

Ecological Aspects in the Poem of Exile: Saadi Yusuf's Poetry as a Model

Omayma A. AlRawashdeh

Department of Allied Sciences, Al-Ahliyya Amman University, Amman, Jordan

Abstract—The ecological aspects in Yusuf's poetry are important because they reveal how the poet establishes a perception of exile through his relationship with nature. This study aims to explore these aspects as presented in the poetry of this Iraqi poet through: Detecting the most important mechanisms embodied in environmental imagination. Illustrating how the incorporated symbols reflect the nature of the relationship that links the poet to his surroundings as manifested in the experience of exile. Unfolding the poet's concern with ecological issues to create an awareness of nature, which helps protect it from damage. The study poses the following crucial question: How does the poetry of exile harness the environmental imagination to express an exile experience that has existential and ecological dimensions? To explore how the environment in the selected texts was used to reflect the poet's experience of exile, the researcher adopted a descriptive-analytical approach. She also made use of some eco-critical essays that helped reveal how important the environment is. Study results unveiled that Yusuf's exile poetry has ecological qualities that convey awareness, values, and concerns of nature. Yusuf could achieve environmental imagination by using symbols from nature, combining reality with imagination, poetic artistry with the philosophy of vision, and the profound meaning of the environment's message. The study concludes that the exile poetry of Yusuf can serve as a model for ecological reading, as it relates human suffering to nature's concerns. It emphasizes that ecocriticism has to be employed in analyzing contemporary Arabic texts.

Index Terms—ecocriticism, environmental imagination, environmental symbol, personifying nature, simile, sustainability

I. INTRODUCTION

The poem of exile is a prominent phenomenon in contemporary poetry in which poets who were exiled or moved away from their homelands because of political, social, or economic circumstances, expressed their individual or collective experiences in exile. Therefore, it incorporates several meanings of humanity and profound existential issues such as alienation, nostalgia, identity, freedom, and belonging. It might reflect philosophical contemplation and an endeavor to reshape the meaning of human existence in the face of loss and separation. Therefore, the self is torn between two places: the place of memory and nostalgia, represented by the absent homeland, and the place of alienation and estrangement, represented by lived reality (Ibrahim, 2016, (7), p. 13).

The Iraqi poet Saadi Yusuf is one of the most prominent poets whose experience of exile greatly influenced his poetry (AlRawashdeh, 2025, pp. 1157-1158). The theme of exile occupied a vast space in his poetic works, spanning about seven decades of creative output. Thus, it became one of the aspects with which his poetry is distinguished. Therefore, some critics consider him to be the real founder of the modern Arabic exile poem. Through him, the notion of exile matured and evolved over the successive decades he lived outside his homeland (Khourani, 2007, p. 13).

Because of his revolutionary ideas and political activities, Saadi Yusuf spent most of his life in exile, moving, through a variety of Arab and European cities: Beirut, Damascus, Algeria, Sidi Bel Abbes, Aden, Sanaa, Amman, Tunis, Moscow, Nicosia, Belgrade, Paris, and London. Therefore, he might be the Iraqi poet with the longest experience of exile or of enforced living outside his homeland. (Khourani, 2007, p. 23)

Khourani believes that,

exile provided him with diverse environments through which he could develop his poetry, successively, without clamor, through direct contact with various cultural sources. About migration and its impact on his poetry, Saadi Yusuf said: Migration was a salvation, a means of preserving the creator's independence and freedom. It saved me the horror of distortion and kissing the tyrants' boots. It gave me the chance to explore new cultural and poetic sources. It also broadened my vision and illuminated various landscapes of people, cities, and civilizations for me. Yet, in return, it prevented me from intimate touching of the roots, which I used to enjoy before. (Khourani, 2007, pp. 23-24)

As a result of this rich cultural tapestry, Saadi Yusuf transcended the political dimension of exile in his poetry to the human-ecological domain, where the existential concern of exiled intertwines with its cosmic counterpart. This can be achieved by protecting the Earth, which is the space that all living beings share. Here, human conditions intersect with images of the environment, which become the objective correlative to the exiled self, as both share suffering and unity of fate.

Saadi Yusuf's openness to environmental vision reconnects humans to their natural surroundings despite the geographical separation from their homeland.

This openness distinguishes his poetry, as it shows how the Arab poet engages with the most pressing environmental issue of the time. This is why Yusuf addresses such an issue from an ecological viewpoint.

Therefore, examining the ecological features of his poetry is crucial to understanding how exile shifted from existential estrangement to a communication with nature and the cosmos, revealing a poetic awareness of the environment.

The study's statement of the problem highlights how the ecological aspects manifested in Saadi Yusuf's poetry, particularly in the context of exile, where elements of nature environment interact with the poet's human experience.

Several questions emerge from this problem, which are:

- How does the poet's exile poem harness images of nature to convey an exile experience with existential and ecological dimensions?
- What kind of relationship between the exiled and nature does Yusuf's poetry have?
- Does the environment in his poetry serve as a descriptive background, or does it represent an active identity that reflects the poet's awareness of his surroundings?
- How does nature become a means of resisting alienation and affirming the sense of belonging in his poetry?

