

Place formations in the Iraqi novel taking Shalal Anouz's novel (Yamama Baghdad as an example)

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ABSTRACT

In this study, however, place in the novel is not regarded from an uncritical view as a neutral context where action merely take place; rather, it is viewed as a significant structure that aids in meaning making and expresses the psychological and social dimensions of the text. This perspective gives a new approach using the novel Yamama Baghdad by the novelist Shalal Anouz as a case study to analyze spatial structures in the Iraqi novel. Using the descriptive-analytical method and a narrative orientation, this research traces the sense of place in hidden and revealed senses and its artistic and symbolic status in the general texture of the novel. The research problem is formulated into one main question which arise due to the nature of the novel and its which is "How does spatial formations appears through the novel and what role does play in terms of shaping the plot and characters and further reflects the changes in Iraq society." This begs deeper questions about spatial patterns and the relationship between place and character, what distance there is between these and social and political changes. The research determines the home, the bedroom, the courtroom and the hotel as enclosed spaces that work psychologically, evoking notions of anxiety, memory and fragmentation. On the other hand, open spaces like the street, the university, the river, and the cemetery function as paths of mobility, transformation, and re-signification. The results also uncover that place is not just descriptive in the novel but an active structural element that guides the action. And Baghdad itself is a kind of collective memory, containing loss and change all at once.

KEYWORDS: Place, formations, Iraqi novel, Yammama Baghdad, Shalal Anouz Full

The Iraqi Novel:

The Iraqi novel live in one of the richest and the most unique of the Arab narrative traditions in which it appears to have evolved from a particularly turbulent historical and social landscape. This turned the form of the novelistic into a vehicle to witness the heavy transformative experiences of Iraqis and also become a site of interrogating issues of identity, power, memory and belonging. The Iraqi novel, from its inception, was not a mere institutional extension of other Arab narrative genres, its distinctive consciousness stemmed from the peculiarities of the Iraqi reality, where, a blend of time-spaces intertwine and cultural, political and civilizational references converge.

Iraqi novel: The very origins of the Iraqi novel were associated with the attempt to arrange a narrative discourse that overcomes the confines of traditional narrating and moved towards the building of a critical social imagination. The novel Jalal Khalid (1928) by the Egyptian Mahmoud Ahmad al-Sayyid is frequently considered one of the early milestones along this road; it was characterized by an explicit reformist tendency and, while addressing the social variety and ideological transformations starting to affect Iraqi society at the threshold of the twentieth century, and while presenting characters who are questioning traditions, it did not go beyond indirect socio-political debate. Abdullah Ibrahim describes this era, as part of a story-awareness that has emerged in search of its beginnings gun under new social conditions.

The Iraqi novel has now reached a more advanced stage, especially since the output of the 1960s as a cultural experience deepened in Iraq, and they succeeded to connect the artistic form with deep political changes. These works were announced the major role of Ghaib Tuma Farman in the development of the inserted narrative in Iraqi history, especially *The Palm Tree* and *the Neighbours*, where Baghdad comes up as a living complex in which ordinary characters move in their hopeless fight against poverty and social margin accounts. Rather, in the details of everyday life and a profound sense of human vulnerability and threat from social change, Farman has built a story and an experience that he carried throughout the narrative. This novel did give the Iraqi location inner voice which enable working-class alleys to transform into concrete social discourse according to Faisal Darraj.

The evolution of the Iraqi novel was related to the political crises, wars, military coups, and changes of authority which created a narrative style oriented, more than ever before, to collective suffering. Consequently, numerous works were produced that used war as their subject matter, but instead of literal representation examined the effects of violence on the mental and social body. This tendency is clearly apparent in the work of Fouad al-Takarli, as reflected in the novel *The Distant Return*, which deals with the diaspora of the individual from authority and the tension between social upheavals and the disintegration of the family, al-Takarli made the Iraqi family a microcosm of the general transformations of the national level. Al-Takarli set up an inner story of the self, with the self as nucleus of social rift, as Yassin al-Nusair points out.

