

## Reading Theory in Contemporary Islamic Discourse: Limits of Interaction and the Question of Acculturation

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### Abstract

Reception theory in Arabic discourse represents a paradigmatic shift from the centrality of the creator to the centrality of the receiver. The literary text came to be viewed as a communicative process constructed within the horizon of the reader's expectations. This theory was influenced by Western scholarship, particularly the Constance School (Jauss and Iser), yet in the Arab context it was subject to distinct cultural and intellectual particularities. Despite attempts at theoretical grounding, the interaction between Western reception theory and Arab-Islamic application has remained limited. Some critics merely transferred concepts without adapting them epistemologically or linking them to heritagebased foundations, such as reception in classical Arabic rhetoric and criticism, including taste, innate disposition, and aesthetic affect. The concept of acculturation emerges here as a means of bridging the gap between reference systems, raising the problem of critical interaction: should the Western model be adopted as it stands, or should a new mode of reception be formulated that proceeds from the specificity of the Arabic text and its aesthetic sensibility? It has become necessary to read reception theory in the light of cultural plurality and pragmatic contexts, allowing for the

production of critical knowledge that is neither dependent nor closed. Reception theory remains an effective tool for understanding the acts of reading and interpretation, provided that literal transfer is transcended and critical dialogue is embraced in a manner that takes into account the particularities of Arab culture and reshapes the relationship between the reader and the text within an interactive acculturative horizon.

**Keywords:** reception theory; reading and interpretation of the Qur'anic text; limits of interaction; acculturation.

### 1. Introduction

Reception theory is regarded as an epistemic shift in the field of Arabic literary criticism. The literary text had previously been examined from an external, research-oriented angle concerned with the historical, social, cultural, and psychological context of the author. After the emergence of reception theory in the West and its transfer to the Arab world, a significant transformation was registered in Arabic critical discourse through the shift of critical authority from the creator to the receiver, or reader. The literary text came to be viewed as a communicative process constructed within the horizon of the reader's expectations. Reception theory examines the communicative field between the text and the receiver, who is seen as a source of the writer's inspiration and as present in the writer's mind through imagined

questions that help shape the text. This theory also focuses on the interaction between the text and the reader and attends to the reader's creativity as a source of meaning that can extend into other creative texts. Structuralism had posited the death of the author and the authority of the text—that is, the study of the text as an internal structure independent in itself and isolated from external context. This approach privileged the subjectivity of the responsible reader, since its analysis was oriented toward aesthetics alone, thereby hindering the study of the historical process of the literary phenomenon. As Mikhail Riffaterre observes, the literary phenomenon is not the text alone, but also the reader, as well as the range of possible reader responses to the text and the utterance, and the productive capacity of the utterance<sup>1</sup>.

Reception theory emerged in the 1960s, and its most prominent pioneers were German scholars. It arose as a reaction to several intellectual currents, the most significant being post-structuralism, which neglected certain aspects of literary analysis—including its reliance on textual neutrality and its deliberate disregard for historical and social contexts outside the boundaries of the text. Reception theory sought to address what structuralism had neglected, placing the literary process within the sphere of human communication and shifting the center of gravity in analytical strategy from the dyad of author and text to the dyad of text and reader. Hans Robert Jauss, Wolfgang Iser, and the American Stanley Fish were among the founders of reception theory, or the aesthetics of reception—whose primary reference was the German Constance School. Later scholars further developed this theory, among them Robert Holub, William Ray,

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<sup>1</sup> Walid Qassab, *Modern Critical Approaches*, Dar alFikr, Damascus, 2007, p. 214.

Jonathan Culler, and Elizabeth Freund. In the United States it appeared under the designation “reception

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theory,” and its leading figures there included E. D. Hirsch, Stanley Fish, and Norman Holland, among others.

Reading theory came to address the following question: who gives the text its value? The text acquires its value through the reader's responses. The reader's role is no longer limited to consuming the text and settling for an aesthetic view; rather, the reader participates in the creative process through the criticism and interpretation of the text, and, prior to that, through responding to it and adopting a critical stance toward it. In Jauss's formulation, the aesthetics of reception is a call for a new interpretation of the literary text that seeks to reveal the features of uniqueness and creativity—or, conversely, saturation and banality—not by interrogating the text's intellectual depth as such or describing the process of its external formation, but by determining its nature, its impact, and the intensity of its effect on readers and critics through examining their reactions and misreadings. It is therefore a criticism of the text through a criticism of its receptions<sup>2</sup>.

