

Real and Imagined Place in the Poetry of Najman Yassin

Abdulqahar Khalid Khalaf^{1*}, Prof. Dr. Nafea Hammad Mohammed²

^{1,2}Tikrit University, College of Arts, Department of Arabic language
Email:abd121213ww@gmail.com

*Corresponding Author

Received: 18.04.2024

Revised: 13.05.2024

Accepted: 26.05.2024

ABSTRACT

The place is an element of any creative work, as the place is an essential element in forming the beauty of the text, whether in poetry, novel, or short story, as the Arab writer was closely linked to the place in which he was born and lived, which drew him to it, and sang about it in poetry and proverbs, and this research aims to study the place in the poetry of Najman Yassin, specifically the real place and the imaginary place, and the aesthetics of this.

This research aims to study the place in the poetry of Najman Yassin, specifically the real place and the imagined place, and to show the aesthetics of this. Yassin is also a storyteller; through his interest in the places and spaces of the city in all its forms, starting from the house, the mahalla, the alleys, the market, and the river, which are considered real places, as well as the imagined place.

The research dealt with the study of the language and terminology of the place, and its concept in general, then identifying the real and imagined place in the poetic texts, and indicating the aesthetics of their formation by analyzing various poetry samples and from multiple poetry collections,

At the end of the research, we reached several conclusions, the most important of which are that the mahalla, the house, and the river are real elements present in these texts strikingly, and the imagined place is also manifested through the poet's influence on the Sufi experience.

Keywords: Place, realistic place, imagined place, mysticism.

Entrance: The concept of place in language and terminology

It can be said that the place is historically older than man, and man, through his presence and being in the place where he lives, works to shape it and transform it into different forms according to his culture and through his multiple life needs; man's relationship with place is a fateful dialectical relationship, as the mind cannot conceive of a moment of human existence outside the context of place

This is why we see the close association of man with place; his association is from his birth until his departure from this world, and he is on a constant journey and continuous movement from place to place; the unseen world is a place, the womb is a place, the grave is a place, and in general the human experience is a set of places, so "place is the incubator of human existence and its main condition"

Place: Place and the plural of places and places plural . The word place is derived from the linguistic root (M, K, N): It means possessing something and being able to own it .

According to the Basis of Eloquence, Article: (M.K.N.): The wrestler says to his companion: "Enable me from your back, or enable me from your back: Enable me from your back, but enable me means to enable me from himself, and he is enabled .

While we find the dictionary of language and flags separates the singular through the derivative process, the place in it is the plural of makanah and makan and the plural of places (with a broken kaf) the place, which is the active form of the universe, and it is said that he is from science in a place, that is, he has an ability and position in it, and it is said that this is the place of this, that is, its replacement.

The first to recognize the importance of place in Western literary studies was the critic Gaston Bachelard in his book, which was translated into the aesthetics of place and the poetics of place: "The first place in our emotional consciousness - be it a cottage or a palace - leaves its mark on the unconscious, which reproduces images of that place, and over time these images are often not identical to reality, but rather to the memory of the place in our imagination ."

Bachelard established his vision of place in literature as a set of artistic images that evoke memory and bring back the past and the time of childhood, or a set of imagined values that are reduced by the subconscious and then become the dominant values .

Roland Barthes called these spatial details - the combination of the real and the imagined - the "realistic effect" to signify the illusionary effect they produce .

According to critic Mohamed Saber Obeid, the place is “the absorptive incubator and the general framework in which the characters move and interact with it, and any text, whatever its literary genre, must have this element since the act of storytelling is the basis from which it starts and returns to it and manifests itself through it and by means of its mechanisms and laws.”

The spatial cultural reference can be divided into: A real place and an imagined place.

The realistic place in Najman Yassin's poetry

The external reality is the real, lived reality, and the fictional reality is an expression of it, but the connection is not direct between the words and the reference, as the debate between them remains; therefore, the Arab critic Mahmoud Amin Al-Alam defines reality by saying: “There are in fact two realities, not one, at least in this field that we are talking about, there is the reality of the discourse itself, and there is the external human reality with all its raging life, production and practices. Although the fictional reality is part of it.”

