

The Image of Place in the Poetry of Muhammad Naji Al Saad: An Applied Study of the Poem "Salam Ala Najran"

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Abstract:

This study aims to provide an applied analysis of the image of place in the poem "Peace Be Upon Najran," revealing the dimensions of the relationship between the poet and his Najrani environment in light of the dialectic of influence and being influenced. The research adopted a descriptive-analytical approach based on textual reading to uncover the aesthetic and intellectual structure of place in terms of its natural, social, and symbolic connotations. The research concluded that Al Saad's experience represents a model of the integrated relationship between man and place, where the poet's influence and being influenced by his environment interact to construct a poetic image that combines authenticity and modernity, and blends the local and the human dimension. This imbues his poetry with a renewed aesthetic energy that expresses the collective consciousness of the Saudi people in their close connection to their land and identity.

Keywords: Nostalgia, Belonging, Influence and Being Influenced, Poem "Peace Be Upon Najran".

INTRODUCTION

Poetry in the Najran region holds special significance, representing a tributary of contemporary Saudi poetry that blends traditional roots with modern experience. It reflects the Najran environment with its geographical and social characteristics, while simultaneously affirming the presence of cultural identity and local distinctiveness by evoking and grounding the place within the poetic experience.

Among the poems in the collection by the poet Mohammed Naji Al Saad, the poem "Peace Be Upon Najran" stands out, containing clear evidence of the presence of place as an artistic space where the relationship between the self and the environment, and between the past and the present, is embodied.

Significance of the Research:

The importance of this research lies in its approach to the relationship between place and nostalgia, a relationship that opens an interpretive horizon linking the poetic self to its cultural and emotional heritage. This contributes to enriching literary studies that address modern Saudi poetry from a unique local perspective. - Research Problem:

The problem addressed in this research lies in attempting to answer the main question:

How is the image of place manifested in Muhammad Naji Al Saad's poem "Peace Be Upon Najran," and what are the features of influence, interaction, and nostalgia within it?

Research Questions:

1. How did the poet depict Najran in the poem "Peace Be Upon Najran?"

2. What are the manifestations of influence from heritage and interaction with the environment in the poem?
3. What role does nostalgia play in shaping the image of place?

Research Objectives:

1. To demonstrate the manifestations of influence from classical Arabic poetic heritage.
2. To study nostalgia in its relationship to place and identity.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

This research employs a textual analytical approach to uncover the connotations of place in "Peace Be Upon Najran," allowing for a combination of meticulous textual reading and an interpretive perspective that reveals the dimensions of influence and interaction.

Previous Studies:

- Patterns of Place and Their Significance in Saudi Women's Poetry (2018), by Mona Saleh Al-Rashada: This study focused on the manifestations of place in the poetry of Saudi women poets, identifying patterns of place, its political, psychological, and social connotations, its connection to the homeland, and its influence on the formation of the literary work.
- Features of Nostalgia in the Poetry of Usama ibn Munqidh (2024), by Hiba Mustafa Jaber: This study examined the phenomenon of nostalgia in the collected works of the poet Usama ibn Munqidh, relying on an objective psychological approach to the evocation of longing and place.

Research Structure:

This research consists of an introduction, a preface, three sections, and a conclusion, as follows:

- Introduction
- Preface
- Section Two: The Image of Place in the Poem "Peace Be Upon Najran"
- Section Three: Place Between Influence and Being Influenced
- Conclusion
- Sources and References
- Appendices

PREFACE

Place has occupied a pivotal position in Arabic poetry since ancient times. The pre-Islamic poet would begin his poem by standing among the ruins, evoking the dwellings of his beloved and the homes of his people, in a scene embodying longing for the past and the recollection of memory. This traditional opening became a symbol of the poet's relationship with the land and memory. With the development of Arabic poetry throughout the ages, place acquired new dimensions. In Islamic times, it became a symbol of faith and sanctity, and in modern times, a symbol of freedom, exile, or homeland, depending on the transformations of human experience. Thus, place in Arabic poetry has remained a symbolic element that transcends geography to express the collective consciousness and the poetic self in its interaction with reality.

In contemporary Saudi poetry, place has emerged with new features that blend local belonging with a human dimension. The Saudi poet now views their environment as a space of identity, history, and memory. The scope of place has expanded to encompass the desert, the city, the village, the home, and everything connected to the human experience. From this, Saudi poetry has acquired a distinctive character that combines the authenticity rooted in heritage with a modern aesthetic awareness that draws inspiration from place as a source of symbol and meaning.

In this context, the experience of the poet Muhammad Naji Al Saad stands out as one of the most remarkable poetic experiences in Najran, distinguished by its emotional sincerity and profound symbolic depth in its use of place. His collection "A Cloud of Revelation" is considered an artistic document that expresses the poet's interaction with his Najrani environment. The natural and social features of the place are manifested in his poetic imagery, intertwined with emotions of longing, nostalgia, and the evocation of the past. In his poems, the poet demonstrates an artistic ability to "make place an emotional space" in which memory is embodied, and through which the features of childhood, belonging, and identity are recalled.

