

Wandering Characters in Shattered Homelands: Between Place and Character in Qassim Tawfiq's Novel *Jisr 'Abdoun/'Abdoun Bridge*

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Abstract: The novel *Jisr 'Abdoun/'Abdoun Bridge* by the Jordanian writer Kassem Tawfiq celebrates the place and makes it a motivation for the characters to search for themselves in the shadow of their correlation with it, revealing the strength of its presence, its influence on them, and its control of their destinies. It also reveals the distortion of the meaning of the homeland within man in this age, in order to push him into alienation and migration and to create feelings of loneliness, isolation, and alienation. This study provides an in-depth analysis of the novel, its characters, and its relationship to the place. It seeks to investigate an individual's relationship with the homeland/place, answering several questions about several issues, including the essence of the relationship between the character and place; the possibility that the place is separated from the character; the character's feelings when defining the features of the place; the extent to which the place controls the character and affects its sensations and interactions with itself and its surroundings; the capability of distorting the self of the character and its alienation; the meaning of 'homeland'; the extent of creating a sense of alienation and loneliness within the human being; man's capability of saving himself from the grip of a homeland with such features; man's ability to create another alternative homeland due to the distortion of his native homeland and the possible location of that alternative. Artistically, the study will examine the technical mechanisms and their employment serving these contents. These techniques include intertextuality, name symbolism, meta-writing, and textual thresholds.

Keywords: Place, Character, Homeland, Fragmentation, Isolation, Emigration, Alienation, Death

1. Introduction: The Character's Relationship with the Place

Man's existence is achieved only by his association with the place [14] (p. 101-175). Since his birth, his relationship is born with the place till he goes down to the grave where his last place is. Therefore, Man is haunted by the place, just like the Place is haunted by Man, and he cannot remove his psychological or physical entity from it.

Besides, the place cannot be a place except through Man's realization and consciousness. and the place that is attracted to the imagination cannot remain an indifferent place of just geometric proportions, because it is a place where human beings have lived not only objectively, but in all the bias of imagination [2] (p. 31) "So the place really touches the

reality of living, affecting people just as much as they do [13] (p. 63-65).

The physical characteristics of a place are not a sufficient condition for determining the relationship between man and place. The framework for relationship and belonging must be created, and it must be seen as an emotional case that contributes to the achievement of the sense of individual and collective identity.

From here, some social and personal meanings are attributed to the place [18] (p. 51-66) and it becomes an integral part of society's morality, awareness, and ideas, and a social entity that contains the outcome of the interaction between the human being and his society. The social, religious, political, and moral models ultimately include spatial characteristics [1] (p. 33-354) [11] (p. 70-72).

Art, like life, requires a place, which is the central space to

influence the character's interactions and behavior with itself and its surroundings. The place in art is a reflection of the real place and a picture of it. In addition, the place does not live in isolation from the rest of the narrative elements but rather engages in multiple relationships with the characters, events, and narrative visions [1] (p. 26). It also carries socio-psychological and artistic values and contributes to the creation of meaning. That's how the place takes its real value through its relationship with the characters. Its distinction can only be achieved through the action of the characters on its lands [10] (p. 29) The importance of the place may turn into something that resembles Fate which controls both the event's destiny and personality alike as it is the identity donor and confers meaning to it [6] (p. 171).

On the other hand, the relationship between space and time is intertwined to the extent that it becomes impossible to approach the place in isolation from time. It becomes also impossible to deal with the characters in isolation from their place and time because characters that are influenced by a certain place are influenced by it through the act of time in that place. Time relationships also unfold in the place, and the place is perceived and measured by time. And it's this synergy that distinguishes the artistic spacetime [3] (p. 6). It also proves that human existence is a spacetime existence, and everyone who looks deals with the human being actually deals with his existence, that is, in his or spacetime [16] (p. 108-110). Thus, man cannot separate himself from his place and time. If he separated himself from it, he would be absent from them his death achieved.

On the other hand, the place can only be felt through the movement of the characters within it and how they interact with it, and how they are aware of it. However, the movement of the human being/ character in the place is coupled with the concept of freedom. Freedom in this regard lies in the sum of the actions that the human being can do without hitting obstacles caused by an external medium that he cannot conquer or overcome [7] (p. 72-77) [15] (p. 7-35) [12] (p. 31-36), and it is freedom here that gives him the ability to shape the place and create its architecture.

However, robbery of freedom is the act that gives the place the ability to control the human being rob his entity and conquer it, which means that man's relationship with indoor places, narrow and hostile, is one of conflict and rivalry, in which triumph in is mostly to the advantage of the place, where the place succeeds in mutilating the entity, alienating it, and shattering it. On the other hand, when the place is a "homeland", it has value and particularity that may amount to sanctity for some people. Homeland is identity, belonging, existence, entity, and roots. Conversely, the relationship between Man and his homeland may be transformed into one of rejection and separation, when he finds himself suppressed in his homeland, or if he is expelled and exiled for political, religious, social, or other reasons, which can be a reason for his exile or alienation and emigration. This distorts the meaning of "homeland" in the spirit of the character and its consciousness.

Therefore, This study provides an in-depth analysis of the

novel *Jisr 'Abdoun/ 'Abdoun Bridge* by the Jordanian writer Qassem Tawfiq, its characters, and its relationship to the place. It seeks to investigate an individual's relationship with the homeland/place, answering several questions including:

1. What is the essence of the relationship between the character and the place?
2. Can the place be separated from the character and its feelings when defining the features of the place?
3. To what extent does the place control the personality and affect its sensations and interactions with itself and its surroundings?
4. Is the place capable of distorting the self of the character and its alienation?
5. What does 'homeland' mean?
6. To what extent is it capable of creating a sense of alienation and loneliness within the human being, and thus becomes a cause of his alienation and isolation?
7. Is Man capable of saving himself from the grip of a homeland with such features?
8. Is he able to create another alternative homeland under the distortion of his native homeland?
9. Where does the alternative lie?
10. What are the artistic mechanisms that the writer employs to serve these goals, which give answers to questions of intertextuality, name symbolism, meta-writing, and textual threshold?

2. Between the Character and Place in the Novel *Jisr 'Abdoun/ 'Abdoun's Bridge*

Perhaps what drives me to pay attention to the place in the novel "'Abdoun's Bridge" is the power of its presence in it, and its role in influencing the characters and their behavior and controlling their destinies. emphasizing the extent to which it affects the psychological, cultural, and social composition of the human person, as well as the quiddity of his relationship with it in his search for the meaning of "homeland", in the face of a distorted reality that draws the human being to the labyrinth, insanity, alienation or suicide, and thus it becomes a cause of his isolation, loneliness, and emigration.

The writer revealed in his novel "'Abdoun Bridge" his ability to probe the depths of the human soul and dive into the self of the Arab in particular and his existential and spiritual struggles in places where he travels forcibly or by choice and will. The place is called and employed in the novel consciously and intentionally. The place was not neutral in it; it strongly attended starting with its main title, *'Abdoun Bridge*, and then in the titles of its two parts, "Small Homelands" and "Shattered Homelands", where these titles, through the word "Homelands" vocabulary, indicate the vision of this place, which was supposed to form the womb for the born human in its lap, and the warm intimate relationship.

However, when the reader reflects on the two words:

"small" and "shattered", he realizes that this man's relationship with this homeland is not based on a relationship of reconciliation, completeness, or affiliation, but rather there is something that leads it to be shattered in the consciousness of the characters and be destroyed.

The place revealed the characters' interactions and feelings about it, so the novel is essentially centered around lost characters in shattered homelands. All the places that were mentioned in the novel: Amman, Cairo, Beirut, Syria, Iraq, Palestine, the Gulf, Italy, and the United States, were places with which the characters interacted. The places either robbed them of their selves or returned them to them. They were active, influential, and pushing places.

