International Journal of Innovative Research and Scientific Studies, 8(12) 2025, pages: 175-188

IJIRSS
International Journal of Innovative Research & Scientific Studies

**ISSN:** 2617-6548

URL: www.ijirss.com

# Symbols of nature in the diwan Dice of the text by the poet Adnan Al-Sayegh

Asmaa Fares Hussein[1*], Ali Hussein Jloud Alzaidi[2]

[1,2]*Department of Arabic Language, College of Education for Humanities, University of Thi-Qar, Thi-Qar, 64001, Iraq.*

Corresponding author: Asmaa Fares Hussein (*Email: asmaafareshassan@u.tq.iq*)

## Abstract

This study explores the symbols of nature in the poetry collection Nard al-Nass by the Iraqi poet Adnan Al-Sayegh through a hermeneutic approach that aims to uncover their semantic and artistic dimensions. The research seeks to highlight how natural symbols are transformed into cultural signs and meanings that carry psychological, political, and existential dimensions. Through these symbols, the poet reflects the anxiety of the poetic self and its fluctuation across political, social, and historical levels. The study employs a hermeneutic method, integrating symbolic and semiotic analysis tools, to reveal the multiplicity of meanings and the semantic openness that nature's symbols offer within the text.

**Keywords:** Adnan Al-Sayegh, Nard al-Nass, Nature, Realistic Symbols, Symbol.

**DOI:** 10.53894/ijirss.v8i12.11039
**Funding:** This study received no specific financial support.
**History: Received:** 24 October 2025 / **Revised:** 21 November 2025 / **Accepted:** 24November 2025 / **Published:** 9 December 2025

**Competing Interests:** The authors declare that they have no competing interests.
**Authors' Contributions:** All authors contributed equally to the conception and design of the study. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.
**Transparency:** The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.
**Publisher:** Innovative Research Publishing

## 1. Introduction

Nature has always served as an inner mirror for the poet and an inexhaustible source of inspiration in shaping poetic imagery and constructing meaning. It is not merely a decorative backdrop to the text, but rather a living entity that intertwines with the poetic self, through which the poet reflects his inner concerns and embodies his alienation or harmony with the world.

Nature is defined as: "The physical existence that surrounds us or affects our being in one way or another—such as the sun, stars, mountains, seas, trees, lightning, thunder, and so on" [1]. It is also defined as: "The innate disposition with which man was created" [2]. Thus, nature has always been the home of poetic inspiration, where the soul soars, and creativity flourishes. The poet is a child of nature, born from it, nurtured in its arms, and refined by its ideals [3]. Some have even considered nature to be an objective correlative of the poet's self, as it represents freedom and reflects the poet's inner world. Since the beginning, it has embraced human activity through its mysterious charm and grandeur, stirring thought, encouraging growth, and engaging in a silent dialogue. It has inspired wonder, evoked longing, and awakened an aesthetic sense symbolising, in other words, the poet's yearning for the absolute, the sublime, and the unreachable [4].

The reason poets frequently turn to nature lies in its unique characteristic of intertwining elements and merging with objects to create a new world, one that mirrors the parallel between the act of writing and the sensory feelings associated with the poet's human condition [5]. This is why Adnan Al-Sayegh employs nature as a source of symbolic meaning—both realistic and multilayered—considering it a rich wellspring of inspiration. Through its elements and phenomena, he contemplates creation and the marvels of existence on Earth.

The poet's inspiration varies based on temperament, social status, physical and mental conditions, wealth or poverty, and the diverse dispositions of the soul—ranging from contentment to rebellion, obedience to resistance—thus expressing reality through natural symbols [3]. Some classify nature into elements and phenomena: *elements* include the sun, moon, and mountains, while *phenomena* refer to things that are causally linked to those elements, such as night and day, thunder, and lightning [6].

Nature is also categorized into: (1) Static nature, which includes terrestrial elements such as rivers, seas, fruit trees, vases, and celestial components like night, morning, stars, planets, snow, lightning, clouds, rain, and seasonal changes; (2) Dynamic/living nature, which includes animals and birds; and (3) Artificial nature, referring to human-made objects such as villages, palaces, and homes, among many others.

Nature appears as a symbol in poetic texts, not in its material essence, but in another truth hidden behind it. It becomes a symbol of a realistic, tangible kind—perceived by the senses—wherein "its material reality is transcended in favour of a quality it inherently carries and signifies. This quality is what draws the mind toward it when it is meant to function as a symbol" [7]. However, the natural symbol chosen by the poet must be in harmony with the intended meaning, even if its material significance fades.

The presence of natural symbols in modern Arabic poetry has become rich and diverse. The poet no longer seeks to present his experience in a direct, didactic manner to the reader. Instead, he creates a poetic scene full of overt and latent energies, thereby clarifying the relationship between nature and the poet [5]. Symbolic nature now reflects emotions such as joy, sorrow, pain, alienation, hope, and despair. To the extent that we sometimes cannot distinguish between *night* as a physical entity and *night* as a reflection of the poet's inner world. Due to the diversity of natural elements, nature has become a vast field that poet's resort to as a source of realistic symbolism.

Among the most prominent forms of natural symbols in *Nard al-Nass* are:

## 2. Static Nature

This includes nature categorized into earthly forms—such as meadows, trees, flowers, fruits, and mirages—and celestial forms such as stars, planets, rain, seasons, and changes in night and day, as well as lightning and thunder [8]. Due to his exceptional poetic talent, Adnan Al-Sayegh has managed to infuse these static natural elements in *Nard al-Nass* with symbolic value. He begins from a realistic perspective, noting their material qualities, then transforms them into symbols that reflect his lived reality. Realism in literature and art is based on the acknowledgement of objective reality and its artistic representation [9]. As Al-Sayegh writes: [10].

*"Empty—except for myself;*
*As if I were a text no one wrote.*
*As if I were temptation. As if I were lost. As if I were a riddle. As if I were a mirage. As if I were a veil. As if I were a cloud.*
*As if I were created without motions—and I must assign and parse them.*
*I am the words. So, who wrote to me?*
*I am the creator. So, who created me?*
*I am myself. I am his self.*
*So who am I?"*

In this excerpt, the static natural elements—such as *mirage* and *cloud*—are paired as opposites: *earthly* and *celestial*, reflecting the poet's inner contradictions. The *mirage* symbolises loss, illusion, deceit, and fantasy, often serving as a metaphor for false hope or waiting for someone who will never return [11]. In contrast, the *cloud* represents rain, life, goodness, and growth. However, the dominant mood of the poem is one of confusion and existential loss, as shown by the poet's repeated, insistent questioning: *"Who wrote me? Who created me? I am myself. So, who am I?"*

This inner loss reflects a key feature of the modern world, where the poet's present is fragmented and dismembered, a result of past experiences. This fragmentation leads to the stark contradictions that characterise the poem, serving as a mirror for themes of absurdity, alienation, despair, and meaninglessness [12].

The poet resorts to silent, realistic natural phenomena—with their various symbolic connotations—to express the pain of the people and their just causes, linking them to political and social issues from both the past and the present. In doing so, the poem reveals the poet's perception of real-world events. He writes [10].

