

## Diagnosis; From Rhetoric to Drawing - Portraits of Mohamed Racim (A Semiotic Analysis)

*Khecha Loubna*<sup>1</sup>

Emir Abdel Kader University of Islamic Sciences-Algeria

[l.khecha@univ-emir.dz](mailto:l.khecha@univ-emir.dz)

Received: 20/07/2024, Accepted: 08/09/2025, Published: 27/12/2025

**ABSTRACT:** This study aims to shed light on the concept of diagnosis and its transition from rhetoric to drawing. To interpret this transition, the study is divided into two parts: a theoretical delves into theoretical concepts, and an applied section where we will analyze Mohammed Racim's portraits using semiotic analysis based on Roland Barthes' framework for static images. Barthes' analysis is based on the famous duality of [(denotation and connotation) or (designation, embedding)] aiming to elucidate the specificity of the term (diagnosis) and its application method.

**KEYWORDS:** Diagnosis, Drawing, Mohamed Racim, Rhetoric, Semiotic

**RÉSUMÉ :** Cette étude vise à éclairer la notion de diagnostic et son passage de la rhétorique au dessin. Pour interpréter cette transition, l'étude est divisée en deux parties : une partie théorique approfondissant les concepts théoriques et une section appliquée où nous analyserons les portraits de Mohammed Racim à l'aide d'une analyse sémiotique basée sur le cadre des images statiques de Roland Barthes. L'analyse de Barthes s'appuie sur la fameuse dualité de [(dénotation et connotation) ou (désignation, encastrement)] visant à élucider la spécificité du terme (diagnostic) et son mode d'application.

**MOTS CLÉS :** Dessin, Diagnostic, Mohamed Racim, Rhétorique, Sémiotique

**المخلص:** تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تسليط الضوء على مصطلح التشخيص، وكيف انتقل من البلاغة إلى الرسم، ولتفسير الانتقال تقسم الدراسة على جزئين نظري يهتم بالمفاهيم النظرية، وتطبيقي سنقرأ من خلاله لوحات محمد راسم وفق تحليل سيميائي بحسب ما طرحه (رولان بارث) في مقارنته للصورة الثابتة والتي تقوم على الثنائية الشهيرة [(التقرير والايحاء) أو (التعيين، التضمن)] من أجل استجلاء خصوصية مصطلح التشخيص وطريقة توظيفه.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** البلاغة؛ التشخيص؛ الرسم؛ السيميائية؛ محمد راسم.

## Introduction

Since the dawn of writing and the appreciation of beauty, humanity has been captivated by the allure of creativity and the beauty of expression. As creativity flourished within humanity, speech has been adorned with eloquent expression, embellished with the charms of rhetorical beauty, and crafted with enchanting compositions and harmonious rhythms. Creativity varied from one person to another, and tastes diverged just as thoughts differed. This pursuit of creativity has manifested in various forms, with each person bringing their unique perspective and style to their chosen medium. Some contemplated letters and crafted poetry or prose, while others contemplated form and color, drawing shapes and lines, adorning walls, until they created drawings that evoke imagination.

They were not hindered by any obstacle in conveying the scene with its natural colors, reflecting various situations and shifting their focus from the present to the past. They may alternate between this and that, in any arrangement that harmonizes with the beauty of expression and color. In this context, Ali Shalq says: **"The art of eloquence in speech follows a pattern of ornamentation just as in engravings, ornaments, and calligraphy, in the beauty of its composition, the sweetness of its twists, and the delicacy of its layers (...) Like the architect who decorates the crown of the column upon its completion, so too does the speaker adorn his expression after fulfilling its extent of civilization"**<sup>1</sup>

Language has always served as the raw material for literary writers to which their pens turn to craft their works of literature. Their expressive methods and means of formulation have varied, carrying their visions and thoughts. They employed similes, metaphors, personifications, and

---

<sup>1</sup>Ali Shalak: The Mind in the Aesthetic Heritage of the Arabs, Al- Mada House, Beirut, Lebanon, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., 1985, pp. 262- 263.

metonymy, introducing several techniques to obscure and hide meaning within layers of language, to encode its path, and to stimulate excite the imagination of their recipients. Some did not suffice with reaching the surface meaning through mere words, but rather, some penetrated beyond the surface meaning by employing language in a more elusive manner, requiring the reader to delve deeper to uncover the intended message.

Therefore, Abdul Qahir al-Jurjani said: **"Speech is of two kinds: one where you reach the intended meaning solely through the indication of the word itself (...) and another where you do not reach the intended meaning solely through the word, but the word indicates its meaning, which is necessitated by its subject in the language. Then you find for that meaning a second indication that leads to the intended meaning. This revolves around metonymy, (...) metaphor and representation"**<sup>1</sup>

Al-Jurjani divides speech into two categories: one that is accessible, understood and can be produced by everyone, provided they are free from the flaws of speech, and the other is specific to the literary elite, understood only by those skilled in nuance, capable of discerning the particularity of usage. If we apply al-Jurjani's types of speech to the realm of art, how would their significance change? In addition, how would the transition occur if art were to employ rhetorical terms?