The internal titles of the novel: "Small Homelands" and "Shattered Homelands" revealed the writer's quest for a place/home with qualities, features, that imply the loss of the Arab human being, and his displacement, and search for a country to that would return to him his stolen self. This is what we read: "The most horrendous thing that may affect humans is to be forced to leave their homes, a phrase that has become customary in Bilad al-Sham and a refrain that has been spreading and expanding uninterrupted for 70 years. [17] (p. 69) However, the novel insists that this situation of displacement is not confined to the Arab world, but rather "one that fills all the cities of the world", and "in America and Europe there are millions of displaced people." [17] (p. 62) In the face of the displacement of millions of people who have lost their homes because of wars or for other reasons, they have perished in different places. Their identities have been dispersed and their destinies have been undermined, and they started searching for the meaning of 'homeland' and identity in another part of the world, where "many isolated people have increased". [17] (p. 81) as man's alienation from his place worsened till it became impossible to build a strong relationship of belonging between himself and his place after the true meaning of real "homeland" was distorted within him.

The novel also refers to seeking refuge, the pain of alienation, the soreness and the suffering of distancing from the homeland to oppression and poverty that prompts people to migrate in search of work in other parts of the world, especially to the Gulf States where money and employment opportunities are located. The individual is forced to leave his home and homeland, and consequently, suffers from the pain of alienation and fragmentation for a living and fear of hunger. He may face the decision to be deported from that country to find himself in another cycle of alienation and fragmentation. Here, the narrator refers to the effect of this deportation: "Some may think that deportation from that country is an easy punishment, but the fact is that it is truly worse than death for an immigrant who toils under a searing sun and moisture that spoils the air he breathes in order to feed starving mouths in India, Pakistan or the Arab countries. [17] (p. 316).

Perhaps the most prominent phrase in the novel is that which refers to the essence of the relationship between place and Man: "The place is not a land, nor a sky, nor is it human

beings or buildings and shops, not even those who live in it, but it is what is within the people who occupy those places." [17] (p. 32) Through the character's relationship with the place, we are assured that places are not so much geographical as psychological that reflect the feelings of the soul, its tension, and conflicts, and perceive its inability to face the widespread social and political violence. The features of the place are a reflection of the individual's state, psychology, and sense. It is the self that interacts with the place, and the place is not separated from the consciousness or sense of its inhabitant. It lives inside him, and its features, qualities, and significance are acquired from him.

By including an internal novel entitled *Descent*, the novel *Jisr Abdoun* makes us face three main characters about which the novel revolves: Noah, owner of a publishing house; Raif al-Saqi the writer of the novel *Descent* and Adel Suleiman the central "imaginary Virtual" character in the novel *Descent*. The three of them searched for the meaning of "homeland" and "salvation" in light of the fragmentation and alienation of their lives and the confusion of their presence in the homeland. Have they actually been able to overcome their destiny in their homelands and regained their selves in the journey of their seeking the meaning of 'homeland' or an alternative homeland? Or is it the homeland that controlled them and broke them down and reformulated their personalities?

2.1. Noah: Fragmentation of the Spirit in Search for the Meaning of the 'Homeland'

The Palestinian fugitive Noah, whose personality was influenced by the Nakba and the Naksa, leaves his studies in Italy in 1982 after Israel's invasion of Beirut to participate in the battle to deter the invaders who expelled his father from the Palestinian Acca, but he arrives in Beirut late after the departure of the resisters on whom he relied. He surrendered before fighting any battle and did not think of returning to Oman because he felt ashamed to return to it defeated in a war he had not fought. He finds enough work to keep from hunger and homelessness in war-ravaged Beirut until he finally gets to work as a drug promoter and then as a pimp. Noah rushed into a "deep mortar to escape confrontation", self-confrontation, and family confrontation. [17] (p. 303) He was eager to forget everything he had lost in his life and to start from the beginning and create a new memory; a memory without sorrows or defeats. Noah's crisis was in being a homeless human being. He would say, "I don't want to be a second-class citizen." When he was asked where he was from and who he was, he replied: "Neither I nor my homeland has been born yet". [17] (p. 168) In Italy he realized the difference between one homeland and another; he realized how homelands are, and he wondered heartbroken: "Why is life so easy here? And why are people so good? Why is the Earth so beautiful? He concludes, realizing that people want it like that." [17] (p. 90) But in Beirut, having fought his harsh battles in the search for homeland and belonging, he finally realized that "he will not find a first, second or even third homeland; the entire homelands have fallen into the

clutches of frenzied monsters. [17] (p. 299).

Noah lived through a condition of psychological loss and spatial relocation, and existential anxiety that began with his loss of his homeland. The writer refers us to the Arab time of living, the time of collapses and defeats, where the homelands are distorted, the balance is imbalanced, and violence and extremism prevail. So the place here is not separated from time, and time is not separated from events, crises, and realities. The character is not removed from its time, its history, or its place. Noah, who is the essence of these places with their time, history, and events, is motivated to seek salvation and absolute liberation in a world without salvation, where homelands are lost and broken, refuge and displacement increased in all the homelands of the world, and finally, he found himself in front of the reality of the collapse of the "homeland" in all parts of the Earth, aware of the impossibility of finding or rebuilding the homeland.

Noah believed that the homeland is home," and a home is a sacred place", and "he, Noah is the one who knows it most." [17] (p. 63) But Noah after the fragmentation trip and the search for a "long-searched homeland" did not find it and he returns defeated. [17] (p. 213) His disappointment is compounded by the fact that he did not have mercy on his parents' condition and did not try to contact them. They even thought that he had been martyred and made a funeral for him and his mother wore black clothes until she died of grief. He realized that his absence was "brutal for him to do, and it was like planting a poisoned dagger in his parents' throats." He felt that he had been hurt to the core, and weariness and despair overcame him. His feeling of shame made him feel weak and broken. [17] (p. 303) Consequently, he was alienated from himself, and his soul was fragmented but when he admits to his beloved girl "Falak", he returns to himself and finds psychological comfort as she saves him from loss in exile.

Falak was a beautiful Jordanian girl, whom he knew in Lebanon while she was still a student at the University of Beirut. He finds in her his love, homeland, life, freedom, and sanctuary. After their marriage, she presses him to return to their homeland, and Noah returns to his father from Akka after more than ten years.

His return was as if he had come from death alive. He ran his father's press and turned it into a prestigious publishing house. His father did not get to see his grandson and Noah did not try to break his dream and confess to him that she was barren. When his father died, Noah kept thinking that he was the one who killed him, just like he killed his mother before him. [17] (p. 330) When Falak dies suddenly on a trip to Dubai, due to a poisonous ant pinch, and an allergy she suffered without knowing it, Noah returns to his sorrows, defeats him, and alienation again.

Falak's loss, who is his wife and sweetheart, puts him once again before the question of the 'homeland'; and actually before all the questions of all existence. After her death and loss of love, Noah feels that he has lost the homeland again, and isolates himself from others, psychologically and morally, despite his going out to work and meeting with friends. He

felt lonely but not alone, asking: "Lonely and not alone. How is that?". [17] (p. 82) But, in this time of anxiety and alienation, one does not need an ordinary prison with bars to see oneself as a prisoner, or to get the meaning of: "to be alone and not alone. [17] (p. 82) At this time, there is no difference between a real cell and a metaphorical cell that imprisons and locks up the soul. There is no difference between a solitary in a room away from others and a human being who mingles with others as he sees himself isolated from them and has built a mock shell around him. When reality is haunted by anxiety, fear, and terror and leads to self-alienation, the self has to look for a mechanism to shelter in. This is emphasized by the narrator: "One of the things that postpone the idea of death or madness in humans is that people live within a hard unbreakable shell that is called 'the self'. [17] (p. 29-30).

