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**The Aesthetics of Place in Classical Poetic Discourse: A Semantic Approach**

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**Abstract**

The Arabic literary corpus has immortalized the exploits of poets in their settlement and nomadism; poems thus came laden with references to places and the remnants of abandoned dwellings. This abundance has prompted scholars to devote sustained attention to the study of poetry and the semantic significance of place within it. This study seeks to examine the concept of place as an aesthetic structure in classical Arabic poetry, tracing its various transformations and meanings from a direct, concrete location to a profound existential vision that rendered place an essential and active element in the formation of the Arab poet's cultural identity.

The research proceeds from the hypothesis that place in pre-Islamic poetry and early Islamic poetry was not merely an external framework for events or a neutral stage upon which the poet described his movements and journeys. Rather, place carries psychological and symbolic connotations that express humanity's relationship with its environment, its longing and anxiety, and its desire for permanence and immortality.

The study adopts an analytical–descriptive method, informed by aesthetic and phenomenological approaches, in order to reveal how place is transformed from a sensory datum into an existential philosophical vision through which the poet reconstructs his being within the poetic text. The study concludes that place in classical Arabic poetry is not simply a natural space, but a field in which the poet's self intersects with the world, revealing the existential dimension of poetry as both a cognitive and an aesthetic instrument.

**Keywords:** place, aesthetics, poetic discourse, pre-Islamic poetry, existential vision.

**Introduction**

Place is considered one of the most significant aesthetic and intellectual concepts that have occupied literary criticism since antiquity. It has never been merely a space in which events unfold or a neutral context accommodating characters and poetic images; rather, it has evolved into an active structural element in the production of meaning and the formulation of an aesthetic vision of the world. Place is not emptiness, but a presence saturated with symbols and significations, where human experience intersects with existential sensibility and aesthetic thought.

In the Arabic heritage, place found its most pronounced manifestation in poetry before any other literary genre, for the pre-Islamic poet lived in an environment defined as much by geography as by spirit

<sup>1</sup>. The desert, with its boundless expanse, was not simply a natural backdrop, but represented the existential fate of the Arab individual, wherein awareness of the world was shaped through openness to vastness, confrontation with isolation, and the search for meaning in the face of annihilation<sup>2</sup>. Hence, place in pre-Islamic poetry across its diverse manifestations was more an image of the self than a mere description of land.

Ancient poets across the Arabian Peninsula and beyond expressed place in ways that transcended geographical description toward emotional and symbolic embodiment. Ruins were not stones or debris, but embodied memory; and the journey was not merely spatial movement, but a movement in meaning between longing and estrangement, between the search for the self and the search for God. Thus, classical Arabic poetry may be described as poetry of spatial consciousness par excellence, transforming place from the material to the symbolic, from description to contemplation, and from signification to an existential vision<sup>3</sup>.

The study of place in classical poetic discourse derives its importance from the fact that it touches the very core of the Arabic poetic experience. Place is not a marginal element that can be isolated from other poetic structures; rather, it lies at the heart of the aesthetic formation of the text, as it connects language and emotion, self and world, time and memory<sup>4</sup>. At the same time, this study enables a modern interpretive reading of classical poetry, drawing upon contemporary aesthetic methodologies (phenomenological, symbolic, semiotic), without forfeiting its cultural and environmental specificity<sup>5</sup>.

The central research question may thus be formulated as follows:

How did place in classical poetic discourse transform from a descriptive element into an aesthetic structure expressing an existential vision of the Arab human being?

To address this question, the study adopts an aesthetic–hermeneutic approach grounded in philosophical conceptions of space in aesthetics (Bachelard, Ricoeur, Merleau-Ponty), alongside the perspectives of classical Arabic criticism concerning the relationship between poetry and existence. Rather than statistically tracking place references in texts, the study seeks to uncover the aesthetic structure of place in classical Arabic poetry how space becomes signification, suggestion, and vision.

#### **The article is structured around four main sections:**

-The theoretical and methodological framework defining the philosophical and aesthetic background of the concept of place.