Therefore, this study raises several key questions, including: How did the concept of diagnosis transition from rhetoric to the visual arts? What are the implications of this intersection occurring in the term with two distinct art forms? How does diagnosis manifest in visual art (the painting)? What are its symbolic and referential implications?

The previous approach imposes a path where two arts intersect, as well as a transition from word to color (from language to imagery), thus requiring a method capable of delving into the art. Perhaps the closest approach capable of approaching both visual art and static images is the

---

<sup>1</sup>Abd al-Qaher Al-Jurjani (471 of H.): Signs of Miracles, Edited by Mahmoud Mohammed Shaker. Al-Madani Press, Cairo, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 1992, p. 262.

semiotic approach, which we will adopt through Roland Barthes' approach to the image.

## 1- Concept of Diagnosis: From Rhetoric to Plastic Art:

### 1.1- In Rhetoric:

The concept of diagnosis is defined in linguistic dictionaries as elevation, prominence, and distinction. This is evident in Al-Mu'jam Al-Wassit (the Intermediate Lexicon): **"To diagnose something means to elevate it and make it prominent, like an arrow surpassing its target, and to diagnose someone means to enlarge and magnify their body (likening a person to a towering figure or emphasizing unique features like eyes and characteristics), and to diagnose something means to distinguish it from others"**<sup>1</sup>

The most striking aspect of this concept is the idea of appointing and distinguishing it, meaning to place it in front of the eyes and make it stand out from the norm. These terms direct us to anything visible that the eye perceives.

In terminology, **"diagnosis refers to distinguishing inanimate and lifeless objects in the image, giving them a distinct entity with feelings, movement, and life. This approach is widespread in poetry, especially in the works of romantics who imagined nature as a whole in its mountains, fields, trees, and rocks, beings that shared their emotions. Diagnosis involves attributing human life and qualities to inanimate objects, imbuing them with life and movement"**.<sup>2</sup>

Ehsan Abbas posits, **"The poet and the myth-maker live in one realm, share a common talent, which is the power of diagnosis. They**

---

<sup>1</sup> Intermediate Lexicon. (shaakhassa) (to distinguish), part 1, p. 745.

<sup>2</sup>Jabbour Abdelnour: Linguistic Lexicon, Knowledge for Millions House, Beirut, part 2, 1984, p. 64.

**cannot represent anything unless they breathe life into their creations, endowing them with inner vitality and human form"<sup>1</sup>**

The mythmaker, much like the poet, relies on imagination, they converge at the point of diagnosis because it is the product of creative imagination which crystallizes the image and transforms it into a speaking world, even though the language whose essence is metaphorical in general and allegorical in particular, thus, the terminological meaning extends beyond the lexical one, they converge in elucidating and highlighting the thing, distinguishing it, imbuing life into it through the image. Furthermore, the concept of diagnosis serves as a bridge between two art forms: language and visual art. Just as metaphor and allegory create linguistic images through diagnosis, the language of color, as a different language, creates artistic images by utilizing techniques like shadow, line, and shape and using the power of imagination as a law and the power of diagnosis as a methodology to convey ideas and evoke emotions within their paintings.

In the realm of literature, the ancients defined the significance of diagnosis and recognized its role in embellishing styles. Modern scholars, however, introduced the term "**personification**" as a translation of the Arabic term, considering it a type of expression and a fundamental element of poetic imagery; Some Western literary scholars have distinguished diagnosis from metaphor and simile, considering it an expressive color that forms vivid images. However, the majority continued to define diagnosis as one of the colors of simile.

According to Charlton: **"for poetry, simile holds immense value, to the point that poetry cannot exist without it. Diagnosis is just one of the myriad expressive techniques and methods employed by poets. Their task is to evoke emotions and memories in readers through their carefully chosen words and vivid imagery"**<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Ihsan Abbas: The Art of Poetry, Sadir House, Beirut, Lebanon, Vol. 1, 1996, p. 131.

<sup>2</sup> H.P. Charlton: The Art of Literature. Translated by Zaki Mahmoud. Committee for Authorship, Translation, and Publication, Cairo, Egypt, Vol. 2, 1959, pp. 91- 95.

## 1.2- In the Field of Plastic Art:

Flournoy defines diagnosis as **"one of the aspects of the amalgamation of various sensations, where visual perceptions are enriched by one's thoughts and other sensory experiences, resulting in more complex visual sensations than the images and shapes one sees, with each sensation indicative of a specific real person"**<sup>1</sup>

Madkur defines diagnosis as **"a term referring to the characterization of the object within time and space"**<sup>2</sup>

Procedurally, it is a characteristic similar to reality utilized by the artist to connect his intellectual insights and various emotions, thereby imbuing an artistic image with several meanings more complex than the shapes seen, embodying it in an artwork that conveys realistic visions.

The earliest manifestations of diagnosis can be traced back to prehistoric cave art\* and rock shelters scattered around the ancient world, **"Cave walls were adorned with drawings and sculptures, which evolved at the end of the Stone Age as seen in the caves of France and Spain, such as the renowned Lascaux caves. Notably, the images were similar in their diagnostic and abstract artistic styles"**<sup>3</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> Jamil Saliba: Philosophical Dictionary. Lebanese Book House, Beirut, part 1, 1982, p. 276.