2.2. Raif: Fragmentation of the Spirit Between Isolation and Decline

Raif al-Saqi's life initially went peacefully. Then he graduated from university and worked in Dubai and then returned to Amman and knew Sarah and loved her. But when the Arab reality began to get crowded with setbacks, wars, and brutal massacres, his life turned into a nightmare that is centered on ISIS. Amman has never ceased to hear about the ISIS atrocities and murders and suicides, becoming appalled. His joy disappeared and he became no longer able to harmonize with himself and others. The poisoned fear infiltrated him and he was hit by boredom and despair. He resigned from work and informed his beloved Sarah that he terminated their relationship, disconnected his connection with his friends and imprisoned himself in his room, and isolated himself from his parents.

The spark of this shift was in his hearing of the story of the assassination of the father of his beloved girlfriend, the scientist Mohammed Gebran by America, who accused him of being an ISIS terrorist. The scientist Mohammed Gebran was a Jordanian native who lived in America and married there and gave birth to Audrey. He sent his daughter Audrey upon her maturity to Amman so that she would not be affected by Western openness. In Amman, Audrey knew Sarah and became her best friend.

Raif was shaken by this story and began studying the character of the scientist Gebran, finding that he was a confused detached figure, who is split in his identity between America and his native country, and was a terribly selfish opportunist. He was unable to escape his native country, heritage, and roots, and sentenced his daughter to exile and removed her even from her mother and the home where she was born, thereby becoming an enemy of his daughter.

Raif believed that no one was different from Mohammed Jibril: "We were confused about our existence without emigrating, just as his existence was. We are no longer what we are; we became what was wanted for us to be". [17] (p. 138). Raif was one of the millions who hastened their death and tried to die, failed, or made their deaths a reality that they lived through every day: "His condition was no better than

the condition of those who rushed to their deaths and died. All of them failed to meet with life, just as he failed to meet with death, too".

He thought a lot about suicide; he heard about a place they call the "Garden of the Dead", and its place, as the reader might realize is at the top of *Jisr Abdoun/Abdoun Bridge*, which reminds us of the novel's title. No one knew about this garden except those who thought of death. [17] (p. 217-218). This is how Raif, in the shadow of his crisis, imagines a fictitious place he called the 'Garden of the Dead'. It was a place he created and was born in his consciousness as a result of the breaking down of the real place /homeland in which he lives. The homeland here has a broader connotation than Amman alone. He sees in it the whole world, the whole existence. So, he thought about entering the park several times in order to take commit suicide, looking for salvation from the grip of this reality. But he did not enter it, not out of cowardice or fear, but because his grief and fear about his fear for those he loved prevented him. [17] (p. 219) Hence, writing a novel was his alternative and savior. His fear of homelessness prompted him to write "about those who have no homes", and therefore gave it the title "decline".

"When Raif intended to write his novel, he decided to retire people and life and he fell inside his room in order to accomplish his project: to retire humans and write a novel, having said goodbye to everyone who is as relevant to an emigrant who has taken the decision to emigrate of his own in order to feel reassured that he no more owes anything to anyone, not even a blame for his absence, which he doesn't know when and how it will end." [17] (p. 29). The omniscient narrator comments: "One of the things that postpone the idea of death or insanity in humans is that people live within a hard shell that is disobedient to fracturing, which is called the 'Self'. Everyone sees himself as the best, noblest, bravest, and most grown-up, and expects the right opportunity to prove it. No one has questioned this fact throughout his life, and through his endless experiences and defeats proved that he is not like that. [17] (p. 29-30). The crisis in which Raif fell a few years ago, and nearly led him to madness or death was resolved at the last minute when he came up with the idea of writing a novel, excluding the other two options: Death or insanity, even if temporarily, "but the experience of writing that "came down on his head without introductions "made him "know that he is neither the best nor the noblest nor the bravest nor even the most aware." [17] (p. 30).

After Raif finished writing his novel *The Decline*, he insisted on handing it over to Noah, the owner of the publishing house, determined that he should read it, not the Sulafa, the director of the house, thereby breaking a tradition and a sacred policy of which this publishing house was known. It was Sulafah who was reading everything that reached the publishing house, and she was the one who decided to allow it to be published. But Raif's intense insistence on Noah and then his strange appearance and face, which has not seen the sun in years, his starvation, and his way of speaking, all sparked Noah's curiosity and made him

agree to read the novel. Raif was sure that Noah would publish his novel because it posed the most important issues of this time and the truest to its reality. Noah, however, refuses to publish it because he noticed a resemblance between him and "Adil", the protagonist/the paper personality. The novel reminded him of what he desperately wanted to forget. Raif's tragic mistake was that he insisted on Noah reading it and did not know how defeated Noah was, did not know how powerful Sulafa was, and how empowered she was in this publishing house, and thus he missed the opportunity to publish it.

Raif kept believing that whenever the *Collapse* approached and the 'Garden of the Dead' opened its doors to him, none of this female trinity, Nidā' his sister, Sarah is his sweetheart, and the novel will abandon him. One of them will open a door through which he will cross to the life he wants, and therefore, he retreats from entering the "Garden of the Dead," the garden that calls him from the top of the Abdoun Bridge to reach death by falling from this bridge. However, after his novel repelled him and was rejected by Noah, after Sarah had refused to return to him after he had gotten out of his isolation, and his sister had scolded him for his mother's collapse, he felt that life had ruled its restrictions on him. The shock of refusal of publishing his novel was severe to him. He felt all the doors were blocked in his face, and he went to *Abdoun Bridge*. Here the reader expects that he is going to take his own life to show that he did not climb it to commit suicide, but rather to hurl the novel papers into the sky. The novel ends with this scene.

2.3. Adel: Fragmentation of the Soul Between Deportation, Emigration, and Decline

The novel *al-Inhidar/The Decline*", the internal novel that was written by Raif, revolves around Adel Suleiman, who emigrated from his country after being expelled from the house by his autocratic father. He travels to Cairo and lives there for three months until the issuance of the visa of the Gulf country he had planned to go to from the beginning whose imagined name was al-Daffa. Adil works at al-Daffa cleaning bathrooms in a restaurant, and then enters prison for a crime he did not commit. He goes out in six months to work as a hairdresser and director of a beauty center and then a pimp and a drug distributor until he is deported to Amman after 30 years of absence. The deportation decision was made against him in al-Daffa as if it were an irreparable blow, and he was thrown in the Amman Security Department's cell for two weeks without a specific charge. When the police released him, he did not go to his family home, where he was born, lived his childhood, and his first youth. He did not feel the longing and nostalgia of any of his family. He did not know what had happened to them: "My cruel father, my submissive mother, my impartial enslaved brothers. They no longer have a place in me." [17] (p. 45).

Thus, the writer deliberately employs the word 'place' as a repetitive motif in the novel, linking it to the "internal" once again, within Man with the sense, feelings, past, and memories regarding the place he lives in, but the place in its

connotation and influence is inseparable from its inhabitants and does not take its meaning and effect without them. The effect of the relationship between the two sides is two-way, not one-way. It is the place with the harsh conditions and atrocities of its inhabitants, especially the autocratic father, that has made Adel hate this place and wishes he stayed away from it forever. The beginning of the novel confirms this by referring to his relationship with this place where he swore not to return: "Here I go back to the place where I swore not to go back, not even dead. I spent thirty years long far away from the world of my own will. I wish would not go back here even if I was laid in a box, but I returned defeated, broken, and saddened by the age that was lost. I'm the man who lost all his past between two cities: al-Daffa, which kicked me with its hoof and kicked me out of it, and Amman that I fought so much to stay away from." [17] (p. 43) It is, therefore the place that is not separated from his father that is the "closest to monsters to humans". [17] (p. 47).

It was his father who "changed his life and made him live a life that he would not have lived if he had left him with the right to choose". So Adel says: "This being who is fond of raising and stacking money without giving himself the right to enjoy it. His real pleasure was to increase his wealth and torture us. He whipped us with his broad belt with guilt or without guilt until he made our bodies bleed, and he did not know that he made other souls bleed more". [17] (p. 48) As for his mother, he could not decide whether she was as persecuted as them or involved in their persecution. He saw her throughout his life as an isolated, secluded woman surrendering to her husband's brutality. He made his brothers, however, struggle and compete for little or no satisfaction or avoid his punishment while wishing for his death". [17] (p. 48).

