



Universidad Nacional de Catamarca - Facultad de Humanidades
Instituto de Investigación en Teorías del Arte y Estética
Revista Rigel – ISSN 2525-1945.

The Aesthetics of Employing the Active and Passive Participles in Yassine Ben Obeid's Dīwān Gardens of Meaning

A study of selected poetic models

Sakina Nour

Ibn Khaldoun University of Tiaret, Algeria

sakina.nour@univ-tiaret.dz

Arabic morphology, semantics, and poetic aesthetics

received: 11/02/2026 accepted: 20/06/2026 published: 17/09/2026

Abstract:

This paper examines the aesthetic employment of the Arabic active participle (ism al-fā'il) and passive participle (ism al-maf'ūl) in Yassine Ben Obeid's poetry collection *Gardens of Meaning* (Ḥadā'iq al-Ma'nā). It investigates the multiple contexts in which the poet mobilizes these derived forms, often moving beyond standardized morphological patterns to activate meanings that serve his poetic and Sufi purposes. The study combines a morphological account of the formation and grammatical behavior of the two participles with a pragmatic and stylistic analysis of their use in selected poems. Particular attention is given to temporal values—past, present, future, continuity, and stability—and to the cumulative semantic effects generated when participial forms interact with poetic context. The analysis shows that the active participle is more frequent and more dynamically associated with the speaking poetic self, movement, spiritual striving, and prophetic praise. The passive participle contributes states of reception, concealment, continuity, and spiritual transformation. Together, the two forms produce stylistic deviation, semantic density, and aesthetic imagery consistent with the collection's contemporary Sufi vision.

Keywords: active participle; passive participle; aesthetics; pragmatics; *Gardens of Meaning*; morphology; semantics; Sufi poetry

Introduction

Meaning in linguistic structure is produced through the interaction of multiple levels. The phonological level forms a basic point of departure, but morphology, syntax, semantics, and discourse all cooperate in producing textual meaning. Morphology therefore contributes directly to the semantic constitution of discourse and forms an essential component of the linguistic system.

Classical and modern linguists have devoted extensive attention to Arabic morphology. Among the most widely discussed structures are derived forms, particularly the active and passive participles. Their importance lies not only in morphological formation but also in their capacity to perform verbal functions, carry temporal meanings, and participate in syntactic government.

This paper, entitled "The Aesthetics of Employing the Active and Passive Participles in Yassine Ben Obeid's *Dīwān Gardens of Meaning: A Study of Selected Poetic Models*," seeks to reveal how the poet uses these two forms and how their grammatical and semantic resources contribute to poetic beauty.

Research Problem, Importance, Objectives, and Method

Research problem

The study asks: How does Yassine Ben Obeid employ the active and passive participles in *Gardens of Meaning*? Does this employment help achieve the intentionality of a poetic discourse shaped by a Sufi vision?

Importance of the study

The study addresses Arabic derived forms through the active and passive participles, their relationship with syntax, and their function in a specific contemporary poetic corpus. It connects morphological description with interpretation of literary discourse.

Objectives

The principal objective is to identify the contexts in which the poet employs active and passive participles, trace the production and movement of meaning, and explain how these forms contribute to the stylistic texture and aesthetic imagery of the collection.

Method

The study adopts a descriptive-analytical method. It surveys occurrences of active and passive participles in Gardens of Meaning and analyzes selected poetic examples that best illustrate their morphological, temporal, pragmatic, and aesthetic functions.

The Concept of Aesthetics

The concepts of beauty and aesthetics have undergone many transformations. From ancient Greek culture to the present, theories have linked beauty variously to usefulness, pleasure, form, perception, and experience. Their shared concern is how aesthetic appreciation occurs. Herbert Read, for example, associated beauty with a unity of formal relations perceived by the senses (Abdel Hamid, 2001). The senses translate visual, auditory, and other perceptual forms into aesthetic experience.

The modern term aesthetics derives from Greek roots referring to perception and perceptible things. As a critical orientation, aesthetics investigates the formal backgrounds of literary and artistic production and treats the elements of a work in relation to its beauty. Aesthetic judgment is historically situated: every age produces its own aesthetics, and no single absolute aesthetic governs all contexts (Alloush, 1985; Zakarneh, 1997).

Accordingly, the aesthetic effect of active and passive participles in this study is not treated as an isolated ornament. It arises from the patterned recurrence of these “governing derivatives,” their syntactic work, and the meanings they accumulate in the selected poems.

The Morphological Structure of Governing Derivatives

The term structure refers to the form or configuration of a morphological unit or lexical item, whether nominal or verbal. Governing derivatives are forms that perform syntactic work analogous to the verbs from which they derive. Arabic grammarians commonly include the active participle, passive participle, assimilated adjective, and intensive forms in this category. The present study focuses on the first two.