*"As if we leap through the air, not through history—*
*Branch by branch, or line by line,*
*While the sky, as if in performance,*
*Warns of more than one storm.*
*In 1963, we dragged Abd al-Karim Qasim*
*Before the widowed gaze from the Ministry of*
*Defence and the Tigris River... and the cream vendor*
*Who still mourns him to this day..."*

Here, Adnan Al-Sayegh employs symbols of silent nature in a symbolic framework, speaking on behalf of the collective. The lexical items in this excerpt such as *sky*, *storm*, and *river*—are loaded with symbolic value. The *storm*, in particular, symbolises catastrophe and embodies injustice and tyranny. It represents the destruction of the homeland and the suffering of its people. The *sky*, likewise, connotes impending doom and devastation, which, from the poet's perspective, reflects the nation's state following the assassination of Abd al-Karim Qasim.

The reference to the *cream vendor* mourning Qasim's death conveys a concrete, emotional response from an ordinary citizen. She symbolises the oppressed class who saw in Qasim a beacon of hope for a better future. The image of the *dice* in *Nard al-Nass* becomes a metaphor for history itself—constantly repeating, as if retracing each line of the past in precise succession, up to the present day.

The celestial form of nature, particularly *night*, has long held symbolic significance in Arabic poetry since ancient times. In modern poetry, it has come to symbolise calamity, injustice, oppression, and anguish—a synonym for the darker aspects of life. This is evident in *Nard al-Nass* as well [10]:

*"I record in my notebook the following:*
*Saturday night...*
*The sky was complicit with the guards,*
*And beneath the gallows stood my friend Hamid Al-Zaydi,*
*And much urine...*
*I throw the dice:*
*(His eyes swollen,*
*Black muzzles stood before him,*
*Counting what remained of the atoms*
*Of his life hanging in the cell's air…)"*

The poet mentions *Saturday night*, a time when all signs of death converge—war, gallows, and weaponry—referencing the execution of his friend, Hamid Al-Zaydi [10]. Here, *night* symbolises death, isolation, and fear. Through this depiction, the poet conveys grief and loss, painting a vivid picture of the executed friend's fear and final moments. He then shifts to another powerful symbol: *black muzzles*. The symbolic use of colour here contributes to a poetic vision that reflects suffering and existential dread. The colour black denotes death, absence, and sorrow. It is a metaphor for pessimism and malevolence in human life, and more broadly, it represents oppression and oppressors [13]. Another celestial symbol appears in the following lines [10]:

*"…Heavy rain*
*Behind the window of the soul*
*Watching the drops merge with their tears.*
*You will never understand what they did to me—*
*There!!*
*What kind of life they threw at me like a bone,*
*Stripped of its meat and flame, and left…"*

In this passage, Adnan Al-Sayegh turns again to silent, celestial nature—here represented by *rain*. Rain is symbolically associated with generosity, renewal, revolution, and all things tied to reform and prosperity. It reflects a desire for internal cleansing, spiritual rebirth, and a break from the oppression and hardship experienced by the individual and the collective.

According to Bisla [14] the poet ultimately gains nothing from the rain, as it is veiled behind the window of a soul abandoned by all the details of life. Here, the poet speaks with a girl he met in exile about the horrors experienced by the Iraqi people in general, and himself in particular. He likens the life that was once available to him to a bone from which all pleasure—symbolised by *heavy rain*—has been stripped. The poet's imagery bears a strong social dimension, shaped by the lived realities of Iraqis during that era: a time of struggle and exposure of a corrupt, cowardly, authoritarian, and deceitful reality [15].

Within the same *silent nature*, we read [10]:

*As if our life were not flowing for us... for us*
*My texts are preceded by their interpretations.*
*And on the table before her sits my heart*
*Whistling in the wind*
*While my flute distorts the world with sins.*
*Dreams pass between my fingers, but I cannot grasp them.*

Here, Al-Sayegh turns to another celestial natural symbol: *the wind*, which represents the loss and usurpation of freedom in Iraqi society at that time. Poetry in general—and Al-Sayegh's work in particular—was subject to multiple interpretations due to his continued writing outside the framework of ideological texts during the former dictatorship. The regime's pens, armed with censors, were poised over his words. It is "clear that the poet philosophises nature, portrays it in his image, and pours his thought into it" [3]. Al-Sayegh confronts intellectual suppression by exposing the faults of the world, foregoing personal dreams to unveil the falseness and ugliness of his surroundings. As Al-Kubaisi puts it, "Truthful literature reflects the realities of life and urges people to strive for a better future" [15].

Among the most fertile natural symbols in *Nard al-Nass* are those associated with the seasons. Al-Sayegh adopts several seasonal elements as mediators for a soul fleeing from its painful reality [16] writing [10]:

*I open my window to spring,*
*Inhaling the air with all its fragrance and staleness…*

*Is the air I breathe*
*Someone else's exhalation?*
*Carrying his legacy of spoils, scents, and deceptions—*
*And mine of regrets…*

In this passage, the poet faithfully depicts his reality, using *spring* as a symbolic reflection of his condition. Instead of spring's pure air filling his lungs, he finds it mingled with stale air—a symbol of the corruption of his lived reality. He questions the purity of the air itself, using the phrase *"someone else's exhalation?"* as a metaphor for a long history of dispossession and deceit. He describes this inherited condition as one of *regret*, which stands in stark contrast to the vibrancy of spring and its associations with life, youth, and renewal.

The natural symbol thus draws its realism from the national issues the poet has experienced or witnessed, as if to say: rather than enjoying life in the prime of youth, we are surrounded by an atmosphere and a reality defined by subjugation, repression, and remorse, just as our ancestors were.

In the same context, he writes [10]:

*…Oh, these prison cells that stretch across us*
*From A to Z*
*From the sanctuary to the plough*
*From the desert to the sea…*
*From War to Exile*
*I will not leave you.*
*Except crippled or a mad poet*
*As long as the lashes*
*Have denied us the chance to raise our heads*
*And see how bright, beautiful, and near the sun it is,*
*And how loudly the grasses sing,*
*Shimmering between the fingers of spring...*
*We will enjoy the singing*
*Our horse song*
*In the seasons of joy and harvest,*
*But where will our bags and regrets go?*

In this passage, Adnan Al-Sayegh describes his lived reality as an exile who left Iraq and moved between various Arab and Western countries. Yet, he refers to his life as a chain of prison cells, reflecting an internal captivity rooted in his homeland. He cannot forget the lashes that struck the bodies of his people, nor the intellectual whips that suppressed creativity through censorship, bans, and coercion. He asserts that he cannot leave this situation "except crippled or a mad poet."

Thus, he turns to nature, choosing its most beautiful season, *spring* symbolises life. He uses it to allude to their youth and vitality, which glimmered like grasses caressed by the gentle spring breeze. He leaves a typographical space—a trail of ellipses and a blank line suggesting the horrors they endured without explicitly naming them. He continues with a *hoarse song*, filled with sorrow and longing, even in the so-called seasons of joy.

Progressing to the theme of autumn, we find a psychological treatment that reveals the poet's self through its reflection in natural phenomena. Nature appears gloomy and sorrowful when the poet is overwhelmed by sadness, and joyful or exuberant according to his psychological state [6]. This is exemplified in his verse [10].