The last few decades have seen a new stage for the Iraqi novel, with collective memory bursting forth and cities being imagined as narrative protagonists. And Baghdad, Mosul, Basra and Najaf have been turned into places imbued with the meanings of scattering and devastations

In this context, the novels of Ahmed Saadawi have come to prominence, particularly *Frankenstein in Baghdad*, which successfully blends reality with fantasy to present a complex portrait of modern Iraqi violence, where the torn body becomes a metaphor for a homeland fractured by conflict. Recent critical studies have argued that this novel elevated the Iraqi novel to a global horizon by reworking local symbolism within a modern narrative structure.

Novels of migration and exile have also contributed to broadening the horizons of the Iraqi novel, as narrative questions are no longer confined to the local geography but extend to the question of identity outside the homeland, as seen in the works of Inaam Kachachi, such as *Tashari*, where Iraqi memory intertwines with the diaspora, and the homeland becomes distributed across multiple languages and places.

This type of narrative does not merely write of absence, but reconstructs Iraq in memory as a textual homeland that lives within language. And whilst the Iraqi novel has diversified thematically and artistically, what unites it is its ability to transform the Iraqi experience into a broad human discourse. It does not merely describe events, but reveals their psychological and cultural layers, and re-examines the relationship between the individual and their history.

This is why the Iraqi novel does not lose its critical place in the Arab world; because it comes from a place in which the individual experience meets with the destiny of the nation, and where narrative serves to understand destruction and to build the meaning afresh.

The explanation for the choice of Shalal Anrouz and the novel of *Yamama Baghdad* in a literary study is due to his narrative artistic and semantic and distinctive form. He embodies an imaginative voice which has attempted to portray the spectrums of social and human change in Iraq, converting the fabric of public life into a story that fuses personal recollection with the collective memory.

The importance of this novel is also emphasized by the way it portrays Baghdad as a character in the novel, not just a setting of an event, broad and narrow spaces become an audible semantic tool, through which the transformations of the citizens and their existential fears are transmitted of the Iraqi people. Bennett and Judt both point to the way the novel juxtaposes the realistic and the symbolic, what we could call the mundane and the monumental—forcing an answer to the impossible question, the one that haunts the cultural memory of the city—making it an ideal text through which to explore the intersection of memory, place, and identity. In addition, the language of Shalal Anouz is characterized by wealth and beauty with a poetic sensitivity that delivers the unfolding of the plot to an aesthetic level — it does not stay within plain narration but reaches the invaluable artistic touch.

Therefore, this selection of this novel is based on its literary status and what it represents of the development of the modern Iraqi novel in the interaction of the fictional text and reality of life in Iraq within a single narrative framework.

Place:

Place has attracted the attention of researchers and thinkers since ancient times and has been deeply intertwined with their lives; it is the fundamental cornerstone within which human beings shape their existence and develop their spatial awareness.

By virtue of this connection, “place has been part of human life since time immemorial, and the sense of place is an innate sensation shared by all people. In this context, place is described as being most closely linked to human life, and human perception of place is a vivid and direct one that remains with a person throughout their life”.

It is also part of their daily and ongoing activities, whether for the purpose of living or interacting with others; this daily use of place gives it particular significance, “because it plays a role that, alongside other factors such as personality and the social and cultural environment, contributes to the formation of human behaviour”.

As for place in the novel, its concept is derived from the idea that “it is the space that encompasses events and serves as the driving force behind the conflicts of the self and its narratives, whether real or a figment of the writer’s imagination; it is an essential element that must be present in any fictional text.” Furthermore, the fictional setting “is the world in which the novelist creates the events associated with his novel; it is a shift from the real world towards an imagined one, though it is fundamentally derived from the real world”.

It is “the setting or backdrop against which the novel’s events unfold, in addition to its structural function of linking its parts and developing the events within it.

Furthermore, place is considered “a fundamental unit of literary and artistic work in literary theory and is regarded as one of the traditional units; it has long been a subject of debate in the realisation of literary and artistic works, particularly in theatre, and the modern literary perspective has not moved beyond it; rather, it has become a pillar of vision and beauty in modern literary theory”, and that “man’s primary reference point relates to place in order to construct his system; indeed, place is the fundamental pillar through which man engages with the environment in which he lives and to which he belongs. For Yuri Lotman, place is a lived reality that influences humans just as much as they influence it; there is no empty or passive place. Place carries values derived from architectural organisation just as we derive them from social organisation. Thus, every place imposes a specific behaviour on the people who inhabit it, and the way in which place is perceived imbues it with a particular significance.”

