

## Inter-Genres in Arabic Visual Poetry and the Levels of Fusion between Linguistic Texts and Non-Linguistic Art Forms

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### ABSTRACT

The Visual-Poem is considered one of the most daring experimental poetry that has penetrated the borders of traditional Arabic poetry. The visual-poem is based on integration of linguistic poetic aspects and non-linguistic visual aspects. Therefore, the visual-poem is considered a hybrid literary genre that is based on integration of several arts, which makes the reader raise questions regarding its essence and identity, and whether it is poetry or artistic drawing or painting. The objective of the study is to confirm that the visual-poem is a special trans-generic literary type, which is an independent phenomenon that cannot be classified under any other literary genre. The study also seeks to highlight the aspect of penetration of the visual-poem to everything that is traditional and definite, starting with the various names that have been given to it, and ending with its various forms that appeared in classical poetry and modern Arabic poetry. To achieve its goals, the study adopts the methodology of analytical comparisons between classical Arabic texts, modern Arabic texts and European modern texts written in English and French. The fundamental landmarks of the visual poem are the same landmarks that are specific to poetry in general. The visual poem does not marginalize the language, the poetic rhythm or music but turns its language into a drawing and makes its music something visible that stems from words that are seen scattered on a white page. In addition, it keeps the components on which the poems are based such as: ambiguity, association, and other elements but it adopts them, not only in the language, but in everything that we see, too. The main conclusion of the study is that the visual poem is not a poetic school that has its own followers, concepts, and characteristics, but a poetic phenomenon that is too broad to be limited by a school or a specific tradition.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The term 'Inter-Generic Writing' is synonymous with the concept of the 'open text onto genres' and it accurately describes writing that is free of the tie of the logic of 'fixed identity', and breaks the borders between traditional genres and traditional arts. It is a kind of modernist writing that appears to be a continuous adventure and constant deviation from what has been drawn by historical and traditional forms of expression.<sup>1</sup>

Edward al-Kharrat says that the term of 'trans-generic writing' expresses a specific kind of writing in which several kinds of literature integrate. For example, poetry can combine with the narrative and dialogue

and the depiction of the scene. Besides, it can introduce a dramatic dialogue of a play together with movie scenery and poetic rhythm. In other words, trans-generic writing is a writing that employs cinema techniques and non-linguistic arts such as sculpture, painting and music.

In 'trans-generic writing' we notice the writer's care about vocal rhythm and system exactly as we see in musical compositions. The reader notices the issue of tonal structure not only in the 'sound' but also in the 'pictures', 'metaphors' and 'scenes'. This structure is close to or similar to the symphonic structures of sonatas or other known musical compositions. This

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<sup>1</sup> Abu Isma'il, 'A. (2005). "Su'al al-Tajnis fi al-Kitaba 'Abr al-Naw'iyah", on: <http://aslimnet.free.fr/div/2005/ouabou2.htm>

also applies to other arts such as sculpture and architecture. In fact, the term 'trans-generic writing' does not mean 'juxtaposition of literary and artistic genres.' It does not either mean that the text should be divided into two halves: half of it is a narrative and the other half is a dramatic dialogue or poetry. The decisive standard of 'inter generic writings' should be the "fusion" of two known genres with each other rather than their adjacency. Besides, the text has to be hybrid that is based on mutual pollination and interplay between the two arts rather than their consecutiveness or sequence. This type reminds us of previous genres such as the '*tragicomedy*' that appeared at the intersection of two previous centuries as a form that was based on integration of the two genres: tragedy and comedy, and the '*play-novel*' that appeared in the nineteenth century as a form that is based on the same principle of integration between the play and the novel.<sup>2</sup>

### Inter Genres in Visual Poetry

The extent of integration between the visual poem and different visual arts is not secret to the researcher in the field of poetry. The visual-poem in modern poetry is the most experimental type that has penetrated the traditional concept of poetic form and the way in which the visual composition of the poem affects its content and semantic components. The visual poem is considered a form that crosses the clear borders of Arabic poetry because it is composed and written with a focus directed at the human eye to enjoy it and be occupied with it, exactly as it is directed at the ear or more, if we can say so.<sup>3</sup>

The visual-poem breaks the borders of the poetic form that has remained for centuries indicative of the elements of rhythm, rhyme, diction and meaning. It also penetrates the printed form and form of poetry in its modern concept by the effect of the visual image, the order of letters, words, parts of words, calligraphy and its color, and other techniques that make it impossible for the receiver to be satisfied with just listening to the rhythms of the poem or the meanings of its words, without paying attention to its special printed form that constitutes a second language that

cannot be ignored in the process of inferring the meaning.

The researcher in classical poetry might find some poetic phenomena that intend to penetrate the traditional form of poetry such as the phenomenon of Tree-Form or pattern (Tashjeer / تشجير), "which is a kind of poetic composition that imitates the form of the tree and its branches. In this kind of poem, the poet chooses a certain line of poetry to be the foundation of his poem and from each word of the line two other lines branch and keep the same rhythm and rhyme."<sup>4</sup> The whole form of the poem looks like a tree and its branches.

The 'Geometric Poem' is based on geometric measurements and shapes. The poet chooses a word that is suitable to start a specific new line of poetry, and its reading in a converse way constitutes the end of the same line as the case is in Trigonometry and Quadrangles and other geometric shapes. The poet can also choose a specific letter and make it the center of the poetic form, and from it, the lines of the poem start and return as we see in the Circular Structure.<sup>5</sup>

It should be pointed out that all these attempts remained in their innovative attempts within the frame of the traditional form. Actually, they added new restrictions to it besides those that already existed and characterized the classical traditional poetry, and they also constituted new obstacles in the face of the poet's emotional and creative overflow. Here are some examples of "Tashjir = Tree-Form" and "Shakl Handasi = Geometric Form":

### Types of Visual Poetry

- **Tashjir Poetry/ Tree-Form Poetry**

Al-Tallawi (1998) defines this type of poetry as "formation of the system or poetic text after the form of a tree"<sup>6</sup> and he believes that 'al-Mushajarat (Tree-Like Poems) "work on creating intimate integration between the idea and the form, and the mutual reconciliation and harmony between them."<sup>7</sup> This

it ends with the end of the oratorical activity. See: Bawardi (2003), p. 180. See also: Ben 'abd al-'Ali (1994). *Thaqafat al-'Udhn wa Thawafat al-'Ayn*.

