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Exploring Intertextuality and Authorial Intent: A Comparative Analysis of Baaba Sillah's *Pencum Taakusaan* and *Dabbali Gi*

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Email: zahid.iqbal@ell.uol.edu.pk**Abstract**

*Baaba Sillah's 2010 publications: *Pencum Taakusaan* (poetry) and *Dabbali Gi* (novel) contain passages that are identical in both content and structure. Is it a coincidence or is it by choice? This study, therefore, investigates how Sillah deliberately transfers these selected poetic texts from *Pencum Taakusaan* into the prose narrative of *Dabbali Gi*, reshaping them as thematic and symbolic elements within the fictional world. A close reading of poems like "Griot's Lament," "The Draft," and "Gaza's Body Parts" to explore how these texts incorporate and reshape themselves demonstrates that these poems become important spaces for remembering cultural heritage and expressing opposition to political issues. The approach in this study is anchored on Julia Kristeva's concepts of intertextuality to show how Sillah's prose and poetry engage in dialogue with each other. The paper uses a postcolonial theoretical framework to argue that Sillah's approach destabilizes colonial hierarchies of genre and voice while emphasizing the psychological and historical effects of colonialism and neocolonial violence. Sillah's intertextual strategy becomes not only a tool for reclaiming agency but also a tool for challenging literary boundaries imposed by colonial epistemologies.*

Key words: *intertextuality; authorial intent; Dabbali Gi; Pencum Taakusaan; Baaba Sillah*

1. Introduction

Baaba Sillah *Mu Sabel*, as he is fondly called, is a Gambian author residing in Norway. Sillah studied psychology, education, and management in Britain and has taught all his life in Britain, Norway, and The Gambia. He has worked in consultancy in different fields, especially development-related areas. Sillah acknowledges that his international exposure has instilled in him a desire to express himself about repositioning Africa in the global discourse. Apparently,

writing offers him that alternative platform to express himself, and he did not fail to use it judiciously (Barry, 2022; Gomez & Fanneh, 2015). He debuts as a freelance essayist for magazines, and before long, he starts commenting on topical issues in the press. Having lost his sight and with it some of his occupational mobility and flexibility, Sillah switches to literary writing, in which he finds fulfillment in doing his part as a global citizen (Barry, 2022). Sillah has produced literary pieces in both poetry and prose styles. His trilogy, *When the Monkey Talks* (2004), *Dabbali Gi* (2010), and *Dreams of the Islands* (2012), is written in prose style, while *Pencum Taakusaan* (2010) remains his only collection of poems (Barry, 2022).

1.1. Background to the study

It is already apparent that in 2010, Sillah published two books, namely, *Pencum Taakusaan*, a poetry collection, and *Dabbali Gi*, a novel. Not only do the books share a publication date, but they also share themes and sociocultural and sociopolitical orientations. As the only poetry collection in his literary archive, the publication of *Dabbali Gi* marks an important turning point in the author's literary output. A comparative analysis of the two works shows that some passages are shared between the poetry collection and the novel, inviting questions about influence and intent. A close reading approach suggests that it is the novel that borrowed from the poetry collection and not the other way round. The borrowed passages, in various ways, strengthen the prose narrative in ways that echo traditional storytelling techniques, characterized by long narratives infused with songs and poetic verses (Onebunne & Obasi, 2019). To establish this fact requires a close examination of both texts for traits that may unveil the existing intertextual relations and authorial intent.

Developing this line of thought requires that we examine "where" and "how" each of the selected poems from the collection is inserted in the narrative. In terms of "where" the intertextual relations have been observed, three positions have been identified: at the beginning, within the narrative, or as standalone chapters. Where it appears at the beginning, it serves as an epigraph to foreshadow the events to unfold in the chapter, as in "The Draft" (Sillah, 2010a, p. 56), renamed "Journey" in Sillah (2010b, p. 66), or the book itself, as is the case with "This Land" (p. vi). Those that appear within the narrative tend to support the narrative and strengthen its arguments, using either their original poetry structure or restructured to assume prose style. The former is the case with "Cebet's Brown" (p. 215), "Noor" (p. 229), and "Lolli's Damp" (p. 139). The latter is true for passages taken from "Relics" (p. 20), "Gaza's Body Parts" (p. 44), and "What Makes Us Tick" (p. 34) that appeared in *Dabbali Gi* (p. 9, p. 129, and p. 118), respectively. Moreover, three of the selected poems appear as standalone chapters or chapter openings, namely "Griot's Lament" (Chapter 8, p. 64), "Children's Chorus" (Chapter 13, p. 26), and "Dancing with Gods" (Chapter 23, p. 28).