-An analysis of the aesthetics of place in classical poetry in terms of linguistic, imagistic, and symbolic construction.

-Tracing the semantic transformation from place as a sensory datum to place as an existential vision.

-A synthetic conclusion highlighting the aesthetic and intellectual findings and opening prospects for further research.

In this sense, the study does not aim to provide a traditional reading of places in classical Arabic poetry, but rather to re-examine them as a cognitive and aesthetic system that articulates the Arab human experience in its struggle with existence where place becomes a language of thought and a site for the manifestation of being.

## **1.Theoretical and Methodological Framework**

### **1.1. Theoretical Framework**

This study approaches the aesthetics of place in classical poetic discourse through a dual perspective that combines aesthetic literary analysis with an existential reading of poetic discourse. Place in Arabic poetry did not emerge as a systematic philosophical construct, but rather as a descriptive and aesthetic structure reflecting modes of consciousness, forms of representation, and patterns of relationship between self and world<sup>6</sup>.

From a theoretical standpoint, three principal approaches have contributed to shaping our conception of poetic space:

#### **1.The Structural–Aesthetic Approach:**

This approach views place as an element within the overall structure of the text, performing a function in the construction of poetic imagery, rhythm, and meaning<sup>7</sup>. Place, in this perspective, is not an isolated lexical unit, but a textual component intertwined with linguistic and suggestive relations to generate meaning. This orientation formed the basis of textual analysis in modern Arabic criticism, where critics sought to identify the function of place in the aesthetic formation of the poem and to relate it to transformations in language and imagery<sup>8</sup>.

#### **2.The Cultural–Anthropological Approach:**

This approach regards place as an expression of collective consciousness and prevailing culture. The desert, the nomadic space, the oasis, and the city are not merely natural environments, but cultural symbols laden with values and meanings that define the Arab individual's relationship with existence and environment<sup>9</sup>. Thus, pre-Islamic poetry, for instance, cannot be separated from the geography of the desert in which modes of thinking and expression were formed, while Abbasid poetry reflects the transformations of urban life and the new symbols it introduced luxury, alienation, and contemplation<sup>10</sup>.

#### **3.The Phenomenological Approach:**

This approach offers the deepest insight into the transition from spatial signification to existential vision. It proceeds from the premise that place in poetry is not an objective entity perceived externally, but a lived experience in which self and world converge through sensation, memory, and contemplation<sup>11</sup>. Inspired by the philosophy of Gaston Bachelard and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, this view conceives place as a mirror of the self and a manifestation of its being in the world. The poet's bond with place is thus a lived psychological relationship, marked by mutual influence.

On this theoretical basis, poetic place emerges as an imagined space expressing the self's anxiety and longing, and its struggle with time and destiny. Consequently, analyzing place in classical poetic discourse necessitates transcending the geographical dimension toward a symbolic one that reveals the aesthetic structure of thought embedded in poetic language<sup>12</sup>.

## **1.2. Methodological Framework**

This study adopts an analytical-synthetic methodology that integrates semantic textual analysis with philosophical hermeneutic reading, aiming to uncover the aesthetic structure of place and its transformation from a realistic datum into an existential vision<sup>13</sup>. Several complementary methods are employed:

### **Textual Analytical Method:**

This method focuses on tracing the presence of place within the examined poetic texts (from the Mu‘allaqāt, early Islamic poetry, and Abbasid poetry) by analyzing vocabulary, expressions, images, and rhythms that generate spatial meanings<sup>14</sup>. The aim is to reveal the internal structure organizing the relationship between language and place, and how spatial vocabulary becomes a carrier of emotion, idea, and vision.

### **Structural-Aesthetic Method:**

This method is used to uncover the aesthetic structure of place within the poem by analyzing its relations with other artistic elements: imagery, rhythm, symbolism, and language<sup>15</sup>. Place in classical poetry cannot be isolated from the symbolic system within which the text operates. The desert, for example, is associated with extended rhythm and elevated diction, while the oasis and the city are linked to softer, more condensed rhythms.