In the poem “Ode to Myself”, the realistic place is shown through this poetic passage :

Old shop boy?

Does the fog take you?

Or do you sail the waves?

With the light of your mind?

The old shops are the center of the city on the right side of Mosul, which is characterized by small, close-knit houses. The poet here is addressing himself when he was a child who grew up in one of the houses in those old shops located on the Tigris River. The river is the artery of those old shops, as it is an important source and an outlet for them. He refers to this in the same poem :

Thus, my soul is a river

and my blood is a resurrection.

Hold on

And shake off the dust of darkness that has accumulated in the heart.

Hold on

Abandon the passion of the soul

And the waist of the river

The river gives you its secrets

It spreads its blue for you

And moves you on, to you...

The poet again talks about the river and the old shops, this time linking the two :

Oh, strange river boy, and son of the old shops

Remember the song of the doves in the old house

And remember the mulberry tree.

And I scream:

Free I am.

Here the poet recalls the places he loved as a child, they are: “Bachelard establishes his vision of place in literature as a set of artistic images that evoke memory and bring back the past of childhood, or a set of imagined values that are reduced by the subconscious mind and then become the dominant values.”

The river has two main philosophical manifestations that fall under the same heading of transformation or change. In the first manifestation, the river manifests itself as an expression of the continuous transformation or becoming in human life itself, which has a philosophical-human dimension related to the human condition itself. In the second manifestation, the river expresses the transformation from the human condition to the unknown supernatural condition, and in addition to the symbolism of transformation, it carries the symbolism of the boundary or separation between the two conditions .

The poet connects the river to a wider space: The earth in general, the sky, and the whole: The sky, the earth, and the river make up the world of this child/poet. The poet Najman Yassin dedicates a poem to the river in the poetry collection (The Gazelle of Love and Death), in which he says :

The river descends from the roots of the mountain

the fountain of childhood.

and comes haunted by the mystery of the first forests

And the first trees.

The river rushes from childhood

Dragging us towards childhood.

The river darkens and overflows

Thunders and turbulent

Sometimes it's dark and stormy

Sometimes it clears like a heart heavy with love
 Shining with light
 Overflowing with suns.

In this section of the poem, we notice the association of the river with childhood as well, but this time the river is not, as usual, only time, but may not be tame, and the reason for this is that the poet has been exposed to a great trauma, as he contracted thyroid cancer; so the river in childhood: Clear as a heart burdened with love, radiating light and overflowing with sunshine, while in his youth, specifically in the case of his illness, the river darkens, overflows, thunders and turbulence, and darkness overtakes him. This contradiction came as a result of the poet's exposure to a harsh psychological condition, so he does not see things as they are, yet the poet recognizes that the river will remain that familiar river :

The river goes on singing the song of eternity.

He delivers us to the springs and the wonder of childhood.

The river and its manifestations in Najman Yassin's poetry can be called (the watery place), and he has variations of this place as in the poem "Between a Wave and a Wave", where he says:

Between a coming wave.

And a coming wave.

I fluctuate in my grief.

And I help the ugliness of this tide, with the wisdom of my heart.

With the wisdom of my heart.

And the brightness of my blood.

Once upon a time.

The tide is thick.

And once.

Softens and clears.

And I am a body among the waves.

Sheltering from the pain.

And a soul that sees this briny wave.

And uses its courage, its handsomeness.

To enter the waves.

Fraternizing with its roar, domesticating its madness.

And walks without getting wet.