This is how Adil lived his first years in a house that was not as warm as it was supposed to be nor the protective house that was supposed to be. Then he lived three decades between departure and migration, between a room and a cell, between a luxurious apartment in al-Daffa, a cell where dozens of Indians, Filipinos, and Syrians were stacked, and a cell where he was imprisoned for six months for a murder in which he did not know the one who was killed, and finally, the last cell in Amman after his deportation. He returned to his first place where his home Amman bears the feeling of rejection, alienation, and alienation, neither longing nor nostalgia. Probably the question that he asks himself when he arrives at the center of Amman, the "city that does not get old". [17] (p. 50) "You are so weird, this country! How did you keep your age and not leave it as we all did?". [17] (p. 50), exemplifies his crisis, the shattering of his soul and defeat versus the survival of the place, and the steadfastness of his prestige and superiority.

2.4. Noah, Raif, and Adil: Three in the Shell of Isolation, Immigration, and Alienation

Raif broke with his novel into Noah's painful memories, which he struggled so long to forget. Noah wondered why Raif had written this account of the displaced evacuated

people who had no cover other than the sky, asking: "What prompts a young man to write about those who have no homes? Has he lived the experience or is he afraid to live it?". [17] (p. 63) As the reader knows that Raif was not homeless and there were no special reasons or economic, social, or political reasons for him to do so, he realizes that the answer is: "Fear of living it"!

On the other hand, Adel's character penetrated Raif's self, as Adel reminded him of his homelessness and his parents' cruelty through Adil's character was a virtual character, "as the virtual person these days", as Noah believed – "is living or will be living". [17] (p. 67). "Noah has heard stories of people sleeping on the road or in mosque squares, most of whom were expelled and displaced from their country, some destitute Syrians and Iraqis who had narrowly escaped death. Displacement is known to be a situation that fills the world." [17] (p. 62) "The whole world has become a stranger and all its cities are all foreign." [17] (p. 70) But the impact of Adil's story on him was beyond merely its being a novel that belongs to a fiction-based literary art that is based on imagination and deals with a fictional character or an imagined country. This may refer us to pay attention to what the writer wrote at the threshold of the novel: "More than a Novel", which makes us wonder: "Does that mean it has two novels?"

This is true from the literal point of view of the question, but, in my opinion, the writer intended it to be more than a novel because it imitates existence and life. It's actually a novel that imitates the human story of this age. It's bigger than just an imagined novel on paper. This is what Noah realized after reading Raif's novel realizing that "the virtual in this time is living or will be living". Adil fair is not just a character imagined in a paper novel, he exists all over the Earth, at this time, at the time of the collapse of homelands, and the distortion of the meaning of homeland, that meaning in which the homeland was bearing the meaning of the safe haven of Man and the sanctuary that preserves his freedom and dignity.

If Adil, the protagonist of Raif's novel, had been expelled by his father and lived displaced and took heaven to be his cover, Noah, too, took heaven to be his cover in Beirut. But Noah was certain that his father from Akka is not the father who expelled his son in the novel Decline, nor was he beating him, starving him, or whipping him as Adil's father was doing to his son. He was not Adil who wished for his father's death and did not miss him after his return. When Noah returned defeated and surrendered, his father received him and did not blame him for his absence. If Adil had been expelled by his father, and he became the reason for his abandonment, Noah was the one who had left his parents, and "he was the one who had expelled his father and mother from his life". [17] (p. 70) But in the end, he looks like him and like his fragments in his search for a homeland, but he certainly isn't Adil Suleiman the declining one. But despite all this, Noah the frustrated imagined that he was the intended one in Adil's character, even though he knew that Raif didn't mean him because he didn't know him and had

never seen him or heard his name, and this fact, as Noah realizes, cannot be revealed by anybody except Noah himself. "He alone knows that he is the counterpart of Adil Suleiman and that he has spent his age looking for salvation from the constraints that determined his existence and the path of his life, and forced him to be someone who is different from the one he wanted to be. This author placed him with Adil Suleiman in a closed corner, and they didn't know what they wanted to be; both are without a homeland, and both of them are looking for their existence." [17] (p. 298-301) Noah thus found that the novel bares him and puts him in front of the mirror of the self and reminds him of his loss and misdeeds, and confronts him with the fact that his behavior towards his parents was ugly.

On the other side, the reader realizes that Noah's life is intersected with Raif's life as well. Raif entered his room prison voluntarily and isolated himself from the world. Noah was isolated from others while living with them, as he lived in the shell of his grief and defeat. On the other hand, if Adel, a protagonist of Raif's novel, had been expelled by his father and consequently was forced to emigrate, it was Raif who decided to isolate himself from others and locked himself in his room. This equates in its meaning to emigration, alienation, and enclosure in a closed place. That's why we find Raif describing his isolation as emigration. And the meaning of this deed is not far from the meaning of emigration. We mean that self-migration is the shadow of the fragmentation of identity, alienation, and anxiety. The concept of emigration necessarily emphasizes an involuntary and non-optional movement, but rather one that is imposed on the person coercively, rather than voluntarily. Emigration is not entirely desirable and motivated by pure desire.

And that's what caused him to isolate himself in his room and emigrate from his previous life. Emigration also means leaving a place that bears the meaning of motherhood, uterus, and homeland. It must also include the meaning of leaving the first country/motherland and abandoning it for a "different" place for the purpose of stability and settlement. Departure takes place only under oppression and political, social, economic, or psychological persecution. And that's what happened to Adil, too. Adel was expelled by his father from his home. This accelerated the decision to emigrate after he had planned to apply for work application and settlement outside the homeland. Expelling him from the house means losing safety and sanctuary and pushing him into a life of loss and homelessness.

Adil, who was displaced from his mother's homeland, and Noah, who lost his homeland and was expelled from his home after the expulsion of his Palestinian father were unable to feel a pure and absolute affiliation with alternative places/homelands. They continued feeling that they were on a forced journey to look for a place in this universe. Adil, who lost his mother's homeland and was expelled from his home after his Palestinian father's expulsion, was unable to feel a pure and absolute affiliation with alternative places/homelands. On the other hand, a house is a place of protection, familiarity, and security, and it is a "sacred place".

[17] (p. 63) When Adil is expelled from his home/homeland, and Noah leaves his homeland and is unable to return to it, they, namely Adil and Noah, are not much different from Raif, who left neither left his homeland nor his home but has isolated himself from everyone, migrating his moral migration, isolated in his room. So all three of them lived through fragmentation, nostalgia, and split in their search for a homeland, identity, and the meaning of existence. The three of them were looking for a way to be what they wanted and as they wanted, and not as others wanted them to be. They searched for the homeland, for its true meaning, for their intimate home in it, and for their fates and their selves. But in the end, they became as I want others wanted them to be and under the power of a place that rejects them and does not accept them.

Thus, everything we have dealt with above confirms that Noah, Raif, and Adil, intersect in the experience of isolation, alienation, emigration, and imprisonment, whether moral or material imprisonment; self-imprisonment or body, or whether emigration carries the meaning of voluntary or compulsory emigration. This leads to isolation or negative self-reliance and self-closure. The lost affiliation, familiarity, and security turned into alienation, alienation, and fragmentation in the mutilated homeland. At this time, the time of shattered homelands, and in a world that has no salvation, where everything is lost, it is no surprise that the place of "homeland" is transformed into a Fate that controls the Fate of personalities and events alike, a Fate that drives his children to alienation and loss. Or isn't exile here a forced transfer to a place that is not the motherland? Isn't emigration a result of conquering and alienation? Isn't the person who is motivated to migrate and abandon his home and land deprived of his stability, reassurance, and belonging, when he is forced to leave and give up something that is originally his own in origin? So isn't this a case of moral imprisonment and deprivation of safety and liberty? So these questions put us back in front of the concept of homeland: what is a homeland?

