
The Absent Text in Rawda Al-Hajj's Poetry: A Stylistic Study

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the phenomenon of the absent text (intertextuality) in the poetry of the Sudanese poet Rawda Al-Hajj, through analyzing selected poetic samples that reveal a strong presence of earlier texts, including Qur'anic verses, Prophetic traditions, classical Arabic poetry, modern poetry, and various cultural and emotional references. The research adopts intertextual theory as its conceptual framework and employs analytical methodology in the applied section to explore the relationships between the poet's text and the absent texts, as well as the mechanisms of integrating these references into the structure of her poetic experience. The findings indicate that intertextuality in Rawda Al-Hajj's poetry is not merely quotation or borrowing, but rather a process of semantic and aesthetic transformation through which earlier texts are re-shaped within a new structure that responds to the poet's emotional and artistic vision. The study also reveals that the absent text enriches suggestion, expands meaning, and enhances symbolic expression in her poetry, especially in her lyrical and national poems. The research concludes that intertextuality constitutes a fundamental component of Al-Hajj's poetic formation, granting her poetry cultural depth, symbolic resonance, and a distinctive poetic voice.

Keywords: Absent text, Intertextuality, Rawda Al-Hajj, Modern Arabic poetry, Poetic meaning.

1 Introduction:

The concept of the "absent text" is one of the most prominent critical concepts in contemporary reading and interpretation discourse. Its significance has grown with the transformations in linguistic and semiotic methodologies, as well as theories of intertextuality. These theories have confirmed that a poetic text does not emerge in isolation but moves within a vast network of relations and references, consciously invoking some and unconsciously internalizing others. From this perspective, any literary text becomes a space for the overlap of voices, the interaction of discourses, the coexistence of times, and the formation of textual identities through the traces of other texts that shape its structure, style, and worldview. The poetic experience of Sudanese poet Rawda Al-Haj falls within this broad horizon, as her poems reveal a remarkable ability to engage with both poetic and human heritage and utilize it within new contexts. These contexts merge the feminine sensibility with intellectual vision, and the finely-tuned linguistic sense with deep symbolic formation. Al-Haj frequently invokes religious, historical, and Quranic texts, interacting with the voices of major Arab poets such as Ibrahim Naji, Badr Shakir al-Sayyab, Nizar Qabbani, and others. Her poetry also retains narrative and cultural

references that create an additional layer of meaning in her poetic discourse.

Since the presence of absent texts in Rawda Al-Haj's poetry is not a mere stylistic embellishment, but a structural and aesthetic strategy that creates new meanings, it becomes crucial to study the nature of this presence, explore its functions and aesthetic and semantic dimensions, and analyze its impact on shaping the poet's poetic experience. This gives rise to the research problem.

1.1 Research Problem:

The research problem lies in asking: How is the absent text utilized in Rawda Al-Haj's poetry? What is the nature of the invoked texts (religious, traditional, poetic, narrative)? What aesthetic and semantic functions does this utilization serve within the structure of the poem? Does the presence of the absent text take the form of imitation, opposition, or transformation of the original text's act? And how can this utilization be read from a contemporary critical perspective?

1.2 Research Questions:

The main problem leads to a number of sub-questions, the most important of which are:

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- What is the concept of the absent text, and how has its meaning evolved in modern criticism?
- What are the most prominent types of absent texts in Rawda Al-Haj's poetry?
- What textual mechanisms does the poet rely on (quotation, imitation, deviation, deconstruction, juxtaposition, etc.)?
- What is the aesthetic function that the absent text grants to the poem's structure?

1.3 Research Hypotheses:

The research hypothesizes that:

- The absent text in Rawda Al-Haj's work is not a direct invocation, but a reconstruction that produces new meaning.
- The sources of the absent text vary between religious, traditional, and modern, reflecting a complex cultural identity.
- The presence of the absent text forms a strategic tool for producing a self-aware feminine discourse that reinterprets major texts from a different perspective.
- Intertextuality in Al-Haj's poetry shifts from a linguistic technique to a philosophical framework that shapes her existential vision.

1.4 Significance of the Research:

The significance of this research stems from several aspects:

- **Theoretical Significance:** It contributes to expanding the application of the concept of the absent text to contemporary women's poetry.
- **Practical Significance:** It provides detailed analytical models for several of Rawda Al-Haj's poems.
- **Procedural Significance:** It studies the interaction between texts as a mechanism for forming poetic identity.
- **Documentary Significance:** It contributes to documenting the presence of icons from classical and modern Arabic poetry in Al-Haj's texts.

1.5 Research Objectives:

The research aims to:

- Define the concept of the absent text in light of contemporary studies.
- Analyze the nature of textual overlap in Rawda Al-Haj's poetry.
- Reveal the meanings the absent text contributes to the present text.
- Show the impact of intertextuality in shaping the

emotional and aesthetic structure of the poet's work.

2 Research Methodology:

The research adopts a descriptive and analytical methodology based on:

- Analyzing the textual structure.
- Interpreting the relationships between the present and absent texts.
- Employing textual criticism mechanisms.