Among the factors that paved the way for the emergence of reception theory are:

### **1. Russian Formalism**

The Russian Formalist school exercised a notable influence on German criticism, which came to place great emphasis on the relationship between the text and its interpretation. The Formalists contributed by

<sup>2</sup> Hans Robert Jauss, *The Aesthetics of Reception*, trans. R. Abd al-Jalil Jawad, Supreme Council of Culture, Cairo, 2004, p. 17.

expanding the concept of form to include aesthetic perception, so that literary reception within Formalist theory is grounded in the formal analysis of literary texts. The Formalists concerned themselves with form and excluded content, holding that what distinguishes the literary work from other types of discourse is form rather than content. This makes the process of sensation and perception in reception focused on literary form, since the distinguishing feature of artistic vision is the principle of perceiving form—a principle whose artistic properties can be disclosed only through the act of perception<sup>3</sup>. By “perception” is meant not merely a psychological and mental process, but also an artistic state and an essential component of art. According to Viktor Shklovsky, literary works can be apprehended only by perceiving the aesthetics of their forms, which results from their distinction from other literary works. No work of art can be perceived unless it is stripped of its ordinariness, for familiar, utilitarian language does not lead to optimal perception, since its comprehension becomes habitual—what Shklovsky terms “automatic perception.”<sup>4</sup> Perception occurs only when the literary work sheds familiarity and is characterized by strangeness and defamiliarization, producing tension, intensity, and artistic distinction, so that perception becomes difficult and demanding. It is at this point that the aesthetics of perception reach their highest level. This is the aim of literature: the achievement of aesthetic value and artistic distinction. According to the Formalists, the writer does not merely depict reality, but takes reality out of the ordinary and gives it an artistic touch represented by strangeness,

distinctiveness, and deviation from the familiar, whether in form or content. This process of

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defamiliarization (*ostranenie*) is central to the Formalist understanding of literary value.

## 2. Phenomenology

Phenomenological theory is based on the concept of transcendence, understood as the objective meaning that emerges after the phenomenon becomes pure meaning in pure consciousness, following a retreat from the external sensible world to pure inner consciousness. This is what is termed “transcendence.” Meaning is the outcome of pure individual comprehension<sup>5</sup>. Roman Ingarden, a student of Edmund Husserl, applied this concept to literary works and found that the literary phenomenon rests on two foundations: one fixed, which he terms “typicality” (the basis of understanding), and another variable, which he terms “materiality” (the stylistic basis of the literary work). Meaning is the result of the interaction between the literary work and the act of understanding, in addition to the concept of “intentionality,” through which meaning is connected to the immediate consciousness of the literary work, thereby excluding prior assumptions that generate understanding and establishing a cognitive system for perceiving phenomena grounded in subjectivity. Husserl considered the function of phenomenology to be the study of pure consciousness and its intentional structures as the principle of all knowledge<sup>6</sup>. The concept of intentionality thus became central to what is known as the approach of literary interaction within the aesthetics of reception. Ingarden

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<sup>3</sup> Ali Bakhoud, “The Strategy of Reception in Light of Formalist Theory,” *Al-Mukhbir Journal*, no. 4, Biskra, 2008, p. 68.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

<sup>5</sup> Bushra Salih Musa, *Reception Theory: Foundations and Applications*, Arab Cultural Center, 1st ed., Morocco, 2001, p. 34. <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

thereby transformed intentionality from its abstract ideal nature into a material reality that can be operationally determined through analyzing the layers that constitute the structure of the literary work.

### 3. Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics contributed to the emergence of reception theory and shared with it the element of understanding. The task of the reader is to grasp the meaning of the text and interpret its ambiguities under specific conditions. As Mohammed Azzam states, interpretation became a set of rules governing the process of interpreting the literary text, reflecting productive efforts aimed at establishing a theory of interpretation in literature, since the understanding of literature must be grounded in comprehensive foundational systems, neither mere abstract contemplation nor imaginary processes detached from human existence<sup>6</sup>.