In terms of "how" the borrowed passages have been inserted into *Dabbali Gi*, the author either maintains their poem structure, sometimes with limited alterations, such as in "This Land" (p. vi), "Griot's Lament" (p. 64), "Children's Chorus" (p. 115), "Dancing with Gods" (p. 248), "Lolli's Damp" (p. 139), "Cebet's Brown" (p. 215), "Noor" (p. 229), and "Journey" (p. 66)—originally published as "The Draft" in Sillah (2010a, p. 56). In other instances, the poetry structure melts away in the prose narrative, such as in extracts from "Relics" (p. 20), "Gaza's Body Parts" (p. 44),

and “What Makes Us Tick” (p. 34). The passages, which seamlessly merge into the narrative, not only deepen the narrative flow but also mirror the surrounding prose.

1.2. Statement of the problem

The noticeable inclusion of selected poems from *Pencum Taakusaan* into the narrative of *Dabbali Gi*, at first sight, signals a self-referential moment that invites readers to re-engage with the poem in a new context. As earlier alluded to, several poems from *Pencum Taakusaan* have been culled and inserted into the narrative of *Dabbali Gi*. The borrowed poems include “This Land” (p. 30), “Relics” (p. 20), “Griot’s Lament” (p. 24), “Children’s Chorus” (p. 26), “Dancing with Gods” (p. 28), “The Draft” (p. 56), which appears as “Journey” in *Dabbali Gi* (p. 66), “Gaza’s Body Parts” (p. 44), “Lolli’s Damp” (p. 75), “Cebet’s Brown” (p. 77), “Noor” (p. 81), and “What Makes us Tick” (p. 34). The ubiquity of similar and sometimes identical passages raises concerns that go beyond aesthetic values, paving the way for more questions, especially about the author’s intention. This observation helps to situate the intention behind the inclusion of these selected poems as part of a deliberate artistic strategy, not a coincidence.

1.3. Significance of the problem

Apart from being an addition to the limited critical reviews on Sillah’s literary works, this study offers new insights and questions that go beyond themes to offer a critical intervention in the understanding of the author’s aesthetic genius by digging into African literary production and illuminating the deliberate intertextual relationship between *Pencum Taakusaan* and *Dabbali Gi*. The approach of tracing how poems from *Pencum Taakusaan* transcend generic boundaries within the narrative of *Dabbali Gi* reveals how Sillah crafts a hybrid literary form that is anchored on African storytelling traditions, where the lines between poetry and prose blur. The study suggests that the intertextual relationship between the two texts replicates cultural memory and serves as a useful tool for epistemic disobedience by challenging colonial aesthetic conventions and reclaiming narrative agency based on indigenous storytelling traditions (Mignolo, 1989; Mignolo, 2009; Ngugi, 1981; Onebunne & Obasi, 2019). These traditions combine songs and narratives, as in the metanarrative of the “Serpent King” (Sillah, 2010b, p. 167), where the inclusion of a Mandinka folksong in Grandma’s story adds to the audiences’ receptive attitude. Similarly, the integration of poetic texts into the prose narrative of *Dabbali Gi* creates a dialogic space in which colonial and neocolonial epistemic violence are not only exposed but also artistically confronted. This study therefore outlines the significance of genre hybridity, authorial self-reference, and intent while contesting inherited systems of domination and silencing.

1.4. Delimitations

It may be observed that at least ten poems have been shared across the two works under review. Since the novel is the receiving text of borrowed materials, it becomes the main focus of this analysis. However, no single approach has been used by the poet in carrying out the process of transplanting passages from one text into another, making it challenging to have a detailed analysis of all the instances in which similarities occur. As a result, the analysis in this study is limited in its reflection of the overall effect of the author’s art.

1.5. Objectives of the study

- i. To analyze how Sillah incorporates selected poems from *Penchum Taakusaan* within the narrative structure of *Dabbali Gi*;
- ii. To examine the intertextual dialogue between Sillah's poetry and prose using Julia Kristeva's theory of intertextuality, in order to understand how these textual crossings reshape meaning in *Dabbali Gi*;
- iii. To apply a postcolonial theoretical framework to assess how Sillah's intertextual strategies challenge colonial genre hierarchies and reassert cultural memory.