<sup>4</sup> Amin, Ahmad (1983). *Al-Naqd al-Adabi*. Misr: Maktanat al-Nahdha al-Misriya, p. 185-186.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 220-221

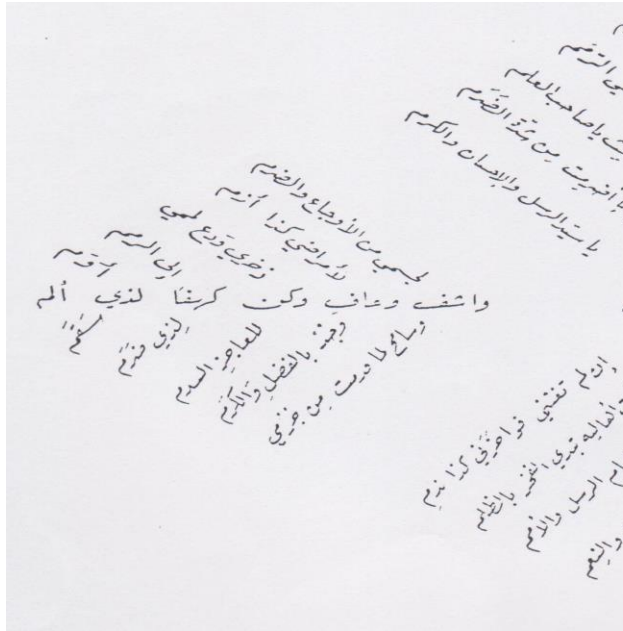
<sup>6</sup> Al-Tallawi, Mohammad Najib (1998). *Al-Qassida al-Tashkiliya fi Shi'r al-'Arabi*. Cairo: al-Hay'a al-Misriya al-'Amm li al-Kitab, p. 152.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 146.

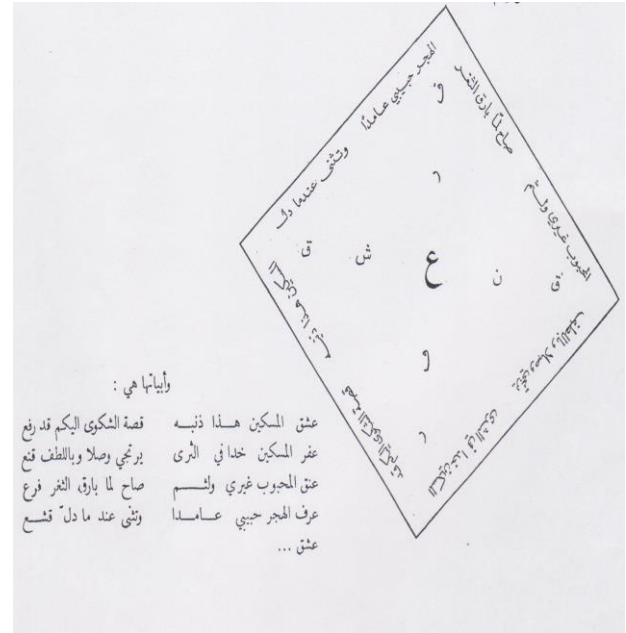
<sup>2</sup>[http://www.diwanalarab.com/spip.php?article17699#.XLI0ROhvZPY\\_](http://www.diwanalarab.com/spip.php?article17699#.XLI0ROhvZPY_)

<sup>3</sup> Regarding Free Verse and Prose-Poem, Bawardi points out the movement of the Arab culture from the culture of the 'ear' to the culture of the 'eye', which constitutes a swapping of the traditional Arab mental concepts that were used to 'hearing' and 'oratory' culture and conveyance of meanings through 'voice' and 'stress' and 'intonation' only. This movement represents cancellation of the receiver's role because his role is limited in the operation of mental interaction and because the language of the text is transitory and

type of poetry was popular in the seventeenth century. Below is a sample poem:



"dividing the space into rings and geometric quadrangles".<sup>11</sup> Below is a sample of Geometric forms:



• Al-Shi'r al-Handasi / Geometric Poetry

The term 'Shi'r Handasi/ Geometric Poetry' is an invented term that is attributed to the popularity of the geometric forms that the poems acquired such as: Circular Form, Triangular Form and the Rhomboid Form. Undoubtedly, these forms, especially the <sup>8</sup> Circular Form, <sup>9</sup> transcended the Quadrangle Form or the Rectangular Form and we can consider them, together with the Mushajarat (Tree-Like-Forms), the most widespread forms.

It deserves mentioning that the Circular Form witnessed a special development and it generated another form called the 'Compound Circular Form' that "requires drawing of a larger original circle; outside on its circumference there should be small circles; on the edges of these large and small circles, the line of poetry passes from the beginning to the end to restart from the center of the circle to the second small circle and then it ends at the center of the large circle."<sup>10</sup> Out of this last type, another less widespread form was developed called "al-Takhtim" (Ring-Formations) which is based on the technique of



<sup>8</sup> Amin, Ahmad (1983). *Al-Naqd al-Adabi*, p. 220-221.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 214.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 220-221.

<sup>11</sup> Bannis, Mohamad (1985/2002). *Al-'Amal al-Shi'riya al-Kamela*. Al-Maghreb: Dar Topqal li al-Nashr, p. 98.

## Inter Genres as Revealed in Names of Visual Poems

Researchers have given different names to the visual-poem. Mohammad Najib al-Tallawi chose a name that expresses all the levels that go into the formation of the poem such as: geometry, sound and indications. He called this kind of poem 'al-Qassida al-Tashkiliya/The Formative/ The Pattern Poem' because this term is able to absorb all the formative levels and able to distinguish this linguistic phenomenon<sup>12</sup>, while other names, in his opinion, do not rise to be comprehensive terms that reflect this phenomenon.<sup>13</sup>

Cherbel Dagher chose the term 'al-Shakl al-Khatti/ the Calligraphic Form' to name these poems, relying on the proposals of A. J. Geimas (1917-1992), which introduces the possibility of studying the metric level of the text through its calligraphic form, depending on the form or pattern of the text-printing, arrangement of the white spaces, the punctuation marks or their absence, besides other elements. Thus, al-Shakl al-Khatti/ Calligraphic Form for him refers to the printed form as the field for work and analysis.<sup>14</sup> The poetic text is a product of circumstances that are specific to it and "external marks that have expressionistic function"<sup>15</sup> that might achieve its complete template shape through its representation on the page.

In addition to these names, we also find the term of al-Shi'r al-Handasi/ Geometric Poetry which was first used to express the poems that have a specific geometric shape or pattern in their printing,<sup>16</sup> and the term of 'al-Shi'r al-Marsoom/ the Drawn Poetry'<sup>17</sup> that describes the poetry whose printing-face consists of various drawings. However, the two terms are limited in their roles to one formative aspect. The term of 'Geometric Poetry' does not include the 'drawn' poems or the geometric forms or shapes that the language of the poem draws or designs.

In a chapter called Tajaliyat al-Asala fi al-Shi'r al-Hadith in his book called: *Nazrat fi al-Shi'r al-'Arabi al- Hadith*, 'Abdo Badawi mentions the two terms

<sup>12</sup>Al-Tallawi, Mohammad Najib (1998). *Al-Qassida al-Tashkiliya fi al-Shi'r al-'Arabi*, p. 18-19.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>14</sup> Dagher, Cherbel (1988). *Al-Shi'riya al-'Arabiya al- Haditha: Tahlil Nassi*.

<sup>15</sup> Dagher, Cherbel (1978). "al-Shakl al-Khatti fi al-Qassida al-'Arabiya al-Haditha". *Dirasat 'Arabiya*, July, 9<sup>th</sup>, 1978, p. 99-111.

<sup>16</sup> I originally found this naming in Bakri Amin in his book: *Mutal'at fi al-Shi'r al-Mamluki wa al-'Uthmani*; and in: Amin (1972), p. 213.