*"What kind of autumn, O my God...*
*The mud covers our lives—even our gills"*

In intertextual dialogue with the previous passage, Adnan Al-Sayegh here employs the season of autumn as a symbol of the bleakness of living conditions. He then resorts to ellipsis as a means of evading the explicit articulation of weakness and hardship, introducing the word *mud* as a symbol of the darkness and heaviness of his reality. The realist poet, after all, is one who deeply analyses their society in a manner that conveys a significant degree of truth [15]. This excerpt thus reflects the general condition of the Arab individual and, more specifically, the Iraqi citizen.

In *The Dice of Text*, the silent, earthly elements of nature reflect, in full, the social reality and its harsh details through the symbolism carried by "fruit-bearing trees." Al-Sayegh is considered among those poets who paid considerable attention to natural symbols due to their associations with specific ideological themes in his work [17]. For instance, he invokes the apple tree in a context of existential argumentation, saying [10]:

*At that moment,*
*In that distraction, I glimpsed*
*A coquettish nymph*
*Standing beneath a leafy apple tree*
*I thought of approaching her,*
*To talk to her,*
*To flirt with her, telling her I've grown weary*
*Of this eternal idleness,*
*I want to eat from that apple and descend to Earth,*
*Or that I've understood the game, even grown bored of it let us play another.*

*Or ask her about many ambiguous things in this forest.*
*I still don't understand.*
*Or invite her to watch Citizen Kane.*
*Or become friends in a way that breaks the greed-driven norms of relationships here.*
*To stroll. To sing. To read poetry. To dance.*
*Or…*
*Ask her about the women who arrived from Earth—what are they doing now?*
*Do they have lovers, or lords of the right hand?*
*Streams of wine?*
*And... before I noticed the seasons changing on her face,*
*Before I realised that here, there are perhaps no questions, no conversations,*
*No histories of relationships at all.*
*Before the nymph vanished,*
*The Sheikh closed his book: The Rising Moons and Joyful Abodes: Descriptions of the Houris of Paradise.*
*And I left it alone, cast out like our father Adam—*
*But without even a bite.*

This text is rich with existential meaning, particularly in its evocation of post-mortem life. Multiple levels of symbolism and philosophical reflection emerge, addressing themes such as freedom, isolation, meaning, and personal choice. The poet portrays himself as living in paradise yet burdened by boredom. In an attempt to escape this ennui, he invites the nymph to engage in simple human pleasures—watching a film, reading poetry, dancing ultimately longing to return to Earth by eating from the forbidden apple, a symbol traditionally associated with temptation, disobedience, and even knowledge in various cultures. Thus, Al-Sayegh places the apple tree at the centre of this surreal, dream-like dialogue, framing it as a point of yearning and symbolic return.

Al-Sayegh often pairs women with nature, a motif pervasive throughout his poetry. Critics have linked this association to a romantic tendency underlying the realist orientation that characterises much of his work. This fusion between woman and nature is both structural and symbolic [18]. For example, he writes [10]:

*You stop laughing.*
*I don't stop crying.*
*The road coils like a snake over the mountain,*
*And your arms coil around my waist,*
*The grassy hills shine, rising and falling.*
*Beyond the arc of the train window...*
*I hear the wheezing of its wheels,*
*And it's groaning from long-forgotten days.*
*I hear you beneath the apple tree singing—*
*I don't understand, so you laugh,*
*And I sigh.*

Here, the poet invokes the apple tree once again, now symbolising both its physical reality and its psychological resonance as a site of loss, exile, and longing. The tree signifies dual meanings: its natural shade and its spiritual association with the fall of Adam, representing the burden of knowledge and transgression. The poet presents himself as a sorrowful, misunderstood figure, grieving beside a beloved who embraces life in contrast to his despair.

Within the same context, Al-Sayegh employs earthly natural symbols that indicate isolation and introspection, such as the forest, which acts as an objective correlative for his inner state [10].

*As I sat in front of a closed bar counter,*
*I took off my shoes, curled them beneath my head,*
*And slept—dreaming of the music of history...*
*A life ulcerated, emptied of meaning.*
*Approaching erasure, yet joyful nonetheless...*
*How much I must postpone and delay,*
*But the hands of my clock delay nothing.*
*Life is short—shorter than a teenager's dress.*
*And I tell the day to wait*
*While I gather the stars from my pillow.*
*Winter hurts without you.*
*Take this firewood burning in the forest—*
*It is what remains of my papers.*
*And my years, which have fallen from the calendars.*
*How can I draw my days?*
*Straight on the crumpled paper of life?*

In this passage, Al-Sayegh portrays a life without his beloved as monotonous and empty. He loiters in bars and escapes into sleep. Notably, he again leans on natural metaphors, stating: *"Take this firewood burning in the forest,"* where the forest symbolises the isolation in which he finds himself, despairing. As noted by scholars, he extracts emotional significance from nature, transforming it from its literal meaning into a semantic symbol of inner sentiment [17]. In the

final lines, he refers to his life as “crumpled” a colloquial term used here as a bitter symbol of disillusionment. The inclusion of such vernacular language does not necessarily elevate the artistic value of the text in classical terms, but rather reflects the realist nature of his poetry, grounded in the language of lived experience.

In the series of personal memories Al-Sayegh presents in *The Dice of Text*, he frequently employs natural, earthly symbols, such as the flower, to convey events that continue to reverberate in the depths of his psyche, especially those concerning the loss of his father. This loss, for him, represents the collapse of security, hope, and dreams.

In Adnan Al-Sayegh’s series of personal recollections, broadcast in *Nard al-Nass (Dice of the Text)*, he employs the symbolism of silent earthly nature—specifically, the flower—to evoke memories whose echoes still resonate in the depths of his being. These especially concern the father and his loss, which entails a collapse of security and the shattering of dreams and aspirations. He writes:

*"Shall I enter the piano, cloaked in a flower of ash, tuning my howling, while my mother spills my father's pancreas over rooftops of prayer, hanging her drenched pleas? And I hide behind the oven, hungry, coughing from every limb..."* [10]. In this passage, Al-Sayegh speaks from the depths of sorrow and longing, describing his cry as a “howl.” He employs the compound phrase *“flower of ash,”* symbolising hope. Here, the flower represents a sentient entity imbued with the emotional state of loss, as ash denotes absence and destruction. As Hamid [6] notes, *"The flower is but a symbol of the suffering self and its lost hopes."* The poet is afflicted by poverty and the looming loss of his father. His mother has only prayers to offer, hoping for deliverance. Meanwhile, he hides, afraid and hungry, in the shadow of this impending loss and the evaporation of all dreams.

Al-Sayegh then transitions from symbolic flora to elemental water sources—rivers and seas, particularly the Tigris and Euphrates. As a son of the Euphrates, born along its banks, he has long adopted the river as a metaphor embodying *"the voice of the crushed people and their dreams, outside the chorus of the circus"* [19]. Alongside the Tigris, he writes [10]:

*"O Tigris,*
*You are fenced in by*
*trees,*
*songs,*
*wires,*
*And gallows.*
*You and the Euphrates were once drawn.*
*by the wings of Michael,*
*Thundering through the riverbed of history.*
*As though you and he*
*They are no longer attentive.*
*to the stream of groaning..."*

Here, Al-Sayegh recounts the legacy of these two rivers and their entanglement with the region’s history, from its genesis to the present. They have borne witness to revolutions, wars, prosperity, and decline. The Tigris recalls Baghdad’s golden age during the Abbasid era—its scientific, intellectual, and artistic grandeur, as well as its verdant land and flourishing banks. Yet it also testifies to Baghdad’s devastation at the hands of the Mongols, and to the gallows used to execute the oppressed and rebellious. Meanwhile, the Euphrates cradle of southern Mesopotamian civilisations is also a symbol of mourning and perpetual lament, particularly due to the historic battle between justice and tyranny at Karbala, between Imam Hussein ibn Ali (peace be upon him) and Yazid ibn Muawiyah. The river bore witness to the persecution of southern Iraqis during the former dictatorship.