<sup>2</sup> Ibrahim Medkour: Philosophical Lexicon. General Authority for the Affairs of the Amiri Presses, Cairo, 1982, p. 45.

\* Diagnostic sculptures for animals and human skeletons last for thousands of years are found in the Tassili caves in the Algerian desert.

<sup>3</sup> Abdullah Abdul Karim: The Arts of Ancient Man, Al- Maarif Press, Baghdad, 1973, p. 32.

Form, in art, is not merely a replication of visual stimuli but often originates from mental images or ideas, **"The form cannot be separated from the intellectual motives behind its execution. Without diagnosing the idea, whenever the artist's hand moves, he draws and sculpts what imitates nature driven by the first human instinctual urge to diagnose beautiful and hideous things"**<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, shapes in nature can be categorized into several groups based on their realistic natural sources, **"They may be found in the composition of animal bodies or in environmental components (inanimate objects) such as rocks and crystals, in addition to shapes resulting from physical phenomena in nature, such as erosion, wave movement, sand, and clouds. The resulting rhythms and shapes found in nature serve as inspiration and stimulated primitive minds to diagnose these shapes and project them onto artistic surfaces"**<sup>2</sup>

The **"Visual perception begins with an external stimulus received by the eye, prompting the mind to respond to the stimulus, perceive the visuals, and diagnose them. Perceiving a realistic form does not perceive the parts that constitute the form but a general perception, which perceives the thing as a whole"**<sup>3</sup>

While beautiful subjects and great personalities have remained a focus of art since ancient times, especially in traditional and classical approaches, there has been a shift with **"the artists gaining greater freedom of expression, moving away from serving rulers and kings. With the spread of democracy, arts leaned towards expressing reality and revealing the diverse facets of humanity in its beauty or**

---

<sup>1</sup> Jean Berteley: A Search in Aesthetics. Translated by Anwar Abdel Aziz. Nahda House, Cairo, 1970, p. 182.

<sup>2</sup> Dolph Reiser: Between Science and Art. Modern Egyptian Bureau of Printing and Publishing, Baghdad, 1986, p. 50.

<sup>3</sup> Abdel Fattah Riad: Composition in Plastic Arts. Vol. 1. Al-Nahda Al-Arabiya House, Cairo, 1972, p. 207.

**ugliness. Thus, humans became the subject of art, and diagnosis turned towards nature expressively"**<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, **"diagnosis, in Aristotle's view, is not merely about expressing ideal beauty but rather about the depiction of any beautiful subject. Humans derive pleasure from imitation itself, achieved through colors and drawings. This imitation extends to various forms of art such as photography, painting, and sculpture"**<sup>2</sup>

Hegel argues that: **"art is limited to the imitation of nature, both internal and external. This definition attributes a purely formal goal to art: the recreation of external reality, using the means available to humanity"**<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, **"the concept of diagnosis became associated with realism. Realism according to modern philosophers emphasizes honesty in depicting typical characters and conditions. Lucien Goldelman sees diagnostic realism as the existence of reality in the most complete forms when social life reaches its maximum levels of density and creative power, blending together with human creative power in literary, philosophical, religious, political domains, etc. Frederick Engler adds that realism means, in addition to the accuracy of details, the honesty and accuracy in depicting archetypal characters in typical circumstances"**<sup>4</sup>

So, how did Mohammed Racim depict the subjects of his paintings? What is the specificity of diagnosis in his paintings?

---

<sup>1</sup> Amira Helmy Matar: The Philosophy of Aesthetic, Al- Maarif House, Cairo, 1979, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup>Amira Helmy Matar: The Philosophy of Aesthetic, Ibid.: p. 31.

<sup>3</sup> Hegel: Introduction to Aesthetics (The Idea of Beauty), Translated by George Tarabishi, Al- Taliaa House for Printing and Publishing, Beirut, Vol. 1, 1978, pp. 36- 38.

<sup>4</sup> Hussein Hashim Abdul Wahid Al-Yassiri: Dialectics of Diagnosis and Abstraction on Pottery Surfaces of Ancient Iraq, p. 08.

## 2- A Semiotic Approach to Mohammed Racim's Paintings:\*

The artistic painting forms a rich field for gathering sensations, emotions, and history, preserving them from disappearance, even if it does not strictly represent reality, it symbolizes a reality settled in the memory of the creator. The latter diagnoses its accurate details and abstracts its possible imaginary dimensions. Since the first man who drew on cave walls to preserve historical memory, his existence serves as a witness to a moment he lived, or its details transferred to his colors and lines. Through reading, a memory or imagination he sought to combine the possibilities of diagnosing the idea and giving it a genuine dimension. In reading these colors and lines, he wonders what these details refer to, what do they signify? Moreover, what truth lies hidden behind these features or silent expressions?

The artistic painting is **"a holistic entity that encompasses sensory, mental, cognitive, and creative aspects"**<sup>1</sup>.