Is it only the land and the place of birth or the identity and belonging to the land, grandparents, and memory, or is it the future and the making of dreams where freedom, security, and human dignity? Does departure from the homeland mean its cancellation? Does the homeland remain after its loss to live in memory or disappear by its disappearance?

The diaspora/exile is not always bigger or wider than the cell but it may be narrower in the self and the soul. Emigration and alienation give birth to alienation and nostalgia, and from their suffering begins the journey of soul-searching and salvation. However, if the homeland is one that robs its children of their identity and becomes narrow, it will become a shattered, demolished marginalized homeland that turns its children into strange refugees. The self of any of them will wriggle with anxiety and seeks to emigrate towards salvation, seeking a shell to protect itself, aware of the meaning of the fact that man is present in the place and his soul is denied in time, to live in his homeland with the body, but he is his "homeland", which he absents it in spirit and time.

3. The Woman: Love, Homeland, and Freedom

The writer showed the woman as a strong and conscious personality who is capable of maintaining her balance in this swinging universe, as both Sulafah, Sarah, and Falak appeared, in addition to her being a sanctuary and homeland for the man. In the absence of the woman, the alienation of the man in life intensifies to the point of losing the "homeland", while in his life, she gives him the same life with love, and thus she grants him "the homeland", and she becomes for him his "homeland". Falak was a model for this woman, as we have already shown. Noah found in her love, homeland, freedom, and sanctuary. With her, he felt free from all the distortions of searching for a homeland that would not come true, and she was his alternative homeland. With love, she succeeded in making life for him again, but in her absence, he returned to the maze of soul-searching, the shell of alienation, the prison of alienation and loneliness.

Therefore, women here seemed stronger than men and more open-minded to dealing with the madness of reality and the mazes of existence. And perhaps the writer here seems to be a feminist in his trend, but on the other hand, he doesn't make her superhuman. He emphasized that the woman might be as fed up as the man, and that is inevitable. But the woman's passionate love is more stubborn. The woman who is in passionate love, nothing pushes her to judge her heart by death. Sara, for example, Raif's sweetheart, was subjected to boredom, despair, and depression, the ugly trinity, like Raif, but did not make herself a victim of this trinity, and did not give up and be defeated like Raif, who was defeated at the first encounter. Sarah was that woman who sacrificed for the one she loved, she sacrificed for a man she loved so that he wouldn't go crazy. She kept waiting for him to come and cut off his every relationship with her by madness, but when he was resurrected out of his ashes, he returned to call her to come back. The isolation he imposed on her and his absence from her made her also isolate herself as if she also was undergoing the experience like him but without renouncing her world, which made her wonder about the essence of this relationship, eventually realizing that she didn't want him and that neither of them was originally created for the other. All that was between them was an illusion, only an experience blinded by passionate love for seeing the truth. And here we realize that if love was real, she would hold onto it and accept his return, but she realized that it was lost and was hard to get back to what it was. Here, Sara was not like Falak. She stopped being an ark or a lifeboat for Raif.

Sulafah, however, was made by the writer more conscious and more able than Noah to know the nature of humans and reconciliation with reality. This might be an invitation from the writer to treat boredom and alienation by reading. Sulafah's continued reading and journey with books made her see life from a deeper, more conscious, more cultural, more loving, and more reconciled perspective. She was wide-hearted and reconciled with herself, even though she was aware of her ugliness, and had experienced many tragedies in

her life. Likewise, she did not prey on her father like the other members of her family because he left them for their poverty and impoverishment, dissipated them, and married a second wife, nor because he put his ugly appearance, which she inherited from him, in her, but rather she wished him comfort and peace." [17] (p. 264) So reading here is a mechanism for purification from the diseases of boredom, alienation, loneliness, and hatred.

But why did she refuse Noah's proposal to marry her at the end of the novel? Because she loves him. "Because I love you, I don't want it to be another thing in my life," [17] (p. 349) she replied. We can understand the motive for rejecting Sulafah through Sarah's story with Raif. Sulafa, like Sara, sacrificed so much for her lover Noah. But Sulafa realized that Noah didn't love her as much as he was looking at his marriage to her as a way to give him comfort and spiritual peace to start again. The novel mentions: "The marriage proposal was impossible or a sign of sudden madness that suddenly fell on him, but that was what he wanted to happen before death surprised him. All that he thought about was to do something that might have the comfort he lacked in his life stations." [17] (p. 349) Therefore, she refuses despite her love for him and for fear that this love will die a day and be destroyed by hatred and so his image will be distorted in her mind, and she will forever lose him. Her refusal was a sacrifice but it was a slap for Noah as he asked himself: "Why do you wait so long on the Earth if you no longer have any hope that something new will happen to you?" [17] (p. 349) Does this hint at Noah's fate? Will this prompt him to commit suicide from the top of the Abdoun Bridge and enter the "Garden of the Dead"? The novel ends without answers.

4. Metawriting

Perhaps the most prominent question that the novel introduces is: Why did Raif not commit suicide and the writer made his reader think that he was going to commit suicide from the top of the Abdoun Bridge? Perhaps the most prominent question that the novel introduces is: Why did Raif not commit suicide and the writer made his reader think that he was going to commit suicide from the top of the Abdoun Bridge? To answer this question, we must discuss a literary phenomenon on which this novel is based in this context. We mean by this the aspect of "meta narration" or "metawriting". In my opinion, the most prominent service that this artistic phenomenon serves is that it answers this question.

"Meta-Writing" means the writing process about writing, namely, a narration that includes a commentary on its narrative identity [8] (p. 20) and "which makes of itself the subject of the speech. It is the process of narrating the story, speaking about the speech, and narrating the novel." [9] (p. 98) Meta-Writing is the writing that refers to itself and to the act of creativity itself, introduces, self-criticism and self-reflection on the process of creative writing. It also places itself on the boundary between narration and criticism and poses questions about the relationship between narration and

reality [8] (p. 73). Undoubtedly, the writer Kassim Tawfik recognizes the importance of the act of writing in general, and the novel in particular. He recognizes its role in baring the human self and diving into it, and its role in "saving the desperate and overwhelmed people" in the face of homeland distortion. Therefore, he turned the experience of isolation in his novel into a therapeutic positive process, motivating Raif's character to isolate himself in order to be able to write. The crisis that afflicted Raif and almost led him to death was resolved at the last minute when he came to the idea of writing a novel, realizing that writing was a resurrection and an exclusion of death. Writing includes self-nudity, emptying of anger and fear, and purification of them. By writing, he dived into the same shell until he realized that "neither the best nor the noblest nor the bravest. By writing, he recognized himself and realized his crisis, and became more aware of how to treat it. The moment he isolated himself and began writing, he carried a huge mass of anger, "finding salvation only in the words", as "they are the only thing that will make others hear what he thinks, not just his family. but all human beings. His concern was to free his soul from its captivity [17] (p. 36) recognizing that "writing is a superhuman act", and that the writer is a skilled creator who creates magical worlds that he leads according to his desire and will. [17] (p. 31) These words that Raif realized confirm his longing to create a world that he could not actually achieve, and therefore, he looked for it through imagination and creativity. There he will feel able to run things as he wishes and not as others wanted him to. The writer is the "creator" of his imaginative world. But he fully realized that his worlds, which he creates, must reveal the truth and not hide it by suspense; "Suspense that we love in novels has always been the furthest from the truth, but it hides facts we have not been familiar with before, and we do not try to verify them." [17] (p. 289) The imagined and unrealistic are easy to cross into people's minds and are more delightful and less painful; we all want to believe what we like to believe, not the truth. [17] (p. 288) These phrases include clear meta-narration as they reveal the way in which writer Kassim Tawfik looks at writing and the writer. This confirms that the writer is preoccupied with the process of writing itself, its repercussions, and its effects on each writer when he is engaged in writing, primarily in terms of salvation, and then in a conscious process of innovation that helps to purify and unload the self, as well as being the writer's voice and message, and then what it can do to the reader. This explains the saying of the writer Raif in the novel: "We humans re-create ourselves whenever we look deeply again at our insides." [17] (p. 217) Raif looked inside himself by the act of writing, as if by writing he had re-created himself and freed himself from all his spiritual limitations. Literature itself is a free reality. It is the bias of the writer's spirit that still heeds freedom, justice, and dignity. His isolation in the room undoubtedly deepened his sense of imprisonment, as if he were in a real prison. This itself deepens the sense of self-deprivation, alienation, and separation, consequently, deepening the sense of yearning for freedom, freedom in all

its physical and moral senses, but it is a freedom that depends on security, reassurance, and the search for justice that he missed outside his room. There is a thirst that has grown toward salvation and tranquillity. Hence, there is no surprise that writing should become an act of freedom, and an act of life in the face of fear, fragmentation, and self-deprivation.