### **Phenomenological-Hermeneutic Method:**

This method seeks to elucidate the experience of place from within poetic consciousness from the perspective of the poetic self interacting with place as an existential dimension<sup>16</sup>. It enables a shift from surface meaning analysis to probing inner experience, whereby place becomes a site for representing existence rather than a mere backdrop for poetic narration.

### **Cultural Comparative Method:**

This method is employed to compare patterns of place across different poetic periods (pre-Islamic, Umayyad, Abbasid), in order to trace the transformation from nomadic space to urban space, and from sensory signification to philosophical meaning<sup>17</sup>. Through comparison, it becomes evident that spatial consciousness in Arabic poetry evolved from the stage of ruins and memory to that of contemplation and knowledge.

## **1.3. Conceptual Framework**

This study is grounded in a set of key concepts that define the scope of its theoretical and analytical inquiry, most notably:

### **Place:**

In this context, place is not merely a geographical location or a material space; rather, it is a symbolic structure formed within poetic language. It is a space of memory, a field of consciousness, and a means of representing the relationship between the self and the world, as well as a symbol of emotion and the illumination of feeling.

### **Aesthetic Structure:**

This refers to the internal organization of artistic elements within the text such as imagery, rhythm, and symbolism which enables place to be transformed into an aesthetic signification rather than a mere descriptive element. From this perspective, words acquire an aesthetic value that allows the poet to employ place as a creative and aesthetic instrument.

### **Existential Vision:**

This denotes the underlying stance of the poetic text toward questions of existence, meaning, and destiny. This stance manifests through the way place is employed as a mirror of the self, a stage for its manifestations, and a space in which the self confronts its inner depths and latent tensions.

### **Poetic Discourse:**

Here, poetic discourse is not understood as poetic language alone, but as a semantic system expressing an integrated intellectual and aesthetic vision. The poetic corpus is thus not merely linguistic expression, but a coherent semantic system that articulates interwoven visions, ideas, and emotions.

The study relies on a selection of poetic texts from different historical periods in order to construct a developmental vision of the presence of place in classical Arabic poetry. Among the most significant of these texts are:

#### **Pre-Islamic Poetry:**

The Mu‘allaqāt of Imru’ al-Qays, Zuhayr ibn Abī Sulmā, and ‘Antarah ibn Shaddād, which represent the initial moment in the formation of spatial consciousness.

#### **Umayyad Poetry:**

Texts by Jarīr, al-Farazdaq, and al-Akhtal, in which place moves from the ruins to more social and human-centered spaces.

#### **Abbasid Poetry:**

Selected works by Abū Tammām, al-Mutanabbī, and Abū Nuwās, where place acquires a philosophical and aesthetic dimension reflecting the maturity of poetic consciousness and the depth of intellectual experience.

### **1.4. Objectives and Premises of the Study**

This study aims to achieve the following objectives:

- Analyzing the aesthetic structure of place in classical Arabic poetic discourse.
- Revealing the transformation from sensory place to symbolic and philosophical place.
- Highlighting the ways in which the self and the world are represented through spatial language.
- Clarifying the relationship between place, identity, memory, and existential consciousness.
- Attempting to benefit from Arabic critical studies through an integrated approach that combines textual analysis with philosophical reflection.

## 2. The Aesthetic Analysis of Place in Classical Arabic Poetry

### (The Ruins as a Mirror of Existence)

In pre-Islamic poetry, place emerges as a structure that encompasses the earliest human experience, with the desert, the ruins, and the journey forming the fundamental pillars of poetic space. In this context, place was not merely a narrative backdrop, but a symbol of the self's tension between stability and transformation, presence and absence, and between the desire for permanence and its impossibility in a transient world<sup>18</sup>.