Place is the social entity that encapsulates the essence of the interaction between the individual and their

society. From ancient times to the present day, place has been the immediate, visible canvas upon which humanity has recorded its culture, arts and thought.” In other words, a place is not merely a geographical location where a person exists, but rather an important and influential part of their life.

It is their present and their past, and a repository for their memories and thoughts. According to Gaston Bachelard, “the familiar place is the house in which we were born, that is, the house of childhood, the place where we indulged in daydreams and where our imagination took shape” and “place is also the space with geometric or topographical dimensions governed by scales and volumes” Al-Jurjani also gave two definitions of place: ‘the vague place and the specific place. The vague place is a place that has a name we give it because of something not inherent in its name, such as creation... And a specific place is a place that has a name, given to it because of something inherent in its name.’”

Another definition states: “Place is a network of relationships, visions and perspectives that coalesce; thus, place is organised with the same precision with which the other elements in the narrative are organised.”

The Dialectic of Time and Space:

Ancient writings differed from modern and contemporary philosophical thought with regard to the elements of time and space, owing to differences in scientific and epistemological frameworks.

The conception of time and space in pre-Platonic philosophical thought was characterised by a certain mythological quality, as primitive thought was accustomed to interpreting phenomena subjectively, attributing life's conflicts to the control of supernatural and volitional forces, “Thus, the mythological conception of time, like that of place, is qualitative and concrete, not quantitative and abstract.

Mythological thought does not conceive of time as a continuous duration, or as a succession of moments of identical quality”; in light of this relationship, interpretations and beliefs adapted to the specificities of that place.

Modern thought, however, rejected these earlier conceptions, as they were not based on realistic scientific principles, since it “understands space as a homogeneous entity, as a system of functional relationships between natural phenomena, and thus assumes that space is unlimited, continuous and homogeneous—qualities we cannot perceive through mere sensory perception” .. This is emphasised by Newton, who holds that “time and space have an existence independent of matter but are objective. They are absolute; here is the mechanistic conception: time and space are independent of moving matter, do not change at all, and are absolute”; Consequently, the body of concepts that has crystallised in modern and contemporary thought has taken the development of the sciences as a fundamental reference point for interpreting and extrapolating these phenomena according to a rigorous scientific perspective, based on systematic analysis and objective interpretation. However, the transfer of these two terms to the literary field leads to a shift in the nature of this reference, as the scientific background is accompanied by the specificity of literary expression, intertwining with the aesthetic and semantic features imposed by creative discourse, thereby granting the two concepts new dimensions that transcend the boundaries of scientific interpretation into the realms of artistic and symbolic interpretation.

Time and place in the novel possess a fundamentally abstract character; these two elements lend the work of art its aesthetic and structural organisation. ‘For every time is defined by a place, just as any place can only be framed within a specific moment in time; it is therefore no surprise that we find both forms presented in the discourse through a single entity, namely the narrator’ .

Whilst the narrator is a key element contributing to the development of time and place in the narrative, at times we find one element taking precedence as the image is formed.

Place is connected to time, and the ‘essential reciprocal relationship between time and place, as artistically captured in literature, has been given the name *chronotope*, which literally means time and place (spacetime)’; this term is used to refer to time and place simultaneously, and to clarify the close relationship between them.

“What occurs in the literary *chronotope* is the fusion of the relationships of place and time into a single perceived and personified entity... relationships of time unfold in place, and place is perceived and measured by time. It is this intersection of systems, and this blending of relationships, that characterise the literary *chronotope*.”

We thus find that space-time has acquired immense significance in the field of literature, “and it can be stated outright that the genre and its subgenres are defined by space-time itself as a formal and substantive concept, which also largely determines the image of humanity in literature; consequently, this image is always fundamentally spatio-temporal.”

What is meant by this is that literature has adopted space-time, which has become one of its established tenets; for place encompasses time and incorporates it into the narrative process.