The selection of the poem "Peace Be Upon Najran" for this research stems from its prominent representation of the presence of place in the poetry of Muhammad Naji Al Saad. It expresses place in its emotional and nostalgic dimensions, allowing for a comprehensive reading of the

image of place in his poetry from two complementary perspectives. Through the analysis of this poem, the research sought to uncover the aesthetic and semantic structure of place in Najrani poetry, and the relationship that connects nostalgia, as an emotional state that evokes the past, to affirm the present.

The Image of Place in the Poem "Peace Be Upon Najran"

After the first section examined the image of place in the poem "He Gave Our Love" from its subjective, emotional perspective, which embodied the poet's intimate and passionate connection to his Najrani environment, this section moves to a broader level of experience. In the poem "Peace Be Upon Najran," place transforms into a unifying national and human symbol. Here, place is no longer merely an individual yearning for childhood and memories, but rather a voice for the community, a realm of dignity, identity, and history.

In this poem, Najran becomes a proud homeland embracing humanity, nature, and heroism. The poetic experience transforms into a celebration of place in its universal and civilizational dimensions, making the text more open and expansive in vision and content.

First: The Natural Place and Its Aesthetic Manifestations

Nature poetry is among the oldest forms of Arabic poetry. Human beings, by their very nature, are drawn to joy and song, and nature has always been the wellspring of poetic inspiration. Within it, the poet's soul finds solace and creativity flourishes, and he echoes sounds, finding pleasure and solace in their repetition, a comfort in enduring the hardships of travel and other trials. The poet Al Saad begins his poem with a poetic greeting overflowing with sweetness and beauty, where the Najran landscape teems with life, overflowing with bounty and light. This underscores the influence of geography on literary works, acting as a natural force, a fact perceived visually. Al Saad says:

Peace be upon Najran, as it appears in the darkness From the lightning that sends forth its rain, from it what it sends forth

The natural scene transforms into a visual and auditory tableau, pulsating with movement. Rain, lightning, and night together form a harmonious scene that expresses the spirit and fertility of the place. "A single environment shapes a person's character as well as their physical constitution. Climate is a powerful influence on this constitution, including the brain, and thus it is also a powerful influence on the spiritual aspect of this person." The poet adds in another image:

Its soil yearns for the soul, longing for its land ,Luminous like a full moon that shines in the stillness of the night. The land in Najran is not inert soil, but a spiritual entity that evokes longing and illuminates the soul. The natural setting here expresses the harmony between humanity

and the universe, and the profound emotional connection between the poet and their environment. The Arab lives amidst nature, interacting with it, influencing it, and being influenced by it. They are "children of nature, from it they were born, in its embrace they grew, and through it they attained perfection."

Secondly: Place as a symbol of national identity and human dignity

In this poem, the poet transcends the boundaries of local place, granting it a comprehensive national dimension. He makes Najran a symbol of the entire Saudi homeland and an example of human values and dignity. "Man does not merely need a physical, geographical space to live in, but aspires to a land where his roots are planted and his identity is firmly established. From there, he embarks on the search for existence and identity... The human self is not complete within its own confines, but extends beyond these boundaries to imbue everything around it with its essence and bestow upon the place its civilizational values." He says:

A land where man lives honored

And not a wanderer, a wretch, a burden, a burden.

In this verse, human dignity is manifested as one of the values inherent to the place; for the poet, place is not merely a geographical space, but a cradle of freedom, justice, and humanity. He reinforces this meaning in his words:

A land impregnable to all enemies

In it, the swift steeds of glory roam, swift and strong

Here, the poet connects the place with honor and strength, making it a symbol of national steadfastness and a space for preserving dignity and identity. This is embodied in this text, which makes Najran a microcosm of a homeland where beauty, purity, and honor converge.

Third: The Place in its Historical and Heroic Dimension

In his poem, the poet evokes the memory of Najran, a place that stretches back through history, linking its ancient glories with its modern acts of heroism. A historical place is a place that carries the history of a nation or people, and bears witness to many events. This place generally constitutes fertile ground for writers and artists. This is because the past is the expansive realm within which the poet's imagination roams, summoning, representing, and reconstructing historical facts according to a different vision and experience. Therefore, this place, through its use in the poetic text, acquires an active presence. On the one hand, it grants the text a new dimension by opening it up to heritage and connecting it to the past. On the other hand, the poet or artist gives the historical place the ability to renew itself and escape the constraints of time by transcending the past and maintaining a continuous presence through the poetic text or the artwork. Al-Saad says:

From the south, and a wind from an angel, tidings of peace upon the trench from every wise person.