2.1 Originality and Novelty of the Research:

The originality of this research lies in that it does not treat the absent text in Rawda Al-Haj's poetry as mere traditional intertextuality or textual reference. Instead, it uncovers its presence as a dialogical structure where overt and covert voices intertwine. The absent texts play a functional role in constructing meaning and shaping the feminine poetic experience. This research seeks to analyze the levels of overt and covert dialogue, showing the mechanisms of intertextuality and expanding the poetic voice's space. It focuses on the functional absence of religious, traditional, and modern texts in Al-Haj's poetry. This approach goes beyond previous studies, viewing the absent text not merely as decoration or citation, but as a part of the poem's internal structure and its artistic workings.

2.2 The Concept of the Absent Text:

2.2.1 1/ Roots of the Concept in Western Criticism:

The concept of the absent text is an extension of the critical discussion around textual relationships, which began with Mikhail Bakhtin's theorization. Bakhtin emphasized that "a literary text cannot be understood apart from the hidden network of dialogue between multiple voices within it and outside it" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 279). Bakhtin lays an important foundation for the concept, asserting that every discourse contains echoes of other discourses, even if they are not directly visible.

Julia Kristeva advanced this idea by introducing the theory of intertextuality, stating that "every text is a absorption or transformation of other texts" (Kristeva, 1980, p. 66). While Kristeva did not explicitly mention the absent text, her emphasis on "the mosaic structure of the text" (p. 37) laid the foundation for the idea of a text working behind the surface language.

In his theory of textual interconnection, Gérard Genette differentiates between five levels of textual relationships, the most important of which is the "hypotext," the previous

text that operates in the background of the present text without directly appearing, which is closest to what we now call the absent text (Genette, 1997, pp. 5-7).

2.2.2 2/ The Concept of the Absent Text in Arab Criticism:

Arab criticism expanded the use of intertextuality concepts and began explicitly using the term “absent text” in the 1980s and 1990s. Mohamed Miftah is one of the most prominent critics to establish this approach, viewing the text as a “complex structure” that operates within a network of symbolic and cognitive references, some of which are overt and others implicit (Miftah, 1990, p. 112). Abdelmalek Maatad situates the absent text within the semiotic framework of the text, asserting that “every text dialogues with another text, whether visible to the reader or hidden in its deep structure” (Maatad, 2004, p. 51). Abdullah Al-Ghadhami considers the absent text a part of the “cultural memory of the text,” serving as a deceptive discourse that deepens the meaning and establishes new layers of interpretation (Al-Ghadhami, 1995, p. 89). Kamel Abu Dib adds that the absence of the text creates “dense energy” that manifests in metaphors, images, and symbolic structures, making uncovering this absence a form of deep interpretation (Abu Dib, 1997, p. 104).

2.2.3 3/ Levels of Presence of the Absent Text:

- Overt Absence: Where the reference to another text appears through a symbol, formulation, or event that the reader is expected to recognize.
- Implicit Absence: Appears within the rhythmic, visual, or lexical structure without any direct declaration.
- Functional Absence: Involves the aesthetic and psychological role of the absence, where the text depends on absence to generate paradox or create a new discourse.

2.2.4 4/ Functions of the Absent Text in Contemporary Poetry:

- Deepening meaning through the creation of indirect semantic layers.
- Creating an aesthetic tension between what is said and what is withheld.
- Expanding the cultural reference of the text.
- Establishing a new poetic identity without imitation.
- Producing a polyphonic discourse.

2.2.5 5/ The Absent Text's Role in Rawda Al-Haj's Poetry:

Rawda Al-Haj is one of the most prominent Arab

poets who employ the absent text as a profound structure rather than as a textual decoration. Her texts operate on multiple levels of absence, including:

- Traditional references (e.g., Al-Khansa, Rabi'a al-Adawiyya)
- Sufi allusions
- Classical poetry texts
- Religious narratives
- Feminine symbols

This makes the discovery of absence an essential part of reading the emotional structure of her poetry.

2.3 Applied Study: Manifestations of the Absent Text in the Poetry of Rawda Al-Haj

The concept of the absent text is one of the most powerful critical tools for revealing the internal structure of a literary work. It allows for the reading of the present text as a discourse interwoven with other texts, inseparable from them and not presented in isolation. In the poetry of Rawda Al-Haj, the presence of the absent text intensifies as a structural, aesthetic, and intellectual mechanism. It does not merely appear as a reference, but as a meaning-generating force, a cornerstone that contributes to the formation of the internal voice of the text. This is evident through Quranic, Hadith, traditional, modern poetic quotations, or invoking collective memory.

In this section, we attempt to uncover the most important manifestations of the absent text in Rawda Al-Haj's poetry through an extensive field analysis of samples that vary between emotional experience, national concerns, existential reflection, nostalgia, addressing the other, and internal sorrow.

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 Analysis of Model One

Text: (Rawda Al-Haj, Cities of Exile, p. 54)

English

“Woe to her who sold her patience cheaply, Her trade was unsuccessful,
And wounds have exhausted her.”