The Active Participle (Ism al-Fā'il)

Definition and grammatical function

The active participle is a derivative that denotes the event and the person or entity performing it, with an implication of occurrence. Sībawayh treated it as closely related to the imperfect verb in meaning and government. In an expression such as *hādhā ḍāribun Zaydan ghadan* ("this is one who will strike Zayd tomorrow"), the active participle governs its object and communicates a meaning comparable to the imperfect verb (Sībawayh, 1988).

The "event" corresponds to the verbal noun, while occurrence contrasts with permanent inherence. Thus *qā'im* ("standing") denotes the event of standing and the subject who performs it, but the property is not necessarily permanent. The Kufan grammarians sometimes called the form "the permanent verb," emphasizing its proximity to verbal meaning (Al-Farrā', 1983).

Al-Zamakhsharī explained the stylistic shift from an adjective to an active participle through the distinction between a stable quality and an incidental occurrence. A fixed quality may be expressed adjectivally, while an active participle can foreground emergence or temporary occurrence (Al-Zamakhsharī, 1993).

Formation

From a trilateral verb, the active participle is generally formed on the pattern *fā'il*, as in *nāṣir* ("supporting"), *ḍārib* ("striking"), and *qābil* ("accepting"). From a non-trilateral verb, it is formed from the imperfect stem by replacing the imperfect prefix with a prefixed ḍamma-bearing *mīm* and placing *kasra* before the final radical, as in *mudahrīj*, *munṭaliq*, and *mustakhrij* (Al-Hamlawi, 2012; Ibn al-Hajib, n.d.).

Temporal and semantic values

- Past: it can denote an event that occurred while presenting the attributed quality as established or enduring in the past.
- Present: context can make it describe a state occurring at the moment of speech.
- Future: it may point toward an action expected or certain to occur.
- Continuity: it can express repeated or uninterrupted action.

- Stability: its nominal character can make a quality appear fixed and settled.

The Qur'anic use of participles illustrates these values. In "and to Him we are submitting" (Qur'an 2:133), the participial predicate conveys stable and continuous submission. In "God will bring forth what you were concealing" (Qur'an 2:72), the nominal form stresses the certainty and fixed truth of disclosure rather than repeated action (Abu Hayyan, 1420 AH). The form may also indicate present fear, future creation, or continuous divine action, depending on context (Al-Baydawi, 1418 AH; Al-Marashli, 2011).

The Passive Participle (Ism al-Maf'ūl)

Definition and formation

The passive participle is derived from a passive verb and denotes the entity upon which the action falls. From a trilateral verb it is normally formed on the pattern maf'ūl, as in manṣūr ("supported"), maw'ūd ("promised"), and maṭwiyy ("folded"). Some lexicalized forms occur on fa'īl, such as qatīl ("killed") and jarīh ("wounded") (Al-Hamlawi, 2012).

Temporal values

Like the active participle, the passive participle can carry past, present, future, continuous, or stable meaning. Munkūb can mean "one who has been afflicted," pointing to a completed event. Maghlūb in "I am overcome, so grant victory" (Qur'an 54:10) describes a present condition. Majmū' and mashhūd in the description of the Day of Judgment (Qur'an 11:103) refer to a future gathering and witnessing while stressing their certainty. Nonsevered divine giving is represented through a passive participle conveying continuity (Qur'an 11:108), while mabsūṭatān ("outspread") expresses the stable generosity of God (Qur'an 5:64).

Participial Forms in Gardens of Meaning

The survey identified 29 occurrences of the active participle, making it more frequent than the passive participle. The following examples show that participial forms are not incidental grammatical choices; they organize temporal movement, stabilize spiritual states, and intensify the collection's Sufi meanings.

Aesthetic Functions of the Active Participle

Return, calling, and spiritual movement

In a poem whose title evokes the renewal of grief, the poet writes:

"The crown of my wounds is that through you I am returning / to my appointed place in light, racing the meteors."

The active participle 'ā'id ("returning") derives from 'āda ("to return"). In context, it points toward the future and makes the return appear established and inevitable. The poem's semantics of return and spiritual origin emerge from the poet's abiding longing.

In the same poem, the poet writes:

"The caller of the wind called; its moaning arose— / part of me yearned for it, and part of me answered."

Munādī ("caller") carries past reference: the call has already occurred, awakening longing and drawing the soul toward spiritual ascent and release.

The present state of mystical devotion

"A blaze—within it I am the enraptured one, prostrate / toward a qibla of beauty that captivates life and mind."

The circumstantial participle sājidān ("prostrate") expresses the present state. The poetic self describes the intensity of divine love through fire, ecstasy, surrender, and beauty. The form transforms a grammatical state into an image of lived mystical presence.