Imru' al-Qays offers a precise example of this at the opening of his famous Mu'allaqa:

Stop, let us weep for the memory of a beloved and a dwelling

At the edge of al-Liwa, between al-Dakhūl and Hawmal<sup>19</sup>

Here, the poet summons place as a memory of pain and longing. Places are not geography as much as they are semantic markers of loss, time, and death<sup>20</sup>. In this scene, place is transformed into a symbolic entity that reconfigures human experience aesthetically: the ruins become a "visual text" in which awareness of time is condensed, and the sands and abandoned dwellings turn into a mirror of a collapsing existence<sup>21</sup>. Thus, stopping and weeping over the ruins transcends the geographical dimension toward a sensory awareness and a profound feeling of annihilation.

As for 'Antarah ibn Shaddād, he renders place a stage for heroism and dignity, where a clear interweaving of beauty and ethical stance becomes evident. He declares:

I remembered you while spears were quenching their thirst from me,

And Indian blades were dripping with my blood<sup>22</sup>

Here, place is not merely a battlefield, but a space for the embodiment of the fighting self, where blood, spear, and sword are transformed into existential symbols that reshape the meaning of life and death<sup>23</sup>. This shift from the ruins (a symbol of loss) to the battlefield (a symbol of action) reflects how pre-Islamic poetry transforms place from an external space into an internal structure of consciousness<sup>24</sup>.

The aesthetic power of place in pre-Islamic poetry lies in its ability to contain opposites: presence and absence, love and death, memory and oblivion. It is not a description of nature, but a

reconstruction of the relationship between the self and the cosmos<sup>25</sup>. Here emerges what may be termed the “primary metaphysics of place” in Arab consciousness, where the desert is understood not as mere spatial extension, but as an existential entity through which the poet tests his fragility and searches for meaning<sup>26</sup>. Accordingly, place moves from a tangible, sensory geography to an intangible entity internalized within the poet’s self.

## **2.1. Place in Umayyad and Abbasid Poetry**

### **(From Sensory Space to Existential Vision)**

The Umayyad period witnessed a transformation in the structure of place as a result of political and social changes. Poetry moved from the open desert space to a more delimited and enclosed space, reflecting the fragmentation of the self and the multiplicity of affiliations. In other words, transformations in place contributed to the emergence of new spatial dimensions. The social and political dimension of place became prominent, with the city (Damascus, Basra) emerging as a new symbolic center opposing the space of the desert<sup>27</sup>.

In the poetry of Jarīr and al-Farazdaq, place appears as a stage for tribal and symbolic conflict, while in the poetry of al-Akhtal it acquires a cultural dimension associated with luxury and civilization. Al-Akhtal states:

The heart has awakened from Arwā, and its falsehood has ceased,

Yet from the love of Arwā its delusions have returned<sup>28</sup>

Here, place expresses not merely personal loss, but a social transformation from nomadic life to settled existence, and from collective memory to individual experience<sup>29</sup>. In this sense, place becomes a cultural element embodying humanity’s shift from attachment to nature toward belonging to the city, with its new values of luxury, isolation, and nostalgia.

Al-Farazdaq, for his part, transforms place into a space of tribal and political identity, where the house and the dwelling become synonymous with social existence. Jarīr, meanwhile, employs place as a symbol of emotion and humanity, investing in the contrast between rural simplicity and touches of urban refinement<sup>30</sup>.

From this perspective, Umayyad poetry consolidates place as a space for the transforming self a self attempting to restore balance between its Bedouin past and its urban present<sup>31</sup>. Place here is not merely a scene, but a stance toward the world, expressing the poet’s awareness of cultural and existential transformation<sup>32</sup>

In the Abbasid era, place reaches its aesthetic and intellectual culmination. Place in Abbasid poetry becomes an embodiment of thought, imagination, and philosophical depth rather than a description of nature. Civilizational transformation, the flourishing of philosophical thought, and poetry’s openness to concepts of time and existence all contributed to endowing place with a profound semantic structure expressing a philosophy of life, death, and knowledge<sup>33</sup>.