It personalizes and characterizes the meaning, making the perceptible sensory, in its holistic sense, **"it is nothing but a visual and creative expression that follows the path of imagination and translates ideas into meanings derived from the cultural environment through which the artist's brush moves, The research**

---

\* Mohamed Ben Ali Ben Said Ben Mohamed Racim: was born in Algiers, on June 24<sup>th</sup>, 1869, in an artistic environment. In 1910, he joined the School of Beautiful Arts to delve deeply in the origins of Artistic crafts. He benefited from the Islamic heritage, as well as Western Academic techniques in miniatures. He was influenced by the crafting technique inherited from his family; thereby he sought to enrich the Algerian art. He died on March 30<sup>th</sup>, 1975.

<sup>1</sup> Grigory Gachev: *Consciousness and Art: Studies in the History of the Artistic Image*. Translated by Noufel Niouf, National Council for Culture, Arts, and Literatures, Kuwait, 1990, p. 11.

**into visual rhetoric aims to address its important questions: How do we communicate visually? How do we read a visual message? How do we form a visual culture?"<sup>1</sup>**

And other questions addressed by Roland Barthes in his research on the elements of semiotics, **"which he applied some of them to the image, by recalling the linguistic theories and statements of (De Saussure) (Langue/ Parole, Signifiant/ Signifié, Arbitrariness)... and what (Yalmaslev) presented in his semiotics about the term (connotation) or (designation, embedding), and what (Bours) presented in his concept of "Icon" with its infinite ramifications, to explore the rhetoric of the image, and how meaning comes to it? Where does it end? In addition, if it ends, what lies beyond it?"<sup>2</sup>**

In semiotics, the analysis of visual art involves examining both **"its formal and semantic structure to uncover invisible semantic relationships embedded within reality, it trains the eye to perceive implicit meanings and nuances"**<sup>3</sup>

### **2.1-First, portraits:**

When analyzing character paintings like those of Khair al-Din Barbarous and Emir Abdulkader by Mohammed Racim, we can utilize the following method:

---

<sup>1</sup> Roland Barthes : Semiotic Adventure (L'aventure Sémiologique) , Ed, Seuil, Paris, 1985, p-p. 17, 85.

<sup>2</sup> Roland Barthes: The Eloquence of the Image, from the book: A New Reading of the Old Eloquence, translated by Omar Okan. Orient Africa, Morocco, 1994, pp. 91- 94.

<sup>3</sup> Said Benkrad: Semiotics: Concepts and Applications, El-Hiwar House, Vol. 2, 2005, Morocco, p. 16.



### First image-Portrait of Khair al-Din Barbarous

Both Roland Barthes in his book "Semiotic Adventure" (**L'aventure Sémiologique**) and researcher Martine Joly in "Introduction to Image Analysis" (**Introduction à l'analyse de l'image**) present an approach to analyzing visual patterns according to the principles of semiotic theory, this approach typically involves several stages:

- . **Stage of General Description:** This stage involves describing the message (image) in detail. Many researchers rely on technical segmentation (close-up analysis) during this stage to dissect its composition.

- . **Study of the Denotative Level (Report):** During this stage, the iconic, formal, and linguistic functions are identified, and their apparent meanings are explored.

- . **Study of the Connotative Level (Connotation):** This stage involves examining the implicit connotations and hidden meanings embedded uncovering new myths or symbolic interpretations.

Martine Joly derived the basic principles of analysis from Roland Barthes' approach. She built upon the duality of (designation, embedding) along with additional detailed steps in the analysis process.

**A. Stage of General Description of the Message:** A complete description of the thematic, linguistic, and visual elements of the message

is provided during this stage. It involves analyzing both iconic and linguistic aspects.

**1. Denotative Level (Report):** This consists of enumerating and monitoring all the symbols that constitute the image, including the formal message, iconic message, and linguistic message.

**2- Analysis of the Formal Message:**

- The Carrier: The entity carrying the image (magazine, book, issue date, the image is on the right/ left ... etc.).
- The Frame: The scale of the image.
- Framing: The focus of the image (face, body...?)
- Angle of Capture: Perspective angle (upper angle, lower angle)
- Composition and Layout on Paper: The center of gravity of the image (eye, boy ... or the tools)
- Shapes: Are there geometric shapes?
- Colors and Lighting: Number of colors and lighting angle.
- Similarity: signifiant = signifié: human form, caricature, an image of a boat that reflects its actual form.

**B- Analysis of the Iconic Message:** it is through two stages:

- **Themes Level:** Identifying all the signs with reference functions.
- **Model Position Level:** Identifying the iconic functions and meanings from the first (denotative) and second (connotative) levels.

**C-Analysis of the Linguistic Message:** This involves analyzing the linguistic message accompanying the image (text content, colors used, font size, background of the writing, etc.) and determining its meanings and functions.

The process of interpreting the image is the transition from the denotative (report) level to the connotative (allusive) level.

I will speak about the formal message, the iconic message, and the linguistic message with focus on the last two.

**3. The connotative level:**

This level involves interrogating the image by translating its signs and decrypting its codes to give them meanings (interpretations) (What does the image convey?), during this stage, all the implicit meanings embedded in the advertising message are identified, whether through visual or linguistic patterns.