We may therefore observe from the above views that the relationship between time and place is primarily one of connection, because one contains the other, “And when we speak of a place, we speak of its time; therefore, time is one of the dimensions of place.” Thus, they are both essential elements of the novel, and cannot be dispensed with, given their fundamental and central role within it.

The Importance of Place in the Novel:

Concepts regarding fictional place have become numerous and varied; yet, regardless of this diversity, place remains singular and “encompasses a measurable spatial domain”. Consequently, critics and scholars interested in the concept of place within the novel—regardless of their philosophical, social or artistic approaches—attempt to define this concept according to”. Place in the novel is considered a fundamentally important element in shaping events and characters, as well as providing depth and embodiment to the world created by the novel.

Place is regarded as “one of the fundamental pillars of the novel, not merely because it is one of its artistic elements, or because it is the setting in which events unfold and take place, and are driven by the characters, but because, in some outstanding works, it transforms into a space that contains all the narrative elements—including events, characters and the relationships between them—and provides the setting in which they act and express their perspectives. It is itself instrumental in developing the novel’s structure, the vehicle for the protagonist’s vision, and the embodiment of the author’s perspective.

In discussing the importance of place in narrative structure, Roland Bourneau asserts that “place can become a fundamental determinant of the narrative material and the sequence of events and motivations; that is, it ultimately transforms into an essential narrative component that breaks decisively with its concept as mere scenery through this transformation, it becomes a controlling element in the narrative and symbolic function of the story, thanks to its specific structure and the relationships arising from it.” In other words, place is one of the factors contributing to the development of the narrative and the pace of events; thanks to its specific structure, as well as its symbolism and narrative function, place can become a central character.

The description of place takes on a special character in defining the character and giving the reader a

glimpse of them; it is through the description of place that we can reveal much about certain things. For instance, the description of a character's home gives us an idea of the social class to which they belong, and thus the place introduces us to the novel's protagonists. Balzac paid particular attention to the description of place, as the place where a person lives is an impressionistic mirror; the place reflects the character's reality, and conversely, the character's life is interpreted by the nature of the place with which they are associated." . Place reveals the different dimensions of the characters and reflects their interactions with the surrounding environment, thereby contributing to the development and construction of the story and lending a unique character to the events.

"In a novel, a place may be a past history, which the work of art recalls by mentioning certain events directly related to that history; the work of art may also add a fictional dimension to it, enabling us to see or revisit history through our recollection of that place." Yassin al-Nusair believes that a place is not a visible external structure, nor a space with defined boundaries, nor a composition of spacious rooms and windows, but rather an entity of transformative action and content rooted in a particular history", meaning that the setting in a novel may be historical, enabling us to recall history and evoke its events through the context of the story.

"The setting offers various levels of openness; the novel may begin in a single specific place and then continue in various locations, or it may be open to several places across all settings from the outset. At other times, the setting is fragmented, representing the utmost degree of openness, with constant movement and travel, and adventures taking place in more than one location" ; that is, the setting in the novel is characterised by movement between several locations, which contributes to adding vitality and dynamism to the story.

"The importance of these places in which humans exist is ranked according to the strength or weakness of the human connection to them. Perhaps what explains the importance of place even more, and reflects the depth of its penetration into the human condition, is that it serves as the starting point for interpreting every action; it judges human behaviour through one's presence in a place, as well as expressing all of humanity's moral, psychological and behavioural concepts."

Thus, we find that place has gradually begun to impose itself on critical study and across all literary genres, and "it has come to be regarded as a formal and compositional element of the artistic work, and the interaction and contrast of spatial elements have come to constitute an overall dimension of the literary text." This statement asserts that it is the configuration of place that gives rise to the textual aesthetics of the literary work.

The novelist's conception of the multiple spaces within the novel differs from place in reality and the external world, even if it is referred to by the same name. "Thus, place becomes a textual entity, engaging in a false reference to the external world (the referent) ... and whilst it refers to the lived space, it neither corresponds to nor is identical with it, for one of the characteristics of textual space is that it is based on divergence and incursions; to the extent that it inhabits the world, it flees from it and shifts away from it" We note from all this that most scholars have agreed in their literary definition of place that it adapts to the novelist's imagination and carries his ideas, thereby acquiring new meanings and characteristics, "It is an imaginative linguistic construct created by literary language from words, not from existing objects or images," and so place is established as imagination rather than as an embodiment of the real geographical scope and framework.