Classification: Implicit Absence + Explicit Quranic Absence

3.1.1 Critical Analysis According to the Absent Text Concept:

1/ Explicit Absence: The Quranic reference (sale – trade – profit)

The text contains a clear instance of explicit absence through a reference to Quranic language with a direct mission-oriented presence. The phrases:

- “Sold her patience cheaply”
- “Her trade was unsuccessful”

Directly evoke the recurring Quranic phrase related to spiritual and moral trade: “They have purchased error at the price of guidance” (Al-Baqarah: 16).

The relationship between “sale” and “trade” in the Quran is a metaphor for the existential transaction between man and his Lord, as in: “Indeed, Allah has purchased from the believers their lives and their wealth” (At-Tawbah: 111). Thus, the poet invokes the absent text through words belonging to the Quranic lexicon, an example of explicit absence, as the reader immediately recognizes the reference based on prior knowledge (Genette 1997, p. 12).

2/ Implicit Absence: Rebuilding the Quranic image in a psychological context:

Although the Quranic lexicon is clear, the poet does not borrow the text directly; rather, she adopts the Quranic rhetorical structure. The concept of “sale” here does not carry religious meaning but transforms into a psychological and feminine image:

- “Patience” becomes something the woman possesses.
- “Sale” becomes an emotional surrender or a surrender of dignity.

Summary of the Analysis:

Absence Element	Manifestations in the Text
Explicit Absence	Quranic lexicon (trade – profit – sale)
Implicit Absence	Transforming Quranic trade into a feminine emotional relationship
Functional Absence	Using absence to produce a sense of defeat and loss
Intertextual Dialogue	Duality between religious discourse and feminine emotional discourse

3.2 Analysis of Model Two

Text: (Rawda Al-Haj, On the Coast, the Heart Confesses, p. 5)

“Woe to it, Khartoum, how can I bear it? Khartoum is cursed

Had it not been for its awe Nile... and history...”

Classification: Explicit Quranic Absence + Traditional Absence + Political–National Functional Absence.

First: Analysis of Explicit Absence (Quranic Reference) in the phrase “Khartoum is cursed.”

The phrase “Khartoum is cursed” directly refers to the Quranic verse: “Perish the hands of Abu Lahab” (Al-Masad: 1). This is a clear example of explicit absence

- “Loss” becomes the result of a human relationship with the other, not the result of a spiritual transaction. This aligns with what Mohamed Miftah calls “transforming the absent text” (Miftah, 1990, p. 152), where the absent discourse becomes energy, not text.

3/ Functional Absence: The emotional structure of the defeated woman:

The poet uses the absent text for an emotional function. The scene is not about a religious woman but rather an emotionally frustrated woman who “sold her patience”—her strength—“cheaply,” i.e., without any return.

Activating the Quranic lexicon within a psychological context is what Abdullah Al-Ghadhami calls “functional absence,” deepening the emotional structure of the text (Al-Ghadhami, 1995, p. 144). The woman is not a loser in a religious sense but “losing in her relationship,” thus turning trade into a condensed psychological metaphor.

4/ Intertextual Dialogue: According to Bakhtin, the religious vocabulary here works as an “other voice” within the text, operating in the background of the image to create tension between:

- The elevated Quranic discourse
- The wounded feminine experience

The “Quranic voice” does not appear as a text but forms a cultural backdrop that generates a semantic tension, the essence of dialogism (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 279).

because it borrows the verse’s structure and syntax, even though the original religious meaning is absent.

Why does the poet use this absence?

- To condemn “Khartoum” as a place, not a person.
- To magnify the feeling of disappointment or pain associated with the place.
- To give the phrase a judicial, fateful tone borrowed from the structure of the Surah.

This type of employment aligns with what Genette calls “syntactic inclusion” (Genette, 1997, p. 10) and corresponds with Bakhtin’s idea that every text carries the echoes of others, even when their function transforms (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 324).

Second: Implicit Absence (National Symbolism – hartoum)

The text implicitly invokes Khartoum’s political and national history, especially in the line:

“Had it not been for its awe, Nile... and history...”

This reference does not point to a specific text but calls upon the reader’s national memory. It involves:

- The Nile as a symbol of continuity and fertility.
- Khartoum as a politically symbolic capital.
- Sudanese history with its various civilizational layers.

This is implicit absence because the poet does not explicitly mention historical narratives; instead, it calls upon a full register of historical discourses without directly stating them, as described by Mohamed Miftah’s concept of “cultural codes” operating in the background of the text (Miftah, 1990, p. 152).

Third: Functional Absence (Between Love and Place – Building Tension):

What enriches the text is that the absence does not serve as mere ornamentation, but a psychological–dramatic function. The question: “How can I bear it?” creates emotional tension between:

- The place—Khartoum
- The beloved—the poet’s addressee
- She cannot bear Khartoum except for the fact that the beloved is in it.

Here, the functional absence works by:

- Turning the place into a dramatic character.
- Connecting individual feelings with the national

place.

- Enriching meaning through invoking Khartoum’s history, the Nile, and Sudanese identity.

This aligns with Al-Ghadhami’s “structural absence,” which creates tension between the surface and depth of the text (Al-Ghadhami, 1995, p. 144).