The observer who closely examines paintings depicting figures perceives them as external visual images, akin to reflections in a mirror. Khair Al-Din Barbarous\*, the renowned brave commander, is portrayed with poise and strength, at a 45-degree angle to the left, an angle suggesting his readiness to steer his warship. His steady gaze, though shifted to the left, signifies his reflection on past accomplishments. The sharpness of his dagger and sword, along with the gesture of lifting his cloak to reveal his adornments, evokes a sense of preparedness for a sea adventure. Notably, the artist emphasizes hand gestures, with Barbarous' right hand pointing towards the sea, symbolizing his past triumphs and fearless demeanor. The artist's focus on similarity and analogy in diagnosing the leader allows for the possibility of reading or deciphering the image's symbols. Semiotic interpretation starts from the resemblance or icon in which the sea background, despite its dangers, welcomed Barbarous' victory. However, the artist enlarges Barbarous' figure, dwarfing both the ship and the sea, by approximating him in the painting and distancing the sea. This amplification highlights Barbarous' prowess in navigating treacherous seas, victorious over both adversaries and maritime perils.

In Arabic literature, courage and heroism are often extolled in verses, exemplified by the poet al-Khansa's:

**The one raised by war, he is not bored**

**If one day it gets bored of its boredom<sup>1</sup>**

Barbarous, the leader, was born out of war, the aim of abstraction and diagnosis, here, in Al- Khansa's saying (raised by war) is to identify the quality of humanity so as to emphasize his inseparability from war and the strong association between him and the war which is boring for many but not for Al- Khansa's brother or a leader in Racim's painting, even though Al- Khansa praised her brother as a son of war.

---

\* Khidr Ben Yaakoub (named Khair Al- Din Basha) (1476- 1546): a marine commander of Ottoman fleets.

<sup>1</sup> Al-Khansa: Al-Diwan, Edited by Karam Al-Bustani, Sadir House, Beirut, 1996, p. 80.

The artist here emphasizes Barbarous' strength as imagined, the leader who and became one with it, molded by its trials and tribulations, remaining as inseparable from the war as, or

The artist focuses on Barbarous' resolute persona, as imagined, depicting him as a commander who orchestrates war with finesse, being a son of both the war and the sea. This portrayal reinforces the association between Barbarous and the sea, portraying him as a fearless leader with an innate affinity to leave the painting for naval adventures as if returning to the embrace of the sea. The unity of elements within the painting compels viewers to perceive it as a cohesive whole within a homogeneous system. This unity generates the specificity of creativity, stimulates the reception process, and charges the interpretive action.

The artist directed the lighting towards the right side of the painting to create deeper shadows on the left, symbolizing the past. The color green was used for the clothing and adorned the image's decorations, serving as a shadow for both the character and the maritime ship in the background of the painting, **"Green, in particular, holds significant symbolic connotations, widely recognized and defined in its linguistic usage. It reveals layers and visions that endow it with a mythical energy rich in density, imagery, suggestion, and encoding"**<sup>1</sup>

The energy reflected on Barbarous' character led the artist to predominantly use the color green. This symbolic use reflects the artist's knowledge of colours' symbolism and uses. The use of green, with its psychological connotations, **"is a natural colour with deep sensation, evokes a sense of tranquility, and imbues the character with a serene demeanor"**<sup>2</sup>

The artist employed the colour green symbolizing his name (Al-Khidr) and calming him. The portrayal of Barbarous' urgency to leave the painting for his sea journey, as if the painting were a stolen moment from time, prompted the artist to grant the character a sense of tranquility using the color green. This naval commander, who never rests, has been

---

<sup>1</sup>Faten Abdul-Jabbar Ali Jawad: Color is a Semiotic Game: Procedural Research in the Formation of Poetic Meaning, Majdalawi House, Amman, Jordan, Vol. 1, 2009- 2010, p. 91.

<sup>2</sup> Faten Abdul-Jabbar Ali Jawad: Op. Cit., p. 91.

imbued by many qualities associated with the sea, so the artist sought to alter his persona by adding a color that exudes more calmness.

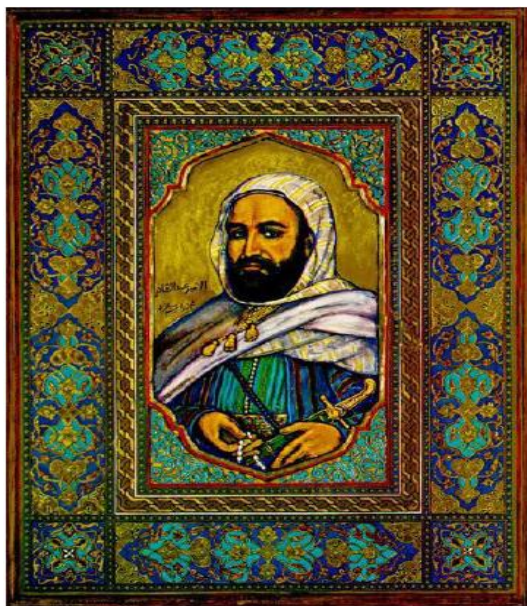
Green serves as a symbolic reference to the density of the formation, leaving a strange lingering impression of this maritime leader on us, increasing our enthusiasm for deeper interpretation, unraveling the layers of meaning embedded within the painting's intricate details (facial expressions, clothes, and the leader's standing in poise and proud) causing the artist meticulously considering every posture and color cue. Additionally, he skillfully paired green with brown, yellow, and orange to produce secondary colors like blue, emerald, and olive green, chosen for the background.