The Manifestations and Significance of Place in the Novel *Yamama of Baghdad :

Summary of the novel:

The novel **Yamama Baghdad** by Shalal Anouz presents a narrative structure that intertwines human tragedy with the historical upheavals that have ravaged Iraq. It begins with an incident that appears to be isolated, but then unfolds into moral, social and political dimensions, making the text a mirror of love, war and the Iraqi memory, weighed down by loss. Against the backdrop of the war that followed the invasion of Kuwait, Lieutenant Thaer appears within a military unit in which Samer serves, reigniting an old rivalry between them dating back to their school days, fuelled by Hanan's choice of Thaer as her life partner. As the bombardment intensifies, hatred stirs within Samer; he seizes upon the chaos to kill Thaer in secret, so that the crime is outwardly recorded as a casualty of war whilst concealing, at its core, an act of deliberate betrayal. Hanan then emerges in the novel as its emotional centre; an Iraqi woman who confronts loss with loyalty; after her husband's murder, she transforms from a grieving wife into the keeper of his memory, then grants a child who has lost his parents a new life by adopting and raising him as Taher, so that this child becomes an extension of the meaning of life amidst the ruins, until he grows up to become a doctor and remains faithful to the memory of his foster father.

With the progression of time, the truth which had been hidden for decades begins to come to light, through the investigations of Thaer's brother Saif. The sordid history of the ancient crime comes to light; Samer had concealed his behavior behind a mask of innocence for decades.

This change in focus makes the novel less a tragedy about war and more a layered tragedy about man-on-man betrayal. And then Baghdad, in turn, within the novel becomes a co-participant in the suffering of the characters, so that it appears, for instance, in scenes of love between two lovers, as well as in scenes of destruction after 2003.

Accordingly, the title of the novel acquires meaning, representing Yamama Baghdad as both a symbol of tenderness and an image — the angel of the city both gentle and martyr — that remains wounded but remains alive. However, the novel is ultimately still about Iraq; an Iraq yet exhausted by wars, but still capable of extracting meaning and life from the ruins themselves.

1- Spatial Formations in the Novel 'Yamama Baghdad':

In the contemporary Arabic novel, place constitutes an active force in the artistic construction of the text. "Given the density of its connotations, the fictional setting transcends the level of mere backdrop—as a vessel for events—to become a focal point for the conflicts between the active forces and their wills within this or that fictional text."

Consequently, place is a fundamental element, just like the other narrative components; it is an essential part of the process of creating the fictional space, and not merely a backdrop or a vessel into which events are poured.

The fictional setting is a gateway to the world of the novel, allowing us to explore its deeper meanings and symbols, right down to its pictorial aesthetic aspects, « In addition to their differences in character and the nature of the objects found within them, their configurations are also subject to another criterion linked to spaciousness and confinement, or openness and closure. A house is not the same as a square, and a cell is not the same as a room, for a cell is not always open to the outside world unlike a room; it is always open to the house, and the house to the street."

On the basis of this literary and artistic dimension, the decision was made to examine the prominent spaces in Shalal Anouz's novel *Yamama Baghdad* through the framework of closed spaces and open

spaces, as exemplified by the house, the room, the street, and similar settings, in an effort to bring attention to their aesthetic structure and significance

2- Enclosed spaces:

Enclosed spaces, given their profound significance, help to strengthen the relationship between the fictional character in particular and the confined, restricted space that the character inhabits, whether by necessity or by choice.

“Enclosed spaces play a pivotal role in the novel, interacting with open spaces through their positives and negatives; thus, these enclosed spaces become filled with thoughts, memories, hopes, anticipation, and even fear. For places that are physically and socially enclosed give rise to conflicting and contradictory emotions within the soul.”

The latter are thus teeming with thoughts and hopes at times, and even with fear, anxieties and apprehensions at others, giving rise to contradictory emotions that draw the character into a vortex of internal conflicts between their desires and their collision with reality.