1.6. Research questions

This study addresses the following research questions:

- i. Does the intertextual relation reward readers familiar with the poems?
- ii. Does it encourage new interpretations of both texts?
- iii. Does it fracture or unify the narrative voice?

2. Literature review

When Julia Kristeva (2024[1980]) cites Mikhael Bakhtin's claim that "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations" and that "any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (p. 64), it was in reference to the subject of intersubjectivity, which later became known as intertextuality. Kristeva's notion of intertextuality is that no work exists in isolation but as a "permutation of texts" (p. 37). Gerard Genette, in 1997, builds on Kristeva's ideas to explore the idea of transtextuality, or textual transcendence (Mirenayat & Soofastaei, 2017). Albay and Serbes (2017) describe intertextuality as "inheritance amongst the literary texts all over the world literature" (p. 208). Similarly, Van Zoonen (2017) views intertextuality as "a term to indicate that all texts, whether written or spoken, whether formal or informal, whether artistic or mundane, are in some ways related to each other" (p. 1). Natalie Glinka (2018, p. 153) sums up the concept, claiming that intertextuality "has great potential to connect different literary texts in the world." Furthermore, it must be noted that intertextual relations are not always an "intentional product of artists, writers and media producers, but also of particular processes of interpretation and reading" (Glinka, 2018, p. 1).

Intertextuality exists not only in literature but also in film, newspapers, and other popular media such as computer screens and computer games (Albay & Serbes, 2017; Mirenayat & Soofastaei, 2017; Vadivelraja, 2018; Van Zoonen, 2017). On the subject of authorial intent, Gisele Sapiro (2023) argues that literature reflects the social world by both mirroring and engaging with the social institutions that produce, consume, and interpret texts. Albay and Serbes (2017) add that "the religions, trade, wars, social and/or economic movement, internet and technology" (p. 208) are all mirrored in the literary work. This implies that literary works are products of the societies they originate from. Contemporary scholarship on African literature affirms that textual works often mirror and respond to real social and political realities (Nwagbara, 2011). For instance, Ogundokun's (2014) critical essay, which focuses on themes used by Nigerian authors,

demonstrates how literature becomes a vehicle for social critique and commentary, exposing social vices such as corruption, class inequality, and social injustice. In the view of Vadivelraja (2018), “writers of literature can change the society through their writings and characterizations” (p. 613). These perspectives reinforce the understanding of literature as socially produced and reflective (Sridevi, 2024).

Building on the notion that writing does not exist out of a vacuum, we may proceed to explore the subject of authorial intent, considering that “many actions do have a preliminary intention that distinctly precedes them in time” (Farrell, 2021, p. 58). In discussing the subject of authorial intent, it is important to note that, contrary to Barthes’s concept of “death of the author,” writing is not a simple act but an intentional process. Farrell (2021) claims that “the making of a work of art requires multiple levels of intention with different kinds of goals and multiple intentions within each kind” (p. 59). Inasmuch as the distinctions between these different kinds of intentions appear blurred, we can agree on the fact that “the one thing intentional actions cannot be is accidental” (Farrell, 2021, p. 58). Building on this notion, we may argue that Sillah’s inclusion of passages from his poetry collection into his novel cannot be accidental but deliberate, with a purpose of achieving a desired outcome. Whether Sillah’s intention is preconceived or not may perhaps be difficult to say, but the preponderance of allusions to other works and echoes of self-reference in *Dabbali Gi* echo a well-carved writing process.

In contrast with William Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley (2014, p. 201), who claim that “the design or intention of the author is neither available nor desirable as a standard for judging the success of a work of literary art” (cited in Farrell, 2021, p. 61), this study aligns with the views of Farrell (2021) that readers’ failure to grasp the generic intentions or point of view of a writer may result in misreading of a particular literary work. In his view, literary works “are not simple words, sentences, propositions, or signifying systems but utterances, attempts to communicate in a particular way for a particular purpose in a particular context for a particular audience” (p. 64).