<sup>17</sup> 'Abdo Badawi used this term to describe the poetry that adopts in its printing a specific pattern such as

'Qassidat al-Faragh/ Poem of Emptiness' and 'al-Qassida al-Electroniya/ Electronic Poem', considering this type of writing as a 'slipping' into the abyss of playfulness with artistic forms that were known in the era of decline and degradation and found similar forms in the European poetry.<sup>18</sup>

Paul Shaul gave the name 'Qassidat al-Faragh / Poem of Emptiness' and 'Qassidat al-Bayadh/ Poem of Whiteness' to this literary genre, deriving it from the European criticism because it refers to exploitation of the page and manipulation of its emptiness.<sup>19</sup>

In his speech about the poetic space, al-Makari introduces the name of 'al-Shi'r al-Basari/ The Visual Poetry' and 'al-Shi'r al-Fadha'i/ The Spacial Poetry'.<sup>20</sup> al-Makari also mentions the term of 'al-Shi'r al-Mujassam / the Cutout Poetry, al-Shi'r al-Mashhadi/ The Scenic Poetry', the 'Multidimensional Poem', and the 'Mechanical Poem'.<sup>21</sup>

Under the term 'al-Shi'r al-Lawha/ The Painting-Poetry', 'al-Shi'r al-Lugha/ The Language-Poetry', Yumna al-Eid (1987) writes a definition for Mohammad Bannis's visual poems. She says that they are "a collection of pieces, drawings and paintings that are based on writing with the Arabic ornamental lines that are fortified in different geometric forms [...] the shape becomes circular and rectangular; it rises and goes down like a bleeding that is crowded in a space of white paper; it retreats and piles up in a small corner and lets the rest be a beautiful horizon or a wide margin that is broad for reading in the silence, in the illusion of the emptiness."<sup>22</sup>

These different names of the 'visual-poem' confirm the significance of 'vision' and 'sight' in defining its meaning and the role that the varied visual aspects play, which are essential in the reader's attempt to infer the meaning of the poem. These aspects include: the blank or the white space in the terms of 'Qassidat al-Faragh/ the Poem of Emptiness' and 'Qassidat al-Bayadh/ The Poem of the Whiteness'; the 'formation',

the poems that took the form of an oasis during the Fatimid era, and the modern poetry pattern that combines between the vocal poetry and calligraphic poetry, in: Badawi, 'Abdo (1998). *Nazrat fi al-Shi'r al-'Arabi al- Hadith*. Cairo: Dar Qiba', p. 73.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 73

<sup>19</sup> Al-Tallawi, Mohammad Najib (1998). *Al-Qassida al-Tashkiliya fi al-Shi'r al-'Arabi*, p. 19.

<sup>20</sup> Al-Makari, Mohammad (1991). *Al-Shak wa al-Khitab: Madkhal Tahlili Dhahirati*, p. 180.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 185-198.

<sup>22</sup> Al-'Eid, Yumna (1987). *Fi al-Qawl al-Shi'ri*, p. 149.

which is basically a 'visual' aspect in the term of 'al-Qassida al-Tashkiliyya/ The Formative Poem/ The Pattern Poem'; the geographical lines in the term of 'al-Tashkil al-Khatti/ the Calligraphic Form'.

In view of this variety of names, this study stresses this "calligraphic" aspect and gives it a special focus even in the naming of this poetic phenomenon. The treatment of this type of poem is not exclusive to its 'blank spaces' or its specific drawings and definite geometrical shapes, but also to what expresses and represents the whole empty page and everything that is transferred to the reader's eyes when his eyes meet these blank spaces and survey their components, including the total shape and all the details of the punctuation marks.

Consequently, we can say that these poems constitute a conscious integration of poetry with other visual arts<sup>23</sup>. They are formed or designed poems because their lines and sections are introduced in designs that reflect their content. Therefore, these visual poems<sup>24</sup> are considered a product of two combined messages: the 'iconic message' that is perceived in a total comprehensive way, and the 'linguistic message' that requires a more analytical and a careful close reading. The words in this compound message play a special role because they constitute, by their letters, the external image of the poem.<sup>25</sup> Bohn (1986) defines the visual poems as poems that intend to be seen, and he considers the combination of 'drawing and poetry' a structure of the essential principles of every art, rather than an evasiveness or concession.<sup>26</sup>

#### • The First Level

This level includes poems whose attempts of formation focus on the manipulation of the punctuation marks and deviating them from their traditional concepts and indications. Sometimes, the poet intends to give them up completely through

controlling the division of the lines of the poem and their number, the order of their words, the construction or de-construction of the lines in such a way that harmonizes with the poetic meaning and the rhythm of the poem and, simultaneously, keeps the structure of the line of poetry that moves from the right side to the left side of the page.

In addition to that, this level includes emphasis on certain words or phrases and highlighting them by the use of a larger size of the letters and bold typing in order to draw the reader's attention more. That is also done through framing the phrases or expressions that the poet intends to emphasize by putting them in brackets or parentheses. The best examples that illustrate this level can be found in the poetry of the American poet E.E. Cummings, who is unique in his various styles and artistic techniques that combine punctuation whose rules differ from the rules of standard English grammar. Sometimes, Cummings uses broken words and manipulates the rules of grammar and linguistic structure in a prominent unusual way. Besides, he employs special tricks that express his view about his environment in a new way that reflects the stormy life that he lived and the sensual entity that his life involves.

The Arab creative poet Elias Awad (1922-1984) is close in his style to E. E. Cummings's style of dismantling the phrases and scattering the words on the page as we see in his poem *Sawqa* / سوقاء<sup>27</sup> in which the white space interacts with the black space to create a special product. Besides, several phrases take the direction of left-to-right on the page.

In this poem, Elias Awad manipulates the components of the standard Arabic sentence and breaks its logical connection but he does not intensify the employment of printing tricks neither does he employ them as E.E. Cummings does.<sup>28</sup>

poem as "the only one of its kind in *Shi'r* magazine, which took upon itself the mission of moving ahead with the modernist Arab poem in a way that goes beyond the prose-poem or free-verse." Bawardi maintains that it is "the only visual poem that was created consciously under the influence of the visual element in understanding the text." Bawardi goes further to say that this poem is the first closest one to the model of E.E. Cummings's model in Arabic literature and it preceded Adonis, Kamal Abu Deeb and others in its time (Bawardi, 2003: 191).

<sup>28</sup> See the text of the poem in: *Shi'r* magazine, issue 31/32, 1964, p. 42-51.

<sup>23</sup> Meisami, Julie Scott; Starkey, Paul (eds.). 1998. *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature* p. 23; Preminger, Alex (ed.) (1965). *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, p. 607.

<sup>24</sup> Cuddon, J. A. (1979). *A Dictionary of Literary Terms*, p. 32.

<sup>25</sup> Longree, Georges H. F. (1976). "The Rhetoric of a Picture – Poem", p. 63.

<sup>26</sup> Bohn, Willard (1986). *The Aesthetics of Visual Poetry 1914–1928*, p. 2.