In the poetry of Abū Tammām, place assumes a complex symbolic dimension; it is a stage for intellectual experience rather than sensory emotion. He writes:

Let your heart wander wherever it wishes in love;

Love belongs only to the first beloved <sup>34</sup>

Here, place shifts from the external to the internal from material space to spiritual space. True place becomes the memory of the heart rather than the geography of the land. This reflects an aesthetic interpenetration of time and space, where longing itself becomes the new spatial structure inhabiting the poet's inner world.

Al-Mutanabbī, in turn, grants place a profound existential dimension. He declares:

According to the resolve of the resolute come great deeds,

And according to the worth of the noble come noble virtues <sup>35</sup>

Here, place is the symbolic space of determination, where geography is transformed into a metaphysics of human action. Elsewhere, al-Mutanabbī links place with destiny, exile with immortality, transforming place into an expression of the self's struggle with its own limitations thus shifting place from a geographical dimension to a metaphysical human act.

Abū al-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī completes this transformation toward a closed philosophical conception of place that reflects existence as constraint. In al-Ma'arrī's poetry, place is not expansion, but enclosure; not movement, but contemplation of nothingness:

Life, all of it, is weariness—how strange

That anyone should desire more of it <sup>36</sup>

In al-Ma'arrī's poetry, the home shifts from a physical shelter to an existential prison. Here, place reaches its highest level of abstraction and symbolism, detaching from reality to become an expression of the being's predicament in an existence saturated with endless questions. Place thus becomes a closed, restrictive structure that renders existence itself a form of confinement and negation.

## **2.2. The Aesthetic Structure of Place Between Image and Symbol**

Tracing these transformations reveals that the aesthetic structure of place in classical Arabic poetry is founded upon three interrelated levels:

### **The Imagistic Level:**

At this level, place shapes poetic imagery through the senses and imagination. The desert, rain, ruins, night these are imagistic units through which poetic scenes are constructed and emotional meaning intensified. Here, the poetic image is apprehended through sensory perception.

### **The Symbolic Level:**

Place transcends the sensory to become a universal symbol. The ruins symbolize time, the desert symbolizes existence, and the journey symbolizes transformation and knowledge. These symbols

constitute what may be described as the “second language of place,” which grants it its aesthetic and metaphysical depth.

### **The Existential Level:**

This is the deepest level of spatial aesthetics, where place becomes a vision of the world. It is no longer merely a location, but a question of meaning: Who am I? And where is my place in this existence?

In this context, place becomes an instrument of philosophical and spiritual awareness, and poetry itself becomes a mode of “dwelling in the world,” to borrow Heidegger’s expression

### **3. Transformations of Place from a Semantic Perspective**

In classical Arabic poetry, place was not merely a neutral backdrop within which the poetic self moved; rather, it gradually transformed into an existential mirror reflecting the human struggle with time, death, absence, and longing. Every semantic shift in the representation of place corresponds to a shift in the poet’s awareness of the self and of the surrounding world<sup>37</sup>

In the early phase of pre-Islamic poetry, place remained stable, enclosed, and tied to the tribe; dwellings, rain-portents, and pastures were little more than witnesses to collective presence and symbols of belonging to roots and identity<sup>38</sup>. Imru’ al-Qays says:

Stop, let us weep for the memory of a beloved and a dwelling

At the edge of al-Liwā, between al-Dakhūl and Hawmal<sup>39</sup>

This call to pause and weep before the ruins is not merely an artistic convention, but a declaration of Arab consciousness of time and place at the moment of loss: place becomes a symbol of steadfastness in the face of annihilation and a means of retrieving a vanished time<sup>40</sup>. It is also a space for ritualized lament and standing by the remnants of dwellings, thereby transcending geographical locality into symbolic dimensions a breathing-space for the poet’s self.