Thus, what was once a symbol of splendour has become a symbol of decay, captured in the juxtaposition of "gallows" and "wires." Al-Sayegh merges the concepts of Iraq, the nation, its rivers, and its people. No longer separate entities, they have become reflections of one another, flowing in the same stream of grief. He continues [10]:

*"And my people...*
*In the stillness of the night, we hear their moaning.*
*slipping through*
*the holes of flutes,*
*from the elegies of Ninkal*
*To the candles of al-Khidr at the Tigris' sunset.*
*My people, when the water carried*
*their trembling shadows like the drowned,*
*They came on their emaciated, mud-caked beasts,*
*From the far villages of the Marsh Arabs.*
*On the serrated edges of the river,*
*They sold clotted cream.*
*And bought bundles of flax.*
*They came to slit the neck of dawn.*
*on the green ponds' rims,*
*drenching their canoes and garments*
*In the blood-red anemones.*
*Their skin chirped like metal sheets.*
*Revealing the secret waters of the marshes.*

*The wider the night grew,*
*The more its stars shrank.*
*from their ceaseless coughing."*

In this passage, Al-Sayegh portrays the suffering of his people who dwell along the banks of the Tigris and Euphrates. Their wails seep through the flute's holes—an image rich with mourning. He references mythological elements such as the *"Elegies of Ninkal"* and the *"Candles of al-Khidr,"* which symbolise Iraqi ritual acts of lighting candles and floating them on the rivers, seeking guidance, and blessing through the intercession of this righteous figure. Candles represent illumination, while al-Khidr embodies high spirituality and righteous deeds.

The poet then describes his kin, the southern Marsh Arabs, and their lifestyle: *"They came on their emaciated beasts... selling clotted cream..."* These people fled poverty and starvation, victims of the regime's policy of marshland drainage—a collective punishment that devastated their livelihoods. The marshes, located in southern Iraq between Amarah, Nasiriyah, and Basra, are aquatic landscapes fringed by reeds. Though isolated, they are beautiful and culturally rich; their dwellings are built from local reeds, and the marshes have recently been designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Al-Sayegh fuses the ancient elegies with the modern displacement of the marsh people to convey that lamentation, sorrow, and mourning are inscribed into the history of Iraq. Yet amid this gloom, there remains a glimmer of hope—a vision of a better life and a brighter future.

In the same context, the *sea* appears bearing "varied connotations and symbols shaped by the poet's experiences, emotions, and unique perspective" [17]. Al-Sayegh writes [10]:
*"I am content with their prattle and wars—*
*with the letters B and H—*
*Then I shape a sea,*
*And sit before it,*
*surrendering to the spray of eternity…"*

Here, the poet employs the sea as a symbol of vastness, depth, and contemplation. It becomes a space he creates for himself—an escape from the clamour of war, or a metaphor for "life in all its emotional ebbs and flows" [16]. The sea becomes both a companion and refuge, offering solace and love in contrast to the destruction of war.

## 3. Living Nature

As Jamal Jassim Amin notes, "The attention of poets to the poetics of reality and the latent reference within their personal experiences confirms the visionary shift in 1980s poetry—from mythology and general knowledge to everyday lived experience" [20]. In this context, the poet turns to *living nature* in his verses, appreciating its vitality and dynamism, and employing vivid imagery that evokes admiration. He does so with remarkable precision, leaving no aspect of the scene unformed or unclear [21].

Al-Sayegh intensifies and condenses his imagery by infusing reality with imaginative elements, animating it with symbols of challenge and resilience. These symbols also serve as a psychological outlet—a response to the sense of loss and helplessness endured by individuals who have lost the ability to effect change. The experience of symbolic representation remains deeply personal; hence, the poet's success in expressing it depends on how powerfully his vision resonates with others, igniting their inner worlds and identities [16].

Accordingly, the realist poet is "compelled to perceive life in its fullness and portray it with all its positives and negatives, aiming to awaken the human within and to normalise the spirit of solidarity and human fraternity" [22]. Adnan Al-Sayegh thus imbues *living nature*—through animals and birds—with a vision reflecting the human condition. This symbolism captures the struggle, resistance, suffering, and the closure of all horizons, present and future, carrying rich symbolic and emotional weight [23]. He writes [10]:
*"In 1984, I was in an abandoned animal stable,*
*continuing my delirium on boxes of RPG7s…"*

Here, Al-Sayegh continues to write his *daily poem*, a poem born of lived reality. This particular memory traces back to the village of Sheikh Awsal, when his first collection, *Wait for Me Beneath the Freedom Monument*, was being celebrated in Baghdad, while he was imprisoned in the darkness of a neglected stable [19]. These poignant, human images are rooted in the local environment that the poet intimately experienced. The symbolism of the *stable* here reflects the degradation of human and cultural value by those who punished him. Instead of honouring him, they subjected him to this humiliating punishment a shameful treatment of any individual, and even more so of a creative intellectual.

Thus, Al-Sayegh uses this animal-related symbol to express his suffering with deep semantic and symbolic dimensions, evoking the cruelty and intellectual shallowness of his tormentors.

Animals often come with established symbolic associations; poets refer to them not for their literal presence but for what they signify. These connotations have been developed poet-to-poet until the animal becomes a symbol in its own right [6]. Take the horse, for example, as in the following lines [10]:
*"All of them are from Quraysh!*
*And the land—the orbit—rotates as one:*
*That its emirate must remain with Quraysh,*
*And the people must ride behind their horses and charge:*
*A pledge, obedience, apostasy, conquest—*

*As required, so they may live.*
*Armies led by donkeys,*
*and donkeys dragging armies…"*

In these lines, the horse becomes a symbol of power and historical continuity, while the donkey—dragging armies is a bitter commentary on incompetence and absurdity. This stark contrast intensifies the poet's critique of authority and tradition, revealing the hollow core beneath pomp and control.

Adnan Al-Sayegh, in this passage, deliberately employs the technique of visual recollection (*al-istikhdām al-istirjāʿī aṣ-ṣūri*), relying on *associative memory*, which transcends spatial and temporal constraints. The reader thus encounters temporal leaps and events that are diverse in nature yet bound by their shared connection to the past [24]. The symbolism of the *horse* in this context deviates from the traditional Arab fascination with and fondness for horses. Historically, Arabs were enamoured with their form, temperament, and strength, often praising their swiftness and endurance, taking pride in breeding noble horses [6].

However, from the poet's perspective in this passage, the horse becomes a symbol of political power and the conflicts surrounding it. These horses represent *allegiance*, *obedience*, *apostasy*, *raids*, and so on all terms which, from Al-Sayegh's view, have been sites of historical contention, leading to the fractured state of affairs we witness today. The horse, therefore, is not merely a creature of beauty and strength but becomes a metaphor for tyranny, violence, and coercion. This juxtaposition between traditional connotations and the poet's subversive reading demonstrates "the rich capacity of poetic symbolism, and its expressive power that allows the convergence of opposites within a single image" [25].