So, his isolation was to seek to depart through paper and between the pages of books to the world of imagination, creativity, and freedom. His self-emigration and isolation from others were a protective and self-protective concept and his search for salvation. His passion for writing was the thing that gave him the meaning of life again. In the act of writing, he succeeded in downloading the vague anxiety that almost killed him, and his tranquility returned to him. So he came out after finishing it as if he was resurrected from death. As soon as he finished writing his novel, he took off the desire for suicide from his mind, and abandoned the idea of entering the "Garden of the Dead," and he emerged from his isolation more aware, conscious, and aware of his, and other senses, especially his mother, his sweetheart, and his sister. He, therefore, made a critical decision to suffer his lifetime and to live all that he carries with him until he died, but not to commit suicide or insanity.

The more he dived into the worlds of his hero, Adel, the rebellious pimp, the more the idea of voluntary death would move away and become remote. He absented it further when he wrote to Sarah about the Garden of the Dead, and forgot it when his sister Nidā' woke him up with her slaps and cries that made him feel he was a killer pushing his mother to commit suicide. He also realized during the writing that he had lost his love and that he had come to love Sarah more, and wrote to her in his letter: "I learned that I would not raise the flag of my surrender before I fight and fall down so dusted with the earth that I could no longer stand again. Here I am born again, and you have the option of accepting or rejecting me. What I care about is not to be defeated in front of you without having fought this battle." [17] (p. 325) He started to wish for a miracle that matches the re-creation to restore the love he had lost. But Sarah refuses to go back to him, realizing that what we lost cannot return to what it was, "Nothing is capable of bringing back to us those we lost." That is how isolation was here, and in this sense, it was a positive process that is necessary to protect oneself from the power of death and the attraction of the "Garden of the Dead" and suicide, but he could not recover the love that he lost. [17] (p. 292).

On the other hand, when Noah reads the novel *Regression*, his Self is denuded in the process of reading and then he recreates it and becomes Raif's counterpart whose Self was also denuded in the process of writing and he recreated it, realizing that he is Adil's counterpart as well. So, this is "not a strange coincidence because the author's imagination is not born out of nowhere. [17] (p. 300) This is another metatext that proves the fusion of reality with the imagined and the storytelling process. Reading the novel revealed Noah's self-nudity. It put him in front of the mirror of the Self, revealing his crisis and sins until his soul was purified of its sorrows,

and he believed in the necessity of salvation and exit from the shell of sadness and memories, and consequently, the necessity of forgetting his beloved Falak. Therefore, we see him decide to marry Sulafa, and in that, there is a declaration of a new beginning. The novel thus confirms that reading like writing is a process that affects the reader's Self to the point of self-nudity, uncovering its flaws and raising awareness of it. It is also a process of purification, unloading, spiritual healing, and enhancing self-building. It is an incitement to the reader to act and change.

5. Symbolism of the Names and Intertextuality

The character's relationship with the place also gains its dimensions by linking it to textual interactions and religious and mythological intertextuality, just as the indications of names are revealed to us. If Noah had killed his mother in his absence, Raif did not have mercy on her and would have nearly killed her if his sister's pained call hadn't called, and this is the indication of the name "Nida'/ Call". And when he was sent by the act of writing, she was sent with him from imminent death. Out of love, Raif shows mercy to his mother and sister, "Nidā'" and his sweetheart, Sarah, and gives up the idea of suicide. He justified that he was "still alive and had not succumbed to death only for the sake of his family, but without their love, he would have killed himself. [17] (p. 182) This is the reason for his name, Raif (Merciful), as he eventually had mercy on his family. Reif, who was looking for justice in the world, gave his hero the name "Adil/Fair", pushing him to seek justice and beauty in a world that was eaten by atrocity, injustice, and homelessness.

Raif believed that: "We must make an upheaval that changes everything, and changes what we are! We have to resurrect the dead man in us [17] (p. 138). In saying these words, he intersects with Noah and his name's symbolism. Noah himself was looking for a miracle that matches recreation, and Noah's name implies religious intertextuality with the prophet Noah, who is associated with the flood. When Prophet Noah was aggrieved by the injustice of people, God pointed out to him to construct an ark to survive with those who believed in him, and overthrow the oppressors with a deluge that God sent to them. According to religious intertextuality, Noah's salvation was by the ark, namely, a ship. Noah was looking for his ark to survive the deluge of injustice and reach salvation and find the homeland. So the writer chose the name of Falak/Ark for Noah's beloved, with the manipulation of diacritics, in my opinion, to complement the data of this intertextuality and its indication. He gave him the name Noah because he was resurrected out of doom by his beloved Falak, and Falak is Noh's ship, Fulka (Ark).

The writer derives his intertextuality from the Christian religion, which sees Noah, the Deluge, and the Ark as a symbol of salvation and renewal of life and baptism. The deluge plunged wicked people and their sins and put an end to the life of corruption with the beginning of a new life. This

implication is confirmed by the threshold of the novel, which the writer inter-textualizes from Christianity with some change: "Holy Mary, Christ's Mother, pray for us, we the sinners." This is confirmed by Raif's saying: "Nobody is innocent, we are all sinners: whoever ruminate massacres, those who kill, and those who are killed, and those who watch and me!" [17] (p. 34) It is then a novel of injustice in a world that goes crazy under brutal and horrific massacres.

The writer sounds to be emphasizing that we arrived in a world that is heading with its brutal and horrendous massacres to insanity and reached such a point where it needs a new Noah and a deluge that destroys everything and probably resurrects a new life. That is why Noah realizes that "The revealed teachings that were revealed from heaven and the human beings believe in are nothing like heaven; otherwise, why is there so much disagreement between them?"

"All of them with their religions and communities are unable to find a path that takes them to heaven. They are lost in the future. They have not been able to find the door that leads to the Salvation Paradise. [17] (p. 93-94) The door of salvation was realized by Noah, the door of salvation in love: "Whoever wants God, his doors are lawful to him, but by love." [17] (p. 95).

Perhaps this answers the question that is posed by Adil, the imagined character in the novel Decline: "How does hatred in people grow at a rocket speed when love grows in them only with difficulty, slowly, and heavily"? These questions about religion, people's relationship with it, and the sense of injustice come to emphasize "love" between human beings, between men and women; and love as an ark for survival and salvation in a fragmented world that distorts humanity.

From this, it becomes clear to us why the writer employs intertextuality, by affirming through it the necessity of love; the idea of salvation, and the renewal of life with love. It was Noah's Fuluk who brought him back to himself, and by love, she changed the course of his life, brought his age back to its beginnings, and brought him out of the deluge of his defeat. She was able to see the defeated Noah as a knight and a hero. With her, he decided to "make a new Noah that brings him out of nowhere, and re-create him in Amman again." [17] (p. 302).