3. Methodology and theoretical framework

Considering that the texts under review have undertones of displacement and reclamation of national identity, this study applies postcolonial theory to analyzing the shared intertextual relations between the two texts. Using a qualitative research approach, this study uses close reading and comparative analysis of textual materials from both the poetry collection and the novel to establish beyond reasonable doubt that Sillah’s 2010 dual publications complement each other. Besides postcolonial theory, the study explores Julia Kristeva’s dialogic concepts of intertextuality and metatextuality. While intertextuality examines how the poems “speak” within the prose and perhaps dialogue with other literary or historical texts, metatextuality is concerned with how the prose acknowledges itself as literature and foregrounds the act of writing about writing (Bazerman, 2004). Of the numerous poems from *Pencum Taakusaan* that have been transplanted into *Dabbali Gi*, three have been selected for this analysis, namely, “Griot’s Lament,” “The Draft,” and “Gaza’s Body Parts.” The choice for their selection is dependent on the factors of “how” and “where” they are introduced into the novel.

4. Analysis and discussion

An earlier hint suggests that Baaba Sillah's simultaneous release of *Dabbali Gi* and *Pencum Taakusaan* in the same year presents a rare opportunity to examine how the author's verse and prose voices intersect, especially when one text directly incorporates selected material from the other. As both texts reflect Sillah's postcolonial sensibility and cultural criticism, their simultaneous release invites a reading of both as dialogic texts, where the prose and poetry endeavour may be considered not as separate enterprises but as extensions of the same critical voice. Below are three subsections, each focused on how Baaba Sillah reworks a specific poem from *Pencum Taakusaan* into or alongside his prose work *Dabbali Gi*, revealing a layered intertextual relationship between Sillah's verse and prose style.

4.1. "Griot's Lament": A poetic ethos transformed into narrative conscience

The poem, "Griot's Lament," is a deeply self-reflective and politically charged piece that functions almost like a manifesto. Originally presented in *Pencum Taakusaan*, the poem is transplanted into the pages of the prose work, *Dabbali Gi*, immediately following Chapter 7, "Dabbali Gi," the titular chapter that delves into the vicious cycle of orchestrated impoverishment. "Dabbali" is a Wolof word for debt taken on top of another debt, mainly due to successive failed farming seasons. As in the case of Yerro Jallow, whose entire family is forced to sell their produce to a sole buyer at a price determined not by the producer but by the buyer as a condition in their loan transaction, "dabbali" has brought untold suffering to the Kataminian society. The arrangement leaves Yerro's family in a quagmire and a more impoverished situation, warranting him to retort out of frustration, "*Dabbali*... that's what it is called; a loan on top of another, as yet unpaid, loan!" (p. 56). The placement, therefore, of "Griot's Lament" as Chapter 8, immediately succeeding the title chapter, holds great significance, especially after perusing its lines.

The intertextual insertion of "Griot's Lament" into the narrative of *Dabbali Gi* is more than just a stylistic gesture; it shows Sillah's introduction of the griot as both a custodian of the past and a living witness to collective introspection. The poem replicates an inward reflection, pointing out a community quick to judge others but hesitant to acknowledge its role in past and present shortcomings. *Dabbali Gi* illustrates this theme through characters who struggle to examine themselves honestly, showcasing a societal inclination to blame outside forces and avoid looking inward. A close reading of the poem in the novel reveals the presence of the griotic voice, which may be appreciated not just as a historical element but as a guiding moral force within the story. The griot's perspective, subtly present in the speaker's distinction between "our own man" and "the other man" and the unspoken thoughts about society, becomes a persistent reminder that improvement and recovery demand a brave confrontation with one's own flaws. In this way, the poem's sorrow transforms into a weight carried by the narrative, pushing the reader to understand that both individual and collective advancement start with self-criticism and remembering the past with honesty.

How then does this role fit into the narrative world of *Dabbali Gi*? As it may already be apparent in our earlier discussion, the absence of the griot's honest voice suggests a missing conscience and a societal amnesia, creating a void that the poem sets in to fill. We postulate that just as the inclusion of songs in griot storytelling interrupts linear narrative with the

accompaniment of one or more musical instruments, the insertion of the poem into the prose also intentionally disrupts its narrative flow. The style invites the audience or reader to participate in the storytelling, forcing them to stop and reflect, much like a chorus in Greek drama. This blending injects the rhythm of oral testimony, signaling that prose alone cannot carry the emotional and ethical weight of what must be remembered (Mbembe, 2019). It also signals Sillah's authorial persona as a griot—one who critiques, remembers, and forewarns, while performing the very challenge the poem articulates—digging into “our own human depths” through both narrative and verse, and modeling a literature that does not fear dissent but uses it as a tool of growth.