Reading is thus the interpretation of texts on the basis of the act of understanding. In its early stages, hermeneutics was concerned with interpreting religious texts according to precise rules and conditions that did not exceed the intended meaning. Friedrich Schleiermacher was the first to move hermeneutics beyond the sphere of theological exegesis into the general process of understanding literary texts, establishing conditions and laws aimed at avoiding misunderstanding. The act of understanding did not merely expand the field of hermeneutics; it also came to include the specific conditions for constructing meaning, namely the context of the text, the author's orientation, psychology, style, and life circumstances.

Wilhelm Dilthey later introduced new concepts of explanation and understanding:

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explanation is associated with external phenomena, where consciousness encounters elements that can be identified, observed, and explained, whereas understanding is linked to the human sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*), which regard the human being as a thinking subject endowed with feeling and emotion<sup>7</sup>.

Dilthey's close linkage of the process of understanding to the author led Hans-Georg Gadamer to move beyond this view by considering philosophical principles as the foundation of the sciences. Gadamer distinguished between two types of understanding:

- **Essential understanding:** the understanding of the content contained in texts
- **Intentional understanding:** the understanding of the author's intentions in writing.

As for Felix Vodicka and Elrud Ibsch, they attribute the emergence of reception theory to three currents:

- History
- Hermeneutics
- Structuralism

Some scholars attribute the emergence of reception theory to the works of the French critic Roland Barthes, especially *The Pleasure of the Text* and *Writing Degree Zero*, in addition to his semiotic orientation. Others trace its emergence to phenomenological philosophy, where Husserl holds that the most suitable subject of philosophical inquiry is the

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<sup>6</sup> Mohammed Azzam, *Reception and Interpretation: A Statement of the Reader's Authority*, Dar al-Yanabi' for Printing, Publishing, and Distribution, 2007, p. 81.

<sup>7</sup> Mustafa Al-Aref, "Hermeneutics and Understanding (Schleiermacher, Dilthey, and Gadamer)," *Philosophical Madarat Journal*, 2006, p. 148.

contents of consciousness rather than the objects of the external world. Still others attribute its emergence to deconstruction, which is also evident in writings on deconstruction.

Concepts of reception theory: Among the concepts of reception theory are:

### **1. The Concept of The Horizon of Expectations**

The horizon of expectations is what is formed in the reader through literary tradition or through the series of previously known works, as well as through the specific mental state in which the reader is situated. It emerges with the appearance of a new work through the laws of its genre and the conventions of its generic boundaries<sup>8</sup>.

According to Jauss, the horizon of expectations is formed through the individual's relationship with a series of texts constituting a specific literary genre, which becomes a familiar, conventional, and continuous framework for a given horizon. The reader thereby acquires prior knowledge of a particular type of text. When approaching a new text, the reader reads it with those rules and accumulated prior knowledge present in mind, which function as a standard or criterion—what Jauss calls “tradition”—through which the degree of a literary work's affiliation to previous models, as well as its deviation from them, can be assessed.

The term “horizon of expectations” is not entirely new; Gadamer had previously introduced a related concept, which he called the “horizon of questions.”

The horizon of expectations consists of three main components:

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- The prior experience acquired by the audience regarding the literary genre to which the work belongs.
  - The form and themes of previous works with which the audience is assumed to be familiar.
  - The tension between poetic language and scientific language, and between the fictional world and everyday reality<sup>9</sup>.

### **2. The Concept of The Aesthetic Distance**

Aesthetic behavior entails a distance between the observer and the object. This aesthetic distance, according to Jauss, is a creative mode of conduct in aesthetic contemplation, in which the observer produces an imaginary object. Giraud described this aesthetic experience as an oscillation between primary pleasure and its object. In Kantian terms, one can think freely between subject and object, according to which one attains a “purposiveness without purpose.”

Jauss attempted to conceptualize aesthetic pleasure through the proposition of “subjective pleasure as the pleasure of the other.”<sup>10</sup> Here, pleasure is that of the receiver; it is the distance inherent in every literary work and in the reader's horizon of expectations, through which the receiver is able to uncover

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<sup>8</sup> Abd al-Nasir Hasan Muhammad, *Reception Theory between Jauss and Iser*, Dar al-Nahda al-'Arabiyya, Cairo, 2002, p. 21.