With the development of poetic experience especially in the Umayyad and Abbasid periods we sense a clear transition from place as a “geographical marker” to place as an inner experience. Place came to reflect the self’s tension and contradictions, acquiring new dimensions: the desert as a symbol of solitude and freedom; the city as a symbol of deceit and moral dissolution; and old homes as symbols of existential loss<sup>41</sup>

Imru’ al-Qays, for instance, made place a mirror of both his estrangement and his pride:

Has it deceived you that your love has slain me,

And that whatever you command, the heart obeys?<sup>42</sup>

Here, the intended place is no longer external; it is an inward psychological space in which the dialectic of self and destiny is embodied. Place becomes a symbolic field where individual experience intersects with major existential questions: Who am I? Where is my place in this world? Thus the text clearly exceeds the geographical dimension and enters the realm of symbolic space.

An even deeper shift in spatial consciousness occurs with philosophical and mystical transformations in Arabic poetry, especially in the works of Abū al-‘Alā’ al-Ma‘arī, Ibn al-Fārid, and al-Hallāj. For these poets, place becomes a cognitive structure and a cosmic vision, moving beyond the sensory to the abstract, and from the limited to the absolute<sup>43</sup>. In Sufi poetics, place is the presence of God in all things, and spatial estrangement becomes an existential estrangement from the material world.

Al-Hallāj says:

By God, the sun has never risen nor set

Without Your remembrance bound to my breaths<sup>44</sup>

At this level, place is no longer “land” or “home,” but a domain of union and a symbolic act of reordering the relationship between human being and cosmos. In this way, place exits the confines of geography into the vastness of metaphysics and existential philosophy.

The transition from “spatial signification” to “existential vision” reveals the maturity of Arab poetic consciousness and the ability of classical poetic discourse to move from external description to philosophical contemplation<sup>45</sup>. Place, ultimately, is the moment where self meets time, where the Absolute encounters the relative, and where the human encounters the cosmos.

Poetic place is not merely a place that is seen, but a place that is lived, remembered, and imagined within it the Arab human experience of life, death, and immortality takes shape. For this reason, place across the ages has remained an aesthetic and intellectual structure, reshaping the relationship between text and world, and between the poet and the self between geography and non-being.

#### **4. Aesthetic Analysis and Its Dimensions of Place in the Arabic Poem**

The spatial structure in Arabic poetry is not merely an ornamental element or a descriptive frame; it is a fundamental aesthetic constituent that determines and distinguishes the nature of poetic experience. In classical poetic texts, place performs a dual aesthetic function: first, it is a tool for generating poetic images and emotional rhythms<sup>46</sup>

Second, it is a means of encoding values and existential visions articulated by the poet. From here we may infer that place becomes a second language within language speaking through symbol rather than direct statement, that is, through suggestive symbolism rather than explicit phrasing.

One may also say that place in classical Arabic poetry functions as a visual and auditory rhythm at once an aesthetic rhythm that exceeds the senses into something akin to semantic resonance. When the poet describes ruins, the focus is not on the geography of the site, but on summoning a dense mass of accumulated emotions: memory, longing, loss, a missing wholeness, and beyond that, existential connotations. This tension between the sensory existence of place and the mental existence of its image is what generates “poeticity” itself, granting place an expressive power that parallels the power of the poetic self in the text<sup>47</sup>

Aesthetically, place contributes to shaping the poetic scene; it directs affect and builds the text’s emotional impact. In pre-Islamic poetry, place is not invoked as a neutral external datum, but is

linguistically re-formed into a complex sensory image where vision, sight, sound, and time interpenetrate<sup>48</sup>. When the pre-Islamic poet stands before the ruins, he does not describe place in itself; he interrogates its traces and transforms the inanimate into an affective sign charged with longing, sorrow, and the recollection of loss.

The ruin-scene is built on the dialectic of presence and absence: the physical presence of place and the temporal absence of the human. This generates a profound aesthetic tension reflected in the structure of the poetic image and its inner rhythm. Spatial imagery here is not built solely through visual vocabulary; it is reinforced by mournful rhythm, the repetition of soft sounds, and meditative pauses that mimic the stillness and desolation of the site.