4.2. “The Draft” from poem to prose: The specter of colonial war in *Dabbali Gi*

In the opening part of Chapter 9 of *Dabbali Gi*, titled “Journey,” Sillah reactivates “The Draft” from *Pencum Taakusaan*, with its haunting catalogue of conscripted soldiers awaiting deployment. The poem, seemingly a meditation on exile, gains new meaning within the prose narrative's depiction of postcolonial disillusionment. It is reframed in the prose to comment on memory and identity, intensifying both the prose's mood and meaning. “The Draft” is characterized by its powerful meditation on the process and politics of conscripting soldiers for the colonial war as well as the resultant tragic disintegration of identity since the war. The persona mourns the transformation of autonomous subjects into “faceless collectives,” a theme mirrored in *Dabbali Gi*, where characters often find themselves unable to resist political machinery or historical tides that uproot them from their moral and cultural centers. Therefore, the rearticulation of the poem's lines in *Dabbali Gi* becomes not only a reflection on the historical trauma of African participation in colonial wars but also a critique of the baselessness of such participation in the first place. In *Dabbali Gi*, the poem intensifies the novel's exploration of historical violence and the erasure of agency under imperial domination. It is worthy of note that in both texts, Sillah portrays the “men” as estranged from themselves as they transform: “Mortal men turned to crude entities/ Their identities subsumed by the green/ And grey outfits” (p. 66). The fact that the novel's characters often speak or act with a similar emotional detachment suggests that the aftershocks of colonial violence continue to echo in Sillah's fictional Kataminian society.

Moreover, the textual presence of “The Draft” in the opening part of Chapter 9 of *Dabbali Gi* serves as a mnemonic intervention, reanimating forgotten or suppressed histories, particularly those of Kataminian soldiers who were conscripted into wars not their own. Like cargo, they are transported “to the Arakan/ And the Kaladan!/ To Sidpur and to Murdock” (p. 66). The references to Arakan, Kaladan, Sidpur, and Murdock place this text firmly in the colonial military history of West African soldiers deployed in far-off imperial wars, particularly WWII's Burma campaign. Sillah uses repetition: “How could they...” (pp. 67–68) and imagery of rigidity and stillness to portray how colonial subjects are turned into objects, “pliable clay in the hands of a potter” (p. 67), to describe characters caught in ritualistic obedience or silence. This suggests a stylistic continuity across genres, revealing another intertextual layer and deepening the narrative depth regarding the novel's historical consciousness.

Finally, from the perspective of cultural and political criticism, it may be observed that “The Draft” operates as a collective elegy, and its echo in *Dabbali Gi* becomes a narrative reckoning of an inherited trauma. By transplanting “The Draft” into the novel, Sillah mourns not only the literal dead but also the cultural dead—those whose names, languages, and stories were buried beneath khaki, rifles, and foreign commands. They were just pawns in a deathtrap, fighting a war that has nothing to do with them (Gomez & Fanneh, 2015; Mbembe, 2019). Just as the narrator prophesied that “Some may never come back,” a handful of men died at the warfront; their bodies were never recovered. “A tumaranke death and a tumaranke burial/ Await them!” (p. 67). And according to Gomez and Fanneh (2015), those that eventually made it back returned with certain social vices such as excessive drinking, addictive smoking, and an insatiable appetite for women. The reference to the fact that “Many women will be in white” and that “Many children will be scarred by longing!” both signal the monumental loss that the passing of these soldiers brings to their families. Ironically, according to Gomez and Fanneh (2015), society remains muted on the subject, as doing so invites the wrath of the colonial establishment. In summary, we may claim that Sillah uses “The Draft” as a literary hinge to connect the silenced histories of colonial militarism with the psychic paralysis of postcolonial life, exposing a people trapped not only in a historical loop but also in a refusal to confront its origins. The text, therefore, functions as a voice from the margins, reminding readers of what was lost.

4.3. From poetic fragment to prose vision: “Gaza’s Body Parts” and a dream of globalized horror and shared wounds

As if building on the repressed truths of cultural trauma resulting from the absurd situation of Kataminian men fighting in and dying in foreign theaters of war in “The Draft,” Sillah, once again, borrows the poem “Gaza’s Body Parts” from *Pencum Taakusaan* to give prophetic insight to the surrounding narrative in *Dabbali Gi*. However, this time Sillah shifts to using a dream narrative since “many creative dreams are nightmares, and many are associated with trauma” (Freud, 1961; cited in Pagel, 2014, p. 17). An entire poem, “Gaza’s Body Parts,” in *Pencum Taakusaan* is narrated as a dream by Cibel in *Dabbali Gi*, suggesting a deliberate recycling of poetic memory within the narrative of political resistance. Considering Pagel’s (2014) claims that “dreams are actually a labyrinth of meanings” (p. 147), Sillah’s choice opens a Pandora’s box of ideas.