The significance of poetry written during a particular phase of Iraq's history lies in its capacity to translate lived reality political, economic, and social—into poetic language, granting the text a dynamic structure that transforms it into a conduit for the existential crisis of the individual within his environment [23]. Al-Sayegh thus incorporates elements of *living nature*—such as birds—investing them with layered symbolism that moves beyond simple associations to a more intimate relation with the human condition [18]. He writes [10]:

*O Lord,*
*I am the bird,*
*And You…*
*If you cannot set me free,*
*Then at least leave me a longer string…*

Here, the poet voices a desperate plea for freedom amid suffocation and restriction, directing his appeal to God—a gesture laden with despair. Al-Sayegh uses the *bird* as a symbol of freedom, serving as an objective correlative to the human condition. He does not demand complete liberation but pleads for at least *a longer string* symbolising a limited, conditional freedom.

Literary texts, in general, tend to invest in symbolic structures not only to enrich their suggestive and referential power but also to anchor the text in a particular stance, thereby avoiding abstraction or rhetorical vagueness [26]. Thus, Al-Sayegh's choice of the *bird* is carefully constructed to reflect his longing for liberty. He continues [10]:

*It happens that... the bird pecks at the bars of its cage.*
*And I peck at the walls of my life.*
*Who has imprisoned us in this body?*

The poet equates himself with the bird in his shared yearning for escape. The bird pecks at its cage in search of freedom, while the poet metaphorically pecks at the walls of his life, walls that symbolise his lived reality, filled with persecution and confinement. This vision emerges from deeply internalised experiences, stored in the poet's consciousness. Despite gaining intellectual, artistic, and social freedom after leaving Iraq in 1996, Al-Sayegh remains imprisoned, *not only physically but intellectually as well.*

Throughout the verses of *Dice of Text* (*Nard al-Nass*), Al-Sayegh displays a profound realism, truthfully conveying suffering, and deploying nature and its symbols as expressive tools. In these poems, he moves beyond personal concerns toward collective issues, focusing on the socio-political and economic conditions of Iraq [6]. He writes [10]:

*It happens that there are no birds,*
*And no storm on the horizon*
*So, who brought all these feathers?*

Here, birds symbolise freedom and revolution, but their absence points to the stagnation and the lack of genuine change. The *storm* (in "no storm on the horizon") is a metaphor for an awaited upheaval—possibly a revolution. The poet then questions the presence of *feathers*, symbolic of loss and ruin, perhaps alluding to the *aftermath* of suppressed hope or failed uprisings. The *birds* here no longer fly; they are disintegrated into *feathers*, dispersed, powerless individuals.

Al-Sayegh also employs insects as symbolic devices to critique social conditions, projecting a nightmarish landscape inspired by Iraqi reality. His poetry becomes a torch illuminating the existential crisis of the individual in his surroundings. He writes:

*We were inherited by the sons of moths,*
*So our days were gnawed away by wars, slogans, blockades, and exiles…*

In this line from *Dice of Text*, the symbolism arises through rhetorical strategies such as metaphors and allegories, transforming poetic figures into symbolic critiques. The metaphor *"sons of moths"* is used to describe rulers, leaders, and heads of state, particularly in the Arab world and especially in Iraq, a nation plagued by war, slogans, blockades, and exile. Speaking in the collective voice, the poet portrays *moths* as parasitic insects that slowly destroy their environment,

representing oppressive regimes draining societies of their vitality. This symbol evokes *mockery*, *contempt*, and *disdain*, emphasising the poet's deep scorn for the mediocrity and destructiveness of political leadership.

In this passage, Adnan Al-Sayegh deliberately employs the technique of *visual flashback*, relying on memory-driven associations that are not bound by spatial or temporal constraints. In other words, we are presented with temporal leaps involving different events, yet what unites them is their rootedness in the past [24]. The symbolism of the *horse* here does not reflect the conventional image familiar in Arab culture, where horses have long held a place of admiration and intimacy. Since ancient times, Arabs have been fascinated by their form and temperament, extensively praising their movement, vitality, speed, and endurance. They prized purebred horses and regarded them as a source of pride [6]. However, in this particular passage, the horse becomes a symbol of its association with the centre of power and the conflicts that accompanied it. For the poet, horses represent allegiance, obedience, apostasy, conquest, and so on—concepts that, from his perspective, have long been the subject of strife and contention, ultimately leading to the dire reality we face today. The horse, then, is both a builder and a destroyer of kingdoms—a symbol of violence, usurpation, and tyranny. This contrast between the traditional connotation of the horse and the new meaning conveyed through the poet's vision *demonstrates the richness of poetic symbolism and its expressive power, which can encapsulate both a thing and its opposite* [25].

The significance of poetry written during a specific historical period in Iraq lies in how it captures the living reality—political, economic, and social—directly linked to human existence, rendering it a dynamic textual structure. The poem thus becomes a torch illuminating the existential dilemma of the individual in their relationship with their surroundings [27]. Hence, elements from living nature such as *birds* find space in Al-Sayegh's poetry, as he transitions their meaning from simple and familiar to one that is participatory and adjacent to human experience [18]. He writes [10]:

*O Lord,*
*I am the bird, and you...*
*If you cannot set me free,*
*At least leave me a longer string...*

Here, the poet expresses a desire for liberation from the constraints and oppression he endures, addressing his plea to God as a sign of despair. He selects the *bird* as a symbol of freedom—a thematic counterpart to the human being, aspiring for absolute liberty. However, in the final line, he retreats to hope for even a partial or restricted form of freedom, symbolised in the plea for a "longer string."

As is commonly observed in literary texts, the use of symbolism within the artistic structure of the poem not only opens the work to interpretation and enhances its suggestive and referential power but also anchors it in a specific worldview that prevents the text from becoming abstract or formless [26]. In this context, Al-Sayegh's choice of the bird as a symbol of his yearning for freedom positions the bird as a mirror of himself. He writes [10]:

*It happens that:*
*The bird pecks at the bars of its cage.*
*And I peck at the walls of my life.*
*Who imprisoned us in this body?*

Here, the bird once again serves as a symbol of the longing for freedom, reflecting the poet's own condition. Just as the bird pecks at the cage bars to escape confinement, the poet pecks at the walls of his own life—a metaphor for his lived reality, filled with oppression and constraint. This vision emerges from a lived experience embedded in the poet's consciousness. Despite attaining intellectual, artistic, and social freedom after leaving Iraq in 1996, the poet remains imprisoned—physically and mentally. His body here does not merely signify the material form, but rather, encompasses the intellectual as well.

Throughout *Nard al-Nass*, Adnan Al-Sayegh's voice exhibits a strong sense of realism, particularly in his candid portrayal of suffering. He utilises natural elements and their symbolism, this time turning away from personal concerns to address collective issues such as Iraq's political, social, and economic conditions at the time [6]. He writes [10]:

*It happens that there are no birds*
*and no storm on the horizon.*
*So who brought all these feathers!?*

The symbolic function of birds emerges here as a poetic trigger for emotional and intellectual associations. Although the birds still represent freedom, they now symbolise *the masses* (the people). However, there are no signs of imminent liberation, which is why the storm—representing revolution—is absent. He then questions the presence of *feathers*, which metaphorically signify death or destruction through the disintegration of the bird (the individual), representing society.