The study aims to investigate the ecological aspects of the poem of exile in the poetry of the Iraqi poet, Saadi Yusuf, through:

- Examining environmental imagination with its numerous manifestations.
- Explaining the symbolic implications and ecological intentions the poem of exile encompasses, which embody the relationship between the human and his new environment (reflection of the environment upon the self and the extent to which it interacts with nature's system), in exile.
- Highlighting the poet's concern about environmental issues and establishing an ecological awareness that calls for preserving nature and protecting it from damage.

Due to the nature of the subject, it was divided into two parts: the theoretical, embedded in the introduction, where the most critical terms that constitute the theoretical framework of poetry's ecological aspects were tackled. The empirical part tackles the environmental imagination in Yusuf's poetry of exile. The two parts conclude with the study's most important findings, some recommendations, and a list of references.

Many primary studies in the field of ecocriticism enriched this study by providing a theoretical framework for identifying the concept of this type of criticism and illustrating how to use its mechanisms to analyze poetic texts to uncover their potential environmental content. The foremost of these studies are:

In a study by Branch (1994), the researcher discussed ecocriticism as a recent movement in literary studies that emerged from the interaction between ecological philosophy and literature. This criticism studies the relationship between literature and environment. It does not consider literature to be just an independent human expression, but a part of an integral environmental system. Drawing on the concept of ecological philosophy, Branch points out that ecocriticism seeks to challenge human centrism by reconsidering the relationship between humans and nature.

This criticism calls for granting nature an intrinsic value independent from its benefits to humans. For him, ecocriticism affects the creativity of literary texts, analyses, and teaching. Nature is no longer considered the background of events but an essential element in the buildup and meanings of texts.

Branch, in the article, seeks to establish the concept that ecocriticism not only analyzes literary texts but also aims to change the way we think about the environment and our relation to it. He proposed a new perspective on the interaction between literature and the environment. In this respect, he was affected by the latest environmental perspective that calls for abandoning the traditional model, which considers the human the center of the universe, and adopting a model based on integration among all living organisms instead.

The study by Buell (1996) calls for rereading American literary heritage, especially the works of Thoreau, to understand how the environment is presented in literary texts. He urges closer attention to environmental texts, especially environmental nonfiction, in literary studies, as integral to cultural heritage.

Buell sheds light on the contradictions between love of nature in American cultural discourse and the excessive consumption of resources in reality. Buell also highlights how environmental imagination can be impacted by gender perception. In general, the book is a form of ecocriticism that seeks to establish equilibrium between ecological texts and history-based cultural content. Therefore, once literature is reread with an eco-centric eye, one can recognize the complex and often contradictory relationship between humans and nature.

As for the poem of exile in Saadi Yusuf's poetry, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, she did not find any study that addresses it from an ecocritical perspective, despite its environmental orientation and the profound feeling the poet bears toward the environment and its issues. Therefore, this research might help fill a gap in this field and reveal the environmental vision embodied in Yusuf's poetry of exile.

Studying the ecological aspects of poetry necessitates explaining the key terms that constitute the theoretical framework scholars use when approaching texts in this type of environmental study that deals with literature from an ecological perspective. These terms include the following:

A. *Environmental Literary Criticism*

Ecocriticism:

It is a branch of literary criticism that is concerned with "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (Garrard, 2004, p. 3), examining how nature is depicted in literary texts and how the relationship between

humans and nature is expressed. He did that to uncover the manifestations of environmental awareness in these texts and to interpret them in a way that fosters a sense of ecological belonging. In doing so, he reveals the moral responsibility that humans must have in dealing with their environment, both influencing and being influenced by it (Muhammed, 2022, p. 458).

This critical approach emerged in the late 20th century as a response to growing awareness of global environmental crises that threaten the natural balance of our planet, such as pollution, global warming, and biodiversity loss:

This critique is part of green cultural studies that began earlier, guided by ecological philosophies that called for reconsidering the relationship between the human and natural environment systems to foster a sense of belonging to them, to confront human dominance and exploitation. (Muhammed, 2022, p. 461)

Ecocriticism considers literature to be a medium for understanding and perhaps even reshaping the relationship between humans and nature. "It combines two distinct and different fields: environmental science and literary criticism, to restore Earth's flourishing, which was lost through human exploitation" (Tosic, 2018, p. 329).

The term first appeared through the American critic William Rueckert in his 1978 essay "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism." It then evolved into an independent critical field by establishing the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE) in 1992 in America, along with the publication of its journal, ASLE. Thus, the approach became institutionalized and academically recognized (Hamdawi, 2012).

Given the relatively recent emergence of this critical approach, various definitions have been proposed to clarify the term (ecocriticism). For example:

Ecocritic Cheryll Glotfelty offers the following straightforward definition of the emerging critical approach: Ecocriticism takes as its subject the interconnections between human culture and the material world, between the human and the nonhuman. Ecological literary criticism is that subset of ecocriticism that focuses specifically upon the cultural elements, language, and literature, and their relationship to the environment; it is a critical stance that one foot in literature and the other on land. (Branch, 1994)

Branch (1994) provides a more detailed definition, shedding light on the methodological shift that ecocriticism introduces to literary studies; it redirects interest away from social relationships between humans and the natural environment.

Thus, according to Branch, ecocriticism emphasizes that the human is a part of the overall ecosystem, not an independent individual who can act freely.