This is how the writer asserts that the woman is the homeland of man, and the man finds his homeland when he finds love and the woman. So Noah believed that it was the woman who "frees the man and makes a homeland for him." [17] (p. 197) With her, he was freed from his spiritual limitations and found his freedom and happiness, and she was the one who encouraged him to return to his homeland, Amman where his father was, breaking by that the barrier of alienation and loss that was narrowing around him. By deciding to return to Amman, life was restored to his father. They restore the absented joy to his father, who was conquered by the absence of the son and the death of the wife. Noah and Falak live happily: "Ten years they have crossed together with happiness that resembles the dreams of the prophets." [17] (p. 329) The word "prophets" here confirms the intertextuality of Noah - but the sudden death of Falak

and his loss of her love made him lose the ship of his life, the ship of reassurance, salvation, and spiritual peace. He returned to the labyrinth of unity, alienation, and spiritual isolation.

He entered into the shell of the Self and the burning of memories and the feeling of guilt and selfishness returned to him and made him believe that he was the one who killed his father and mother when he searched for a mirage homeland and a dream that has become heartbreaking ashes. His sweetheart's death took him back to his defeat and doom again. By losing love, he lost the path to salvation and his crisis intensified and sank into a deluge of grief once again and felt in desperate need of a new ship.

The manipulation of diacritics on the letters of the name (Falak) helped the writer 'hit two birds with one stone.' In addition to the intertextuality, the writer criticizes the list of taboos and prohibitions that have been prolonged and has not ended in our Arab world since the strict religious movements started permeating people's lives and thoughts.

He says about the name Falak in his novel: "The Arabs absented the name Falak, and they no longer use it to call females after stringent currents have restricted people's minds. The Muslim Brothers, the Salafists, and the Wahhabi Brotherhood succeeded in taking over life and making it a mockery for the States and governments that were pleased to see that people became enslaved from their insides.

They distorted the beauty of lots of harmless things and turned them into futile things that negate the necessity of their existence. For example, they consider the sunflower a disbeliever because it is called "Abbad al-Shams, namely, Sun worshipper" and changed its name into "Dawar al-Shams/ Sun Disk" because the flower cannot worship its "Sun"! They did the same thing with the name Falak because they see it as a pornographic name whose linguistic connotation is immoral and exciting. The name means in Arabic: the round shape of the girl's breasts. So, which father will dare to talk about his daughter's breasts? Where will his manhood go if he mentions the name of his daughter, even though she has become a scientist, thinker, or doctor, and people will know that her breast has become round and looks like an ark?" [17] (p. 248).

What confirms the significance of the name and its symbolism is Falak's answer, who insisted that it is derived from the "ark", namely, "ship", noting that "her life is tied to her name. It is only a wave that will fade with light wind, pointing out that she knows that she will die and that her stay on Earth will not be a long period" [17] (p. 248) and that is what is actually being achieved. This may confirm that "salvation" in this distorted time is nothing but a short-lived state of emotion, not an eternal permanent state. From this, we say that the writer Twfiq succeeded in choosing the names of his characters, giving them names whose significance and meaning correspond to their roles and dimensions of personality and their relationship to their place of "homeland."

Thus, the religious intertextuality of Noah and Falak's names comes as political and intellectual referrals of a

critical nature that refers to reality and the lived political and social time. This is also an indication of the intellectual, spiritual, and ideological relationship between these characters, the place, and the homeland.

The political taboo is also reflected in political hints, most notably the symbolism of Adil's father in the internal narrative of decline. Adel, the seeker of justice in life, symbolizes his father, who robbed him of his life and expelled him from his home to the authority and the political system that expels the homeland inhabitants and displaces them, and thus, they go out to look for a homeland that receives them. Adil's mother, however, is their homeland and the land. The brothers who live under their father's injustice symbolized the oppressed people who are deprived of liberty and will.

The writer's second hidden allusion is devoted to the Gulf. Falak was Noah's dream and his salvation, but the poisonous Gulf called, "Samsom" stung her and killed his dream by killing her Falak. There's no doubt there's a political connotation behind this ant. If not, why would the writer choose it to be from the Gulf? Why does the writer say that "Samsom" is a Gulf ant par excellence?" [17] (p. 333) Why didn't he choose another country or another cause that kill her? The writer may thus criticize the Gulf's attitude towards Israel and its political relations with it, which assassinate the dream of Noah, the hunted Palestinian, and assassinate his hope of resolving his cause, and the salvation of his homeland and his soul. Then why would a writer make an ark barren? Because if she gives birth to a grandson of her Father in law from Akka, this may give some hope, because Falak symbolizes the ark of salvation. And why does the writer use al-Daffa, an imagined name for a Gulf country in the novel *Decline*? Undoubtedly, it makes the writer Raif find a self-censor that protects him from censorship just as writers do in reality, and so as not to be accused of denigrating and disgracing a country. This is an obvious meta-narration.

6. Unclosed Ends

Raif was a mirror of Noah, revealing in his novel Noah's sins. Therefore, Noah refused to recall his sins and refused to publish the novel in order to erase it from existence. Its publishing means its survival and the continuation of its life. That is what Noah was unable to afford because he decided to start again and forget his past, his misdeeds, and his journey of loss in the search for an illusion and a mirage. To start again, he had to decide Raif's fate and kill his novel. In other words, his salvation, and resurrection lie in the death of the novel.

Here Noah failed to be a lifeboat for Raif. Noah, who seeks a lifeboat for himself, refuses to be a boat for Raif, and his publishing house to be a platform for Raif's cry in the face of the brutal world. Thus, Noah was selfish, but his selfishness here was driven by his crisis and fear of self-confrontation. So Noah's new birth meant a "deluge" for Raif. Will Raif return to take care of the Garden of the Dead after he has lost the novel and lost his love before? Is he destined

to re-enter the shell of "insanity" or suicide? Does Sara's obsession at the end of the novel with going to the café "al-Makan/The Place", where she met Raif, indicate that by losing love, she also lost her path to salvation, and consequently, she started seeing what Raif himself had seen when he gave up his love, and when he saw the existence with a distorted eye that was infected with boredom and horror? I think so, as this café, called "al-Makan/ The Place" symbolizes, in my opinion, the 'distorted homeland' that controls the destinies of its children, which is evidenced by Raif's description to Sara when he was confused by its existence: "We are no longer what we are; we are what we are wanted to be. Now I'm sitting with you not because I want to, but because there's a scheme that got me here, and got you you like me here; I am now sitting with you not because I want to, but because there is a scheme that got me here, and I got you like me here, and none of these came here by his will - he said, pointing his hand at the customers and workers - but rather a great conspiracy brought them to what they are, not from today, but since hundreds of years." [17] (p. 138).

The writer undoubtedly projects Raif's emotional, intellectual, and psychological state on the Place "Café" to become an equivalent, an objective correlative to his condition and self, and consequently, the café is distorted like his Self, and the perception of the Place "Café" becomes a sentimental state that is far from his real description. His terrifying nightmare description here reinforced Raif's state of fear, terror, and alienation, which later struck Sarah, at the end of the novel, when the Café turned into a repellent hostile place; the decorations appeared to her strange and savage, and people forms were abnormal, and therefore, she escaped from it. The Café has transformed from a beautiful image that was carried at the beginning of the novel into a grotesque ugly nightmare image, an unpleasant place that embodies the state of labyrinth and distortion, and reinforces Noah's view about the fall of the homelands in the claws of frenzied beasts. [17] (p. 299).

The ends of the characters Noah, Raif, Sarah, and Sulafa were undoubtedly heartbreaking. They were all chained prisoners by their selves for various reasons. But these reasons in their essence are not different from each other, but rather confirm that the homeland is no longer as much a place and land as it at this time means how much sanctuary, protection, and warmth it gives to the human beings, and how free the human being feels in it without taking away his self, rights, and humanity. Homeland in short is where man lives with freedom, dignity, and security.

But on the other hand, the writer wants the end of the rich writer, whose novel Sulafa agreed to publish, to be exactly as she wanted because she is rich because he wanted to assert the authority of money and its control over the fate of man as money is a force that can move and drive people's destiny in this era, as the life of the wealthy is "beautiful, soft and entertaining" [17] (p. 270), and seems to be "freer" [17] (p. 277) while those who do not have this power lose their right and their hopes are lost.