<sup>9</sup> Abd al-Qadira Buzayda, “The Aesthetics of Reception according to Hans Robert Jauss,” *Journal of Language and Literature*, vol. 5, no. 3, University of Algiers, p. 17.

<sup>10</sup> Robert C. Holub, *Reception Aesthetics*, trans. R. Abd al-Jalil Jawad, 1st ed., Dar al-Hawar for Publishing and Distribution, Syria, 1992, p. 92.

the hidden dimensions of the text. It refers to the gap between the author's writing and the reader's horizon of expectations—that is, the distance between what the reader expects and the new work<sup>11</sup>.

When this distance is minimal and the receiver does not reach a new horizon of experience, the work becomes a purely consumptive work, devoid of aesthetic value, as it is entirely anticipated according to the reader's assumptions and prevailing taste. However, when this distance expands, the artistic quality of the work is measured by its aesthetic deviation from what its original audience expects; thus, the work becomes a source of aesthetic pleasure, wonder, or bewilderment. This effect gradually diminishes within the horizon of future aesthetic experience for later readers, who eventually perceive it as familiar<sup>12</sup>.

### 3. The Death of the Author

This term first appeared in an article by the French critic Roland Barthes in 1968. It refers to reading and analyzing a text independently of its author, meaning the separation of the author from the text and the exclusion of all external influences surrounding the author. The text is thus examined through its internal structure and the relationships on which it is built. In this way, the creator is excluded from the process of uncovering meaning within the literary work, and the text is liberated from the authority of the author, with priority given to the meanings contained within the text itself. This idea had an impact on reception theory, which shifted from the authority of the sender to the authority of the receiver, who is considered the producer of the

text and an active participant in its creative process. As a result, the author came

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to be seen not as a visionary or a genius, but as a skilled craftsman who arranges—or rather rearranges—the material that happens to be available to him. The author's function is to have knowledge of literature<sup>13</sup>; what he knows or does not know about life is of no significance to that function. In other words, the literary work is the result of previous literary works (intertextuality), and the author's role is only to recombine these texts, without any relevance to his personal character or thought.

This Western theory (Reception Theory) is a concept that originated in the West and was applied to Western literature, a literature characterized by a distinct aesthetic, semantic, and artistic vision that differs significantly from what is known in ArabIslamic literature. This literature contains many philosophical ideas that contradict our faith and identity, whether Arab or Islamic. From this perspective, it represents a distorted vision, and relying on it or adopting it exclusively leads to the suppression of innovation and creativity. Mere imitation deprives us of critical thinking and creativity, turning us into deformed entities lacking the Arab and Islamic identity, which is one of the greatest and most flourishing civilizations.

Nevertheless, there is nothing wrong with cultural exchange and engaging with others, as well as understanding their sciences and arts. Avoiding this is a form of rigidity, and opening up to other ideas, cultures, and literatures is both necessary and even more than necessary; it is, in fact, inevitable in our present

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<sup>11</sup> Bushra Salih Musa, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

<sup>12</sup> Ali Bakhti, "The Effectiveness of Reception and the Possibilities of Strategic Transformation in the

Aesthetic Theory of Hans Robert Jauss," *A'dad*

<sup>13</sup> Walid Qassab, *Methods of Modern Criticism: An Islamic Perspective*, 2nd ed., Dar al-Fikr, Damascus, 2009, p. 122.

time, whether we like it or not. However, every idea and every cultural

Magazine, University of Ashour Ziane, Al-Jelfa, Algeria, p. 137.

influence that reaches us must pass through the filter of identity—namely the filter of Islamic belief, thought, aesthetics, and language—in order to distinguish what should be accepted from what should be rejected, and what should be selected from what should be discarded<sup>14</sup>.

If we examine the forms of acculturation mentioned above, we find the terms “horizon” and “receiver” within reception theory. When we turn to the classical Arab heritage, we also find significant references to the concept of *maqām* (context). If earlier scholars recognized the importance of *maqām*, then it is even more necessary today—given the development of critical methodologies—to pay attention to its role in both classical and modern literary production. The discussion of *maqām* is, in essence, a discussion of difference; for this reason, Al-‘Umari distinguishes three contextual registers in his study: the register of popular life, the register of eloquent literature, and the register of formal literature. Each register contains a “horizon.”