Such an approach makes the place transcend the concept of the backdrop as a setting for events, becoming an aspect of belonging or alienation.

Therefore, ecocriticism views literature as a reflection of the relationship between humans and nature and proposes an alternative conception of that relationship.

It emphasizes that nature is not merely a secondary issue, but an entity with an aesthetic and cognitive value on par with that of humans in literature. Thus, ecocriticism considers the literary text a structure deeply rooted in a natural context. It reflects the writer's or character's embodiment in the context and evokes awareness of the spiritual and moral values associated with humans' interactions with their environment.

It might be said that this critical trend not only examines texts but also questions the human stance toward nature:

It is clear that every ecocriticism must discuss environmental consciousness, paying attention to the positive values when criticizing the environment. It should examine the aesthetic sense in tackling manifestations and elements of nature by disclosing the environmental vision of nature's elements. Everything that is represented environmentally and aesthetically in literature falls within ecocriticism's scope of interest. (Muhammad, 2022, p. 462)

B. *Environmental Literature*

In the introduction to his book (*The Environmental Imagination*), Lawrence Buell identifies environmental text through four standards, which, from his perspective, constitute components of the text with environmental orientation. He considers the environmental text a literary or artistic work in which humans and nonhuman organisms are portrayed as active participants in the narrative or intellectual structure, where human history and natural history intertwine. Thus, non-human interests are recognized and valued. Therefore, the text raises ethical questions about the human impact on the environment, offering a vision of nature as a dynamic, ever-changing system rather than a static backdrop for events (Buell, 1996, p. 7).

Adopting such a vision opens a new field for literature that trespasses human centrism. It makes the reader better aware of the mutual relationship between him and the natural surroundings.

The Russian writer Postnikov (2001) wrote an article on ecological poetry that aligns with the new ecological values. He mentioned the following five qualities that distinguish this kind from other types:

"(1) Feeling of enchantment, (2) emphasis on spiritual, rather than sensuous, (3) simplicity and spontaneity, (4) philosophical depth, (5) rhythm, "attuned" to eternity" (Postnikov, 2001).

Badran (2015) affirms that the concept of environmental literature requires the writer to have a sense of the environment in which he is a part. Such a feeling makes us overlook literature that just describes nature, without trying to understand it, engage in a dialogue with it, or be aware of it (p. 196).

Given the previous standards and privileges, one can say that environmental literature is that which portrays the relationship between the human and physical environment, reflecting the aesthetic and moral interaction with it. Its goal is to reinforce environmental awareness through an implicit critique of destructive behaviors. It is an indirect call to preserve the environment and interact with it as if it were a living being. It also calls for getting along with humans' natural surroundings.

Any literary discourse that transcends mere environmental description and the aesthetic use of nature can be considered part of environmental literature. Thus, it becomes an intellectual and epistemic tool for diagnosing the environmental imbalance caused by unsustainable human behavior. In doing so, environmental literature plays an active role in raising awareness of environmental dangers. Thus, it seeks to foster collective global awareness that helps correct the natural system and preserve life on Earth (Al-Sultani et al., 2021, p. 20).

Finally, it should be noted that the environmental literary text combines an aesthetic dimension with an environmental message. Thus, it challenges the literary creator to balance these two dimensions lest the text become a direct didactic discourse.

C. *Environmental Imagination*

Environmental imagination is a critical term widely used in environmental literary studies, especially in the practical tradition. Scholars collectively agree that the American critic Lawrence Buell was the first to coin the term in his book: (*The Environmental Imagination*), where he explores "how the physical environment shapes imagination" (Tosic, 2018, p. 331).

Buell believes that the contemporary environmental crisis is also an imaginative one (the way we imagine nature). Dealing with it depends on finding better ways to depict nature and the human relationship with it. He said:

If, as environmental philosophers contend, western metaphysics and ethics need revision before we can address today's environmental problems, then environmental crisis involves a crisis of the imagination, the amelioration of which depends on finding better ways of imaging nature and humanity's relation to it. (Buell, 1996, p. 2)

To show that environmental imagination is not an aesthetic luxury but an essential condition for restoring our relation with nature, Buell focuses on how we perceive nature, as that determines how we deal with it practically and morally. He says:

How we imagine a thing, true or false, affects our conduct toward it, the conduct of nations as well as persons. Walden Woods in Concord, Massachusetts, has become a legal battleground because Thoreau's writings have led many to perceive it as a sacred space that should be kept in its "natural" state. (Buell, 1996, p. 3)

From his viewpoint, the environmental imagination that achieves real environmental change requires rethinking the primary literary concepts of representation, metaphor, reference, and characterization: "I shall argue below that environmental interpretation requires us to rethink our assumptions about the nature of representation, reference, metaphor, characterization, personae, and canonicity" (Buell, 1996, p. 2).

From the preceding discussion, it seems that environmental imagination for Buell stands for: the literary and cultural ability to represent nature and human relationships with it, using methods that uncover and address environmental crises by reviewing images, symbols, and inherited concepts that have shaped our understanding of nature. This can be achieved by inventing new images and representations of nature, in which imagination becomes a critical and moral tool for reconstructing our awareness and behavior toward the natural world. Nature should not be merely used as an embellishment of the text with natural images.