This aesthetic dimension appears clearly in the Mu‘allaqa of Zuhayr ibn Abī Sulmā, where place becomes a vessel for both collective and individual memory. The image of empty dwellings intersects with the poet’s sense of time’s passing and the impossibility of return, producing a calm, rational nostalgia consistent with Zuhayr’s contemplative, wisdom-oriented discourse. Thus, place becomes integrated into the poem’s internal music: it calibrates the rhythm of feeling and grants the text its aesthetic balance between image, emotion, and meaning.

For example, Zuhayr says:

I stood there after twenty pilgrimages—

Yet for which part of the abode can I make out the landmarks? <sup>49</sup>

Here, the ruins become a pictorial tableau combining color, sound, and movement; poetry turns into a kind of affective painting, and geographical signification becomes a musical tone carrying the emotion of loss and remembrance. From this perspective, the aesthetics of place lie in its ability to evoke the experience of presence and absence simultaneously: place exists as image, yet is lost as reality. From this tension between being and non-being, poeticity is born <sup>50</sup>

#### **4.1. The Symbolic Dimension of Place: From the Real to the Figurative**

The symbolic dimension of place becomes manifest when it transforms from a tangible space into a philosophical or spiritual signification. The desert is not merely a homeland; it is a symbol of freedom and emancipation from constraints, and a mirror of the human struggle with destiny. The city, in the poetry of al-Mutanabbī and Abū Tammām, becomes a symbol of constraint, corruption, and social falsity <sup>51</sup>

In mystical experience, place becomes a symbol of divine manifestation and spiritual journeying. Every place for the Sufi may be a “station” of knowledge, and every spatial movement a passage through the (gradations of being). Al-Hallāj says:

I saw my Lord with the eye of my heart;

I said: Who are You? He said: You. <sup>52</sup>

The symbolic transformation of place renders the poem an open space for multiple readings, for every spatial symbol contains layered signification between the real and the imagined, the visible and the inward.

#### **4.2. The Semantic Dimension of Place as an Interwoven System of Meaning**

From a structural reading, place can be viewed as a knot within the network of meanings that constitute the poetic text. It is not understood except through its relation to other elements: time, the self, and language<sup>53</sup>. Place, in this sense, produces meaning through interaction, not through isolated description.

Thus, when the poet says “ruins,” he automatically evokes “time” (the past), “self” (longing), and “loss” (non-being). The significations integrate to form a coherent aesthetic unity.

#### **4.3. The Aesthetics of Spatial Paradox**

Among the most refined manifestations of aesthetic structure in Arabic poetry is what may be termed “spatial paradox,” whereby place is employed to create a semantic conflict between what is seen and what is intended. The poet may describe a beautiful site while in fact expressing inner pain, or mention the ruin of dwellings to signal the ruin of the self. This paradox between form and content grants the text its aesthetic depth and endows it with a perpetually renewed interpretive dimension.

#### **4.4. The Unity of Place and Poetic Vision**

Finally, one may say that the aesthetics of place can only be understood in light of the poetic vision governing the text. The place of *Imru' al-Qays* is not the place of *al-Mutanabbi* or *al-Ma'arrī*, because differences in existential consciousness produce differences in aesthetic structure<sup>54</sup>.

Each poet sees place through the lens of lived experience, transforming it from an external space into an inner mirror of consciousness, and from a natural scene into a philosophical vision of being and time.

### **Conclusion**

This study has concluded that place in classical Arabic poetry is not a marginal descriptive element or a silent background to poetic experience; rather, it is a profound aesthetic and intellectual structure embodying the existential experience of the Arab self in its relationship with time, being, and non-being. In the poetic text, place transforms from a sensory space into an element that bears memory, identity, and emotion, and into a field in which human consciousness appears in its search for meaning interpreting both inner and outer transformations that reveal the poet's life and experience.