Fourth: Stylistic Analysis – Between Poetry and Story:
 The poet uses the Quranic reference to reshape an internal dialogue:

- The external group → “The women in the city said...”
- The speaker → “I excused them, my master...”
- The beloved → “Your beautiful face, pulling me from vein to vein...”

This structure exemplifies Bakhtin’s “polyphony” where the text does not speak in a single voice but incorporates multiple voices, including the Quranic, national, and feminine emotional ones (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 279).

Fifth: Temporal Structure as a Sign of Absence: The manipulation of time in her line:

“Now, after now, before now, tomorrow, and after tomorrow,”

Serves two functions:

- It intensifies the presence of the beloved.
- It transforms time into a closed circular space. This aligns with Paul Ricœur’s concept of “the poem’s time, which does not progress linearly but circles around the self” (Ricœur, 1984, p. 211).

Summary of the Analysis:

Absence Element	Manifestations in the Text
Explicit Absence	Quranic reference "Perish the hands..."
Implicit Absence	National memory of Khartoum, the Nile, and Sudanese history
Functional Absence	Emotional tension between place and beloved
Intertextual Dialogue	Interaction between Quranic, national, and feminine voices
Temporal Absence	Non-linear time that creates a constant presence of the beloved

3.3 Analysis of Model Four

Text: (Rawda Al-Haj, Cities of Exile, p. 40) “O my companions,
 Cover me, cover me With fragrant garments,
 Clear the way for a heart that almost flies with longing to you, my beloved.”

First: Explicit Absence – Reference to Prophetic Discourse (“Cover me”)

The phrase “Cover me, cover me” directly refers

to the Hadith of the Prophet ﷺ when he returned from the cave of Hira and said to his wife Khadijah (may Allah be pleased with her), “Dathiruni, dathiruni” (Sahih al-Bukhari). This is a clear and direct reference, constituting what Genette calls “explicit intertextuality,” because it retains the wording and structure of the original text. It is a form of explicit absence within the text, as the reader immediately recognizes the source due to their Islamic cultural background.

Second: Implicit Absence – Rebuilding the Scene of Fear as Nostalgia

Although the phrase is clear, the poet does not directly recover the fear of the Prophet but reconstructs the discourse within an emotional context:

- “Cover me” no longer refers to fear but to a need for emotional warmth.
- The shift from a prophetic scene to a fraternal, companion-based, and human context.
- The replacement of fear with longing.
- The substitution of Hira Cave with a community of “companions.”

This transformation exemplifies what Mohamed Miftah calls “transforming the absent text,” where the text is relocated into a new context without preserving its original function (Miftah, 1990, p. 152).

Third: Functional Absence – Utilizing the Absent Text to Generate New Emotional Energy

The original Hadith text is linked to:

- Fear
- Trembling
- The need for cover
- The disordered moment

However, the new text transforms this energy into:

- Love
- Yearning
- Collective warmth
- Emotional shared experience, as she says: “Clear

Sixth: Summary of the Analysis

Absence Element	Manifestations in the Text
Explicit Absence	“Cover me, cover me” (direct reference to the Prophetic Hadith)
Implicit Absence	Transformation of the scene from fear to longing
Functional Absence	Using the absent text to create collective emotional warmth
Textual Dialogism	Blending religious, emotional, brotherly, and sensory voices
Semantic Transformation	From fear’s cover to “fragrant garments” (emotional warmth)

collective others.

- Transforming religion into a poetic energy, not a sermonic discourse.

This is a clear example of her ability to tame religious memory to serve an emotional discourse.

3.4 Analysis of Model Five

Text: (Rawda Al-Haj, Cities of Exile, p. 3)

“Does happiness mean anything other than the coming of rain?!”

the way for a heart that almost flies with longing to you, my beloved.”

Thus, the absent text is used for an emotional function, according to what Al-Ghadhami calls the “emotional function of intertextuality” (Al-Ghadhami, 1995, p. 144).

Fourth: Stylistic Analysis – From Religious Discourse to Human Emotion

The text blends various elements:

- The call: “O my companions”
- The religious heritage: “Cover me”
- The sensory aspect: “Fragrant garments”
- The kinetic aspect: “A heart... that almost flies”

This combination creates an overlap between four linguistic registers: the religious register, the emotional register, the brotherly register, and the sensory poetic register. This polyphony is a model for what Bakhtin calls “textual dialogism” between multiple voices (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 279).

Fifth: Position of the Text within Rawda Al-Haj’s Project

This model (like many of Rawda Al-Haj’s texts) demonstrates:

- A tendency to invoke sacred texts and reframe them emotionally.
- A bias toward the collective voice in the discourse, where the poet turns to the people or companions or

Go to wherever your choice leads you,
(And the Rashid) awe and trust that you will always return to him

No matter how far you travel through paths and ravines
Go in the space of God, and fall where you choose
You may be the prince of yourself, my master,

And for him is the tribute!!”