Continuity and inner residence

"So too your meaning, dwelling within me, / came to me as revelation, sent through ecstatic love."

Muqīm ("dwelling" or "abiding") is derived from the non-triliteral verb aqāma. It establishes permanence and temporal continuity: the beloved's image remains in the poet's pulse and arrives as inspiration. The form supports a Sufi discourse of unveiling, revelation, and uninterrupted divine love.

Prophetic praise

In "A Hand Washing the Moons," the poet praises the Prophet through the imagery of Aḥmadī light:

*"He is the light, and the birth is faithful to its promise; / seasons have come to us, and others
are awaited."*

Wāfin ("faithful" or "fulfilling") indicates present and future. Grammatically, it governs the prepositional phrase "to its promise." Semantically, the Prophet's birth becomes a decisive threshold between what was and what will be, and the mercy of the prophetic mission extends to the end of time.

The poem further employs several active participles—al-hādī ("the guide"), fārighan ("empty/withdrawn"), jādhīb ("drawing"), al-sā'idūn ("those prevailing"), muṭma'inn ("serene"), and mushib ("abundant"). Their meanings range across present, future, and stability as the poem narrates the Prophet's life before revelation, during revelation, and after the mission, together with its cosmic effects.

Narration beyond ordinary place and time

In "Evening Is a Meaning," the poet writes:

*"No song behind me but the water of my questions, / and nothing ahead except what the
roads
endure.
Were you other than me when darkness wrapped my hand, / walking slowly while the birds
prayed?
On this earth there is no nest and no melody for narrators, / nor for those who departed in
its night."*

The plural active participle al-sā'idīn ("the narrators") condenses the poem's spiritual epistemology. Ordinary place and time cannot contain the narrators' bewilderment. Their experience surpasses material knowledge and moves toward inward knowledge and ascent along the path of truth.

Fire, water, love, and travel

The poem "Traveler" opens:

"Now the seas burn in my blood— / from them, a loving tongue and two hands."

The active participle *‘āshiq* ("loving/lover") expresses a present state that extends toward permanence. Throughout the collection, fire and water form recurring semantic fields. Fire conveys mystical burning and disclosure; water supplies renewal and verbal abundance. Their apparent opposition generates the symbolic energy of the Sufi journey.

"God is mine—I have been nothing but a traveler / in the shade of a mount without an address."

Musāfir ("traveler") locates the poetic self in a sustained movement toward the Real. The participle is therefore part of a coherent semantic and aesthetic system rather than a passing morphological form.

Aesthetic Functions of the Passive Participle

Reception, purification, and spiritual ascent

"Laid upon dreams, I watch their river / pass over my wound, approaching from the wound."

Musajjā ("laid out" or "covered") is a passive participle describing the poet's present condition and its future possibility. The poetic self, as a seeker of divine love, requires purification and spiritual elevation from worldly impurity. The passive form foregrounds the state received by the subject rather than an action initiated by the self.

Deferral, pledge, and the unknown

In the poem "Light," the poet writes:

"Distances rushed toward me—deferred / were their echoes, while the far dawn had not yet come."

*"Together we crossed the provinces of sorrow, hoping / that the unseen might open a door
not held in pledge.
O Lord, if our sighs survive for a time, / will the soul survive its dark unknown?"*

Mu'ajjalāh ("deferred") indicates present and future and governs the following deputy subject, "their echoes." Murtahan ("held in pledge") and majhūl ("unknown") evoke prior constraint and obscurity.

The participles accumulate states of postponement, captivity, and uncertainty, intensifying the poem's spiritual waiting.

Prophetic qualities

"One such as you is entrusted with every noble quality; / one such as you is neither disgraced nor turned away."

Mawkūl ("entrusted") is formed from the trilateral verb wakala and conveys present and future. In prophetic praise, it associates the Prophet with noble character, divine care, and enduring intercession, resonating with Qur'anic descriptions of sublime character and promised divine gift (Qur'an 68:4; 93:5).

Inspiration and exile

In "And You, O Exile," the poet writes:

"Inspired, he joins night to morning; / my tales found in events a narrator."

Mulhaman ("inspired") expresses the state of a poet inhabited by poetry. It allows the speaking self to narrate longing, burning, pain, hope, and the burden of exile while creating a spiritual world that relieves loneliness.

Continuity and concealment

"A fire whose maps are forever connected— / a fire, like my destiny, hidden in my blood."

Mawṣūlah ("connected") and makhbū'ah ("hidden") are feminine passive participles expressing stability and continuity. Fire becomes a permanently kindled longing moving through the poet's veins yet concealed in the depth of the self. The forms create stylistic deviation by moving beyond predictable structure toward renewed meaning.