Scholarly studies have shown that the classical Arab poet regarded place as a stage upon which human tension between stability and change is enacted between presence and absence, longing and loss, and the inevitability of disappearance. The desert was never merely a geographical tract, but a symbol of freedom, vastness, and existential trial; ruins and the remnants of dwellings became a mirror of memory and recollection; and the journey became a sign of quest, knowledge, and perpetual transformation. Hence, the development of poetic vision of place reflects the shift of Arab perception

from an immediate sensory level to a contemplative philosophical level that moves beyond the material and tangible toward the symbolic and metaphysical, the intangible and unseen. In this framework, the description of place exceeds the bounds of geography to become a symbol of wide-ranging signification, where poets' values and virtues intertwine with psychological feelings nostalgia, loss, estrangement rendering place a cultural, intellectual, and aesthetic document at once.

Methodologically, the study has shown that combining structural analysis with an existential reading makes it possible to uncover multiple layers of poetic space; this model may be adopted to approach both ancient and modern texts alike. These findings open broad prospects for future research, such as comparing spatial structures between the classical and the modern, studying the image of place in exile and estrangement poetry, and analyzing Sufi place as a spiritual space that transcends sensory boundaries into the worlds of inward experience.

Accordingly, it may be said that classical Arabic poetry established a profound vision of place, making it a central locus where arts and aesthetics intersect with philosophy between being and time, and between individual experience and collective consciousness. For this reason, it has occupied a prominent position in the history of Arabic literature, as the bearer of an aesthetic and existential vision that shaped the features of Arab intellectual maturity and the horizons of Arabic poetic imagination.

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<sup>5</sup> See Salah Fadl, *Narrative Techniques in the Arabic Novel*, Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 1992, p. 14.

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<sup>17</sup> See Adonis, *The Time of Poetry*, Beirut: Dar al-'Awda, 1980.

<sup>18</sup> See 'Abd al-Qadir Busharib, *Place in Pre-Islamic Poetry: A Semantic and Aesthetic Study*, Algeria: Manshurat al-Ikhtilaf, 2008, p. 45.

<sup>19</sup> See *The Diwan of Imru' al-Qays*, ed. Muhammad Abu al-Fadl Ibrahim, Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, 1984, p. 45.

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<sup>20</sup> See 'Abd Allah al-Ghadhami, *Sin and Atonement*, Arab Cultural Center, Casablanca, 1993.

<sup>21</sup> See Yusuf al-Yusuf, *The Aesthetics of Place in Classical Arabic Poetry*, Latakia: Dar al-Hiwar, 2002.

<sup>22</sup> See The Diwan of 'Antarah ibn Shaddad, ed. Muhammad Abu al-Fadl Ibrahim, Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, 1981, p. 112.

<sup>23</sup> See Ihsan 'Abbas, *The History of Literary Criticism among the Arabs*, Beirut: Dar al-Thaqafa, 1971.

<sup>24</sup> See Shukri 'Ayyad, *Rhythmic Structure in Arabic Poetry*, Cairo: Dar al-Fikr al-'Arabi, 1992.

<sup>25</sup> See 'Abd al-Qadir al-Qitt, *The Emotional Trend in Contemporary Arabic Poetry*, Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, 1978.

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<sup>33</sup> See 'Abd Allah al-Tayyib, *A Guide to Understanding Arabic Poetry and Its Craft*, Khartoum: University of Khartoum, 1989.

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<sup>35</sup> See The Diwan of al-Mutanabbi, ed. 'Abd al-Wahhab 'Azzam, Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, 1992, p. 243.

<sup>36</sup> See The Diwan of Abu al-'Ala' al-Ma'arri, Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, p. 45.

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<sup>38</sup> See Ibn Qutayba al-Dinawari, *Poetry and Poets*, ed. Ahmad Muhammad Shakir, Cairo: Dar al-Hadith, 2004, p. 32.

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<sup>42</sup> See previous reference.

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<sup>48</sup> See 'Abd Allah al-Jabiri, *The Symbolic Space in Pre-Islamic Poetry*, Amman: Dar Majdalawi, 2002, p. 81.

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<sup>50</sup> See Adonis, *The Time of Poetry*, Beirut: Dar al-'Awda, 1992, p. 55.

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<sup>54</sup> See 'Abd al-'Aziz Hamuda, *Convex Mirrors*, Kuwait: 'Alam al-Ma'rifa, 2008, p. 103.