<sup>27</sup> It was published in *Shi'r* magazine in Issue 31/32, 1964, p. 42-51. Bawardi (2003:190) considers this

The writer of this study admits that she has tried hard to find any Arab poet who is specialized in such tricks and playfulness with words to see how he integrated them in his poems but I have not found anyone. However, I found a few poets who partially give up one or two aspects only. For example, Abbas Baydhoun<sup>29</sup> and Muzaffar al-Nawwab (b. 1934)<sup>30</sup> partially give up the employment of punctuation marks. Others such as Mohammad Bannis (b. 1948) are also characterized by adopting this formative level through their employment of various lines, especially those that give prominence to the aesthetics of Islamic Arabesque decoration style.<sup>31</sup>

"White-Space" is another active element that is obvious in producing the meaning in Bannis's poetry. This is what we also find in poems that are written by Sa'di Yusuf (b. 1934), Adonis (b.1930), and Nazih Abu 'Afash (b. 1946), who indicated the 'white space' by leaving the whole space of the page completely empty, or filled it with three dots that indicate deletion. Besides, they frequently resorted to "fragmentation" of the phrase into its words or the words into their letters and scattering them on the white space of the page.

Among the attempts that are specific to Adonis and Sa'di Yusuf is the employment of the 'framing' technique, which indicates separation between the 'essential' and the 'subordinate' in the meaning of the poem. Alternatively, they put the 'marginal' element in footnotes to turn it into something that is merely extra additions that are outside the necessities of the poetic composition.<sup>32</sup>

We also find that both poets manipulate the punctuation marks but at a lower level, which motivated me to look for other poems that resort to this 'trick' in certain magazines such as: *Mawaqif*, *al-Adab*, *Shi'r* and *Faradis*, where I found a large number of such poems and poets of different affiliations and goals.

<sup>29</sup> For example, some sections of his poem "12 Texts in a Poem" where the first one is called 'Sabil', the tenth one is called 'Incomplete Mural.' Neither of them contained any punctuation marks. The second section of the poem is called 'al-Dhou', where the poet uses the comma in only one place. See Baydhoun (1982). It is also possible to notice the degree of his giving up the use of punctuation marks in his collection of poetry called *Hujurat*. See Baydhoun (1992).

<sup>30</sup> We notice that he gave up the use of most punctuation marks in his 'Complete Works'. He uses only two dots, three consecutive dots, the question mark, and the quotation marks in sporadic places. See: al-Nawwab (2001).

Probably, the best representation of the First Formative Level is a poem called 'al'-Adhdadh/Opposites' by Kamal Abu Deeb (b. 1942) due to the<sup>33</sup> large number of varied visual elements that it includes, besides other poetic or artistic forms. For example, we find sections of traditional metric poetry, other sections that bear the title of a tale and a third type that is satisfied with marks without words. We also find postscript of notes of a symphony that is given the title of (N0 1).

In addition to this, we find integration between Arabic, French and English in the same section. It also employs the technique of 'fragmentation', printing some words in 'bold', and making variation in the type and font of the script. All this reminds us of the term of 'Compound Poem', which is a poem that tends to benefit from other literary genres and non-literary arts such as painting, sculpture and music.

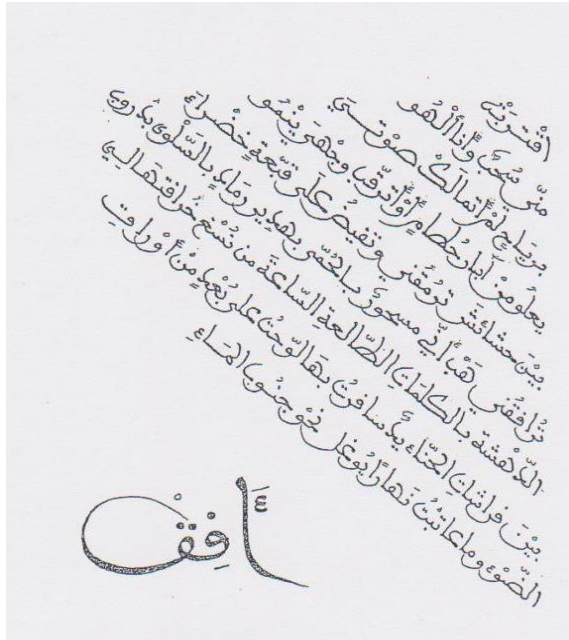
#### • The Second Level

On the second level, these typing/printing tricks continue to exist but they are sharper with an addition of playfulness in the structure of the poetic line. On this level, the line can start in the middle of the printed page or from left to right or from the bottom to the top or from the top to the bottom. It can also take the shape of italics with some slanting to the right or left. Thus, when reading, the reader is compelled to turn the page partially or fully to the right or the left direction. This is seen in Mohammad Bannis's poems, where the reader starts reading by looking for the starting point, and thinking about the relationship between the 'white-space' and the 'black space' that is based on special and distinguished harmony in every poem. Bannis's poem 'Shi'riya' is a good example that illustrates our argument. See how the first section has its special order:

<sup>31</sup> See the third section of his poem 'Shi'riya'; the first pattern in the Appendix; Bannis (2000). Vol. 1, p. 245; and sections from his poem "Hakaza Kallamani al-Sharq". It is possible to review the text of the poem in *Mawaqif* magazine, Issue 36, Winter 1980, p. 14-27.

<sup>32</sup> I introduced sections from Adonis's poem 'Ismael', in which he adopted the technique of 'Ta'tir / Framing' and 'Tahmish/Footnoting' in the second form in the Appendix. The whole text of the poem was published in *Mawaqif* magazine, Issue 49, Winter 1984, p. 158-175. Besides I illustrated this technique in Sa'di Yusuf's poem 'Mostafa' in pattern N0 3, Yusuf (1995), Vol. 3, p. 133-142.

<sup>33</sup> Form Four in the Appendix of this study.



The poet divides the page into two parts. The upper part occupies the written uttered text and its lines are written slanting upwards while the lower part is occupied by the 'whiteness' of the page with one word only which says "Wake!". The word is typed in bold, in a larger size instead of italics. No doubt, this act, as its printed order implies, is of great significance as it constitutes an open call by the poet or urgent request to wake up and desert the traditional classical poetic forms and create exceptional new forms that have no definition or limits, but have complete freedom of writing, no matter how far it is from the traditional forms. This meaning is in harmony with the slanting order of the lines and, consequently, with the expressions that indicate demand for change: "I could not help my voice rising from the well of wreckage!" These words imply the inability to bear things that have become a wreckage and are disconnected from the present. Besides, talking about subjects that have become far away from him is unbearable.

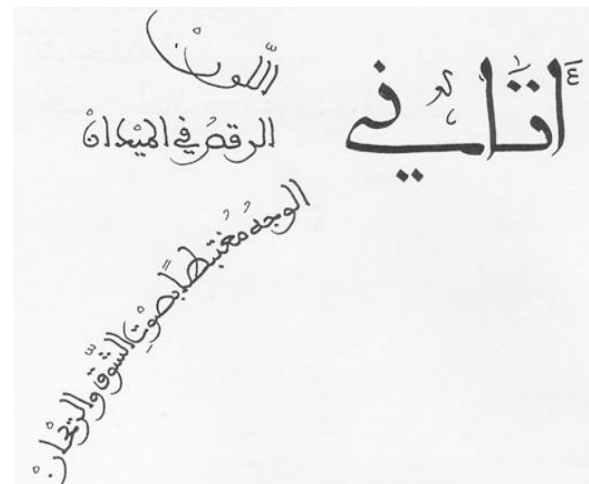
Therefore, he sees himself attracted by the need for change, by forgetting and by modern words "that rise at this hour" and are understood by the age. He emphasizes his abandonment of the old saying: "I have among the redbreast butterflies a hand that I travelled with; waved with it from a short distance of the leaves of light; I have never blamed a day that goes too far towards the south of the water".