Comparative Synthesis

Form	Dominant role	discourse	Temporal values	Aesthetic contribution
------	---------------	-----------	-----------------	------------------------

Active participle	Centers the poetic self, movement, calling, devotion, travel, and praise	Present, future, continuity, stability, and retrospective activation	Dynamism, agency, spiritual striving, and semantic intensification
Passive participle	Represents received states, purification, deferral, inspiration, concealment, and permanence	Past, present, future, continuity, and stability	Receptivity, inwardness, vulnerability, mystery, and stylistic deviation

The distinction is not absolute. Both forms can cross temporal boundaries and acquire meanings from context. Their aesthetic value lies precisely in the interaction between morphological potential and poetic intentionality.

Conclusion

The analysis of selected poems from *Gardens of Meaning* yields several principal findings. First, the active participle appears more frequently than the passive participle. Its grammatical capacity and association with the acting poetic self make it especially suitable for concentrating meaning and positioning the self within discourse.

Second, Ben Obeid's poetic practice exceeds the standardized morphological structure of the active and passive participles. The forms participate in a discourse that articulates his Sufi experience and gives linguistic shape to longing, revelation, spiritual travel, prophetic praise, exile, burning, purification, and inward knowledge.

Third, the poems employ the two forms in varied contexts marked by stylistic diversity, deviation from ordinary linguistic expectation, and accumulation of semantic layers. *Gardens of Meaning* can therefore be situated within contemporary Sufi poetry, where grammatical choice becomes a vehicle for expressing the poet's condition and the transformations of lived reality.

Finally, the poetic image arises from the poet's ability to coordinate linguistic, artistic, and stylistic resources. The active and passive participles create temporal movement and semantic density,

enabling the reader to enter the mystical experience through the beauty of language. Morphology is thus not a static level beneath literary meaning; it is an active instrument of poetic intentionality and aesthetic production.

References

- Abdel Hamid, S. (2001). Aesthetic preference: A study in the psychology of artistic appreciation. Alam Al-Maarifa.
- Abu Hayyan Al-Andalusi, M. ibn Y. (1420 AH). Al-Baḥr al-muḥīṭ (Vol. 1). Dar Al-Fikr.
- Al-Baydawi, N. al-D. (1418 AH). Anwār al-tanzīl wa-asrār al-ta'wīl (M. A. Al-Marashli, Ed.; Vol. 3, 1st ed.). Dar Ihya Al-Turath Al-Arabi.
- Al-Farrā', Y. ibn Z. (1983). Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān (Vol. 2, 3rd ed.). Alam Al-Kutub.
- Al-Hamlawi, A. (2012). Shadhā al-'arf fī fann al-ṣarf (1st ed.). Al-Taqwa for Printing, Publishing and Distribution.
- Al-Jurjani, A. al-Q. (1992). Dalā'il al-i'jāz (M. Shakir, Ed.; 3rd ed.). Dar Al-Madani.
- Al-Marashli, Y. (2011). The miraculous nature of the Holy Qur'an and morphological meanings (1st ed.). Dar Ibn Hazm.
- Al-Najjar, M. A. A. (2015). Ḍiyā' al-sālik ilā awḍaḥ al-masālik (Vol. 3, 1st ed.). Al-Resalah Publishers.
- Al-Samarrai, F. S. (2007). Meanings of morphological structures in Arabic (2nd ed.). Dar Ammar.
- Al-Zamakhsharī, M. ibn U. (1407 AH). Al-Kashshāf (Vol. 2, 3rd ed.). Dar Al-Kitab Al-Arabi.
- Al-Zamakhsharī, M. ibn U. (1993). Al-Mufaṣṣal fī ṣan'at al-i'rāb (A. Abu Mulhim, Ed.; 1st ed.). Maktabat Al-Hilal.
- Alloush, S. (1985). Dictionary of contemporary literary terms (1st ed.). Dar Al-Kitab Al-Lubnani.
- Ben Obeid, Y. (n.d.). Ḥadā'iq al-ma'nā [Gardens of meaning]. Dar Al-Awtan.

Ibn al-Hajib, U. (n.d.). *Al-Shāfiyah fī ‘ilmay al-taṣrīf wa-al-khaṭṭ* (S. A. Al-Shaer, Ed.). Maktabat Al-Adab.

Ibn al-Hajib, U. ibn U. (1989). *Amālī Ibn al-Ḥājib* (F. S. S. Qadara, Ed.; Vol. 2). Dar Al-Jeel.

Sibawayh, A. ibn U. (1988). *Al-Kitāb* (A. S. Harun, Ed.; Vol. 1, 3rd ed.). Maktabat Al-Khanji.

The Qur’an. (Warsh transmission).

Zakarneh, H. B. (1997). *Introduction to aesthetics*. Jordanian Diplomatic Institute.