First: Explicit Absence – Reference to “Rashid” as a

Symbol of the Caliphate

The word “Rashid” is not just a personal name but a direct reference to the Abbasid Caliph Harun al-Rashid, symbolizing:

- Power
- Authority
- Centralized rule
- Legitimacy of governance

This reference is an explicit absence because it invokes a historical text known and fixed in the reader’s memory. According to Genette, this is a historical intertextual reference (Genette, 1997).

Second: Implicit Absence – Rebuilding the “Leader and Followers” Relationship in an Emotional Context

Despite invoking the image of Harun al-Rashid, the discourse does not focus on:

- The politics of Harun al-Rashid
- The history of the Abbasid Empire
- The prosperity of Baghdad
- The conflicts of the Abbasid era

Instead, it transforms the meaning of “Rashid” into a symbolic figure:

- “Rashid” = the beloved/man/the emotional center
- The speaker = the woman/the object of attachment

It is a transformation of political meaning into emotional and psychological meaning. This corresponds with what Mohamed Miftah calls “recycling the absent text into a new network” (Miftah, 1990).

Third: Functional Absence – Dismantling Authority and Granting Freedom to the Other

The absent text (the caliph’s symbol) becomes a tool for a new poetic function:

- The beloved is “the prince of himself”
- The Rashid (the authority figure) has “the tribute”
- The freedom is given to the beloved, while the symbolic submission (tribute) belongs to the speaker. This represents a profound symbolic reversal:

- The beloved is granted complete freedom: “Go in the space of God, and fall where you choose.”

- The authority (or the beloved himself) retains the tribute: “For him is the tribute!!”

Thus, the political meaning is transformed into an emotional, surrendering, and sentimental one. This is exactly what Al-Ghadhami calls the “transformational function of the absent text,” where the invoked text is not used as is but is re-produced in a new meaning (Al-Ghadhami, 1995).

Fourth: Implicit Quranic Intertextuality – Rain as a Symbol of Mercy

The rain: “Does happiness mean anything other than the coming of rain?!”

Carries a wide Quranic reference about:

- Rain as mercy: “The rain, the relief, and the life after dryness” (Ar-Rum: 24)

However, the poet does not mention the Quranic text directly but builds upon the symbolic meaning of rain as one of the clearest religious and emotional metaphors. This is an implicit absence that works in the background of the meaning.

Fifth: Aesthetic Analysis – Blending Nature, Politics, and Love

The text combines four overlapping layers of meaning:

- Natural Layer: Rain
- Political/Historical Layer: Rashid
- Religious Layer: God’s space – the symbolism of rain
- Emotional Layer: Longing, belonging, submission, waiting

This blending shows the poet’s ability to:

- Transform history into love
- Turn rain into happiness
- Convert freedom into belonging
- Turn tribute into deep emotional symbolism.

Sixth: Summary of the Analysis

Absence Element	Manifestations in the Text
Explicit Absence	Reference to Harun al-Rashid explicitly
Implicit Absence	Shifting from a political reference to an emotional one
Functional Absence	Reworking the political authority as an emotional surrender
Implicit Quranic Intertextuality	Rain as mercy and life-giving symbol
Textual Dialogism	Blending politics, religion, nature, and love

This is a form of Bakhtin’s textual dialogism, where voices collide and interact within the text (Bakhtin, 1981).

The text is a profound example of Rawda Al-Haj’s ability to transform grand historical and religious texts into new emotional material, without resorting to direct quotation or shallow citation.

3.5 Analysis of Model Eight

Text: (Rawda Al-Haj, *Scented Document*, 2002, p. 54-55)

“Thank you for your beautiful cruelty, my master
Thank you for your face
When it wears something other than my colors
Which twist the ropes of my affection
Choking my neck
To read you my greetings
Thank you for the blade of blame and reproach
Thank you for the oppression in your eyes”

The Absent Text:

This text is heavily inspired by Nizar Qabbani’s poem from his collection *Wild Poems* (Nizar Qabbani, *Diwan Qasa’id Mutawhisha*, p. 44), which begins with: “Thank you...

Thank you...
For my beloved is dead... And now you may Drink a glass
over the grave of the martyr And my poem was assassinated
And is there any nation on earth... But us, who assassinate
the poem?”

First: Explicit Absence – Direct Reference to Nizar Qabbani’s Poem

The opening lines of Rawda Al-Haj’s poem, especially the repeated “Thank you,” and the expressions of pain, are directly borrowed from Nizar Qabbani’s iconic poem.

The phrase “Thank you for your cruelty” mirrors Qabbani’s expression of gratitude for the pain caused by a lover’s betrayal. This reference is an explicit absence since it evokes Qabbani’s original phrasing and emotional tone, making it a clear intertextual reference (explicit intertextuality) as per Genette’s classification (Genette, 1997, p. 16). The reader, familiar with Qabbani’s work,

will immediately recognize the source.

Second: Implicit Absence – Rebuilding the Emotional Landscape

While Rawda Al-Haj’s text directly echoes Qabbani’s themes, it also shifts the emotional focus. In Qabbani’s original, the speaker’s grief is linked to the death of his beloved, which is represented by the killing of the poem itself. However, Rawda Al-Haj’s text subtly reframes the emotional tone:

- “Thank you for your face” and “Thank you for the blade of blame” shift the emotional experience from sorrow over death to a more personal sense of betrayal and suffocation.
- The reference to “choking my neck” evokes an internal emotional struggle rather than an external violent action.

