



Open Text as a Hybrid Genre: A Procedural and Genre-Based Reading of Khalida Khalil's *A Sea Turbulent on My Palm*

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Abstract

This study examines the concept of the "open text" as a contemporary literary form that deliberately crosses the conventional boundaries separating poetry, narrative, and drama. Drawing on major genre theory discussions from Aristotle to modern theorists such as Todorov, Genette, and Eco, the paper clarifies how genre expectations operate as both creative constraints and interpretive horizons. The applied part provides a qualitative, close-reading analysis of Khalida Khalil's book *A Sea Turbulent on My Palm* (2024) as a representative case. The analysis focuses on (1) language and style (poetic condensation, displacement, internal disclosure, and pronoun duality), (2) genre techniques (the integration of poetic imagery, narrative sequencing, and dramatic dialogue/conflict), and (3) distinctive markers of open-text writing (genre overlap, the centrality of language as both means and end, and the reworking of traditional genre features to fit a hybrid structure). The findings indicate that the book achieves cohesion through a controlled balance of genre resources, where poetic language frames narrative movement and dramatic tension without collapsing into any single dominant genre. The paper argues that the open text is not a random mixture of forms but a purposeful compositional strategy that expands interpretive possibilities while retaining formal coherence.

Keyword: Open Text; Genre Theory; Genre Hybridity; Poetic Language; Khalida Khalil

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INTRODUCTION

Early literary traditions already imply that no literary work exists entirely outside genre. Even when a text resists classification, it is usually read against prior generic expectations shaped by cultural memory and critical tradition (Barry, 1995; Fowler, 1979). At the same time, genres are not fixed templates; they develop through experimentation, historical change, and the continual production of new works (Aurell, 2015; Devitt, 1993). In recent decades, a noticeable trend in modern writing has been the deliberate crossing of genre boundaries, resulting in hybrid forms that borrow and recombine techniques from poetry, narrative, and drama (Addison, 2009; Cornis-Pope, 2014).

Across world literatures, hybridity has become one of the most visible signatures of late-modern writing. Instead of repeating stable generic molds, many authors stage deliberate encounters between lyric intensity, narrative movement, and dramatic tension. Such texts are often read with uncertainty: readers sense familiar genre cues, yet no single genre provides a complete map for interpretation (Colón, 2015; Kankkunen, 2024).

Within Arabic literary production, the turn toward transgeneric writing has been accelerated by encounters with modernity, the spread of free verse and prose-poetry experiments, and the expanding influence of the novel as a form capable of absorbing other modes. While this tendency has been noted in criticism, there remains a need for close, methodologically guided analyses that show *how* hybridity is organized on the level of language, structure, and scene-making in specific contemporary works (Allen, 2010).

This paper explores the "open text" as one such hybrid form. The term is used here to refer to a text that is open to the major literary genres and that constructs meaning through their interaction rather than through adherence to a single genre's conventions. The study offers (a) a concise theoretical overview of genre theory and

critical positions on genre boundaries, and (b) a procedural (applied) analysis of Khalida Khalil's *A Sea Turbulent on My Palm* (2024), which self-identifies as "open text" and explicitly signals a poetics of difference (Baransi, 2019).

Accordingly, this paper addresses the following questions: (1) What genre-theory concepts are most useful for describing an 'open text' that crosses poetry, narrative, and drama? (2) What stylistic and structural techniques mark openness to genres in Khalil's **A Sea Turbulent on My Palm** (2024)? and (3) How does the book maintain coherence while mobilizing resources from multiple genres?

The paper is organized as follows. After outlining the materials and qualitative method, the Results and Discussion section synthesizes genre-theory concepts as an analytical framework and then presents a close reading of the case study, focusing on language/style, genre techniques, and distinctive markers of open-text writing. The conclusion summarizes the main contributions and implications for the study of contemporary Arabic genre hybridity (Mahmoud, 2019).

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative textual-analysis design based on close reading and theory-guided coding. The material analyzed is Khalida Khalil's **A Sea Turbulent on My Palm** (2024), a collection that explicitly presents itself as an "open text" and signals a program of generic openness through its paratexts (titles, epigraphs, and framing statements).

The analytic procedure followed two steps. First, key concepts from genre theory were synthesized to build an operational framework for analysis, drawing on classical and modern positions (e.g., Aristotle on literary forms, Todorov on genre as an institution and a horizon of expectations, Genette on the distinctions between forms and historically realized genres, and Eco on interpretive openness). This synthesis produced three working domains for coding: (1) language and style, (2) genre techniques, and (3) compositional markers of openness to genres.

Second, the primary text was read iteratively to identify passages that most clearly instantiate these domains. Attention was paid to paratextual cues, figurative density, pronoun address, narrative sequencing (temporal movement, description, implied events), and dramatic devices (dialogue, question-answer turns, conflict). Identified passages were then described and interpreted in relation to the framework to explain how poetic, narrative, and dramatic resources coexist and interact.

To strengthen analytical rigor, the categories were applied consistently across the collection, and interpretations were anchored in observable textual features (lexical choices, shifts in address, scene-making, and structural transitions). The aim is not statistical generalization but an explicit, replicable account of how genre hybridity is organized within a representative contemporary Arabic 'open text.'