To put the above claim into context, this study observes that textual evidence from “Gaza’s Body Parts,” for instance, appears in the narration as Cibel’s dream. Cibel, in *Dabbali Gi*, is a young woman whose husband, Yerro, is serving at the warfront in Burma, leaving her behind to fend for herself and their two kids. Sillah paints a picture of her in the following words:

Cibel has never experienced war herself and tends to associate war with the grisly accounts she has heard from Griots re-telling through the songs of Ceddo, Krina, the Battle of Sankandi and the siege of Kansaala. The Battles of Kaabu, the Rivers of blood, the long and painful suffering, the loneliness and longing for home, the bravery and savagery of men, the sorrow and the miracles of the potions of the Serifis. (p. 121)

The above excerpt supports Pagel’s (2014) assertion that dreams emanating from trauma are “more common among young women” (p. 110). Inarguably so, Cibel’s inexperience, coupled with

her fear for Yerro's chances of survival, set the pace for her repressed anxiety. Sillah (2010b) goes on to state that "Cibel could not by any stretch of her imagination see Yerro in any of these situations, and a crushing feeling of antipathy towards war deepens within her" (p. 121). When we borrow thoughts from Sigmund Freud and Carl Gustav Jung, who "regarded dreams as manifestations of the unconscious" or the act of dreaming as "the psyche's attempt to tell a story" (Farkas, 2021, p. 83), the dream may suggest a reflection of Cibel's autobiographical memory. Therefore, the dream narration may be considered as the result of her unresolved trauma, following the uncertainties and impending doom that news brings from the ongoing war that the dreamer's husband is fighting in a foreign land. Moreover, the arrival of brown envelopes, such as the one delivered in Tarawalle Kundaa and Marong Kundaa, announcing the death of Baakari Tarawalle and Junkung Marong, creates a semblance of collective and personal annihilation anxiety (Kira et al., 2012). Compare the following passages:

All around me are the strewn,
Decapitated bodies and parts of bodies.
There are piles of bodies, limbs and fingers fluttering.
A nose here, an ear there, bowels dangling,
Shoulder blades, thighs,
Chunks of unassorted human flesh here,
Gauged eyes there and everywhere,
Human entrails, human debris and human waste
Spread over everything!
Masses of corpses in massive mounds,
Piled high and deep
Extending as far as the eye can see. (Sillah, 2010a, p. 44)

Now let us compare the above lines of poetry with the prose passage below:

Every muscle and fibre in my body freezes. All around me are the strewn, decapitated bodies and parts of bodies. There are piles of bodies, limbs and fingers fluttering. A nose here, an ear there, bowels dangling, shoulder blades, thighs, chunks of assorted human flesh here, gouged eyes there and everywhere, human entrails, human debris and human waste spread over everything! There are masses of corpses in mass graves, piled high and deep, extending as far as the eye can see. A sea of heads and faces are all glaring at you, each trying to say something to you but not saying anything. Some are winking, their brows furrowed while the grimaces of others bear the horror and pain of their departure from this life-our life! (Sillah, 2010b, p. 129)

Evidently, the addition of the above passage into the narrative of *Dabbali Gi*, especially in the form of a retold dream, is both apt and timely. It is apt in the sense that in the midst of an atmosphere of uncertainty where many young men were conscripted from the colony to fight in the Second World War, an almost equal number of young women risked losing their husbands to the war. The dream, told in the autodiegetic narrative, is an account of the collective fear of a society that is heightened by the arrival of brown envelopes bearing notes that announce the

death of fallen soldiers, their husbands. These apprehensions rub off on the subconscious of loved ones, making it possible for the anxiety to intrude on Cibel's dream, which she later relayed to Ramata, her friend, who is surviving a similar fate. Leaning on the views of Farkas (2021) that "dreaming can recreate past scenarios and generate future ones using material retrieved from the episodic, autobiographical, and semantic memory of the dreamer" (p. 183), Cibel's dream may be considered as a premonition for the situation at the battlefield and the war encounter, based on stories told by griots.