This transformation reflects implicit absence because the core themes from Qabbani’s poem are reinterpreted in a new, personal context—moving away from public death to intimate suffering, shifting from national pain to individual sorrow.

Third: Functional Absence – Reworking the Function of Grief

The absent text from Qabbani’s work serves a functional absence in Rawda Al-Haj’s poem by reworking the original function of sorrow and anger.

- In Qabbani’s poem, the pain is collective, symbolic of the political and cultural assassination of poetry and the loss of a national voice.
- Rawda Al-Haj, however, transforms this sorrow into an intensely personal experience, linking the emotional suffering to a relationship rather than a national loss.

This shift from collective national grief to individual emotional anguish represents the functional absence, as described by Al-Ghadhami, who refers to it as “emotional intertextuality” (Al-Ghadhami, 1995, p. 144).

Fourth: Stylistic Analysis – From Public Political Grief to Personal Intimate Suffering

Rawda Al-Haj’s poem, while structurally similar to Qabbani’s, diverges in tone and style:

- Nizar Qabbani uses a more public, political voice, laden with sorrow and anger over the cultural death of the poem: “And my poem was assassinated.”
- Rawda Al-Haj, however, shifts this into a personal, emotional conflict, using words like “choking” and “blame”

to evoke a more intimate and personal suffering that is not about the loss of national culture but about personal betrayal.

Sixth: Summary of the Analysis

Absence Element	Manifestations in the Text
Explicit Absence	Direct reference to Nizar Qabbani's "Thank you" structure
Implicit Absence	Transformation of grief from public, cultural death to personal loss
Functional Absence	Shifting the function of sorrow from collective to individual
Stylistic Shift	Moving from political sorrow to intimate, personal anguish
Implicit Symbolism	Reworking the national loss into personal emotional betrayal

This stylistic shift reveals the poet's ability to transform the collective cultural anguish in Qabbani's work into a private, individual experience, effectively reworking the emotional landscape into a space of personal introspection and feminine experience (Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalānī, 1379 AH).

Fifth: Implicit Cultural and Emotional Symbolism

The line "Thank you for your cruelty" invokes not just a literal betrayal, but also an implicit reference to the cultural weight of Qabbani's poetic stance—his poetry always involved personal grief deeply intertwined with political and cultural oppression. Here, Rawda Al-Haj makes the implicit connection between personal emotional loss and broader cultural despair, while reframing it into a deeply personal feminist discourse.

Concluding Thoughts on Rawda Al-Haj's Use of the Absent Text:

In this model, Rawda Al-Haj exemplifies her remarkable ability to invoke the cultural and emotional weight of a famous literary tradition—Nizar Qabbani's famous poem—while giving it new life in a deeply personal, emotional, and feminist context. By transforming public grief into private sorrow, she reshapes the function of intertextuality to align with her own thematic concerns. Through this, she reinvents traditional expressions of grief, making them not just universal but uniquely her own.

3.6 Analysis of Model Nine

Text: (Rawda Al-Haj, *Cities of Exile*, p. 3) "If it rains...
 It quenches the dead soul in my heart
 Then two palms rise
 Sharing the wound, one on the right and the other on the left
 On the edge of boredom
 And sang a melody that almost
 breaks from long waiting
 If it rains... all my instruments
 rise
 Singing with (Al-Sayyab) the song of rain! Rain... Rain."

First: Explicit Absence – Direct Intertextuality with "Song of Rain" by Al-Sayyab

The text explicitly refers to Al-Sayyab, not implicitly, but directly:

"Singing with (Al-Sayyab) the song of rain! Rain... Rain."
 This is an explicit absence because the poet explicitly introduces Al-Sayyab's voice into her own text, clearly identifying her work as connected to "Song of Rain." The repetition of "Rain... Rain" is the most famous sonic element of Al-Sayyab's poem, which begins with: "Rain... Rain... Rain..."

This sonic reference constitutes what Genette calls "rhythmic intertextuality" (Genette, 1997, p. 16). Thus, the rain is not just a natural event but a shared poetic structure, marking this as an explicit absence.

Second: Implicit Absence – Presence of Al-Sayyab's Symbols Reworked

Al-Sayyab is associated with three major symbols:

- Rain as a symbol of fertility and rebirth
- The palm as a symbol of Iraqi memory
- Existential pain (wound – waiting – loss)

Rawda Al-Haj reworks these symbols, giving them a new, personal interpretation:

1. The image of "two palms": Al-Sayyab used the palm as an individual symbol for homeland, mother, and memory. Rawda transforms this by saying:

"Then two palms rise, sharing the wound."

Here, the palms are not just a symbol of national memory but become a duality of femininity—a divided self, torn between two wounds, personal and emotional. The image is taken from Al-Sayyab but rewritten within a feminine experience.

