification so that it fits with the context of the text. The context of the text here revolves around what happened during *Othman Bayyumi's* visit to his parents' grave after he was appointed as a government employee, and he reassured them, saying that no matter

what obstacles he encountered, he would become determined until he reached the end. He made a vow to move them to a new grave when God fulfilled his hopes.

At that moment, the image of his lover, *Sayyida*, came to his mind, and that made his heart contract when he remembered that she was waiting for him to take a more serious level in their romantic relationship, but he hesitated because he fully realized that marriage has responsibilities and costs that require his full attention, which will make him preoccupied with achieve his dream. Then he prayed to God with this supplication which intertextualized with the Quranic verse: "O God, guide me to the straight path." The reference to the the Qur'anic verse here indicates to the readers the extent of Uthman's adherence to his Lord, so he asked God to guide him to the most righteous path with regard to his family future.

Concluding Remarks

In the end, we come to the conclusion that Naguib Mahfouz has deliberately imbibed religious texts as references that give the novel authenticity and a real history related to the social reality and the imaginary element presented by the novel. The author's thorough knowledge and familiarity with the Quranic allusions, which he used, is what enabled him to weave the novel's events out of them. Based on the result, it can be concluded that novel writing is in dire need of such literary vitality from the overlap and mixing of texts mechanism known as intertextuality since it is a significant and practical tool for both text creators and readers and Naguib Mahfouz is deeply influenced by Islamic culture and inspired by the Holy Quran as evidenced by the significance presences of Quranic verses that the novel imbibed at the levels of events and narration in order to enrich the fictional text to produce new connotations in line with the contexts.

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