D. *Environmental Symbol and Personifying Nature*

Environmental symbolism and personifying nature are the foremost manifestations of environmental imagination in Yusuf's poem of exile. This is what the researcher will elaborate on in the analysis, but the two terms should be initially explained.

(a). *Environmental Symbol*

It is a distinctive form of literary symbolism that invests elements of nature (plants, animals, water, climate...) with the exact mechanisms by which literary symbols in general are crafted: allusion, compression, displacement, and multiple meanings. It is distinctive for directing its semantic energy to express the relationship between human beings and the environment by considering nature as a semantic center and a partner in meaning-making. In doing so, it achieves the symbol's poetic dimension on the one hand and, at the same time, the objectives of ecocriticism by fostering a collaborative vision between humanity and nature, calling for the preservation of ecological balance, and questioning modes of attrition and pollution.

The environmental symbol in exile poetry has a double function. it incorporates the relationship between humans and nature, thereby highlighting the environmental equilibrium that ecocriticism calls for, while also tackling the existential dimension of exiled people. Therefore, nature's elements, such as trees, birds, water, and seasons, become symbols with double meanings. On one hand, they signal the environment, and on the other, they serve as mirrors that reflect the exile's own experience of alienation, nostalgia, and loss. Here, nature is not merely used as a neutral background, but a living entity that internalizes the exile's emotions and reflects his anxiety and nostalgia for his homeland. In this sense, the environmental symbol in exile texts becomes a vortex for the aesthetic, ecological, and existential dimensions. Thus, it

gives the text a profound artistic dimension that relates the individual's personal alienation to the universal concern of safeguarding the Earth, the space shared by all beings.

(b). Personifying Nature

The term is one concept in ecocriticism. It combines the rhetorical dimension of personification, which portrays the non-human as if it possesses human traits such as emotions, will, or the ability to act (Qutub, 2004, p. 73), with the environmental dimension that respects and protects nature's entity.

Blending the rhetorical and environmental dimensions is, according to eco-critics, a condition for including personification within what is known as environmental imagination, so that it functions aesthetically and morally to the fullest (Buell, 1996, pp. 180-218).

Thus, from an ecocritical perspective, personifying nature implies transforming it into a living entity that shares humans' feelings and actions. Such a thing not only adds a persuasive rhetorical and aesthetic dimension to literary discourse but also opens the door for readers to read it eco-critically. Thus, nature's personifying becomes a tool of awareness and dialogue with nature. Hence, it is no longer considered an object for exploitation, but rather as an existential partner.

Thus, personification in exile poetry goes beyond the rhetorical role it plays, in which nature is considered an inanimate, exploited object, to a living entity with its own rights and values. Thus, personification enhances awareness of the importance of nature.

The descriptive-analytical method the study used combined description with a deep analysis of nature's components to uncover their implications, as manifested in exile poetry texts. It also used ecocritical principles to uncover the hidden environmental vision in these texts, showing how the environment impacted the poet's imagination and the means he employed to highlight his relationship with it. The texts chosen were those that reflected the poet's experience in exile, whether affecting or being affected, and that reveal an environmental orientation. They all belong to the collection of poems he created in the various places of exile.

II. DISCUSSION

After discussing the concept of environmental imagination in the theoretical section, the researcher started analyzing the poetic texts that reflect such a phenomenon in the poet's experience. In the analysis, she will show how nature is dealt with as a living being that interacts with humans.

Thus, its elements become means of expressing the poet's ideas and feelings through using symbols, personifications, and similes.

The researcher will also discuss the semantic and technical impacts of such methods to unveil the environmental vision the poet presents and how that relates to the experience of exile.

A. Environmental Symbolism

In the exile poem, Yusuf relies on environmental symbolism to express existential issues of exile; elements of nature serve as icons that reflect feelings of alienation, exile, non-belonging, and loss of identity:

Thus, nature is personified and imbued with the same emotions and feelings that haunt the poet's own self. Therefore, it might be gripped by nostalgia, alienation, and the anguish of estrangement. It might be overcome by despair and frustration, or might hold the power to endure and suffer. It might also become one of the significant existential meanings shaping human identity and giving it its humanity. (AlRawashdeh, 2022, p. 401)

These symbols carry various implications that produce levels of meaning that make the poem an emotional experience, transcending personal feeling to a more general human sense of estrangement.

Through symbols, the poet can reveal his environmental awareness, an integral consciousness in which issues of alienation and displacement intertwine with the sustainability of the earth and nature.

Among the symbols that embody the feeling of alienation in exile and reflect the impact of environmental exile on nature is the Irish rose symbol:

No flower by the name of Irish Rose ever blooms as we know
or read about it...
Yet, there it sits, in a corner of my garden
(If I may call these mere four yards a garden.... I shall lose nothing!
It has been with me since I first settled here three years ago, in this secluded rustic haven.
And, so I tend to it
water it...
(every evening as it has decreed)
Waiting for it to unfurl a rose or a promise of a rose,
(Which is in Basra called Junbutha)
The effort faltered!
The effort faltered!
People here say:

The Irish rose thinks
 The plant is in London.
 Not in Dublin...

So, how, then, will it be with Basra? (Yusuf, 2014, (5), pp. 133-134)

The Irish rose that does not flourish despite constant care becomes a symbol of the poet himself, a soul in exile that cannot fully flourish except in its own native cultural soil. The plant's failure to flower despite the devoted tending symbolizes the difficulty of integration, or the inability to develop a true identity and cultural flourishing outside the original environment.