Enclosed spaces are characterised by features that may be positive, such as safety, reassurance and a sense of comfort; conversely, these features may be negative, centring on fear and violence.

In *Yamama Baghdad*, the following key enclosed spaces have been identified in this study:

The home

The home stands as the foundational structure of human civilization, encompassing within it a collection of villages and cities. It carries both a physical and a spiritual dimension, forming an integral part of human existence, for life often begins within the embrace of the home. The home represents shelter, dwelling, and refuge; within its architecture lies a deep human longing for survival and continuity, and within its walls are stored memories and joys alongside sorrows and frustrations.

By tracing the narrative spaces in the novel *Yamama Baghdad*, it becomes clear that the author has made the enclosed space an active psychological and symbolic element rather than merely a backdrop for events. These enclosed spaces function as mirrors that uncover the inner depths of the characters and contain their emotional and intellectual transformations.

The most prominent of these spaces is the home, which occupies a clear symbolic centre in the novel, as a place of memory, embrace, brokenness, and the rebuilding of destiny. We find in the novel that the author has not provided a precise description of the various houses through which the main character moves, nor has he delved into the details; rather, he has focused on the events, as illustrated below .

Hanan's Home:

“At home that evening, she approached her father...”

Here, the home is presented as a space for family dialogue, where Hanan enters the first circle of emotional confession; thus, the home becomes a place where great beginnings are quietly shaped within the family. It is a space that gives the character a sense of security before she reveals what is stirring within her.

This home was the starting point for the events; the author alluded to the pain and loss Hanan feels, as well as the sense of security and longing for the past with her martyred husband, through: “And when she had finished, she sat before him and felt his presence as if he were filling the house”

When the child enters Hanan's life, the house ceases to be merely a place of residence; rather, it transforms into an entity that regains its pulse after a long void.

The child comes, and the child is life that had been laid up, and alters the inner significance of the spot, and fills its corners.

The moment the door slammed behind him, the dwelling transformed from a haven to a battleground. The slammed door was a reminder of the tumultuous nature of the relationship going through a strain and the balance of its internal system, as if the walls could watch as the tension developed, the growing rift between their characters.

The bedroom:

He looked over at his wife who was resting softly and quietly on her bed in the bedroom. In my view, the bedroom is not just a site for slumber, but the site of deeply held moral struggle; it is here in this space that Hajj Ahmad grapples with his conscience before sharing inauthenticity regarding the marriage.

And when Sinam Taher is simply in her room, the room here becomes a symbolic border Taher formed between the world of motherhood and the world of the marital relationship, in a frank expression of the psychological and emotional priorities.

The living room:

It boasts room amongst family for interaction together, melding daily life and memories. The kid plays, the family could talk there, and Thae's picture hangs as a testimony for the presence of the absent!! So in turn the living room is a storage unit for memory; the photo hanging on the wall is not decorative but serves as a container which keeps the other person alive within their home—they can “stay” with the other in a sense, as a symbolic presence at least, to a degree of continuity, whereas as “during one of their sessions together in the living room, a harsh conversation took place between them” and here again the living room becomes the stage of this psychological confrontation, where the marital relationship which is gradually falling apart is reduced to fragility under the light of direct speech ‘Thus in the novel the living-room is a space in which opposites: life and death, the present and the past, loss and continuity coexist.

The kitchen and dining room:

The kitchen and dining room represent the continuity of the family system despite psychological turmoil; food in the novel often features in moments of tension: “Everything we need is in the kitchen”, and as in: “He went from his bedroom to the dining room”; as if the author wishes to say that daily life continues even amidst upheaval.

•The university cafeteria:

This enclosed space marks the beginning of their first love, and it is here that their conversation shifts from getting to know one another to the formation of a romantic relationship between Hanan and Thae: “They sat at a table a little way off...” It is an enclosed space, yet one that is open to the future.

•Criminal Investigation Directorate:

An official, enclosed space, yet in the novel the irony transforms it into a gateway of destiny; it is here that the acquaintance begins which will change Hanan’s fate: “At the Criminal Investigation Directorate in Baghdad...”