Brown follows as a secondary color, whether used independently as a pure color or in combination with other colors, is employed in the frame and inside the painting, in the structures, ship, ground, clothing, and background as a color mixture.

Then comes yellow with its light and dark shades, leading us to the final destination of orange, which occupies a significant space in the painting as it represents the color of the character's attire, turban, and many details of the garment. Following these colors are others of lesser importance, such as blue, white, red, and black, although indispensable as they contribute to breaking the dominance of the predominant colors, providing richness and allure.

In addition to color, the painting incorporates iconic representations and intricate lines to further enrich its visual narrative. Decorative shapes intricately woven into the rectangular frame, along with Arabic script bearing: (Khair Al-Din Barbarous) and (The Algerian State Institution), add layers of cultural and historical significance. Horizontal lines delineate the horizon and coastline, intersecting with vertical lines that rise to form the ship's masts, mirroring the vertical lines in Barbarous' robe. These meticulous details, combined with the interplay of colors and lines, breathe life into the portrayal of Barbarous, presenting him as a formidable historical figure from 16<sup>th</sup>-century Algeria.

## **2.2- Portrait of Emir Abdelkader:**



## The picture- Portrait of Emir Abdelkader

## Second

As for the portrait of Emir Abdelkader ben Mohieddine\*, a politician, revolutionary leader, writer, and poet, his features are a mixture of strength, asceticism, and clarity, reflecting beauty and grace.

Leon Rocha described him **"as having a wheatish complexion, a broad forehead, black and finely drawn eyelashes over greenish eyes, a straight nose, thin lips, thick black hair, and a beard"**<sup>1</sup>

He holds a prayer bead in his right hand and a dagger in his left, portraying a seated position, possibly representing a calmer demeanor as depicted by the artist. Although his gaze may be as sharp as that of the leader Barbarous, the turmoil of the maritime leader and his rebellion makes him restless, unlike the calmness and balance of a leader who has only experienced warfare on land. Thus, the Emir appears calmer, which may also be attributed to his status as an emir and his poetic nature,

---

\* Emir Abdelkader (September 6<sup>th</sup>, 1808, Mascara- May 26<sup>th</sup>, 1883, Damascus, Syria).

<sup>1</sup> Prince Abdelkader's Book: Art and Culture Series, Supervised by Mahfouz Kadash. Published by the Ministry of Culture.

although poetry is not devoid of excitement and agitation. The poet Hatem al-Taie's verses further underscore this dynamic, depicting Abdelkader as a fearless warrior who confronts the challenges of war with unwavering resolve:

**If war bites him, he bites it back  
And if war bares hits teeth, he beares his <sup>1</sup>**

Diagnosis in this verse attributes the war a fierce animal quality in (war tries to devour him) and human quality in (war advances towards him), i.e., if war called he engaged fearlessly and most bravely, When the war ended, he would carry a pen and become the calmest poet and prince.

The emirate is, supposedly, what imposed this calmness. The artist focused solely on the character; hence, the depth of the image is closed, lacking a background, with many surrounding decorations. The artist also emphasized the use of blue hues for the decorative elements and the prince's attire; evoke a sense of depth and tranquility to the composition. Blue **"defines dimensions, gives a sense of depth, and is a soothing color"**<sup>2</sup>

Blue, with its calming properties, is chosen by the artist to reflect the calmness and patience of the prince, symbolizing depth of meaning. Furthermore, the artist extensively used ornamentation both within the frame and inside the painting, known as **Arabesque\***, escaping the boundaries of nature and its manifestations, flowing in continuity and repetition, hinting at aesthetics and specificity.

This painting, like its predecessor, bears the artist's eternal name and possession, signed in Arabic letters after the name of Emir Abdelkader, on the right side of the prince, indicating the artist's pride in depicting this painting, which praises one of the most prominent figures

---

<sup>1</sup> Al-Hathalion: Diwan. Illustrated copy by the House of the Holy Books, Egypt, 1965, part 3, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Idris Farajallah: Color Formation in Printing, Al-Fath for Art Binding House, Amman, Jordan, Vol 1, 2008, p. 37.

\***Arabesque** or Islamic ornamentation is intricate and interlacing patterns, representing geometric shapes, flowers, leaves, or fruits, distinguishing Islamic art.

in Algerian history and one of the heroes of popular resistance known for his wisdom, politics, prudence, bravery, and victories in our past history.

The prince appears dignified and noble, with youthful features, a black beard without any gray, and a finely shaped nose indicating intelligence and shrewdness, and eyes that gaze in a specific direction, as if drawing horizons and objectives for them. Unlike the first painting, his attire appears ordinary; the prince does not wear a turban but a woolen shawl and a white burnous. The artist seems to be aware of all these characteristics to embody the prince with his true qualities, possibly based on previous images.