Thus, Mohammad Bannis integrates different poetic components to produce a text that says and performs at the same time. His poem 'Shi'riya', which is an explanatory poem, calls for creation of a new poetry, in language, form and content. The poem manages

from the first section to embody its call and apply it by adopting a simple language that has no queer words in its phrases but has an exceptional form of its own. It is also distinctive in an unfamiliar order of the lines, which require the reader to turn the page partially in order to be able to see it straight. No doubt that even after the reader turns it, he will not get a form that is close to the traditional poem at all.

We can also refer to other sections in this poem whose lines are built in a form that is different from the traditional structure as we see in the seventh section where the first line branches into three lines: the first line moves upward, the second line moves to the left straightly, and the third line bends downward:

In the poem below, the reader sees three lines that follow one word at the beginning. It is the verb "Atani = (the colour/ dancing/the face) came to me" . The subject (in Arabic) comes after the verb and each subject in the three lines symbolizes 'revelation' or 'poetic inspiration' that come from a certain field of art that is represented in the words "colours, dance, and music.'



• **The Third Level**

It is a level that is not satisfied with what is found in the two first levels about visual techniques. This level tries to include attempts that are beyond them. The poet exploits the white space of the page in a special artistic and structural way. He resorts to drawing by words in order to embody a specific image that fits in with the content of the text. On this level, we find ourselves obliged to distinguish between two types of integration between poetry and drawing and divide them as follows:

- **The First Type**

The First Level includes those poems that include adjacent drawings but are not separate from the poem

and are not added just for decoration but to complete the meaning, too, and to express full success of integration of poetry and drawing. This level is illustrated by sections from the poems: 'al-Mawt Tifl A'ma/ Death is a Blind Child,' and 'al-Kalimat wa Zilaloha/ Words and Their Shadows.' The two poems



### Section (1)

adopt a similar type. They are composed of two lines of drawing and writing that look-like one line of the same boldness and shape.

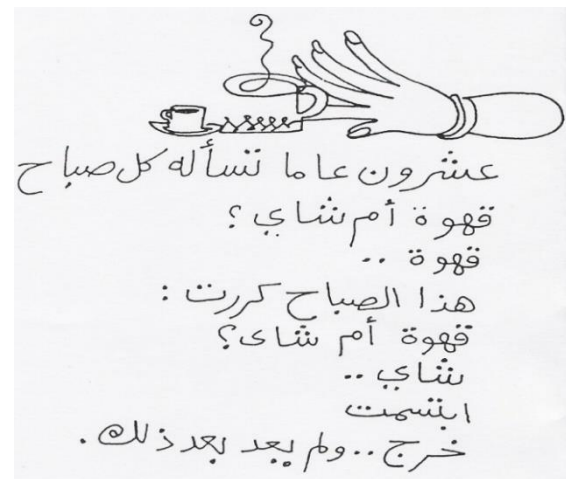
Below is a section of the poem 'al-Mawt Tifl A'ma'. This is the third section and we see complete harmony between drawing and writing, as if one hand wrote and drew the words, rather than two.



We notice the fusion between 'drawing' and 'writing' through the harmony between the three lines in the

letters "s/س" and the letter "sh/ش" and the two lines in the quotation marks ("...") with the mark that is drawn on the mirror in the space between them. The harmony also exists between their length, too. The letters 'alef' and 'hamza' come closer to the lines of the fingers in the drawing, which appears in length and straightness. Treatment of the content of the poem reveals two conflicting forces, which are: the desired versus the existing; the desire and ambition versus helplessness or the rational versus the unachieved. The mirror cries because the beautiful face going away from her, because she always desires things that are opposite to the features of beauty. The mirror can represent literature or painting. Both arts reflect reality but, for long periods, they adopted the role of reflecting its aesthetics only, or beautifying its ugly aspect, and showing it according to its desired image rather than the image of the life that we live. Thus, this reality has mostly appeared as an ideal one that drowns us in the happy endings of novels and stories or beautiful images in poems, especially those that turn nature into a desired paradise. This reality also drowns us in the beautiful colors of the drawings.

However, this beautification is no more possible, especially that the nature of art is like a mirror that obliges it to reflect things as they are. Art is reproduced by a man who lives reality and is aware of its details and events, and fails to be separated from it no matter how much he tries to do so. In a similar way to this poetic section, the drawings and phrases harmonize in the poem of 'Zilal al-Kalimat/ Shadows of the Words', where the words are written in a more inclined words like the drawings. Here is a description of two sections that, I think, meet at certain points:



### Section(2)



The drawings in the two sections and all the sections of the poem are shadows of the words and accurate drawings that reflect all its words. The lady that is spoken about appears in the drawing and the text of the First Section. The dog, the tree, and the man also appear. The clock tells about the man's delay at his appointment. This lady, as she appears in the drawing, and as the words tell about her, is ready to wait for her dog to do its needs, no matter how long that takes the dog, but she is not ready to wait for the Persona (speaker), who might be her lover, if he is late. The reason for that is not attributed to the place as the place does not change.

In the Second Section, coffee and tea cups are drawn as the lady's hand asks her husband to choose either of them every morning. The text is based on the repeated question everyday: "Coffee or Tea?" But the meaning of this question and the drawing in the first section are not the intended target of the words. The target is the words themselves, the shadow of the words and the superficial meaning that is reflected from them. Like the text, they invite the reader to search and dig for the deeper indications that lie behind the drawing and the text, too.

It is noticed that the speech in these two sections is about the relationship between the woman and the man. The woman appears to be an authoritative one who controls the relationship between them. The powers in this relationship are not equal. In such relations we usually see that the man is more powerful and has more authority than his power and authority in reality. Thus, through integration between drawing and writing, the poet achieves deeper indications than those that are reflected in the text or the drawings. In some places, the drawings are funny because they convey the meanings of the words in a concrete literal meaning. Through his integration of drawings and writing, the text embodies the relationship between the title, the text, the phrases and drawings, which imply an indirect call for paying attention, not to the visible shadow that results from the words only, but to the invisible and intangible depth, too.

#### - The Second Type

The Second Type of integration between drawing and poetry deals with the poems in which the lines of the picture, its colors and aesthetics, are formed by the words of the poem itself, where we find fragmented words and scattered letters in an irregular, unrepeatable

way in order to form a drawing that expresses the content of the poem.

This technique takes us back to Mallarme's call to poets to employ drawings, not by drawing objects but by employing their impression on the readers' souls.