•The Court and the Notary’s Office:

This enclosed space represents the transition of the human relationship from emotion to legal legitimacy; here, the law attempts to confirm what fate has wrought: “Upon their entry into the Notary’s Office...”

Thus, we can say that the author has constructed the enclosed spaces in the novel on two levels: a real place that serves a narrative function, and a symbolic place that reveals the characters’ inner psyches.

“It took place in the Karrada Court”

The court is an enclosed space, yet in the novel it bears the weight of a decision whose impact will endure over time.

•The hall:

“The hall was packed with guests”

In the celebration scene, the hall represents a communal space where joy is proclaimed, yet it also carries layers of memory, for the new joy evokes shadows of the past.

•**The hotel (suite):**

“At the Babylon Hotel, where a suite had been booked”

Here, the hotel is a closed space in which the narrative revisits the first moment of love; the place thus becomes a vessel for nostalgia, where the distance between two times is measured: the time of fulfilment and the time of recollection.

Open spaces:

Open spaces are defined as a symbol of broad ambitions and openness to the outside world, to the extent that ‘the architecture of a space sometimes helps to bring characters closer together or create distance between them’, because the architectural reality and the nature of the space in which it exists play an important role in creating the right atmosphere.

“An open space is an external spatial environment not confined by narrow boundaries; it forms a spacious area and is often a natural open-air setting.”

The latter is deeply connected to the enclosed space, and humans serve as the link between them, being the fundamental element in this cycle. Humans, in turn, choose the open spaces that suit them, in accordance with their needs and desires, “and their psychological states are reflected in their surroundings... .. so that places take on the colours of the soul...” Due to their complex artistic compositions, which in turn suggest a range of meanings and reflections, only rational human beings are capable of deciphering their codes and extrapolating their meanings and hidden depths.

Thus, open spaces generally suggest movement and freedom; they are “the spatial realm that embraces different types of people and diverse forms of narrative events”, which is why they occupy an important place in contemporary Arabic fiction.

In the novel *Yamama Baghdad*, numerous instances of these profoundly significant open spaces emerge, by virtue of their function in linking setting to character. We shall demonstrate this by examining the most important of these open spaces in the novel, which include:

•**Pavements and roads**

Streets and roads are defined as open spaces, as they serve as a means of transition from one space to another. “The street is the city’s desert, its temporal fragment, its ceaseless, dynamic life, and the spiral of its civilisation; for its energy extends as far as the imagination, and its twists and turns mark shifts in time and place, encompassing both a rural-urban and a narrow perspective, the vision of small and medium-sized towns,”

The streets are imbued with the magic of nature, being in direct contact with the sky; they are also imbued at times with the passers-by who are absorbed in their journey to reach their destination, and at other times with the prevailing calm and silence, in the stillness of the night and its pitch-black darkness.

The novelist blends the street with the characters’ thoughts and feelings, and does not dwell on a detailed description of the roads due to the lack of activity on them; we summarise them as follows:

1- The Najaf–Baghdad Motorway:

It was eleven in the morning on the Najaf–Baghdad motorway. The motorway is packed with people at that point; it is a transit place, but it becomes the place of a new fate starting when the missing child emerges there. In a world filled with noise and fear, the author creates a wholly human space where the emotion of care and embrace emerges.

2-The road from Hilla too Baghdad :

The passenger in the front seat stopped the driver a little bit in front of one of the small shops.

The road here is not simply a physical distance but literally a corridor between two psychological spaces; along the road Hanan memories move, and the car drives movement equals internal memory.

The author makes the road an open space where daily life coexists with the traces of war, where the small shops remain a testament to life's resistance to death.

• **University of Baghdad:**

"I was accepted into the Faculty of Science at the University of Baghdad"

The university is an open space for beginnings, for getting to know one another, and for the formation of first emotions; it is here that the first encounter between the characters takes place, and the relationships that will later expand within the narrative begin.

• **The River:**

Since ancient times, the way this vast blue expanse has been viewed has varied among writers, poets and ordinary people alike, for it is steeped in mystery and power. It has long been a source of inspiration, recognised as a piece of breathtaking nature and a symbol of the unknown and new horizons. In the novel, the river carries a profound symbolic dimension; it is the link connecting the past to the present, granting memory a space for reflection and recollection, 'on the banks of the Tigris'.