Al-Sayegh also employs *insects* as symbolic devices to expose social realities drawn from his lived experience, shedding light on both individual and collective suffering within Iraqi society. He writes:

*We have been inherited by the children of moths,*
*and our days have withered away amid wars, slogans, sieges, and exiles.*

Many of the symbols in *Nard al-Nass* derive from figurative language metaphors and metonymy that convert rhetorical devices into poetic symbols. For example, the expression *"children of moths"* metaphorically refers to rulers, leaders, or presidents in the Arab world, particularly in Iraq, a country historically plagued by propaganda, blockades, and displacement. Here, the poet speaks in the plural, indicating a collective voice. The moth, a parasitic insect, symbolises these rulers, who parasitically consume the lifeblood of their societies, draining resources and propagating endless wars and

slogans. This symbol carries connotations of mockery, disdain, and irony, as well as degradation and vilification in the poet's portrayal of authority figures.

Soon, we observe that Al-Sayegh imparts a different connotation to the same symbol when he writes [10]:

*Our life is a house of salt,*
*a house of wind,*
*a house of illusion, [like a spider's web].*
*We build it, and once it rises, it collapses,*
*and [beneath it] we die.*
*Nothing remains but a name, on a text, on... / an inscription on a coffin.*

In a previous passage, the *house* symbolised the homeland, a foundational root from which the individual emerges. However, in this stanza, Al-Sayegh subverts that earlier symbolism by portraying the homeland as a house made of salt, wind, and illusion the most fragile and transient materials imaginable. This reflects the deepest levels of disillusionment an individual might reach toward their nation. He likens the homeland to a *spider's web*, evoking its frailty and vulnerability. No matter how much its children strive to raise or fortify it, it inevitably collapses—burying them beneath its ruins. The poet's voice here is marked by despair and a heightened sense of pessimism. This mood culminates in the line: *"We build it, and once it rises, it collapses, and [beneath it] we die."* His text thus transforms into what Iliya Hawi terms *"gloomy elegies that negate life's validity and meaning"* [28].

Al-Sayegh continues in this same vein of realism, though now with deeper emotional resonance. He soon references Kufa and its bridge, alluding to his childhood and the personal significance these places hold. The poet remains emotionally attached to this manmade, concrete landmark, writing [10]:

*Exile has greatly expanded for us...*
*(And I say to myself: My feet*
*tread across the seven continents,*
*but my heart never leaves*
*the Kufa Bridge...)*

The symbolic significance of the *Kufa Bridge* lies in its equivalence to the poet himself, as both were "born" in the same year [19]. It was from this bridge that he journeyed to all corners of the world, carrying his poetry his texts translated into numerous languages. He even published a poetry collection titled *Songs on the Kufa Bridge*, reflecting his profound attachment to it. The poet holds tightly to the memories it embodies, with all their pain, and exile has done little to sever his bond with this memory-laden past. He was unable to redirect his poetic energy elsewhere; rather, it helped maintain the presence of memory throughout both his poetic and lived experience [29].

In *Nard al-Nass*, we also find Al-Sayegh employing *industrial-natural symbols* as a tool of critique against historical narratives. He adopts a tone that is at once accusatory and inquisitive when he writes:

*Why is it that every time [they enter a village],*
*[they build], [they cultivate],*
*with women...*
*and they leave the land*
*to rot... or bleed:*
*....*
*A land in mourning—*
*what a conquest this is!*
*... And there is a silent scream*
*that folds the dictionaries and never reaches sound.*
*A scream — aah — ah — hh —*
*long drawn out — for this earth,*
*and I do not tire of it.*
[10]

Here, we encounter the *village* as an industrial-natural symbol representing life and stability. At the beginning of the stanza, the poet questions the reason behind the destruction of the village, the enslavement of its women, and the killing of its young men. This echoes the violent history of the *Islamic conquests*, with their enslavement and bloodshed, which left lands barren and desolate. Rather than cultivating their land and building their future, the blood of these youth was spilt upon the soil, betrayed and slain in tyranny. The poet unveils the grim outcome of such invasions: wailing, death, and devastation, all underscored by a scream so profound that it defies linguistic expression. He characterises it as a scream too immense for language a cry that outlives the speaker and echoes endlessly across the wounded earth.

This passage also carries intertextual resonance with the Qur'anic verse:

*"she said: Indeed, when kings enter a city, they ruin it and make the most honourable of its people humiliated. And thus, do they do."*
(Qur'an, Surah Al-Naml: 34)

In addition to the religious intertext, the poet invokes contemporary experience through the line: *"A long-drawn-out scream for this earth—and I do not tire of it,"* fusing classical history with present-day suffering in a poignant and urgent poetic indictment.

Adnan Al-Sayegh's poetry has consistently served as a vivid embodiment of the Iraqi individual's life in all its intricate details. Through a clear and accessible poetic language, he articulates the individual's dilemmas and anxieties. Among the industrial (man-made) symbols he employs to signify alienation and subjugation is the following excerpt [10]:

*He walks through our alleys*
*and our schools*
*He intervenes:*
*In the shaving of beards, in bedrooms,*
*In celebrations, and mourning,*
*in what we eat, and what we wear*
*He fashions us according to his agenda:*
*parties and sects,*
*a house for Islam, a house for infidels,*
*the pure, or the impure:*
*a tail, a joker, or a planted spy...*

Here, the poet continues to enumerate symbols of domination, which shift from natural imagery to connotations of authoritarian control. *Alleys*—typically markers of daily life—and *schools*, long associated with enlightenment and national development, become sites of surveillance and coercion. Under the dictatorship, schools—supposedly spaces for intellectual growth—were transformed into arenas for espionage, with teaching staff monitored even in their casual remarks. Children, sometimes unknowingly, betrayed their parents, contributing to an atmosphere of fear that extended even into the sanctity of bedrooms.

The regime's aim was to mould the population into a uniform ideological shape, ensuring its own longevity. As a result, every social group—whether loyal or oppositional—was branded with a specific label, a trend that has continued in crude and divisive terms into the present, such as *tail*, *joker*, or *infiltrator*.

In *Nard al-Nass,* Al-Sayegh attempts to reconstruct the image of Iraq during the Iran–Iraq War, having lived through that period himself. He presents the country as "a marginalised, ruined, and bleak image—an outcome of authoritarian rule that thrust the nation into senseless conflicts and wars" [27]. This critique is conveyed through realistic, industrial symbols [10]:

*"The world is ruined mud devours mud" ...*
*We mount the military truck...*
*Dust, smoke, and blood cover us forever.*

Al-Sayegh opens the passage with a symbolic colloquial expression that signifies the collapse of humanity—humans consuming each other, rendering life futile. He then turns to a stark image of death: soldiers riding atop a military truck amidst smoke, death, and blood. *Smoke* functions here as a symbol of the intellectual and ideological confusion that led to war and destruction, obscuring the truth behind prolonged, bloody conflict. Al-Sayegh believes that once one becomes engulfed in such confusion, clarity can only be achieved through distance and an alternative perspective [30]. The smoke thus represents both a literal and metaphorical barrier to insight, while the omnipresence of *blood* conveys the persistence and permanence of death.