<sup>34</sup>This call revealed itself on its top fulfilment in his poem "Un Coup des Dés" (A Throw of a Backgammon Cube). It is also found as a fundamental element of the poetic composition among later poets such as Apollinaire, who is considered their ideal role model because his poems integrate the contents of the poem with their printed form in a special organic form. For example, in his poem called "Voyage", he shows the path of the voyage through ordering the words of the poem on the surface of the page. Similarly, in his poem "Il Pleut"/ "It Rains", the reader imagines the falling of rain through the fragmented words on the page. His other techniques include drawings that appear in most of his poems. <sup>35</sup>

In Arabic poetry, we can find several similar samples in the writings of Mohammad Bannis. The reader looks at his poems and starts looking for an entrance to them, but he does not find a specific one. Actually, he finds entrances from several angles, each of which creates a different poem. In this way, he creates tens of texts out of a single poem. Each text has its specific reading, approach and meaning. To illustrate this argument, the following section analyzes Bannis's poem "Dhat Sabah/ One Morning", which is drawn in the following way:



<sup>34</sup> Bohn, Willard (1986). *The Aesthetics of Visual Poetry 1914–1928*. Cambridge, p. 2.

<sup>35</sup> Review some of his poems in the Appendix of the poems, Forms 5., 6.

As we see, the word "al-Dam/ Blood" is in the center of the poem but though it is not the title of the poem, it acquires its significance from its place in the center and obliges the reader to deal with it as a beginning from which all the lines start. It occupies the opening of every poetic line, constituting an anaphora<sup>36</sup> in the whole poem. When the reader reads the poem, he is free to choose the direction that he likes. For example, he can choose to start with the word "Blood" and move into the left direction, which is the ordinary direction of the poetic line (in Arabic). Alternatively, he can start reading with the word "Blood" and then he can move upwards, and so on and so forth in a circular way till he reads the whole poem and, finally, reaches the starting point. What he actually gets is the following order:

فرسٌ أخضر من منخفض الوديان يطربنا والدم  
كفنٌ يتسلق عيناً تبحث عن ضوء بين رماد والدم  
نهرٌ تتلاشى فيه تراويل الموتى والدم  
خرقٌ تُحرق معنى الكلمات والدم  
بابٌ لا تفتحه أصداء نحيب والدم  
والدم وحشٌ يفترس الأحلام على صخرة أرض تكي

The word "Blood" in the center of the poem imposes the general atmosphere that controls the poem. It is the motif that moves the reader to the atmosphere of murder and bloodshed,<sup>37</sup> which probably represents the atmosphere of repeated wars or a series of betrayals, suppression and exploitation or similar issues that put the human being in front of scenes of bleeding.

In addition to all that, the order of the lines in this shape embodies the bleeding that flows into all directions and expands onto a large spot of land. Thus, the relationship between the drawing that is produced by the order of the words and the text of the poem and its contents is achieved. The drawing represents the bleeding of the addressee through the use of the verb "Qatalouka/ They Killed You"; it is the bleeding of the human being on his land, the bleeding of his burdens

of life<sup>38</sup>, the bleeding of the present that the human being brings to himself by his wars.

It is worthwhile mentioning that the word 'Blood' acquires its importance from the visual techniques that give prominence to it such as: employment of big size bold emphasized font. Consequently, typing it in the center of the page in a way that draws the attention of the reader and makes him focus his eyes on it for seconds before he starts reading the lines. The word also gains significance on the syntactic level as it functions as a 'subject' of all the surrounding sentences that function as predicates, which means that "Blood" is the main word and all the predicates revolve around it.

Consequently, the word 'Blood' functions as a repeated 'subject' that is emphasized by 'repetition' as a central motif from where all the other indications start. Here, we find correspondence between the syntactic grammatical level and the printed indicative level, too, as the whole discourse about blood is the central point on all levels.

From the point of view of 'content', I see that the six predicates of the subject 'blood' can be classified into three groups, each of which includes two contrasted aspects:

1. **The mare versus the beast.** The paradox between the two is clearly perceived. The 'beast' is man's enemy, who fears it, and always tries to get rid of it. He has lived with it a long conflict in his life and migration from one place to another. He is the antagonist of the mare. Horses acquired a high status in the life of Bedouins and Arabs. No one of them gave up horses in his journeys and movements and wars. The owners gave their horse a special care as if it were one of the family members. Sometimes, the head of the family prefers his horse to his family members in his treatment, feeding and drinking or caressing. Thus, blood is a beast that preys on dreams on a weeping earth that clings to hope; it is a green mare that calls for optimism and desire for life. Probably, this is an allusion to

<sup>36</sup> Repetition of the first word(s) or phrase or sentences for a rhetoric purpose. See; Wahbi, Majdi (1984). *Mu'jam al-Mustalahat al-'Arabiya fi al-Lugha wa al-Adab*, p. 118.

<sup>37</sup> It is a narrative event or character or idea or expression that is repeated in literature or popular heritage. It can also be repeated in several literatures or one literary work. See: Wahbi (1984), p. 396.

<sup>38</sup> Yumna al-'Eid referred to this in her articles "al-Shi'r al-Lawha, al-Shi'r al-Lugha", in her book *Fi al-Qawl al-Shi'ri*, stressing that Bannis's poem is "powerful in its ease, pure in its complication, touches us in more than one place of our contemporary concerns to such an extent that we do not know how to seize the paths of our bleeding with it." Al-'Eid, Yumna (1987). *Fi al-Qawl al-Shi'ri*, p. 155.

people's hope during war or after it when they look at the blood of the martyrs who died so that victory and new life would be born.

2. **The shroud versus rags.** Here, too, the characteristics of each kind of these cloths come to the reader's mind; the whiteness of the *shroud* versus the dirtiness of *rags*; the purity of the shroud versus the torn rags; wrapping the body of the dead after washing it versus wrapping the dirty bodies and the worn equipment with rags.

Regarding 'blood', we find contrast between 'blood' that symbolizes a 'shroud' that rises to the eyes of the seeker of light among ashes, and 'blood' that symbolizes 'rags' that burn the words. In the first instance, the shroud is the spotlight at the end of the tunnel while in the second, it is nothingness and death.

3. **The river versus the door.** The *river* is a lively landmark that beats with life. Wherever there is water, there are plants, trees and creatures. The *door*, however, is a motionless inanimate and lifeless object. In view of this classification, we notice that the scene of 'blood' creates two contradictory feelings in the soul of the looker on it. It is a mixture of *wounds* and their *bandage*, despair and hope, mourning and pleasure, silence and speech, and, consequently; *death* and *life*. It is the source of death and source of life. Technically, it is a metaphor that represents the human being in his life and death. This 'blood', with the contradictions that it bears, takes us back to the myth of *death* and *resurrection*.

Again, the study emphasizes the significance of the relationship between the text and its content. We can go back to the *shape* of the lines that we mentioned above. We notice that they employ the bleeding blood; the bending of the lines in this shape might also suggest the shape of the radiation that stems from the sun. From this perspective, we can say that the lines represent the radiance of hope, warmth, or new life that is resurrected after death. By adopting this shape rather than other shapes, the poet succeeds in

embodying all the different associations of blood and mixing the two meanings of death and rebirth of life.