Emphasizing that the rose is in London, not Dublin, reflects a feeling of non-belonging. The new environment does not secure the proper conditions for spiritual and cultural growth:

Exile reinforces the feeling of non-belonging; it is not merely a strange place, but a place where practicing belonging falters, as it is disruptive and lacks intimacy. It harbors a repellent force for the relationships of the exiled person, which become overshadowed by sorrow and shallow participation. There has always been a rift, a clash between the exiled and the place to which they moved. The attempts to reshape themselves to meet the demands and conditions of exile have rarely succeeded. (Ibrahim, 2016, (7), p. 15)

Environmental imagination in the text is manifested in the human qualities attributed to it: "Here, people say: The Irish rose thinks..."

This personification reflects a hidden awareness of nature, an environmental perspective that considers it a partner in the human experience. The plant that thinks stands for the nature that cooperates or resists, depending on its environmental conditions. The text here calls for reconsidering humans' relationship with nature, indicating that it should not be viewed as a source of beauty but as a living entity with its own memory and conditions. Thus, the Irish rose that thinks it is in London may suggest that an identity has been uprooted from its original environment, so it needs to contemplate before blooming. This is quite similar to ecosystems that require equilibrium to thrive.

Thus, the Irish rose did not blossom because it was uprooted from its original environment, exactly like the exiled poet who was uprooted from his cultural and geographical milieu.

Sustainability in the poem is reflected through attempts to maintain the plant's life in the new harsh environment. Within this scope lies the attempt to create a nurturing environment in exile, by calling a mere small space a garden. However, this environment is artificial and insufficient.

Failing to bloom in the new environment shows that sustainability cannot be maintained through individual efforts alone; rather, it requires an integrated ecosystem built on coordination and collaboration among all stakeholders. This aligns with the vision of the United Nations through the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all member states to achieve a more sustainable future by 2030. The Sustainable Development Goals represent a comprehensive framework that connects environmental, economic, and social dimensions within a unified and globally integrated system based on partnership and collective action (Elnaklah et al., 2025).

Through environmental symbolism, Yusuf's poetry of exile presents a particular concept of "belonging" based on the idea that the estranged person takes nature as a substitute homeland, transcending geographical and political boundaries. Humans' relationship with nature as a substitute homeland is demonstrated in Yusuf's poem (The First Language):

Seven green-feathered parrots sat on two branches of a tree,
 lonely, and forlorn
 standing in the middle of the meadow...
 slipping into my home
 through a window that knows how to open it, even if unseen.
 Seven parrots in the open morning
 A blue sky
 And a faint breeze
 Nobody has awoken yet,
 No sound was echoed...
 Those seven parrots removed, like a tattered garment, the language of the human cage,
 To fly far away... (Yusuf, 2014, (5), p. 417)

The seven parrots in the text are described as (free). They are liberated, overriding the cage's boundaries and rationally taking the tree as a secure haven. This is an environmental symbol of the exiled person who seeks freedom from the shackles of exile: cultural, political, and social. The poet here makes the natural environment a haven for tranquility, a substitute for belonging and freedom that dissipates the feelings of estrangement, alienation, and inadaptability that shackle the self. "A blue sky and a faint breeze".

The poem's title, (The First Language) alludes to nature's language that was not influenced by humans. In rejecting humans' language of the cage, the parrot goes back to nature's language, which is free and sustainable. In this respect, the experience of exile can be a form of rediscovering nature's language, emancipated from the dominance and cultural usurpation by that of humans.

From the viewpoint of ecocriticism, nature can be a substitute for belonging. Therefore, the parrots here symbolize the exiled self that looks for a language that is more credible and strongly related to nature's language. The lonely, forlorn tree symbolizes human alienation in exile.

Environmental imagination is identified through personification, which presents birds as conscious beings that protest, perceive, and think. They reject human shackles and behavior that limits their freedom. At the same time, they know how to choose the appropriate time to cast off these shackles, when humans are still not awoken. "No sound was echoed" The cage in exile's experience may symbolize constraints on the exiled (Shalabi & Abu Amrieh, 2024, p. 140). Birds' awareness represents the potential for rebellion and rejection of those shackles.

Personification also appears in the meadow depicted as someone who knows how to open the window and step into the poet's home, suggesting nature's ability to interact and communicate with humans, "in the middle of the meadow, slipping into my home through a window it knows how to open even if unseen".

In the text, there is an implicit critique of human centrality and superiority in the right to dominate other creatures. This is reflected in satirizing human behavior toward those creatures, especially in confining them for their own comfort, believing that other creatures exist solely to serve their well-being at the cost of the creatures' natural freedom "Those seven parrots cast off, like a tattered garment, the human cage language to fly far away".

Comparing Cage's language to the tattered garment underscores an awareness of the need to cast off the dominance and constraints that humans impose on other creatures. These constraints are nothing more than outdated values that caused significant damage to the ecosystem.

Such a perception aligns with Eco philosophy: "According to these Eco philosophers, anthropocentrism has caused unjust domination and exploitation of other members of the ecosystemic community" (Branch, 1994).