This reference to the "trench" constitutes a powerful symbolic presence in the poem, as the incident of the trench represents, in Arab and Saudi memory, a symbol of patience, faith, and steadfastness. "When memories are recalled, we imbue them with a certain value, perhaps an aura of happiness that stands at the dividing line between our personal history and our undefined prehistory," the poet continues, evoking the heroic dimension in his words:

A fortress that men fear when it attacks

- Swiftly, you see the open gates of the fortresses bent
- A time has passed, where the enemy stands witness
- With our glories, a magnificent edifice we built
- Through these verses, the poet reinterprets the place as a towering, heroic entity, uniting the past and the present, history and glory. The place in Najran is the record of memory and the arena of heroism. In the text, it is the trace of time, the collective memory that inscribes its presence upon the geography.

Fourth: The emotional dimension and nostalgia in the love of place.

Despite the overwhelming sense of nationalism and collective identity in this poem, the poet doesn't neglect the emotional connection he feels to the place, a connection rooted in sentiment and nostalgia. Yearning for the past is a recurring theme in poetry and writing, often influenced by individual and social factors such as imprisonment, exile, and a deep longing for the past, as well as the recollection of childhood and youthful memories. The poet seeks refuge in his joyful past to escape sorrow. In this poem, he says:

My two friends, take me back to Najran and conceal / A yearning that crushes the heart with longing when it is afflicted

And I am captive with longing for its valleys / When I see the torrent flowing joyfully

Here, the poet expresses a yearning imbued with sincerity and spontaneity, as Najran becomes a haven of tranquility and spiritual serenity. At the poem's conclusion, this longing ascends to a visionary dimension when he says:

A revelation came to me from Najran, a sign,

Knowing that the yearning in my soul has traveled by night.

Thus, the place at the end becomes revelation and inspiration, not merely a memory, confirming that the poet's relationship to the place is not that of a body to the land, but of a soul to a homeland pulsating with glory and

generosity. The image of the place is linked to the storyteller's expressive ability in relating the place to the narrative elements. It can be said that describing the place is one of the most important means of defining its image.

In conclusion, this study reveals, through an analysis of the poem "Peace Be Upon Najran," that the place in Muhammad Naji Al Saad's poetry is no longer merely a space for life or a framework for memories, but has transformed into a comprehensive symbol of identity, dignity, and eternity. The poet has succeeded in making Najran a national and human entity pulsating with life, encompassing the dimensions of nature, history, and humanity in a unique aesthetic and semantic unity.

Thus, place emerges in this poem as the voice of the homeland and its living memory, a mirror reflecting the values of authenticity, belonging, and pride that distinguish the Saudi people in their deep connection to their land and history.

Place: Between Influence and Being Influenced Place as an Influencer in Shaping Poetic Vision

In the poem "Peace Be Upon Najran," we find that place influences the poet's vision of life and homeland, elevating his love of place to love of country, as he says:

**A land where man lives with dignity
Nor is he lost, destitute, or burdened by hardship.**

At this stage, place becomes a primary component of the poetic vision, guiding both thought and emotion, and granting the poet his aesthetic and semantic energy. This applies to the poetry of Muhammad Naji Al Saad, in which place and man merge to such an extent that it becomes difficult to separate them.

The Poet Influences Place Through Poetic

Reshaping In "Peace Be Upon Najran," the poet reshapes the place in its heroic and patriotic dimensions, attributing to Najran qualities of heroism and glory, as in his words:

**Lands impregnable to all enemies
In them, the swift steeds of glory roam, swift and mighty.**

He does not describe Najran as it is, but as it should be: an eternal homeland embodying the values of steadfastness and pride.

Thus, the place transforms from an object of description into an object of artistic veneration, reflecting the poet's ability to influence the reader's perception of the place itself.

The place as a bridge between individual and collective memory.

The comparison reveals that for the poet, place is the bridge connecting individual memory to collective memory. Private experience transforms into a shared

experience that expresses the conscience of the entire society. Poetry, in its early stages, was known for its narcissism. The harsh desert life compelled the poet to focus on the self in his poetic composition. The poet, through his poetry, discussed only subjective issues revolving around his life and feelings alone, expressing them in poetic themes dictated by the nature of life in his era. Poetry began as a means for the poet to reflect what was on his mind and what was connected to his being. With the emergence of religious movements and political parties, there were necessarily ideas that concerned those belonging to those movements and parties, which sought to establish them in society and impose their views. The poet thus acquired a function to express their collective ideas. This collective consciousness gave poetry a public platform and a major role in disseminating the ideas of the group to which the poet belonged and whose causes he adopted. All of this, at a certain point, changed the depth, content, and form of the poem. The poet moved from the individual to the collective. In "Peace Be Upon Najran," the poet's influence on the place is evident through his artistic and symbolic reinterpretation of it.