## 2. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Dealing with the visual poem does not mean dealing with a poetic trend or a school of poetry. The visual poem is not a poetic school that has its own followers, concepts, and characteristics that are adopted by poets who try to apply them in every poem. It is a poetic phenomenon that is too broad to be limited by a school or a specific tradition. The visual poem disappears at the literary borders and classification according to 'section', 'length' or 'metric' becomes useless<sup>39</sup>.

However, the fundamental landmarks of the visual poem are the same landmarks that are specific to poetry. It did not give them up or substitute them by others, neither did it give up the structure of the poetic text that consists of sound, word and sentence that are produced by interaction, adjacency, poetic image and rhythm.<sup>40</sup> Above all, the visual poem did not marginalize the language, the poetic rhythm or music either, but it *turned* its language into a drawing and made its music something visible that stems from words that are seen scattered on a white page.

In addition, it did not cancel the components on which the poems were based such as: ambiguity, association, and other elements but it adopted them, not only in the language, but in everything that we see, too.

On the other hand, the visual poem did not give up the poetic content, but refused to talk about things that we do not live daily. Thus, it moved another step into depth in order to express the human self and its confusions, adopting the suitable techniques to that. This makes it appear un-surrendering to the reader on his first sight to it, and refusing his passivity and his acceptance to it negatively.

Hence, the visual poems sought to change our concept of the two operations of reading and writing, and obligated us, through its adoption of the 'double marks', to look at the text before reading it in order that we accept the authority of the physical dimension that is specific to it. Through its call to the reader to pay attention to the printed structure, the visual poem confirmed the independence of the text and its

other techniques in order to complete the structure of the text. See: Qassem, 'Adnan Hussein (2001). *Al-Ittijah al-Uslubi al-Bunyawi fi Naqd al-Shi'r al-'Arabi*, p. 169-209.

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<sup>39</sup> Taylor, Carole Ann (1985). *A Poetics of Seeing*, p. 6.

<sup>40</sup> This is how 'Adnan Qassem determined the structure of the poetic text. He considered the text as a whole structure that consists of sound, word, sentence that produce images, rhythm, and all the

impartiality as an expressive form and as an independent trans-generic literary form.<sup>41</sup>

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**Dr. Rima Abu Jaber Baransi** is a Palestinian scholar, researcher and inspector of Arabic Language and Literature at Oranim Academic College for Education in Haifa. She got her M.A. degree (2007) and Ph.D. degree from the University of Haifa (2011). Her M. A. Thesis is about: *The Visual Poem in Modern Arabic Poetry*. Her Ph. D. Dissertation is about: *The Oxymoron in Arabic Poetry and Its Contribution to the Poetic Meanings*. Dr. Baransi has published several researches published in books, in local and international refereed journals. She has presented her studies at local and international conferences at: Oranim College, al-Qasemi College, Kay College, Bar Ilan University, University of Haifa (Haifa), Adnan Menderes University, University of Prague, University of Lisbon and University of Bucharest. Dr. Baransi has received several scholarships for her excellence and has occupied several academic, educational and public positions.

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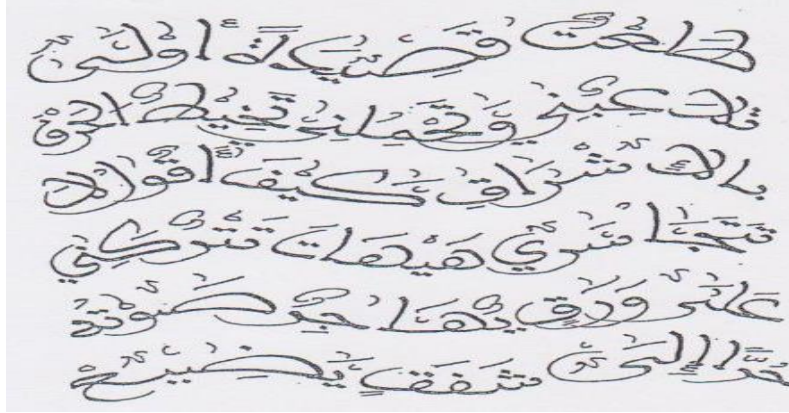
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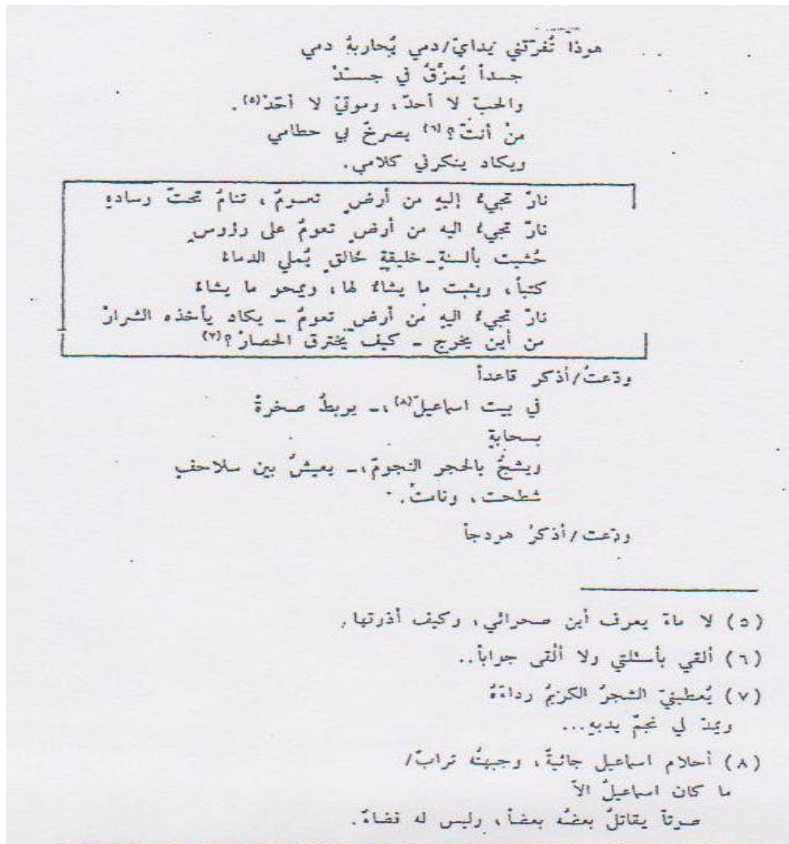
<sup>41</sup>Bohn, Willard. 1986. *The Aesthetics of Visual Poetry 1914–1928*, p. 67.