2. The image of "wound and waiting": Al-Sayyab writes about:

"Like a child who babbles before falling asleep..."

And "The rain almost turns green from endless crying..."

Rawda reinterprets this with:

“A melody that almost breaks from long waiting.”

The core theme of pain and waiting is present, but its function shifts into an emotional personal waiting rather than national or existential anguish. This is an example of implicit absence because the poet does not explicitly mention Al-Sayyab’s symbols but evokes them through the use of emotionally charged imagery.

Third: Functional Absence – Transforming the Rain from a Cosmic Symbol to a Personal One

In Al-Sayyab’s “Song of Rain,” the rain represents collective salvation, revolution, rebirth, and the return of life to Iraq. However, in Rawda Al-Haj’s poem, rain shifts to represent:

- Personal rebirth: Reviving the soul of the poet herself.
- Restoration of femininity: Healing the wounded female spirit.
- Renewal of emotional energy: Refreshing a heart burdened by longing.

The rain no longer serves as a universal symbol of national struggle but becomes a personal inner event that reawakens the poet’s own emotional and feminine self. The transformation of this symbol is what Genette

calls “functional transformation,” where the absent text’s function is repurposed to serve a new emotional and personal context (Genette, 1997).

Fourth: Rhythmic and Stylistic Analysis – Merging the Voices of Al-Sayyab and the Poet

The poem operates in a free-verse rhythm that shifts when invoking Al-Sayyab:

“Singing with (Al-Sayyab) the song of rain!”

Here, the rhythm intensifies as the poet does not simply reference a text but summons the sound of Al-Sayyab’s poetry. The rhythmic shift creates a new poetic space where both voices—Al-Sayyab’s and Rawda Al-Haj’s—interact without one overshadowing the other.

This creates polyphonic voices, as Bakhtin would describe it, where the voice of the poet intertwines with that of Al-Sayyab, creating a dialogic poetic space (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 279).

- Al-Sayyab’s voice = The experience of collective existential pain
- Rawda’s voice = The experience of personal, emotional yearning

This overlap of voices creates a new poetic space, bridging the historical and the personal.

Fifth: Semantic Function of the Rain in Rawda Al-Haj’s Poem

Al-Sayyab's Rain	Rawda Al-Haj's Rain
Rain = Testimony to historical injustice	Rain = Testimony to the lover's injustice
Rain = Return of life from death	Rain = Reviving the poet's spirit
Rain = Salvation of the people	Rain = Personal salvation
Rain = Symbol of Iraq	Rain = Symbol of the heart

Thus, the rain transforms from a collective symbol of national struggle to a deeply personal psychological symbol.

This model illustrates Rawda Al-Haj’s skill in managing the absent text not as an authoritative force but as a poetic lever, reworking male symbols (such as rain and

the palm tree) to create new feminine, emotional meanings. She successfully blends her voice with Al-Sayyab’s, making it her own without losing its original depth.

Analysis of Model Ten

Text: (Rawda Al-Haj, Live for Poetry, p. 7) “They say... Woe to the heavy words,

Sixth: Summary of the Analysis

Absence Element	Manifestations in the Text
Explicit Absence	Mention of Al-Sayyab – Repetition of "Rain... Rain"
Implicit Absence	Palm trees – Waiting – Wound – Existential pain
Functional Absence	Transforming rain from a national symbol to a personal one
Stylistic Shift	Free verse rhythm – Rhythmic shift invoking Al-Sayyab’s voice
Cultural Absence	Representing Al-Sayyab as the spiritual father of modern Arabic poetry

That the departure I feared has come, Should I bid farewell?
Woe to me...
(Herira) and the caravan, how shall I depart!? When did I
possess
A man's heart?"

First: Explicit Absence – Invocation of “Herira” and “The Caravan”

In the phrase: “Herira and the caravan, how shall I depart!?”

This is a direct reference to the poetry of Imru' al-Qais, whose work is deeply associated with love, travel, the caravan, the night, and the pain of departure. The name “Herira” immediately invokes the pre-Islamic poetic world, particularly the imagery of Imru' al-Qais and his relationships with women during his travels. The explicit absence occurs because Rawda Al-Haj is not quoting a specific text directly but invoking a linguistic and emotional world that carries profound associations. The presence of “the caravan” further strengthens the reference, as it was a symbol used in Imru' al-Qais' poetry related to travel, departure, and eventual separation.

Second: Implicit Absence – Employing the Psychological Structure of Imru' al-Qais

Rawda Al-Haj recycles the emotional structure that defined Imru' al-Qais' poetry:

- The pain of losing a beloved
 - The necessity of departure
 - The inability to prevent separation
 - The existential defeat in the face of fate
- She writes: “They say... Woe to the heavy words, That the departure I feared has come...”

This evokes the same tragic announcement found in Imru' al-Qais' famous lines:

“Afatima, be gentle, some of this submission...”

“Stop at the place where my friends mount their camels...”

Thus, the absent text does not directly appear; instead, it carries a psychological tone that mirrors the emotional weight found in Imru' al-Qais' poetry. This is an implicit absence, as the reader immediately draws on the emotional

framework of Imru' al-Qais' poetry without it being explicitly stated.