It is also useful to consider how the concept of “horizon” operates in the reading of classical Arabic poetry, as in Al-‘Umari’s study, where he notes: “Major poets sought to merge these horizons; hence the significant variation in the poetry of Abu Tammam. On the one hand, he responded to the creative demand based on assimilating and mastering the finest of earlier Arabic poetry, and on the other hand, he responded to the themes and conditions of his audience, whose aspirations and cultural

level did not always reach the level of artistic experience.”

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Through this study, despite its brevity, we can see how the concepts of reception theory may be used to shed light on certain aspects of the history of Arabic literature<sup>15</sup>.

Among Muslims, Islamic texts are surrounded by an aura of sanctity and reverence, which makes them difficult to subject to arbitrary interpretation. Islamic texts are divided into sacred religious texts and nonsacred texts, such as literary works (poetry and prose). When we focus on religious texts, we refer to the revealed scriptures such as the Gospel and the Torah in the Western tradition, and the Qur’an and the Sunnah in Islam, which constitute the foundation of the Islamic religion and from which all its legislation is derived.

The early righteous scholars unanimously agreed that the Qur’an and the Sunnah are divine revelations to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Muslims received them through memorization, documentation, and full compliance with all that revelation brought, whether commands or prohibitions, without objection, debate, or distortion, all of this being tied to faith in God. Therefore, no alteration or corruption has occurred in them, as stated in the Qur’anic verse: “Indeed, it is We who sent down the Reminder, and indeed, We will be its guardian” (Al-Hijr: 9).

As for Western traditions, their religious texts were subjected to alteration after they revolted against the Church, which had excessively expanded its religious authority,

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<sup>14</sup> Walid Qassab, *Modern Criticism Approaches – An Islamic Perspective*, 2nd ed., Dar al-Fikr, Damascus, 2009, p. 11.

<sup>15</sup> Hassna Muhammad Rahma, "The Impact of

Reception Theory on Modern Arab Criticism," *LARC Journal for Philosophy, Linguistics, and Social Sciences*, No. 4, Vol. 2, Iraq, 2021, p. 157.

including granting indulgences. This was accompanied by deviations among bishops and priests, which led the people to reject their authority and strip the Church of the right to interpret and explain sacred texts. As a result, every individual was granted the right to interpret religious texts as they pleased, and thus sanctity was removed from their religious scriptures<sup>16</sup>.

Thus, all their studies and research are based on the complete deconstruction of any textual sanctity, and the idea that all texts are open to interpretation as the reader wishes; that is, there is no authority of the text and no limits to interpretation. This contradicts Islamic thought, its boundaries, and the values adhered to by Muslims.

However, there are critics who attempt to twist the religious text and subject it to Western theories, especially reader-response theory, which is based on the authority of the reader, and on the idea that he is the only one capable of reviving the text, generating meanings, and interpreting them according to his own ideas and prior reading backgrounds, which grant him that absolute authority over texts, whether religious or literary alike. These critics have absorbed Western culture during their studies in the West, as well as through Western educational missions sent to Muslim countries; thus, they have lost their identity and become fascinated by that Western Christian world. One of them says: "The text accommodates all forms and levels."

When Muhammad Arkoun was asked about how to deal with clear, unambiguous Qur'anic texts such as the verse: "For the male, a share equal to that of two females" (Surah An-

Nisa, 4:11), he said that in such cases nothing can be done except to reopen the question of Qur'anic interpretation. He added

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that we cannot continue to accept that women should not have a fair share; and that when it becomes impossible to adapt the text to the contemporary world, it should be changed<sup>18</sup>.

Here we find that full authority has been granted to the reader over the Qur'anic text, even if through distortion; and this follows their path in line with the West. In addition, alongside the issue of textual authority, there is also the problem of applying the concept of the implied reader to Islamic texts. The implied reader is considered the peak of what Iser introduced in terms of concepts and methodological procedures; he distinguished it from other types. For the literary work to exert its effect, it requires prior dispositions that are not drawn from external empirical reality, but from the text itself. Accordingly, the implied reader, as a concept, has deep roots in the structure of the text; it is a construct that can never be equated with a real reader<sup>17</sup>. The implied reader is an ideal reader potentially present in the text, whose task is to reproduce meaning in new dimensions that go beyond the initial proposition of the text. He goes beyond the author's understanding of the text and opens the door to new creative productions and interpretations that multiply after every reading.