Thus, there is a call from Eco philosophy and post-structural theory to,
decentering of the human subject as an affirmation and as a 'liberation of life' which results in a sense of interrelationship rather than a pattern of domination. Ecological egalitarianism, then, may be seen as a kind of contextualist discourse with nature. (Branch, 1994)

B. Personifying Nature

In the exile poem, Saadi Yusuf personified nature by attributing human qualities to it that reflect human feelings and experiences, like rights and awareness.

From Yusuf's perspective, personifying nature was not merely an aesthetic tool used to present a natural scenery. Instead, it went beyond that, becoming a mirror that reflects how humans perceive the world around them. Thus, it unveils his profound relationship, emotional interaction, and responsiveness to its shifts and transformations. Nature is no longer considered a silent, functionless entity or a background, but an active partner in human experience.

According to ecocriticism, which is concerned with the relation between literature and environment, such an approach can be a means of reconnecting humans with nature and an endeavor to bridge the rift imposed by exile, modernism, and compelling separation from one's homeland.

This can be taken as an awareness of the environment that goes beyond material boundaries to include spiritual and ethical dimensions. Therefore, personification in exile poetry not only reflects humans' enchantment with nature but also reveals their understanding of how it influences their lives and their responsibility to it.

The researcher will discuss one example of nature that Yusuf dealt with in his poetry of exile. She will analyze such an example from an ecocritical perspective to show how personifying nature can enhance environmental awareness, catalyzing the reader to reconsider their relationship with the environment.

Among the examples of Yusuf's poetry in which he deals with nature as a living, active being, pulsating with emotions:

As dawn rises
The lake comes to me, still drowsy
Draped in a gown of diaphanous mist
The lake carries its trees toward my window
And the pewter gleam....
Time has elapsed for the birds that awoke before us.
The road that crosses the village was jammed with cars.
The lake was quiet
It will remove a gown of the diaphanous mist
And draws nearer, little by little, by little....

Will it hold me
Or will I hold it
Or shall we try to be again? (Yusuf, 2014, (5), pp. 412-413)

Personification is clearly demonstrated through presenting the lake as if it were a human being capable of rising, putting on and taking off clothes, carrying elements of nature, moving, and communicating. It looks like a mollycoddle woman, woken, but still drowsy: "Coming to the lake, but still drowsy". She came wearing the diaphanous mist like a garment as

if it were preparing itself for a new day. The mist might be the objective correlative for the silky, fine dress that women usually put on when they want to appear in full adornment: "Draped in a gown of diaphanous mist".

The lake also appears as if it were an active person moving toward the window, carrying elements of nature as a gift for whoever wants to communicate with it: "the lake carries its trees toward my window".

The emotional and human dimension is revealed in the sentence: "She will remove a gown of the diaphanous mist". This image depicts a woman revealing her true self to her lover. The diaphanous mist becomes a kind of veil the lake hides behind, revealing its true beauty, just as a woman might shyly or excitedly conceal her charms.

The lake removing its gown is analogous to the moment of fidelity, temptation, and love that the beloved discloses to her lover.

Personifying the lake here turns it into an intimate beloved rather than just a charming scene. Thus, the personification reinforces the relationship between humans and nature by turning it into mutual love: "Will it hold me, or will I hold it?". Such words constitute a kind of dialogue in which humans and nature exchange roles, making it difficult to distinguish who communicates with whom. This dialogue reflects the harmony that must be established between nature and humans, rather than an exploitative stance toward it.

Considering the lake a living being, the central character in the text, and the intimate personal feeling toward it, remind us of the relationship between Thoreau and the Walden Pond,

the author establishes an extraordinary personal tie with the pond. He writes of it as his "neighbor", his "great bed-fellow", his soul-mate in its isolation, himself feeling "no lonely any more" than it: "What company has that lonely lake, I pray?" (Buell, 1996, p. 208)

The identification between him and the pond becomes apparent when he uses it as a symbol of his ideal self: "Walden serves as a multipurpose symbol: of steadfastness, calm, purity, and, most importantly, of the speaker's own better self, his soul's ideal" (Buell, 1996, p. 208).

Thoreau sees that: "Sympathy with nature is evidence of perfect health, and further that to ensure health, a man's relation to Nature must come very near to a personal one" (Buell, 1996, p. 209).

C. *Simile*

Saadi Yusuf uses simile in the exile poem to create a vivid picture that links natural elements to human feelings, consolidating environmental and aesthetic awareness in the reader.

In the poem (The Blind Pig's Restaurant) from the collection of poems: (New York Poems), he says:

The Irish bartender dressed in black said:
We are here, Irish
Irish Americans,
I am Irish...
I asked her: Will you visit your country this year?
She flustered like a severed branch,
The Irish bartender said ...
I do not understand what you mean...
And I, too, do not understand
When you say:
won't you visit your country this year? (Yusuf, 2014, (5), p. 353)

In this section of the poem, the poet likens the Irish bartender who lives in America and flustered when he asked about the possibility of visiting her country to a severed branch. This symbolizes the living being that has been separated from its homeland. Such an image reflects the state of loss and alienation caused by separation from her origin. The Irish bartender lives in America, but she is not fully American, nor is she entirely linked to Ireland anymore. Thus, the bartender here is analogous to the tree that was uprooted from its natural environment and left rootless. Nature, in this case, is not considered an embellishment but a means of expressing feelings. Just as the severed branch loses its vitality and slowly fades away, the bartender loses a part of herself due to separation from her homeland. Resembling the flustered bartender to the severed branch suggests a kind of tension and fluttering, similar to the branch's trembling of its uprooting the moment before it falls. Such a thing reflects the sudden anxiety that the bartender felt at hearing the question. The poet disclosed this emotional disturbance through a vivid botanical image. Thus, the scene is presented in a more vivid and impactful way, he takes: "The severed branch as a symbol of a person who was forced to live under foreign skies for years" (Khourani, 2007, p. 103).