In this poem, we observe (the watery place) through an oppositional duality: Wave coming / Wave going, and through : (I am a body among the waves) and (I am a soul that sees this brackish wave). This duality is an expression of the poet's internal conflict, as he goes through the ordeal of occupation and torture. These binaries "as a philosophical idea are based on the ability to link seemingly separate phenomena." From this, we understand the influential value that these binaries give to the literary text through the synthesis between the relationships established by the meanings, and critics have benefited from the thought of Cohen, who believes that binary opposites arise from two different feelings that awaken a sense, one in the realm of conscious awareness and the other in the unconscious

In the poem Another Ruin, the poet takes us to what happened during the American occupation of Iraq and describes the scene as follows :

And the sky is soot.

And the earth a naked corpse?

Where does the madness of blood

to have the tranquility of salvation?

From this fluctuation in madness and madness

In this scene, the poet puts us in front of the disasters that have befallen the country and the people, and with all this devastation, the poet points out that they will not be able to stop the flow of this immortal river :

Not for them.

To stop the madness of this river.

Rushing through the caverns of the soul.

It is not for them, to make

the diamonds of my soul / a stone.

Or charcoal that generates the smoke of desolation.

In this poetic passage, our poet boasts about the Tigris River and asserts that no one can stop the flow of the river, signaling the pulse of life and fertility that this river generates for the city and every village located on its banks.

The poet also puts us in front of the fluctuating conditions in the country, as he says :

Between a coming wave.
 And a coming wave.
 I fluctuate in my grief
 I help the ugliness of this tide with the wisdom of my heart
 with the wisdom of my heart
 And the brightness of my blood
 The poet also returns to childhood and his relationship with the city "the old city" on the right side of Mosul, as he says in the following race poem :
 In the wilds of my childhood that did not leave me.
 Which buzzes in my chest.
 And provokes my whimsical, lush.
 And my feisty rallies.
 And my cracked heart flashes in this darkness.
 To enter the city that inhabited me and created me.
 These places are also evident in the poem Ashes of Times, where he says :
 What do I see?
 My sky is plundered, and my soul is dispossessed!
 The blind thorny forest
 Devoured my soul
 The blind thorny forest has devoured my soul!
 I stand broken-hearted
 at the hands of the ancient neighborhood
 I supplicate near the shrine of Sheikh Fathi
 I pray to the secrets of our violated alleys
 Dew wetting my eyes
 And my soul is suffocated!
 The land is no longer spacious.
 The horizons have become narrow!
 My God
 He is that child shining with the joy of light
 now sees
 Only the rust, the ashes of time
 He has lost the dawn of days and paths!
 The places here are: The old neighborhood, Sheikh Fathi's shrine, the alleys of our violated locality, and these are places that are familiar to the poet, but his suffocated soul is in a troubled situation, and he is a man who sees things not as they really are; the land has become inhospitable to him, and the horizons are narrow, not as he saw those things as a child.
 The poet moves inside the house in the poem "That Boy", and captures this captivating scene :
 Tucked between the branches of the mulberry tree.
 In our old house.
 I shake with all the strength in my heart.
 It's a towering trunk.
 The red berries are falling.
 and the boys of the neighborhood would rush
 to snatch the bright fruit.
 My mother's screams get louder.
 And my grandmother's calls, panic reaches me from above.
 Honey from the berries drips into the boys' mouths.
 And the call grabs my sweetheart:
 "Come down, before the spirit of the tree kidnaps you.
 And leads you to a path from which there is no return.
 And I have two stubborn eyes.
 And a voice that chirps.
 And shake the trunk with madness and fortitude.
 In this cinematic scene, the poet begins with a close-up shot through the poetic sentence (I tuck between the branches of the mulberry tree), then the camera moves to a wider place (in our old house); the camera must wander around the house from above; because the scene is from the point of view of the child sitting between the branches of the mulberry tree, then the camera settles for the action of the child shaking the trunk of the towering tree. The camera then settles on the child's action of shaking the trunk

of the tree, and then the camera gets closer and closer to depict (the red berries falling), and then the camera takes us outside, where we notice (and the neighborhood boys, rushing to catch the bright fruit).