Third: Functional Absence – Reversing the Roles between the Pre-Islamic Poet and the Contemporary Poetess

One of the key features of this model is the reversal of roles between the male pre-Islamic poet and the contemporary female poet.

In Imru' al-Qais' poetry:

- The man is the lover.
- The man controls the departure.
- The masculine figure is strong, like a knight.
- The poet speaks with a male voice. In Rawda Al-Haj's poem:

- The woman is the lover.
- The woman loses control over the departure.
- The feminine figure questions: “When did I possess a man's heart?”

The poem's tone is a feminine protest, questioning the male's role in departure and the emotional dynamics. This shift shows the functional absence at work, as the poetic structure from Imru' al-Qais is recontextualized into a feminist perspective. Rawda Al-Haj uses the language of the ancient poem but redirects its function from an assertive male voice to a questioning female voice, revealing the transformation of the power dynamics within the text.

Fourth: Stylistic Absence – Invoking the Structure of Pre-Islamic Poetry

The poem displays several stylistic choices that invoke the ancient structure:

- The lamentation: “Woe to me...” This evokes a common form of pre-Islamic poetry, known for its tragic tone and emotional weight.
- The disjointed rhythm: This reflects the pause and reflection typical of Imru' al-Qais' poetry when recounting love, loss, and longing.
- The rhetorical question: “How shall I depart!?” This type of existential doubt is very common in ancient poetry and represents a traditional way of expressing loss and fate.
- The compressed phrasing: “When did I possess a man's heart?” This existential question represents a typical pre-Islamic rhetorical doubt, filled with emotion and weight.

These stylistic choices blend traditional and modern poetic forms, drawing directly from ancient poetic themes but delivering them in a contemporary, feminine context.

Fifth: Semantic Analysis – The Absent Text as a Mask for the Modern Woman's Pain

Rawda Al-Haj does not invoke Imru' al-Qais merely as a symbol of tradition but because:

Sixth: Summary of the Analysis

Absence Element	Manifestations in the Text
Explicit Absence	Direct invocation of "Herira" and "the caravan" (Imru' al-Qais)
Implicit Absence	Psychological structure of loss, departure, and fate from Imru' al-Qais' poetry
Functional Absence	Reversing roles: from male poet to female poet questioning the power dynamics
Stylistic Absence	Use of rhetorical questions, lamentation, and disjointed rhythm of ancient poetry
Semantic Transformation	From fateful separation to questioning the unattainable male heart

- He was the first Arab poet to base the experience of love on the theme of travel.

- He was the first to transform the separation from a beloved into a fateful event.

Rawda uses this symbol to express that she, as a contemporary woman, is still living:

- Sudden departures
- Disappointments she cannot prevent
- The inability to possess a man's heart

This is clearly evident in the final line: "When did I possess a man's heart?"

This question shifts the center of power: rather than the weak lover of pre-Islamic poetry, the man here becomes the unreachable one, and the woman is left receiving the disappointment.

This transformation of meaning is the core function of the absent text. It is not invoked to be preserved in its original form but to be opposed and redefined in a contemporary context.

This model highlights Rawda Al-Haj's ability to revive pre-Islamic poetic traditions while transforming them to create a feminine, modern emotional discourse. She masterfully reinterprets the themes of loss and departure, turning them into a contemporary, personal experience.

4 Conclusion of the Research

This research has sought to uncover the manifestations of the absent text in the poetry of Rawda Al-Haj through both theoretical and applied approaches, integrating the intertextual method with stylistic analysis. The study has shown that Rawda Al-Haj's poetry is not merely an emotional discourse but a rich space in which

Quranic heritage, prophetic Hadith, pre-Islamic, modern, and humanistic texts are transformed into a dynamic source of meaning, intersecting with the poetess's personal feminine experience.

The theoretical chapter demonstrated that the absent text is

not a superficial reference but a semantic structure where memory, re-presentation, and reproduction converge. The applied chapter revealed, through ten selected models, that the presence of the absent text in Rawda Al-Haj's poetry varies between:

- Quranic intertextuality (Surah Yusuf, Surah Al-Masad, religious heritage)
- Hadith intertextuality
- Arabic classical poetry (pre-Islamic and Abbasid)
- Modern poetry intertextuality (Al-Sayyab, Ibrahim Naji, Nizar Qabbani...)
- Sufi and emotional discourse
- Collective Sudanese and Arab memory

It was clear that Rawda Al-Haj's use of the absent text does not function decoratively or as a citation but works in multiple directions:

- Deepening emotional dimensions
- Rebuilding feminine identity
- Reinforcing national and humanistic dimensions
- Producing new meanings through the transformation of the original text
- Creating a poetic language filled with emotion, tension, and symbolism

The research concludes that the absent text represents an internal breath that allows the poetic experience to thrive, evolving from mere invocation to rewriting. The study confirms that Rawda Al-Haj's poetry deserves more in-depth exploration of intertextual dynamics due to its rich suggestiveness and ability to harness the heritage for her unique poetic vision.

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