• **The Cemetery:**

In many literary texts, the cemetery becomes a space where absent characters are recalled; death is not a complete severance, but another form of presence through remembrance. This is the reason the cemetery in the narrative is usually associated with misanthropic contemplations and nostalgic excursions of the characters in front of the silent gravestones.

For its part, in Yamama Baghdad, the cemetery emerges as a place associated with fidelity: The fact that it is visited every Friday makes it an extension of the connection with the one who has vanished. Instead of a site of farewell it represents a site of memory and site of nurturing emotional connection. The cemetery thus signifies the loyalty of families — that love does not vanish with death — as attested by the weekly visits every Friday morning to the cemetery.

It can be inferred from this that the distinct open spaces in the novel construct an aesthetic artistic composition throughout the narrative structure, while the authors delineate on the connotations of these places whose meanings are at once linear positive and negative.

Conclusion and Findings:

Through the analytical reading of the novel Yamama Baghdad for the novelist Shalal Anouz, I realize that the narrative text is based on a structural artistic vision between the real and the human. The author manages to offer such a narrative experience that depicts the transformations that the Iraqi society has gone through in the key moments of history, and to transform its singularities into a symbolic indicator that disclose the nature of the relationship between people and their destiny in the time of anxiety and turmoil.

The analysis reveals that the novel does not only register events to be narrativized but attempts to verbalize them artfully in a fiction where the individual memory and society coalesce and characters, locations and events become interdependent factors in a process of meaning production in the narratives.

The analysis also reveals that the narrative structure of the text employs a temporal progression based on flashbacks and foreshadowing, which allows the text to connect the past with the present within a single framework and grants the story a psychological dimension that goes beyond the boundaries of the immediate event.

This structure helped to highlight the psychological depth of the characters, particularly those shaped by the war and the internal fragmentation it left behind, which was reflected in their choices and attitudes. It

also became clear that place in the novel played a central role in shaping the narrative vision; it did not appear merely as an external framework for events, but became a structural element that helped to direct meaning. Baghdad appeared as a symbolic centre in which Iraqi memory stores its pains and transformations, whilst enclosed and open spaces carried psychological and social dimensions that expressed the nature of the transformation that befell the Iraqi people during and after the war. Through an analysis of the characters, it became apparent that the novel accorded the female character a prominent symbolic presence; embodied in the character of Hanan, she embodied the values of loyalty, patience and the persistence of life, until she became a symbolic image of moral steadfastness in contrast to other characters who revealed a fractured self when succumbing to grudges and internal conflicts. The narrative language also stood out as one imbued with a descriptive and contemplative sensibility, tending towards expressive economy at times and emotional openness at others, thereby enhancing the text's aesthetic structure.

The study concluded that contemporary Iraqi fiction, in this narrative model, emphasises the human dimension as the focal point for shaping the fictional event, and that war does not appear in the novel as a mere political event, but rather as a force generating psychological and social transformations.

My thesis also analyzed that place functions structurally in a recursive process of meaning-making, and that the geography of Baghdad in the novel transcends its actual terrain, becoming a representation of the overarching Iraqi memory. It also showed that the author employed characters of psychological depth, thus allowing for these layers to peel away and the text to discover the tension between the various forms of loyalty and betrayal and between memory and forgetting. Furthermore, the narrative language was a functional aspect for its art effect as it allowed the concatenation of description and reflection.

Recommendations

This study recommends expanding critical engagement with Shalal Anouz's narrative works, given their artistic and semantic richness, which can contribute to a deeper understanding of the transformations in the modern Iraqi novel. It also recommends devoting separate studies to the concept of place in the contemporary Iraqi novel, as it is a structural element no longer separate from the formation of the text's intellectual vision. Furthermore, it recommends directing attention toward the study of representations of the female character in the modern Iraqi novel, as she embodies a social and cultural discourse that goes beyond her traditional presence. It is also useful to draw upon modern critical approaches, particularly cultural narratology and discourse analysis, to uncover the deeper layers of meaning in contemporary Iraqi novels.

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