Sulafa, who is madly in love with her teacher Noah, sought to persuade him to publish the novel of the wealthy woman despite knowing that this novel did not rise to the level of works that are normally accepted by the publishing house, and although she realized that Noah did not care about money, she wanted to earn him big money out of that love. However, in the end, she succeeded in finding a justification for its publishing. Raif, because he is an unknown and a poor writer, wrote a novel about a paper virtual character that revealed the publisher's nudity in front of himself - and unfortunately - she refuses to publish his novel despite its quality, and thus, his little dream is killed.

7. The Textual Thresholds and Associations of Place

The textual threshold [4] plays an important role in the field of analysis, as they open the road for the reader to enter the text and set out the way to break into the text and cross into its interior to analyze it. The reader cannot move to the text spaces without passing through his thresholds, which gives him the keys to analysis. So every reading without reading the thresholds is considered incomplete and distorted.

Titles in the Semiotic perspective are considered an important sign, and the main title is considered a necessary explanatory key to probing and analyzing the text's depths and environs. It is one of the most important elements on which the parallel text is based, as Gérard Genette considers it [6]. It is considered a parallel text to the text itself, which is an independent indicative signal [5] (p. 15-23), an independent signal as a subtext containing the overall meaning, and with it, the literary work becomes complete. The titles also play a metafictional role, in addition to their title role. They are material because they constitute a critical practice by the writer on his work that imply with the author's intentions.

The title of this novel, "Abdoun Bridge," reflects the author's purpose behind this choice. It's called "Abdoun Bridge", but it suggests death, fall, and suicide as Abdoun Bridge is linked to the fictitious "Garden of the Dead" that Raif had imagined calling him from the top of the bridge so that he reaches death by falling. Suicide and fall from a well-known location in Amman Center are undoubtedly not ordinary death or ordinary suicide, but death that people will talk about and require investigations by the authorities regarding the identity of the suicide and the causes of his suicide. The media will also be full of news about this event, and people will talk about it and leave a far-reaching echo behind it. This confirms the purpose of Raif's blatant retreat from suicide and thoughts about throwing his papers from the top of the bridge instead of throwing himself.

If he abandoned the idea of death because of his compassion for his mother and family, he also decided to protest against the refusal to publish his novel assisted by this place/Abdoun Bridge. Throwing the papers from Abdoun Bridge is a symbol of revelation of his protest and refusal of publishing. This act is

a declaration of the revolution of papers against the refusal to publish them; a declaration of their rebellion and liberation. Therefore, the writer says: "Every paper has a world of its own and a wide space of freedom. It is not restricted by a page that was written before it or another that was written after it." [17] (p. 352) People started "rushing and bumping into each other with a lot of hostility and fierceness; each of them wanted to take a piece of paper and his curiosity would kill him to understand what this thing has fallen out of the sky and committed suicide." "When Raif descended from the edge of the bridge and turned his back on it and the mess of the noise of the mobs from below, he heard the sounds of police cars rushing to the scene." [17] (p. 352) That's how Raif makes the noise that he aimed to cause by throwing the papers. He could have torn them or burned them, but he chose a blatant place with its noise to achieve his goal. Noah's rejection of Raif's novel means killing the message that Raif dreamed of communicating to people in order to contribute to changing a certain reality. So when Raif throws it off the Abdoun Bridge in protest, he is rebelling against the rejection of publisher Noah, as if he were spreading it his way, realizing that its suicide would attract curious people and thus ensure fame for doing so.

As Noah made Raif lose the opportunity to "do an important job that people would talk about" [17] (p. 31), and killed the novel, he necessarily killed Raif's voice and took away his right. This justifies why Raif chose to attract people's attention by making his papers commit suicide in response to the refusal to let him communicate his voice and his cry.

The bridge with its first indication that was reflected at the beginning of the novel signified death. The bridge with its first connotation at the beginning of the novel signified death. Falling from above leads to death, and death here was the salvation for Raif, salvation in escaping from a distorted reality and a shattered world as if life were about to be utter him out from its womb. But this transformation that hit Raif and made him retreat from the idea of suicide from the top of the Abdoun Bridge by throwing firing papers transforms the meaning of the place "bridge" into that of "freedom". This is reflected in the author's description: "Every paper has a got a world of its own and a wide space of freedom." [17] (p. 352) Here the bridge carries a polar contradictory indication that combines conflicting concepts that reflect the relationship that takes place as a result of Raif's personal connection to this place/bridge. The bridge is a high, rising place that bears the meaning of freedom, emancipation, highness, and life, manifesting itself as the way to rise to the desired world: salvation and freedom. Raif makes himself believe in his ability to get rid of the horrors of the world and its ugliness, which turns the image of the bridge into its last image into a place that refers to height and elevation and thus to freedom and life.

However, its counter-indication suggests the Earth, the bottom, falling, and death, where the decline corresponds to death and falling. It's the oppressive dark underworld that is the opposite of the upper world. The low is synonymous with

the bottom, land, and reality, which are the concrete and the lived. The lived here is a counterpart to imprisonment and injustice. Good is the higher and evil is the low [11] (p. 70-72) and goodness and salvation is a rush of the soul towards the highness, towards the dream of justice and emancipation. Since the breadth is equal to the height, it means that free movement will only be in the heights. The movement of the free papers parallels the movement of free consciousness and creativity that Raif lived. Freedom here will only be achieved by consciousness, thought, and imagination, where the breadth and ability to fly exist.

High places/Abdoun Bridge (vis-à-equivalent to consciousness-imagination) allow for movement, while low places (the isolation room in the house/café/lived reality) indicate grotesqueness, narrowness, and rigidity. This suggests death, as death is immobility and inertia, and it is downward. "Movement is the ability to change," [13] (p. 66) creation, and human creativity, which is his thought and imagination. "Only human beings can change the essence of things by their will and come out of the framework of rigid rules and strict inevitability. It is the genius of man that makes him capable of changing his reality." [13] (p. 66) And so Raif did when he changed his reality, giving up the idea of suicide by choosing to write a novel and practicing the act of creativity and flying through the imagination freely, until he reclaimed some meaning of life, albeit under the shade of death. As Gaston Bachelard puts it, imagination does not adhere to geometric dimensions but operates according to force and speed. [2] (p. 115) Imagination freely exercises its action on space, time, and elements of power." [2] (p. 116) In this way, Raif was able to find a way to adapt to his reality and seek to destroy and demolish it, to find for himself a substitute for a homeland that shattered his soul. It was writing here that made him change his reality, and the meaning of Abdoun Bridge changed. Writing here carried the meaning of denuding, revelation and emancipation. Stripping reality, exposing its horrors and self-revelation, its liberation, and emptying it of the causes of defeat. There is openness and freedom to the imagination and consciousness, and treatment of the tortured spirit, in order to reach salvation and achieve purification of the idea of suicide and death.

8. Summary

The novel *Jisr 'Abdoun/ 'Abdoun Bridge* revealed the strength of the presence of the place and the extent of its impact on the characters and their destinies, where the place is inseparable from their awareness and sense of it. The novel revealed the distortion of the meaning of homeland for the contemporary man. The novel's places have succeeded in distorting and alienating the Self of the character and creating a sense of alienation and isolation, down to the question of the truth of homeland and its meaning. At this time, at the time of the demolition and shattering of homelands, the homeland is transformed into a destiny that controls the fate of the characters, a destiny that drives its children to their exile, alienation, loneliness, maze, madness, or suicide. In the

shadow of all this, one has to look for an alternative private homeland, one that restores his psychological balance.

The novel affirmed that love is one of the most important gates of salvation that makes man able to break free from the distorted grip of his homeland, where he finds in his love his freedom, life, and "homeland". On the other hand, the writing process constitutes an offloading and a purification process of the Self of its self-imprisonment and isolation and gives it tranquillity and meaning of life again. The novel also affirms that the homeland no longer means a place and land, but it means a place that gives human beings security, freedom, dignity, and self-reassurance.

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