## Appendix of Poetic Forms

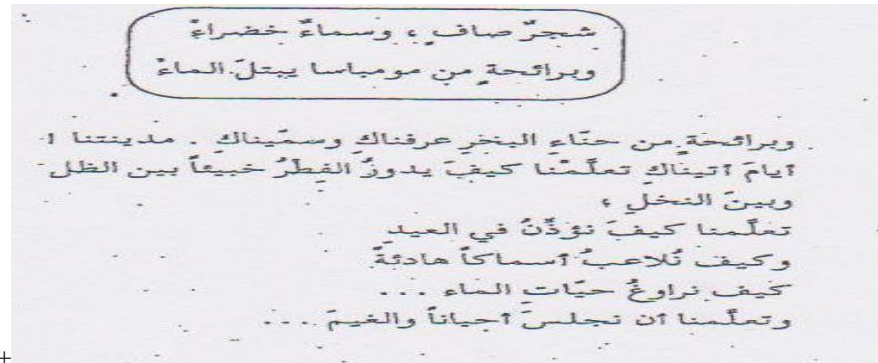
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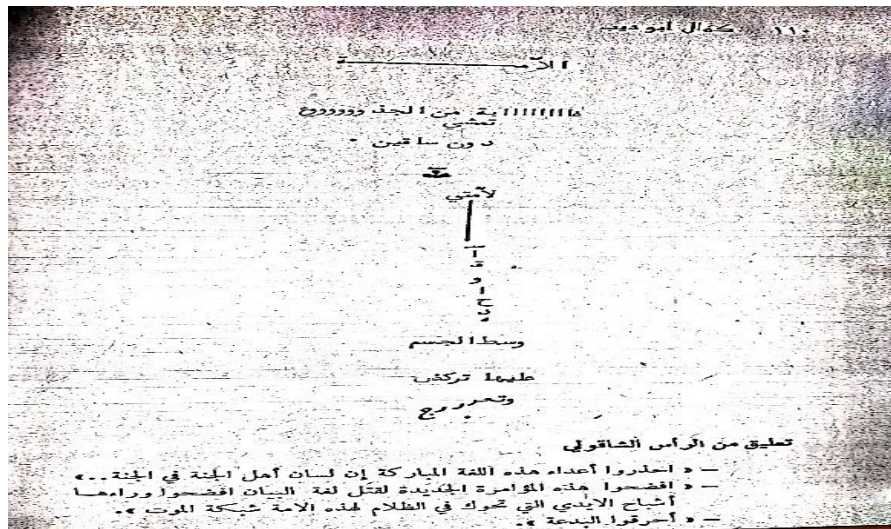
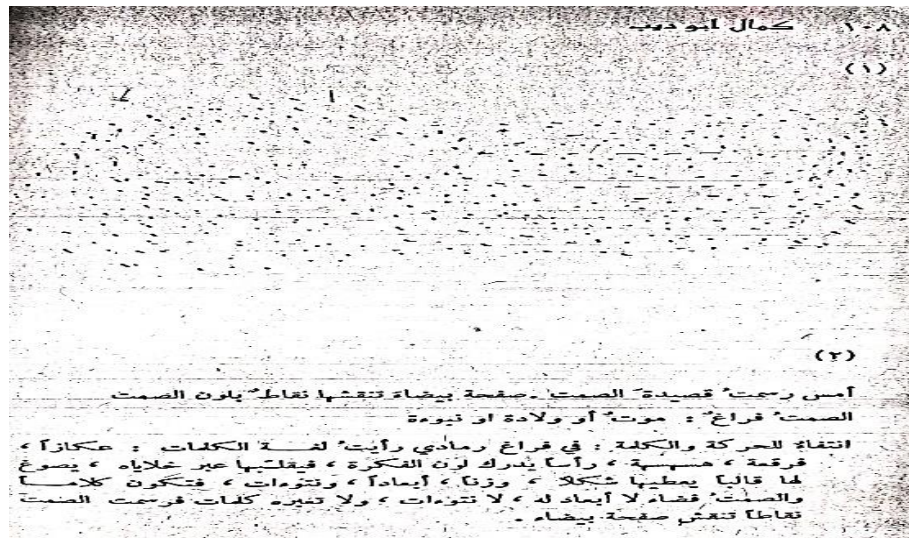
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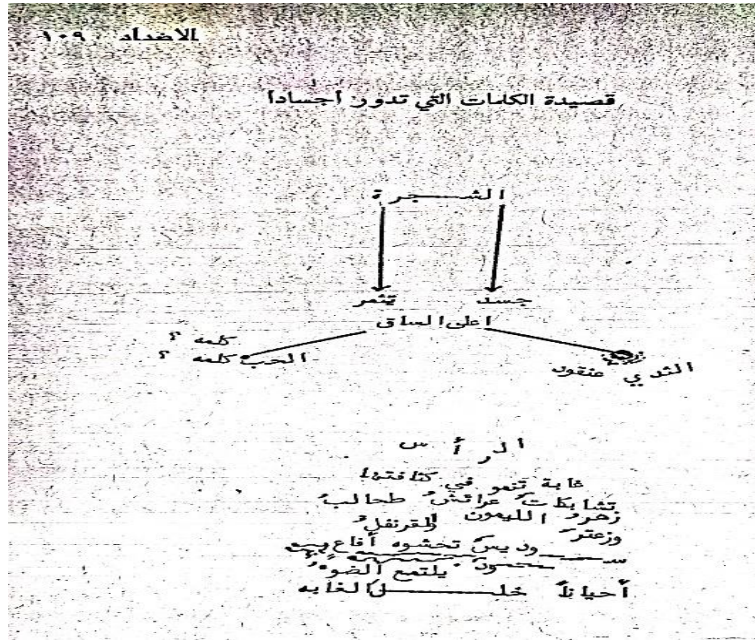


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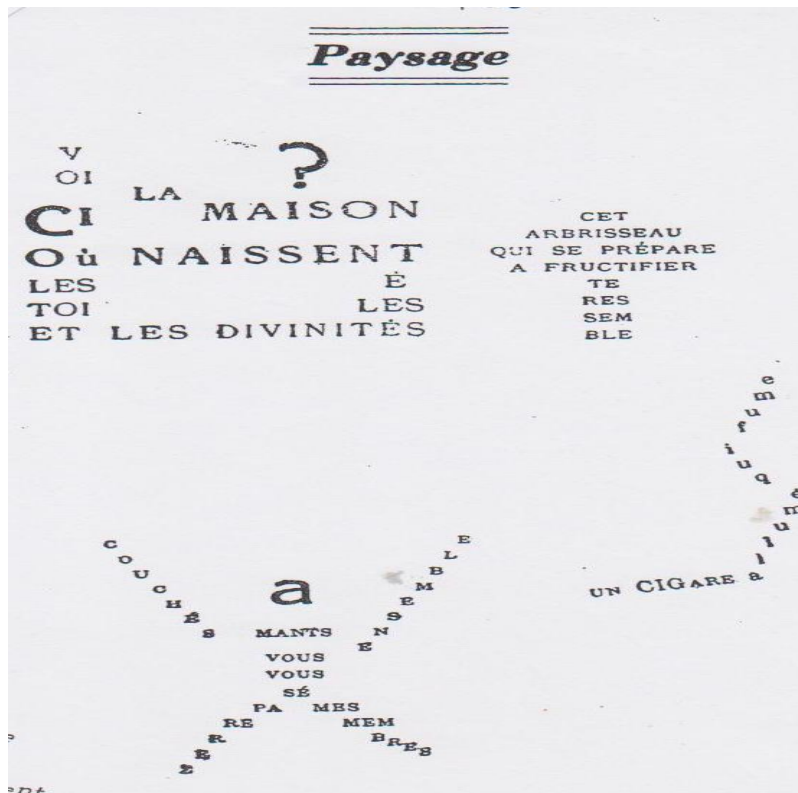


## Form (4): Sections from the poem "Opposites"





Form (5)



Form (6)