Unlike the two earlier poems discussed in this study, the poetic transmutation of "Gaza's Body Parts" suggests that Sillah is not just reusing a poem from an earlier work but intentionally layering meanings across genres. The poem's reappearance suggests that language in Sillah's texts is not bound by genre but part of a larger cultural rhythm where word and world echo each other. Among the most visceral intertextual transformations in *Dabbali Gi* is the adaptation of the poem "Gaza's Body Parts" into a character's dream. In its original form, the poem conveys a brutal testimony of militarized dehumanization, rendered through the following gruesome imagery: "decapitated bodies," "gouged eyes," and "a sea of heads and faces" (Sillah, 2010a, p. 44). When transposed into prose, the poem morphs into a surreal, traumatizing dream that collapses physical distance between Gambia and Gaza and fiction and political reality. Sillah's narrative choice in *Dabbali Gi* not only preserves the mood of the poem, it also amplifies the writer's emotions by embedding global horror into the subconscious of a Gambian/Kataminian subject. This move is more than stylistic; it not only collapses the boundaries between poem and prose but also between global sites of suffering—linking Gaza's destruction to the psychological burden borne by the African postcolony, thereby signalling a transcultural solidarity and a shared psychic injury among oppressed peoples across borders (Damrosch, 2014). In this way, the poem becomes not only a testimony but also a psychological event in the novel, asserting that African literature must bear witness not only to local wounds but also to the interconnected suffering of oppressed peoples across the world.

Although the shift from poetic lineation to dream prose alters the poem's rhythm, it does not—in any way—interfere with its message. We may, therefore, assert that Sillah's stylistic choice is a political subtext that alludes to shared oppression and suffering across geographies, revealing how deeply the global spectacle of violence is etched into the consciousness of even those geographically removed from it. Although Gaza is not Gambia, the two are symbolically linked in Sillah's transposition (Damrosch, 2014). The faceless corpses, mass graves, and silent screams evoke a universal experience of the colonized, bombarded body and point toward Pan-African and transnational solidarities. By localizing Gaza's devastation in a Gambian dreamscape, Sillah universalizes the condition of being trapped in the spectacle of global violence—where African, Arab, and other oppressed bodies suffer objectification and erasure (Damrosch, 2014). Furthermore, we may argue that the poem serves as a witness to the prose and that the prose acknowledges and retells that witnessing through another lens (Ngugi, 1981). The textual transmutation between the two works is not simply repetition—it is remembrance through transformation, explicitly addressing the points of convergence and divergence between story and plot addressed by Paul Wake (2006).

5. Conclusion

The instances of intertextual relations shared in this study reveal Baaba Sillah's attempt at not only blurring the boundaries between poetry and prose but also deepening his narrative impact and sharpening the novel's political critique. By replicating "Griot's Lament," "The Draft," "Gaza's Body Parts," and other poems from *Pencum Taakusaan* into the narrative terrain of *Dabbali Gi*, Sillah has transformed poetry into a lived experience, thereby making it an active agent within the architecture of prose fiction. This study asserts that the inclusion of selected poems from *Pencum Taakusaan* into *Dabbali Gi* does not only decorate the prose narrative but also animates it. The technique infuses characters with inherited memories as in "Griot's Lament," repressed histories as in "The Draft," and unresolved traumas as in "Gaza's Body Parts." Collectively, these poems add new insights to a reading of *Dabbali Gi*. While "Griot's Lament" illustrates intertextuality as both a literary technique and a form of cultural intervention, positioning the griot as a voice of memory and an agent of unfinished reckoning in a society haunted by denial and historical amnesia, the textual permutation of "The Draft" into the novel's thematic core elevates the poem from historical lament to a narrative condition, through which readers come to appreciate the psychic and cultural costs of blind submission to foreign ideologies. In "Gaza's Body Parts," Sillah's dream sequence employs intertextual self-reference as both a stylistic device and a powerful means of transforming poetic memory into narrative trauma. This complex construction allows Sillah to investigate an active type of cultural witness, questioning established, colonial writing methods and pushing for a full awareness of the realities of the postcolonial world. Judging by the preponderance of intertextual relationships between *Pencum Taakusaan* and *Dabbali Gi* established in this study, we may conclude that Sillah's texts position him as both a griot and a novelist who witnesses the violence of empire and the ethical urgency of agency. By all indications, readers familiar with the poems may find the intertextual relation rewarding, as both texts complement each other at both thematic and stylistic levels.

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Declaration of interest statement

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