The poetic voice continues to symbolically render industrialised nature through a range of images representing ruin, death, and devastation, most notably the symbolic image of *Al-Ghari Cemetery*, which embodies the poet's emotional and national concerns. It becomes, in this context, an objective correlative for his homeland, as shown in the following verse [10]:

*Like the expanse of Al-Ghari Cemetery*
*which breathes near our house that breathes*
*near the banks of the Kufa River*
*on which they built their bridge, inaugurated by the Pasha,*
*whose many ministries swept away*
*So much speech, so many days, and so many dreams*
*into Al-Ghari Cemetery...*

Here, the poet selects a human-made natural symbol: the cemetery, specifically *Al-Ghari*, one of the oldest cemeteries in the world, containing nearly six million graves. He recounts its relentless expansion, filled with the bodies of Iraqis. The poem refers to the *Pasha* as a symbol of the regime's long history of bloodshed and repression, wherein freedoms and dreams were confiscated and buried. He further extends this imagery (Al-Sayegh, 2016: 1364)

*Like the expanse of Al-Ghari Cemetery*
*which crept far and near*
*until it crowded the streets of the city,*
*which in turn devoured*
*the fields where we once played in our childhood—*
*a childhood that had just begun*
*when the sirens of war sounded,*
*a war that, once ignited,*
*consumed the green and dry of our lives,*

*leaving only the crusts of siege,*
*even in exile—*
*until Al-Ghari Cemetery.*

The poet here documents a contemporary historical period that he experienced, one marked by countless death convoys brought about by war, oppression, and tyranny. The cemetery's expansion to encroach upon city streets and surrounding fields becomes a potent symbol for the spread of death and the erasure of life. Once symbols of childhood, dreams, and vitality, the streets and fields now fall victim to the machinery of war. The war's fires devoured both the "green and the dry" of existence, leaving the people with nothing but the remnants of starvation, and even in exile, they could not escape, only to return symbolically to Al-Ghari Cemetery, the destination.

Adnan Al-Sayegh's poetic generation is often described as "a generation preoccupied with immediate mobilizational concerns that do not allow for the emergence of purely aesthetic poetic tendencies" [31]. However, *Nard al-Nass* (The Dice of the Text) is rich with both mobilizational and artistic dimensions. From a realistic perspective, the poet expresses his psychological state when he writes:

"Like the extension of Al-Ghari Cemetery, I stretch from boredom and thirst.
The poppy and history pull me toward the echo, storing my patience for what is to come.
I peel the bark of language in search of the core of the text" [10].

Here, Al-Sayegh employs the cemetery as a symbolic expression of his psychological state, drawing from the notion of "psychological correspondence and collective concerns" [14]. This is a technical artistic approach in which scenes of devastation are fused with deeply personal, introspective imagery. The resulting impression for external observers is that such images have been captured through the lens of a poet fully immersed in his subjectivity—perhaps even a poet suffering from schizophrenia [27]. The cemetery, as a symbol of stillness and lifelessness, parallels the poet's experience of existential boredom. He juxtaposes the symbols of the "poppy" and "history," merging a narcotic plant with a historical narrative akin to delirium—a thematic coupling that Al-Sayegh has referenced on multiple occasions.

Thus, the poetic symbol "begins with tangible material reality but does not stop there; rather, it transcends it toward a psychological and emotional abstraction" [22]. Al-Sayegh continues to invoke the cemetery as a hybrid symbol—both natural and industrial—driven by internal psychological impulses. He writes:

*"The gravedigger said to me: Like the extension of Al-Ghari Cemetery, stretch out with your shelves, your dice, and your steps as far as you wish,*
*but you will reach only me. Every extension ends at Al-Ghari Cemetery.*
*And like the extension of Al-Ghari Cemetery, rumours scattered like starlings*
*after the gunshot, after they fired into the air to celebrate the fall of the dictator."*

In this excerpt, the poet employs the phrase "he said to me" in an intertextual reference to the Sufi mystic Muhammad bin Abd al-Jabbar al-Niffari, in his renowned work *Al-Mawaqif wal-Mukhatabat* (*Stations and Conversations*). Al-Sayegh here borrows the figure of the *gravedigger*, a character intimately tied to the cemetery. Symbolically, this figure represents proximity to death—it is the last person to interact with the dead in this worldly life. The poet engages in a dialogue with this figure as a symbolic gesture, expressing fearlessness in the face of mortality, stretching his dice east and west as an extension of Al-Ghari Cemetery. Through this movement, he explores various subjects that intersect directly with the individual and their reality, recounting truths that have historically resulted in the proliferation of cemeteries.

These symbolic references gesture toward significant historical events, such as the attempted assassination of the dictator in the early 1980s, as well as his eventual fall, both incidents contributing to the creation of mass graves whose echoes are still felt today.

He further writes:

*"Like the extension of Al-Ghari Cemetery, stories and chapters extended,*
*grew, swelled, divided, branched, clashed, debated, interbred, conspired,*
*conflicted—and blood and ink spilt.*
*They carried the dead with candles and tears to Al-Ghari Cemetery."*

In this context, Al-Sayegh condenses history into its chapters and mutations, using verbal clauses—specifically the present tense to indicate the continuity of historical fragmentation, proliferation, contention, and ultimately, conflict and bloodshed. The culmination of these historical episodes is symbolised by Al-Ghari Cemetery, which stands as a metaphorical end to all such trajectories, just as it is the literal end of life.

In *Nard al-Nass*, these events constitute "a destabilised and threatening present that extended its impact even onto the 'text' itself, as the poet sought inspiration from multiple sources, attempting to capture other horizons. Throughout this search, one can detect artistic and psychological struggles that cast their shadows on the written text" [26].

Therefore, several sections of the text reveal a symbolic orientation toward self-enclosure, marked by motifs of isolation, alienation, disintegration, loss of freedom, and suppression, rendered through natural-industrial metaphors [5] as seen in the following passage [10]:

*"I am neither bored nor joyful,*
*nor am I angry with anyone.*
*I feel no desire to converse or quarrel in a bar, mosque, poetry reading, or ideological forum.*
*The pawns are all alike,*
*as are [their] conversations…*
*And I, staring at the chessboard of hope,*
*am not thinking of suicide, or of writing a poem against God or the government.*

*I have no intention of peeping beneath the steps of buses*
*at the intersection of their legs…*
*I will not say to another: my meaning is my death,*
*and my other is my hell and my heaven,*
*my madness, my garden, my jinn and my solitude.*
*All there is: I woke this morning—April 9, 2003,*

*at six twenty-six a.m. Big Ben time,*
*and I do not know if I am happy, drunk, hungry,*
*sad… or hopeless."*

This excerpt centres on the morning of April 9, 2003—the day the statue of the dictator was toppled in Firdos Square by American occupation forces. The poet lists a series of contradictions that reflect a state of disorientation: neither joy nor boredom, no sorrow or anger, and no desire for interaction or even rebellion. He rejects both suicide and divine protest, as well as any normal engagement with life. The mention of the mosque and the bar—symbolically opposite spaces—is deliberate: the mosque traditionally represents liberation from servitude and a site of spiritual rebellion against tyranny [16] while the bar stands for escapism and moral decay. The dual invocation of these spaces illustrates the ideological and emotional polarisation that characterised the post-regime moment. Thus, the poet resorts to a constellation of natural-industrial symbols to convey the magnitude of his inner fragmentation.