The mother feels the shaking of the tree, and we hear the mother's screams (and my grandmother's calls, panic) reaching the child's location, but he notices the honeyberries dripping into the boys' mouths. The boys outside the house rejoice as they eat these red berries, but his grandmother's call continues with intimidation and threats (come down, before the spirit of the tree kidnaps you and leads you to a path from which there is no return), but the child - seeing the boys happy with the berries - increases his determination to continue shaking the trunk of the berry tree.

This transition from a close-up to a wide shot, from inside the house to outside, with the mother's screams and the grandmother's call and her intimidation of the climbing child created a realistic, rhythmic, and fast-paced scene for the audience.

The psychological states lived by the characters are revealed through the place because there must be a mutual influence between the character and the place he lives in or the environment that surrounds him so that the structure of the space can reveal the emotional state lived by the character, and may even contribute to the internal transformations that occur in him .

Imagined Place in the Poetry of Najman Yassin

The imaginary place gives creativity in general a specificity, which is to evoke things that do not exist through language. "The imaginary, in turn, realizes the process of creativity and creation and restores to the receiving self its role in realizing and interpreting aesthetic knowledge ." It can also be said that "the literary text is an interaction between reality and the imaginary to produce what is called the imaginary, so there is a close relationship linking reality to the imaginary, for example, the novel "is an imaginary work that illuminates reality ." The imaginary has an unrealistic existence, it is different from reality and results from dreaming and fantasizing to symbolize what the author aims at.

The imaginary place is the place to which the poet resorts when he rejects the real place, as it carries the values of ugliness and its hostile features, this rejection pushes the poet to "dive inside the self in search of the features of purity and aesthetic brilliance; to recreate his reality in a dreamlike formulation" .

The imaginary place is evident in the poet's description of his mysticism, as he says :

The magnificent springs in the branches of the tree of the soul
could not have produced such a splendid river

only after being bathed in the light of your compassion.

And this green in the sky of my depths
did not bloom.

In the previous stanza, we notice the amount of the imagined place: The magnificent springs, but where? In the branches of the tree of the soul, as if the soul was formed in the form of a tree in which multiple and varied branches extend, which may be thin or thick, and these springs turn into the splendid river, that is, the beautiful river through the lights and mercy of God, and the imaginary place is evident here, as it becomes "an important means used by the poet to change the hostile reality, poetically recreating his familiar world that dwells in his conscience" .

As we observe in the following paragraph :

My God

All the tribulations have become bright stars in my sky
When you washed my heart with the generosity of your bounty
and set me free, a white bird of the soul

I praise your favors

I praise the mercy of your mercy!

My God.

According to Bachelard's idea, the familiar place reflects an emotional and intimate awareness towards the place, as he believes that the familiar place is that house in which we were born, that is, the house of childhood, the place where we practiced daydreaming and formed our imagination, so the place in literature is the artistic image that reminds us and revives the memories of the childhood house, and the place of great literature revolves around this aspect .

While the hostile "unfamiliar" place is that place that a person does not want to live in, such as prisons and exiles, or that poses a danger to his life, such as battlefields, so the person does not feel familiarity, tranquility, and comfort with these places, but rather feels hostility and hatred towards them , if there is harmony and familiarity between the place and the character, the place is attractive to that character, while if there is hatred from the character to that place, the place is repulsive to that character.

The poet Najman Yassin, through the combination of poetic language and mystical experience, reaches "the psychological place, the place that he imagines, dreams or lives his experience". In other words, the imagined place is exactly what embodies the poet's visions and perceptions.

In the poetic collection, "That's the Sign of My Soul", specifically in the poem "He stopped me and said to me", the imagined place is manifested through the following poetic passage :

He stopped me in the waves

And told me:

"The stars are calling you.

Go deep into the yam

and wash this heart

With the silver of your stray star!

** ** * ** * ** * **

He stopped me in the light.

And told me:

I gave you the table of the heavens

And the childhood of radiance

Seek the magic of the veil

And the fires of access.