Thus, it becomes clear that place in his poetic experience is not merely a geographical space, but a spiritual and aesthetic entity that contributes to the formation of consciousness and identity, expressing the interaction of the self with history, homeland, and nature simultaneously.

CONCLUSION

This study, through an analysis of the poem "Peace Be Upon Najran" by the poet Muhammad Naji Al Saad, demonstrates that place in his poetic experience is not merely a descriptive element, but rather a vibrant aesthetic and human entity, representing the axis of self-awareness, identity, and belonging. It is a symbol of pride and collective identity.

The study confirms that Al Saad's poetic experience reflects an evolution in vision from a subjective to a collective space. In the poem "Peace Be Upon Najran," place transforms into a vast national space that expresses the nation's history and collective glory. Thus, place in his poetry becomes integrated, serving as a mirror to both individual and collective consciousness, and a source of images and meanings that draw inspiration from the spirit of Najran in its historical and human dimensions.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

1. His poetry reveals a dialectic of influence and being influenced between the self and place, where place transforms from an influencer on the psyche to one influenced by human experience and collective consciousness.
2. The poet blends the heritage of classical Arabic poetry with the spirit of the modern age, drawing inspiration from traditional opening verses and tribal symbols within a contemporary framework that unites authenticity and innovation.

2. Nostalgia is a central emotional theme that enriches his poetry, linking memory and place and transforming longing into artistic energy.
3. In Muhammad Naji's poetry, place reflects self-representation and love of homeland, particularly his hometown of Radhia, where he grew up.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Researchers should be encouraged to study the experiences of poets from various regions of Saudi Arabia to highlight the diversity of poetic discourse and the richness of local and national identity.
2. The concept of nostalgia should be utilized as an interpretive mechanism in reading modern Saudi poetry that evokes memory, longing, and identity.
3. Researchers should be invited to compare the representations of place in Najran's poetry with those of other regions of the Kingdom to highlight the unity of experience and the diversity of vision.

RESEARCH APPENDICES

The poem "Peace be upon Najran"

1. Peace be upon Najran, as lightning flashes in the darkness, sending down its rain, and as it sends down its rain.
2. Southward, and a wind from an angel brings glad tidings. Peace be upon Al-Ukhdu from every wise person.
3. Its soil is sought by the soul, longing for its land, shining like a full moon in the stillness of the night.
4. And it rises high upon dark, early morning clouds, its fronds seen ascending among the galaxies.
5. Therein is a cluster of dates, yellowed by the sun, gaining splendor, and captivating the eye with its beauty.
6. For it is the heart of a lover, yearning for its air, and dates upon the eyelashes, intoxicated and out.
7. When the scent of the early spring rains waters it, the eye may gaze upon silken, dazzling.
8. A beauty whose curves are covered by early morning clouds. Generous, he bestows upon the earth, if it overflows
9. A fresh garment upon a slope and valley, its attire joyful, if it disobeys the blazing steps
10. My feelings yearn for the vine branch, one after another, pouring forth a melody of love
11. My two friends, return me to Najran and conceal a longing that crushes the heart with yearning when it is saddened
12. And do not increase your blame, nor remain stubborn if my rhyme surges, do not blame if it satirizes
13. For it has not committed a shameful blame nor harm, and it was not in the field of insult nor did it resort to it

14. A wail that tears at my lamentation with awe, like an orphaned child whose world has been crushed and has become distraught
15. My two friends, be generous to me with a night in her beautiful embrace, where riders become wanderers
16. And I am captive Yearning for its plains, when I see the torrent flowing joyfully
17. A heart that the wind plays with, lost, like a ring on a slender, wandering path
18. As if I see a rider on the saddle of a swift horse, throwing down a withered, gurgling, liver-strewn, trembling one
19. The minarets of Sa'dan shine, its sky is lofty, Abu Hamdan struts proudly
20. Lands that are defiant against all enemies, where the swift, noble steeds of glory roam, galloping
21. Lands where man lives honored, not lost, nor burdened by misfortune or hardship
22. Infatuation with its moon, love for its jasmine, its air heals the soul and relieves sorrow
23. A heart that longing has forcibly consumed when it is far away, and an eyelid that pours forth tears A swift attack, if it comes suddenly
24. Our horses from the west of (Taslal) are without it, with dark forelocks, goodness and hope are bound
25. A stronghold that the people fear when it raids swiftly, you see the open gates crooked
26. A joy for the race and in war a curse upon the enemy that our horses raided, few escaped
27. A time has passed in which the enemy met a witness to our glories, a magnificent edifice we built
28. And a great longing overcomes me when my horse gallops swiftly when I saddled it
29. A revelation came to me from Najran, with a knowledgeable sign, that longing in the soul had traveled by night

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