The poet relies on symbols drawn from nature, rich in semantic potential, to convey a range of diverse meanings and themes that function as an *objective correlative* for both the self and society. These symbols appear with multiple significations, facilitated by a text that is inherently open to multiplicity, full of gaps that prompt the reader to engage in a process of excavation for meanings that are perpetually unfolding and never entirely conclusive.

## 4. Conclusions

The study yielded a number of findings that underscore the significance of symbolic natural imagery in *Nard al-Nass* (*The Dice of the Text*). The most salient conclusions can be summarised as follows:

1. The natural symbols employed in *Nard al-Nass* are not presented merely as aesthetic elements; rather, the poet uses them as interpretive tools imbued with layered meanings related to identity, exile, and the self.
2. These symbols function as internal mirrors reflecting psychological alienation and existential fragmentation, through which the poet expresses the self's anxiety about the world and the Other.
3. The diversity of these natural symbols fosters semantic openness, endowing the text with both intellectual and aesthetic density. This enhances the reader's horizon of reception and lays the groundwork for a dynamic, open-ended reading.
4. The poet deploys familiar natural symbols—such as the apple, clouds, and rain—in unfamiliar contexts that disrupt their conventional meanings and imbue them with new, subversive connotations.
5. Nature, through its various symbolic manifestations, emerges as a partner to the poet: it moans, speaks, rages, pursues, and ultimately represents the poet's inner world more so than it reflects any external reality.

## References


[1] K. Y. Al-Zaydi, *Nature in the Holy Qur'an*. Baghdad: Dar al-Rashid Publishing, 1980.
[2] M. i. M. Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*. Beirut: Dār Ṣādir Entry, 1955.
[3] A. S. M. ʿ. Nawfal, *Nature poetry in Arabic literature*. Cairo: Misr Press, 1945.
[4] A. J. Al-Alaq, *On the modernity of the poetic text: Critical studies*. Baghdad: General Cultural Affairs House, 1990.
[5] Z. Mahjoub, "Meaning and text: From form to significance — A thematic study of 1960s Iraqi poetry," p. 235, 2024.
[6] H. A. Hamid, "Al-Tabi'a fi al-Shi'r al-'Iraqi al-Hadith fi al-Nisf al-Awwal min al-Qarn al-'Ishrin," vol. 109, no. 143, pp. 162-199, 1984.
[7] S. A. I. Al-Qurashi, "The physician, Nazik al-Mulla, and Badr Shuqair al-Sayyab," Dirasah Muwazana Unpublished Master's Thesis Iraqi University, 2012.
[8] Z. A. Hamza, "Description of nature in abbasid poetry: Kashajam paintings as a model," *Journal of the College of Basic Education for Educational and Human Sciences, University of Babylon*, vol. 35, pp. 850–872, 2017.
[9] S. Fadl, *The method of realism in literary creativity*. Cairo: General Egyptian Book Organization, 1978.
[10] A. Al-Sayegh, *Hamid al-Zaydi: Writer and activist executed by the criminal Ba'athist regime in the mid-1980s*. Kuwait: Al-Arabi Magazine, 2004.
[11] S. Y. Al-Tamimi, "The vocabulary of nature in the diwan of Kathir 'Izzah: A linguistic and lexical study," Unpublished Master's Thesis Al-Mustansiriya University, 2012.
[12] W. Munir, "Experimentation in the contemporary poem," *Fusul Journal*, vol. 1, p. 176, 1997.
[13] N. Hamdi and S. F. Dahkuri, "The symbol of nature in the resistance poetry of Buland al-haidari," *Journal of the College of Education for Human Sciences, University of Babylon*, vol. 38, p. 170, 2018.
[14] H. Siddiqi and J. Nassari, "Symbolic nature in the poetry of badr shakir al-sayyab and Nima Yushij," *Journal of Arabic Language and Literature Studies*, vol. 15, pp. 126–127, 2013.
[15] T. Al-Kubaisi, *Shajar al-Ghabah al-Hajari (Stone-Forest Tree): Critical writings on modern poetry*. Baghdad: Ministry of Culture & Arts / Dar al-Rashid Publishing, 1979.
[16] S. Karam, "Nature in modern Algerian poetry: The case of Ahmed Sahnoun," vol. 234, no. 237, pp. 256–257, 2021.
[17] N. Qasmi and S. Hosseini, "The semantic employment of natural symbols in the poetry of Adnan al-Sayegh," vol. 14, no. 132, pp. 134-137, 2018.

[18] ʿ. Al-Saʿidi, *Shiʻriyyat al-Yawmi: Shiʿr Adnan al-Sayegh — Dirāsah Fanniyya*. Baghdad: Vision Media, 2007.
[19] S. Rahi, "From Jisr al-Kufa to Asqa‘ al-‘Alam: Mahattat fi Tajribat al-Sha‘ir Adnan al-Sayegh," p. 8, n.d.
[20] J. J. Amin, "Transformations of the new text: An artistic-historical insight into the poetry of post-1970s generations in Iraq " p. 54, 2010.
[21] N. H. Al-Qaisi, *Al-Ṭabīʻa fī al-Shiʻr al-Jāhilī*. Baghdad: Dār al-Irshād, 1970.
[22] A. B. Mohammed, "Imagery in the realist trend in modern sudanese poetry: A stylistic study," PhD Dissertation, International Islamic University Islamabad, 2000.
[23] N. Ouda, *persuasive language: The symbolic confrontations between text and authority*. Beirut: Dar Kunuz al-Maʿrifa, 2018.
[24] A. I. a.-D. Al-Khatib, *The structure of the persona poem in modern iraqi poetry from the pioneer phase to 2000*. Beirut: Arab Scientific Publishers, 2015.
[25] ʿ. a.-D. Ismāʿīl, *The Arab poetic tradition: Its issues and artistic phenomena and its qualitative aspects*. Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1975.
[26] M. Mazloum, *Ḥaṭb Ibrāhīm aw al-Jīl al-Badawī: Shiʿr al-Thamānīnāt wa Ajyāl al-Dawla al-ʿIrāqiyya*. Damascus: Dar al-Takwīn for Printing, Publishing & Distribution, 2007.
[27] N. Auda, *Persuasive language: the symbolic confrontations between text and authority al-lugha al-muqnʿa: Al-muwājahat al-ramziyya bayn al-nass wal-sulta*. Beirut: Dar Kunuz al-Maʿrifa, 2018.
[28] I. Hawi, *Nature and time, or the symbols of life and death in the poetry of Abū al-Qāsim al-Shabbī*. Tunisia: Majallat al-Fikr, 1975.
[29] H. Al-Khaqani, "Nasheej al-‘Ibad in the land of al-sawad: The tragedies of war and the frost of exile in the poetry of adnan al-sayegh," p. 93, 2023.
[30] M. I. Mubarok, M. Rochmanti, M. Yusuf, and M. Thaha, "The anti-inflammatory effect of ACE-I/ARBs drug on hs-CRP and HDL-cholesterol in CKD patient," *Indian Journal of Forensic Medicine & Toxicology*, vol. 15, no. 3, pp. 3743-3750, 2021.
[31] A. H. Jalloud, *Poetic generations from the post-pioneers to 1990 in Iraqi critical studies*. Baghdad: College of Arts, Al-Mustansiriya University, 2010.