If we look at the wave, the wave is not a constant subject to the law of tides, and if we look at the light, the light is also subject to the law of change, it is not constant, it may be bright or dim, and therefore the poet means standing in the two cases a relative stand, not an absolute one, and this conflicts with the recognized earthly standards, so we see after the saying he said to me, poetic images, Therefore, we can call it the moral place, which is the virtual place that is not directly perceived by the senses, but "is formed within the framework of the metaphorical structure of the poetic language, and is interpreted in the mind through the meaning implied by it or the image generated in it, and acquires its importance within the context of the text".

The importance of this type of place - the imaginary place - in the textual threshold may be that it fulfills the most important functions of the title, which is (the seductive function), which is the function "that is entrusted with the suspense and attraction of the reader". This seduction is achieved from the fact that the strangeness of the place is not generated unless the opposites that violate the standard of language meet, and an example of this is the title of the poet Najman Yassin's poem "Rising from the Ashes", a title based entirely on the imaginary place, as the ashes are the effect of burning a place, as this title achieved two important goals: The first is to entice the reader who may not be able to escape without reading this poem, and the second is to convey the main theme of the poem in a concise and condensed form :

I know you threw the pebble.

Into the lake of my depths.

And released the birds of my thoughts.

And I know that my sour mood.

Becomes a cloud that speaks the joy of blood.

And provoke my anguish.

I know that you stopped me in the heart of the world.

Washed the soot from my heart.

And raised me from my grayness.

I know that you.

Allowed me to the lure of the dream.

And the window.

That shines with the wonder of revelation.

And took me to rivers that were not born.

And fruits that were not plucked.

And songs that intoxicated me.

And slit my veins.

The dream state allowed him to open a new window for his imagination, which shines with the surprise of revelation to take him to rivers that were not born, and fruits that were not harvested, in addition to that, the songs drove him to a state of intoxication and killed him with the intense emotion that is mixed with sadness like Iraqi songs that always have a tinge of sadness.

CONCLUSION

The place is one of the most important elements introduced in the construction of the poetic text. The poet Najman Yassin tried to add aesthetics through it, utilizing his experience in story writing; the

realistic place appeared clearly represented by the river, the mahalla, alleys, the house, mosques, mosques, and churches.

The place in the poetic text of the poet Najman Yassin took various dimensions: Psychological, social, national, political, historical, and religious.

Psychologically, the river took the poet between a familiar place and a hostile place, especially in the case of his illness, as in the poems of his poetry collection (*Gazelle of Love and Death*), socially condemning all social manifestations that do not fit with his values, which are the values of justice and truth, and politically; this was clearly shown by condemning the American occupation, symbolizing it at times by ghouls or prayers, as in his poetry collection (*Psalms of Darkness*), and religiously, the features of his mysticism and the use of the Sufi lexicon and lexicon of the Quran in many of his collections of poetry, the imaginary place appeared in his poems with a Sufi tinge in general.

This indicated the elevation of the place, from a narrow geographical space to a linguistic space that pulsates with movement and life. The poet interacted with it humanly and carried his concern, his culture, and the culture of the group, as well as his vision.

The place cannot be separated from its historical, social, and religious contexts, and it is not self-sufficient but is all of these elements in one crucible.

REFERENCES

Poetry collections

- [1] That is the verse of my soul, Najman Yassin, Dar Ghaida for Publishing and Distribution, 1st edition, Amman - Jordan, 2023.
- [2] Ghazal of Love and Death "Poems", Dr. Najman Yassin, Arabic Encyclopedias House, Beirut, Lebanon, 1st edition, 2012.
- [3] Poor at the thresholds of your lights, Najman Yassin, Dar Ghaida for Publishing and Distribution, 1st edition, Amman - Jordan, 2024.
- [4] Psalms of Darkness, Dr. Najman Yassin, Arab Writers Union Publications, Damascus, Syria, 2007.