From the perspective of environmental imagination, one can see that a simile reflects the profound relation between humans and nature, in which the nature becomes an extension of human identity and an expression of psychological and existential situations. Attributing an emotional quality to the environment catalyzes the recipient to contemplate nature's beauty and significance, eventually enhancing a sense of responsibility toward it.

Yusuf, in the poem of exile, frequently associates simile with environmental memory. Examples of that are explicitly stated in the poem: (I will wait), from the collection of poems entitled: (Poems of the Public Garden):

"And this river
This roaring river
The plunging

Raging like a bull....
 Will it not calm down so that we gather shells from its bed
 And hear a song from a nymph?" (Yusuf, 2014, (5), p. 461)

The poet likens the tumultuous river with its sweeping movement to a raging bull that cannot be tamed.

The simile here combines both nature's extraordinary power and the tense relationship between humans and nature. Comparing the river to a bull deprives it of serenity and vitality, making it a ferocious beast, not a friend. Such a repellent force endangers human stability and interaction with nature. The bull symbolizes the unbridled words; it symbolizes an imbalanced nature, the force of nature. In other words, it symbolizes the imbalanced and incongruous nature.

Nature's violence, gathering shells (symbols of fertility and life), and communicating with nature (hearing a song from a nymph) represent a far-fetched hope that signals the death of environmental imagination.

Examining the preceding image reveals that the poet's imagination retains an ecological memory. In this poem, there is an implicit comparison between the river of exile and that of the homeland.

Exile River	Homeland River
Tumultuous.	Habitable.
A place for fear and seclusion.	A place for meditation and waiting.
Ambiguous and nameless.	Named and celebrated.
Aggressive and unfriendly, void of any intimacy.	Intimate.
Does not allow sitting, enjoying its hidden treasures, or listening to a tale, but forces humans to run away.	Encourages sitting at its banks, taking its treasures, and listening to tales.
Water does not sing, have treasures, or give, but sweeps.	Water sings, rich with treasures, and gives.

Although nature in exile is hostile, repulsive, and non-cooperative, the poet still loves to reconnect with it. This reveals that he possesses ecological awareness that yet compels him to engage in dialogue with cruel nature. He doesn't try to withdraw from it, but instead tries to draw closer to it through imagination, tranquility and heedfulness. "Will it not calm down so that we gather shells from its bed and hear a song from a nymph?"

The query "Will it not calm down?" is addressed to the tumultuous river, but in fact it is a request for the river to subside, allowing a chance to ponder and listen. The query here implicitly echoes an inner feeling to create a relationship with the new environment.

The poet's desire to gather shells from the riverbed reflects a willingness to delve deep into the environment to find a meaning or an echo of that in this life. Thus, the poet's focus shifts from external nature to the deeper meanings hidden within it.

Listening to nature is one manifestation of awareness of it. It is one means of creating a relationship between humans and the natural world, in which nature is treated as a living entity worthy of listening to.

The environmental awareness of the Iraqi poet is not just a nostalgic feeling toward the rivers of Iraq, but a real attempt to create a relationship with the new environment of the reconciliation that he was after.

The excerpt can be considered a nostalgia for nature, in which memory longs for the time when nature speaks, chants, and whispers (AlTarawneh, 2020).

III. CONCLUSION

The researcher came up with specific results outlined in the following:

- Saadi Yusuf's exile poem is an eco-literary text that conveys a profoundly sensitive awareness of the ecosystem that embodies nature's values and concerns.

- The environmental imagination is achieved in the exile poem through the use of symbols and images drawn from nature. The poem blends the real with the imaginative, uniting poetic artistry with the philosophy of vision and depth of the environmental message.

- Environmental symbolism, personification, and similes that draw one or both of their elements from nature are the most important aspects of this kind of poetry.

- The interaction between the environmental and existential concerns was revealed through symbolism, which played a pivotal role in the existential concern of the exile and that of the environment. The human exile and the environmental one were both expressed simultaneously by the poet. He used a symbolic language that unified personal emotion with cosmic awareness, presenting his vision on alienation and the search for belonging.

The poet balanced the exiled's attempt to free himself from ties of exile and the rejection of other beings being subjected to human dominance. This unveils the strong relationship between humans and nature as well as the unity of their destinies.

- Environmental symbolism reinforces respect for nature, being addressed as if it were a living being with rights and conditions that should be revered. Such a vision aligns with ecological philosophy that calls for the elimination of human centrism.

- Personification creates a living being from nature with whom the human communicates as an existing partner, not as a source of exploitation. Such an approach reinforces the idea that humans and nature are integrated, existing within an interconnected ecosystem.