This, however, cannot be applied as a procedure to Islamic texts (the Qur'an and Hadith), because they are texts of supreme authority that do not accept interpretation which undermines their sanctity, contradicts their true meaning, or exceeds legitimate

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<sup>16</sup> Fatima Jabir Ali & Abdullah Ammar, "Text Authority and the Limits of Interpretation," *Al-Madawana Journal*, vol. 6, no. 2, Bouira, Algeria, 2019, pp. 283–284. <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 284.

<sup>17</sup> Bouqrouma Hakima, "The Formation of the Implicit Reader in the Quranic Text," *Al-Khitab Journal*, No. 5, Mouloud Mammari University, Tizi Ouzou, June 2009, p. 277.

boundaries. Here arises the problem of applying this method and other Western approaches to Arabic texts. Arabic and Islamic texts have a specificity different from Western ones; our texts are rooted in ancient, interconnected civilizations, like chains whose links cannot be separated from one another, and they possess religious and legislative sanctity that does not allow interpretation except in a way that clarifies meaning, not in a way that goes beyond it into unrelated meanings.

Such interconnected texts cannot be subjected to Western critical methods that are characterized by uncontrolled openness, which allows unrestricted individual interpretation. This civilization rebelled against all traditional religious, social, and cultural values; and whenever a critical approach appears, another arises to refute it and introduce new principles.

It has therefore become necessary to formulate a new reception theory that starts from the specificity of the Arabic text and its sensibility. It has also become necessary to read reception theory in light of cultural plurality and pragmatic contexts, in order to produce a critical knowledge that is neither dependent nor closed. If we look at the implied reader from another perspective and give it a faith-based Islamic framing, our understanding of this implied reader changes.

This reader is linked to understanding; he participates in shaping meaning with the receiver through interaction with the text. A reader with a faith-based background has an acculturative horizon and is equipped with the tools of reading theory, and fully realizes that he is dealing with a text surrounded by an aura of sanctity and by boundaries that prevent

deviation of words from their proper place, otherwise distortion occurs as happened with

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previous nations. "The believer whose heart is filled with this faith, before approaching the text, is deeply convinced that God has placed the truth within this text for His servants to discover."

Thus, the reader seeks meaning, significance, truth, and also himself<sup>18</sup>. The Qur'anic text is a text filled with meanings that generate further meanings and expand readings. The more one delves into reading, the more ideas emerge that call for reflection and contemplation, without excluding the Author—God Almighty—far above what they attribute to Him. The Qur'anic text is a unique text with linguistic inimitability; it is a constitution for language and literature and an ideal model for literary genres.

Any attempt to subject the Qur'anic text as a sacred text to Western frameworks is blind imitation devoid of creativity. True creativity lies in re-reading Western approaches and deriving from them what fits our cultural, linguistic, and religious capacities. "When we align ourselves with the other's theories, we do so in a way that enables understanding of what we find acceptable and what we reject. Thus emerges the possibility of contributing to the construction of a distinct vision with enough originality to become a creative act in which all participate, each offering their contribution. When we read the other and then present alongside their ideas our own perspectives, we are in a position to initiate the alternative that the Arab school has long aspired to produce."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Bouqrouma Hakima, "The Formation of the Implicit Reader in the Quranic Text," p. 278.

<sup>19</sup> Habib Monci, *Theories of Reading in Contemporary Arab Criticism*, Publications of Dar Al-Adib, Oran, Algeria, 2007, p. 5.

## Conclusion

Reception theory constitutes an effective tool for understanding the act of reading and interpretation. However, Arab and Islamic scholars should not be swept away by Western thought uncritically; rather, they should recast it within their heritage and cultural framework so that it becomes compatible with an Arab-Islamic reading approach that establishes a productive relationship between the text and the reader within an interactive acculturative horizon. Interpretation is legitimate in Islam—it is for this reason that the tradition of interpretive texts of the Noble Qur'an and the Prophetic Sunnah emerged. Over time, and with the influx of diverse peoples embracing Islam, the need for interpretation increased. The essential condition, however, is that interpretation must not violate the intended meaning of the Divine, distort the apparent sense of the text, or lead to misrepresentation. The interpreter must possess both linguistic and juristic competence, as well as protective zeal for religion.

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