### **3-Second, Portrait of the Woman:**



**The third picture- the Veiled Woman (A- Hayek)**

Among the personal portraits painted by the artist Mohammed Racim is the portrayal of a woman, appearing in two different depictions. In the first, she wears traditional attire known as "Hayek and ajar", with only her eyes and right hand visible, adorned with traditional silver jewelry on her wrist. Her skin appears tan compared to the second painting. The artist situates her against a silent backdrop characterized by white-painted walls, mirroring the color of her Hayek. Lines in scarlet brick add texture to the scene, with an open door to her right casting shadows and providing depth, while a closed door to her left intensifies the light. The light source comes from the left side of the woman, indicating the future, as reflected in her gaze directed towards the right, also symbolizing a forward-looking perspective, "**The symbolism of the color white represents serenity, purity and clarity**"<sup>1</sup>, used by the artist to cover the woman, revealing only her eyes. The poet, Al- Tirmah said:

**This night has never seen your eyes as I do  
It shows your tenderness and beauty<sup>2</sup>**

It seems intentional that the woman in the painting looks at something specific; concealing a smile that is barely discernible, yet the hint of a smile appears in the sparkle of her eyes. This attire is a reference to the identity of Algerian women and the traditions prevalent in Algeria, particularly in the capital and nearby cities. This image, depicting the purity of the woman and the covering of her body, was a familiar sight to the artist, reflecting the traditions of Algerian women. The specificity of the color white lies in its ability to reduce the brilliance of any color next to it <sup>3</sup>, which influenced the artist to tone down the crimson color, making it warmer in the headscarf worn by the woman under the "hayek." The density of white made the deep and mysterious crimson color less intense

---

<sup>1</sup> Idris Farajallah: Color Formation in Printing, Op. Cit., p. 44.

<sup>2</sup> Al-Amidi: Showing the Thefts of Al-Mutanabi, Edited by Ibrahim Desouki, Al-Maarif House, Egypt, 1995, p. 190.

<sup>3</sup> Idris Farajallah: Color Formation in Printing, Op. Cit., p. 45.

and more transparent, creating a harmonious blend with the woman's dusky complexion in a balanced composition.

#### **4- Portrait of the Woman**



##### **The fourth picture- The Adornment of Woman**

In the second painting, another woman appears wearing traditional Algerian urban attire known as "karako," adorned with all her finery, reflecting uniqueness, authenticity, and an identity that cannot be denied or overlooked by the observer, it is evident that the painting resembles a gaze at the woman. The lighting in the painting comes from two angles or dimensions. The first is frontal, emphasizing the aesthetic value of the subject, focusing on lines, shapes, facial details, features, jewelry, and clothing. However, the woman's eyelashes are slightly lowered, suggesting modesty, which necessitated the illumination coming from the depth. The subject or character is depicted as if seated in front of the viewer, as if he were sitting her down in front of him to portray her, hence her lowered eyelashes out of modesty, however, in Arabic literature, modesty, coquetry, and beauty are described together with pampering, modesty, and beauty, as in the verses of Qais ibn al-

**Mulawah: "I say to my companions, 'She is like the sun and its light, near but distant in its touch'"<sup>1</sup>**

The artist imbues the image with symbolic lines and colors to portray beauty, coquetry, and modesty. The colors in this painting are entirely different from its predecessors, with subdued, warm colors ranging from shades of blue in the curtains to a softer, less intense hue, reminiscent of the clear sky. The artist enhanced the brightness of the background in the painting to increase the brightness of the woman's face. The woman appears to exude a great deal of calmness, dignity, and femininity. The artist's choice of dark purple in the Karako, echoed in the scarf and dress, adds regal elegance to the woman's demeanor, infusing the painting with splendor and vitality.

Furthermore, what contributed to the openness of the painting and the brightness of colors was the intelligent use of white, which accents further enhance the painting's luminosity, lending it an ethereal quality akin to a fairy from the imagination. Therefore, the **"color signal"** became one of the artistic techniques used to evoke sensory emotions in the artist, **"expression through imagery transcends mere composition to convey a narrative beyond language"**<sup>2</sup>

Color serves as a conduit from symbolic meanings to suggestive implications, ensuring a semantic transformation through diagnosis.

### **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, as eloquently expressed by Al-Jurjani when he divided speech into two types, we can apply his statement to art: Art also falls into two categories. The first type leads directly to the intended purpose through the symbolism of color, line, shapes, and the arrangement of figures, offering the viewer an initial impression upon observing the artwork. Often, the artist captures a decisive moment in one stroke, allowing the viewer to grasp the essence of the painting at a glance, despite its suggestive nature.

The second type, however, does not directly reach its destination, nor its ultimate depth of meaning. Instead, color, line, and shape hint at some of its significance, which the subject matter dictates. Here, one

---

<sup>1</sup> Mediation between Al-Mutanabi and his Adversaries, Al- Maarif House, p. 267.

<sup>2</sup> Faten Abdul-Jabbar Ali Jawad: Op. Cit., p. 55.

finds a secondary, hidden significance between shadows and shapes, guiding the viewer towards the intended purpose. The first category revolves around diagnosis, serving as one of the illustrative methods in artistic work, relying on the method of projection in crafting artistic pieces. The second category revolves around symbolism, relying on the symbolic execution of lines, shapes, colors, and shadows.

The semiotic approach has unveiled hidden meanings in artistic works, whether related to lines and shapes or to the use of colors.