- Similes unveiled an environmental memory pulsating with nostalgia for the original environment, with a strong desire for reconciliation and coexistence with the new environment.

- The poet highly values natural relationships over social ones. He believes in merging with nature rather than devaluing it. This is manifested in the positive impact nature has on humans: a field for contemplation and philosophical thinking, a source of inspiration, a close friend, and a haven for the exiled.

The study concludes by considering Yusuf's exile poetry as a good model for ecological reading, which connects human suffering with environmental concerns. It confirms that ecocriticism should be used in analyzing contemporary literary Arabic texts, as the ecological reading highlights a different impact from traditional exile studies by shifting the focus from narratives of alienation and separation to the dynamics of interaction and integration within the environment of exile. Rather than limiting the analysis to feelings of loss and displacement, this approach demonstrates how individuals reconstruct their relationship with the new place through adaptation to its natural and social elements, developing a renewed ecological sensibility grounded in participation and gradual belonging.

The researcher recommends the following:

- To examine the sense of place in Yusuf's poetry from an ecological perspective.
- To conduct an independent study on environmental sustainability in Yusuf's poetry.

REFERENCES

- [1] AlRawashdeh, O. (2022). Nature as a Private Symbol: A Reading in the Poetry of Sa'adi Yousef. *Dirasat, Human and Social Sciences*, 49(5), 398-418. <https://doi.org/10.35516/hum.v49i5.560>
- [2] AlRawashdeh, O. (2025). The Distance Shot in the Poetry of Saadi Yusuf. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 16(4), 1157-1168. <https://doi.org/10.17507/jltr.1604.11>
- [3] Al-Sultani, E., Al-Ali, Z., & Al-Janabi, R. (2021). Ecological Criticism a Green Horizon in the Contemporary Critical Studies. *The Arabic Language and Literature-Faculty of arts-University of Kufa*, 33(1), 11-40. <https://doi.org/10.36318/jall/2021/v33.i1.254>
- [4] AlTarawneh, E. (2020). Textual Consistency Mechanisms in the poem "Lost Nostalgia" by Abu Alqasim Alshabbi. *Al-Balqa Journal for Research and Studies*, 23(2), 25-36. <https://doi.org/10.35875/1105-023-002-002>
- [5] Badran, M. (2015, May). The importance of ecocriticism in literary studies. In *Proceedings of the 4th International Conference on Arabic Language* (pp. 193-203). Retrieved August 17, 2025, from https://alarabiahconferences.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/conference_research-802789851-1436354361-1238.pdf
- [6] Branch, M. (1994). Ecocriticism: The nature of nature in literary theory and practice. *Weber—The Contemporary West*, 11(1). Retrieved September 1, 2025, from https://www.weber.edu/weberjournal/journal_archives/archive_b/vol_11_1/mbranchess.html
- [7] Buell, L. (1996). *The Environmental Imagination Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* (2nd ed.). The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- [8] Elnaklah, R., Alotaibi, B., Elbellahy, S., & Abuhussain, M. (2025). Perspectives on Sustainable Construction in the Middle East: A Comparative Analysis of Industry and Academia. *Sustainability*, 17(1), 4. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su17010004>
- [9] Garrard, G. (2004). *Ecocriticism*. Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.
- [10] Hamdawi, J. (2012, March 19). Environmental or ecological criticism. *Alukah*. Retrieved August 9, 2025, from https://www.alukah.net/publications_competitions/0/39426/
- [11] Ibrahim, A. (2016). *Encyclopedia of Arabic Narrative* (Vol. 7). Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation for Knowledge.
- [12] Khourani, S. (2007). *The Mirror and the Window: A Study of Sa'adi Youssef's Poetry*. Dar-AlFarabi.
- [13] Muhammad, H. (2022). Ecocriticism: An Analysis of Arabic Ecocritical Studies and an Application to Radwa Ashour's Short Story "I Saw Date Palms". *Journal of Literary Studies and Humanities*, 26(2), 456-491. <https://doi.org/10.21608/shak.2022.226641>
- [14] Postnikov, V. (2001). Eco-poetry. *The Trumpeter Journal of Ecosophy*, 17(1). Retrieved October 1, 2025, from <https://trumpeter.athabasca.ca/index.php/trumpet/article/view/137>
- [15] Qutb, S. (2004). *Artistic Imagery in the Qur'an* (17th ed.). Dar El-Shorouk.
- [16] Shalabi, A., & Abu Amrieh, Y. (2024). Occidentalism Revisited: Insights from Contemporary Anglophone Arab Diasporic Literature. *Journal of Intercultural Communication*, 24(4), 134-145. <https://doi.org/10.36923/jicc.v24i4.977>
- [17] Tasic, J. (2018). Ecocriticism: interdisciplinary study of literature and environment (S. Abd El-Aziz, Trans.). *Fusul*, 26/2(102), 328-335. <http://search.mandumah.com/Record/977718> (Original work published 2006)
- [18] Yusuf, S. (2014). *Poetic works*. Dar Al-Jamal for Publishing.

Omayma A. AlRawashdeh has a PhD in Arabic Language from the University of Jordan. She is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Arts, Department of Allied Sciences, at Al-Ahliyya Amman University. Her area of interest is criticism and modern literature. Email: o.rawashdeh@ammanu.edu.jo ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2543-6305>