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Genre Theory as an Analytical Framework

In Arabic dictionaries, "genus/genre" is typically defined as a general category that unites individuals through shared distinguishing features, and that stands above subtypes in classification. This linguistic meaning underlies critical genre theory: a genre is a set of conventions that supports recognition, interpretation, and evaluation while remaining historically variable.

Genre study is often traced to Aristotle's *Poetics*, which offered one of the earliest systematic discussions of literary forms and their principles. Subsequent criticism continued to refine genre thinking, and modern theory emphasized genre as an institutional system. Wellek and Warren describe genres as organizing principles necessary for both writers and readers. Todorov frames genres as an institution that provides the reader with a "horizon of expectations" and the writer with "models of writing," shaped by the ideology of each historical period. Genette distinguishes between broad forms (e.g., narrative, dramatic) and historically realized genres (e.g., novel, epic), highlighting how genres evolve through practice.

Critical positions on genre boundaries can be grouped into three tendencies: (1) a separationist view that insists on clear divisions; (2) a neutral, flexible view that values genres while allowing innovation; and (3) a

transgressive view that challenges boundaries and supports writing beyond genres. Even within flexible approaches, genre knowledge remains important because the creation of new works can modify generic rules—unlike biological species or grammatical rules, which typically remain stable.

Defining the Open Text

Two related meanings circulate around the term "open text." Umberto Eco introduced "openness" primarily in the domain of reading and interpretation: an open work invites multiple readings rather than enforcing a single, closed interpretation. A second meaning—central to this paper—concerns openness to genres: a text that draws simultaneously on poetic, narrative, and dramatic techniques so that no single genre can fully account for its identity.

The late-modern intensification of genre overlap is linked to broader cultural and aesthetic transformations: the novel's historical capacity to absorb other genres, Romantic challenges to classical separation, and twentieth-century experimentation in narrative and poetic forms. In Arabic literature, encounters with Western modernity, the rise of free verse and prose poetry, and later calls for transgeneric writing (e.g., associated with writers such as Edward al-Kharrat) provided conditions for texts that deliberately blur boundaries. In such writing, hybridity is not accidental; it becomes a programmatic choice used to express complex experiences, indirect meanings, and layered subjectivities.

Case-study Findings in **A Sea Turbulent on My Palm**

Khalida Khalil's *A Sea Turbulent on My Palm* (2024) presents itself explicitly as "open text" and frames this intention through its paratexts. The book includes epigraphs that encourage choosing "the untrodden path" and describes writing as "a text without restrictions... a sky without limits." It comprises fifteen texts, mostly medium in length, each with an individual title. Across the collection, poetic language often predominates, yet narrative movement and occasional dramatic dialogue are integral to the composition. The result is a cohesive hybrid texture rather than a conventional poetry collection or a set of short stories.

Language and Stylistic Choices

Several stylistic traits recur throughout the collection and function as practical markers of open-text writing; (1) Pronoun duality: Many passages are driven by the interplay of first-person and second-person address, establishing an intimate dialogic frame that supports both lyric disclosure and narrative interaction; (2) Poetic condensation: The text frequently compresses multiple propositions into extended sentences formed through stacking images and clauses. This condensation allows the writing to introduce situation, relationship, and affect simultaneously; (3) Internal disclosure: Much of the action unfolds as inward revelation—events are narrated as emotional and cognitive movements rather than as externally observable plot. This inwardness aligns with lyric tradition while still enabling narrative sequencing; (4) Displacement (deviation): The language relies heavily on metaphor and semantic deviation to generate surprise and aesthetic intensity. Displacement operates as a constructive breach of ordinary language, producing poetic value while maintaining communicative function.

Genre Techniques: Poetic, Narrative, and Dramatic Resources

Poetic resources are evident in metaphor density, rhythmic phrasing, and affective intensity. At the same time, narrative resources appear through recurring figures (a speaking "I" and a addressed "you"), implied storylines, temporal shifts, and descriptive pauses. Dramatic resources surface in dialogue, conflict-laden questions, and scene-like moments that create tension and expectancy.

Importantly, these techniques are rarely isolated. Dialogue may contain poetic figurations; narration may be carried by lyrical disclosure; and dramatic conflict may be expressed through metaphor rather than through external action. This integration is central to the book's open-text identity.

Distinctive Markers of Open-Text Writing

Three Characteristics Stand Out

First, genre overlap is systematic: poetic diction, narrative sequencing, and dramatic tension are balanced in varying proportions from text to text, making generic dominance difficult to assign. Second, language assumes an expanded role—no longer merely a vehicle of meaning, it becomes a structural agent that builds scenes, replaces objects, and carries the emotional logic of the text. Third, traditional genre elements are intentionally

softened and generalized: characters tend toward archetypal figures (woman/man), time and place often remain indeterminate, and conflict unfolds as internal struggle rather than as external plot. These modifications enable hybridity while preserving coherence.

CONCLUSION

The open text represents a late-modern strategy of writing that expands creative freedom by crossing established genre borders. In *A Sea Turbulent on My Palm*, Khalida Khalil constructs a coherent hybrid fabric in which poetic language frames narrative movement and dramatic tension. The collection demonstrates that open-text writing is not a random mixture of forms but a controlled compositional practice: genre resources are selected, balanced, and reworked so the text remains readable while inviting multiple interpretive paths. As such, the open text merits study as a distinctive contemporary genre phenomenon within Arabic literary production.

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