Through my exploration of the booklet, *\*The Pioneer of Miniatures in Algeria\**, by Mohammed Racim, published in 1971, we can summarize the artist's paintings in various themes: portraits of prominent figures such as Emir Abdelkader and Khairuddin Barbarous, depictions of Algerian society and urban life, scenes of people in markets, women's gatherings, mosques, and distinctive Algerian streets. The paintings are characterized by lively and dynamic portrayals reflecting identity and history, ranging from specific events or battles to processions of rulers and hunting expeditions, as well as paintings adorned with Quranic verses and others depicting serene floral landscapes.

It is evident that the artist is greatly influenced by Islamic miniature art, but his creativity diverges from it. While the former neglects perspective and emphasizes transparency in its detailed drawings, Racim's style predominantly relies on perspective in his paintings. His artworks consist of subjects with symbolic significance executed in a realistic and diagnostic style. Furthermore, he frames his paintings with intricate and beautiful decorations, incorporating written elements meticulously within the composition.

## **Bibliography:**

### **Books :**

- Abd al-Qaher, Al-Jurjani. 1992. *(471 of H.): Signs of Miracles*, edited by Mahmoud Mohammed Shaker. Cairo: Al-Madani Press. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.
- Abdel Fattah, Riad. 1972. *Composition in Plastic Arts*. Cairo: Al-Nahda Al-Arabiya House. Vol. 1.
- Abdullah, Abdul Karim. 1973. *The Arts of Ancient Man*. Baghdad: Al-Maarif Press.

- Al-Amidi. 1995. *Showing the Thefts of Al-Mutanabi*, edited by Ibrahim Desouki. Egypt: Al-Maarif House.
- Al-Hathalion. 1965. *Diwan*. Egypt: Illustrated copy by the House of the Holy Books. part 3.
- Ali, Shalak. 1985. *The Mind in the Aesthetic Heritage of the Arabs*. Beirut, Lebanon: Al- Mada House, 1<sup>st</sup> ed.
- Al-Khansa. 1996. *Al-Diwan*, edited by Karam Al-Bustani. Beirut: Sadir House, Beirut.
- Amira, Helmy Matar. 1996. *The Philosophy of Aesthetic*. Cairo: Al-Maarif House.
- Dolph, Reiser. 1986. *Between Science and Art*. Baghdad: Modern Egyptian Bureau of Printing and Publishing.
- Faten, Abdul-Jabbar Ali Jawad. 2009- 2010. *Color is a Semiotic Game: Procedural Research in the Formation of Poetic Meaning*. Amman, Jordan: Majdalawi House. Vol. 1.
- Grigory, Gachev. 1990. *Consciousness and Art: Studies in the History of the Artistic Image*. Translated by Noufel Niouf, National Council for Culture, Arts, and Literatures. Kuwait.
- H.P. Charltime. 1959. *The Art of Literature*. Translated by Zaki Mahmoud. Cairo, Egypt: Committee for Authorship, Translation and Publication. Vol. 2.
- Hegel. 1978. *Introduction to Aesthetics (The Idea of Beauty)*, translated by George Tarabishi. Beirut: Al- Taliaa House for Printing and Publishing. Vol. 1.
- Idris, Farajallah. 2008. *Color Formation in Printing*, Al-Fath for Art Binding House. Amman, Jordan, Vol. 1.
- Ihsan, Abbas. 1996. *The Art of Poetry*. Beirut, Lebanon: Sadir House. Vol. 1.
- Jean, Bertelemey. 1970. *A Search in Aesthetics*, translated by Anwar Abdel Aziz. Cairo: Nahda House.
- Martine, Joly. *Introduction to Image Analysis (Introduction à l'Analyse de l'Image)*. Ed, Nathan.
- *Mediation between Al-Mutanabi and his Adversaries*, Al- Maarif House.
- Mohamed, Rassim. (1971). *The Pioneer of Miniatures in Algeria*.
- *Prince Abdelkader's Book: Art and Culture Series, Supervised by Mahfouz Kadash*: published by the Ministry of Culture.
- Roland, Barthes. 1985. *Semiotic Adventure (L'aventure Sémiologique)*. Ed, Seuil, Paris.

- Roland, Barthes. 1994. *The Eloquence of the Image, from the book: A New Reading of the Old Eloquence*, translated by Omar Okan. Orient Africa, Morocco.
- Said, Benkrad. 2005. *Semiotics: Concepts and Applications*. Morocco: El-Hiwar House, Vol. 2.

### **Lexicons:**

- Belassem, Mohamed. 2008. *Visual Art, Semiotic Reading in Painting's Patterns*. Amman, Jordan: Majdalawi House. Vol. 1.
- Ibrahim, Medkour. 1982. *Philosophical Lexicon*. General Authority for the Affairs of the Amiri Presses. Cairo
- *Intermediate Lexicon*. (shaakhassa) (to distinguish), part 1.
- Jabbour, Abdelnour. 1984. *Linguistic Lexicon, Knowledge for Millions House*. Beirut, part 2.
- Jamil, Saliba. 1982. *Philosophical Dictionary*. Beirut: Lebanese Book House, part 1.

### **Articles:**

- Hussein, Hashim Abdul Wahid Al-Yassiri: *Dialectics of Diagnosis and Abstraction on Pottery Surfaces of Ancient Iraq*.