Books

- [5] The Basis of Eloquence, Abu Qasim Jarallah Mahmoud bin Omar bin Ahmed Al-Zamakhshari, edited by: Muhammad Basil Ayoun Al-Sud. Beirut. Dar Al-Kotob Al-Ilmiyyah, 1998.
- [6] The aesthetic shaping of the place and its artistic construction in modern Arabic poetry 1940-2000, Dr. Yasser Fadl Al-Amiri, Nour Houran for Studies, Publishing, and Heritage, 1st edition, Damascus - Syria, 2019.
- [7] Time and Place in the Poetry of Abu Tayyib al-Mutanabbi, Dr. Haider Lazem Matlak, Dar Safaa, 1st edition, Amman, Jordan, 2010.
- [8] The Higher Language "Poetic Theory", Jean Cohen, translated by Ahmed Darwish, Supreme Council for Culture, 2nd edition, Cairo, Egypt, 2000.
- [9] The Imaginary in the Algerian Novel from the Same to the Different, Amna Belali, Dar Al-Amal for Printing, Publishing and Distribution, 2006.
- [10] Narrative Terminology in Modern Arabic Literary Criticism, Ahmed Rahim Karim Al-Khafaji, Dar Safaa for Publishing and Distribution, Jordan, 1st edition, 2012.
- [11] Al-Manjid in Language, Literature and Media, Louis Maalouf, Dar Al-Mashreq, Beirut, Lebanon, 2nd edition, 1975.
- [12] The Rhetoric of Place, Dr. Fathia Kalhoush, Arabic Publishing Corporation, 1st edition, Beirut, Lebanon, 2008.
- [13] The structure of the novel form, Hassan Bahraoui, Arab Cultural Center, Beirut Casablanca, 1990.
- [14] The Dialectic of Place, Time and Man in the Gulf Novel, Dr. Abdul Hamid Al-Mahadeen, The Arab Foundation for Studies and Publishing, Beirut, 1st edition, 2001.
- [15] The aesthetics of novel formation, a study in the epic novel (*Madarat al-Sharq*) by Nabil Suleiman, Mohammed Saber Obaid, and Sawsan al-Bayati, Modern Book World, Amman, Jordan, 2012.
- [16] The Aesthetics of Place, Gaston Bachelard, translated by: Ghaleb Hilsa, University Foundation for Studies, Publishing and Distribution, Beirut, Lebanon, 2nd edition, 1984.
- [17] Studies in Ancient Poetry, Samar Al-Dioub, Syrian General Book Organization, (n.ed.), Ministry of Culture, Damascus, 2009.
- [18] The Art of Storytelling in Theory and Practice, Nabila Ibrahim, Gharib Library, Egypt, (n.d).
- [19] LiSan al-Arab, Ibn Mansour, Abu al-Fadl Jamal al-Din Muhammad ibn Makram (d. 711 A.H.), edited by Abdullah Ali al-Kabir, Muhammad Ahmad Hasaballah: Abdullah Ali al-Kabir, Muhammad Ahmad Hasaballah, Hashim Muhammad al-Shazali, Sayed Ramadan Ahmad, Dar al-Maarif, (n.ed.), Egypt, (1984).

- [20] Egypt the Place, a study in story and novel, Mohamed Gabriel, published by Al-Hindawi Foundation, Egypt, 2017.

Theses

- [21] The Poetics of Narrative in the Iraqi Novel 2010-2015, Ahmed Majeed Al-Bassam, PhD thesis, Karbala University, Faculty of Education for Humanities, 2016.

The Web

- [22] The space of the novel between the real and the imaginary, Houria Al-Dhale, Arab Journal for Publishing and Translation, Issue (525), 17/1/2010, on the Internet: <https://web.facebook.com>
- [23] Semantics of the fictional place in three contemporary Omani novels, the woman's novel as a model, by Nana Abdulrahman, Nizwa Magazine on the Internet: <https://www.nizwa.comuk>
- [24] In the River and its Manifestations, Darren Ahmed, Maaber website: <http://maaber50megs.com/>