

Magical Realism in the Contemporary Arabic Novel: The Forbidden Paradise by Yahya Al-Qaisi as a Model

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Abstract

Literary creativity depends heavily on imagination during the process of artistic creation, but its presence differs from one literary work to another. The need for literary creativity has increased, especially with the advent of the modern era and coinciding with the social and political changes that have occurred at various levels. This made the creator move from reality to transcend it to other worlds that are closer to magic. This is what we observed in many literary genres, the most important of which is the novel. Therefore, we chose the novel The Forbidden Paradise by Yahya Al-Qaisi because of its departure from the usual language, on the one hand, as its language was intensely poetic, in which the Sufi (mystic) language, with its dimensions and connotations, open the door for endless interpretations, as well as its consideration of some realistic phenomena, on the other hand, such as the search for treasures and troves and the fantastic and peculiar secrets that occur during these attempts that enter into the world of magic and prediction of the future, with all the connotations of the third eye of insight and foresight. With this he could mix modernity through the messages that he receives via e-mail from figures aware of the ignorance that he embodies in their way of thinking, which does not go beyond primitive mentality, violating all physical sciences and even geology. This is natural because magic requires revolution against everything that is realistic and physical in order to transcend it to everything that is unreal and metaphysical.

Keywords: *Paradise; metaphysical; Yahya Al-Qaisi; Forbidden Paradise.*

Introduction

The Arabic novel kept pace with human reality and was able, thanks to its mechanisms and the way, it was constructed, to address critical issues and monitor reality in all its subtleties and details. Thus, it was able to achieve leadership and expand its circle of readability. However, with the beginning of the third millennium and the entry of Western doctrines and ideas and the advent of post-modernism, this literary form responded to the latest new data, as the novel begins to move from reality to transcend it into fantasy; to reveal magical worlds that call for the presence of all that is wondrous and peculiar.

The presence of what is called magical realism has become a distinguishing mark of the contemporary Arabic novel and a characteristic closely related to it. The reasons behind this are many; the most important of which is the need of literary creativity in general for imagination and its excitement and suspense that would constitute an attraction factor for the recipient, especially since the reality in which we live is full of paradoxes and contradictions as reflected on many works of Arab and Western novels alike. Therefore, we tried to devote this study to identifying the features and manifestations of magical realism in the contemporary Arabic novel, specifically in the novel The Forbidden Paradise by the novelist Yahya Al-Qaisi. To access this creative work, we had to stop at a number of issues, the most important of which are:

What is meant by magical realism? What is the difference between it and the neighbouring terms, fantasy, wondrous and peculiar?

How was magical realism manifested in the novel The Forbidden Paradise?

We chose this topic for both subjective and objective motivations. Among the subjective motivations are our interest in the genre of the novel and our desire to research it in form and content. Among the objective

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motivations are the novelty of this topic and shedding light on the creative novelist Yahya al-Qaisi so that he could receive the due study and research.

As for the method of the study, we chose the descriptive and analytical method as it is considered the most appropriate method to approach this topic and delve into it in depth.

Summary of *The Forbidden Paradise* by Yahya Al-Qaisi

Yahya Al-Qaisi starts his novel *The Forbidden Paradise* with a Sufi (mystical) introspective speech steeped in condensation and ambiguity. He divided this fictional work into a group of subtitles in the form of short texts or chapters whose stories are separated and then connected in an aesthetic artistic form. He views things differently, as if he were experiencing a state of inspiration or Sufism mixed with delusion and imagination that has made the main character or protagonist of the novel in a state of intoxication in the Sufi sense, questioning and bewildering that no one else had seen or experienced. Therefore, he asks us to be patient, as that is the condition of every lover, and as it is said: taste is the ultimate knowledge.

This state gave him a lot of contemplation, confusion, and questioning, planted doubt in him and took away his reassurance and tranquillity. Therefore, he decided to transform that attachment into a creative artistic work, as happened to him in his previous novel *Sons of Heaven*. This novel changed his position in the eyes of people between acceptance and denial because of the ideas it contained that attracted people to him about extraordinary acts and solving the problems of their lives, such as pregnancy, marriage, searching for treasures and troves, and salvation from their bad luck, about miracles, and seeking help from supernatural powers, thinking that he is a magician or sorcerer who possesses unseen powers or a magic wand. Others viewed him as crazy, raving and having no authority over what he says. The novelist presents a group of characters that shake his convictions and arouse astonishment and pleasure as they draw the reader into their spiritual worlds and their ideas about life, creation, and man's relationship with the great power that moves the universe and regulates its affairs. The novelist lists many of the cases that visited him in order to provide solutions for them, despite their different academic standings between the illiterate and the scholar, such as the case of the fifty-year-old woman who saw invisible beings living with her estranged husband in a state of semi-separation. The same situation was experienced by her daughter, which was prevented from getting married despite her extreme beauty. The same situation was with the journalist and the Australian pilot, and even the foreigners represented by the American character Patty, who tries to benefit from the amino acid present in her body to superpower and adapt the world in the service of magic and sorcery. Similarly, the archaeologist searches for treasure and troves, and the Lebanese engineer who wants to be one of the followers of the Awaited Mahdi, after being informed of his novel is indifferent to the difference between reality and fiction, until he (the narrator) is chased by e-mail messages from the character "Ahmed Al-Husseini," the hero of his previous novel *Sons of Heaven*, and calls for accepting his ideas on the grounds that writing is awareness, creativity, questioning, doubt, and confusion. He is pleased with the thousands or hundreds of messages he receives daily via his e-mail. Reality is often more peculiar than fiction. He also emphasized the invisible aspects of our lives, which many believe are marginal, but they control our lives and appear in most situations in the form of emotions.

The character of Dr. Jamal, an estranged and expert scientist in the field of antiquities, and his adventures in searching for treasures, troves, and statues studded with pure gold, and boxes of agate, aquamarine, ruby, precious stones, minerals, and other riches guarded by the jinn. However, he was extremely complaining and disgusted with the state's policy that refuses to reveal these treasures, which made him obsessed with the idea of red mercury. This substance that helps maintain youth and magicians and spiritualists search for it at high prices to offer to the jinn in exchange for providing services to them.

The narrator opens a new gate or another story to tell us the tales of American Patty and the course she gave to him and to a group of intellectuals and doctors in order to benefit from the potential of the amino acid residing in us due to its ability to communicate with invisible beings, hidden souls, and the people who lived in those places long ago. Moreover, we believed that man does not die, but rather moves from one stage to another, and that man has the ability to move across dimensions, times, and places. Man has

supernatural abilities that he must take advantage of. Then he soon received another email message in which his friend told him about an ophthalmologist who believes in the idea of the third eye, or the forelock, which is located in the middle of the forehead, which is responsible for the sixth sense and sees worlds that we do not see, and which, when activated, enables us to telepathically and anticipate events. The Indians were interested in it, as evidenced by the red dot that they place on their foreheads, and Muslims were also interested in it because of its connection to prostration in their worship, just as people placed metals on their foreheads through decorations, all of which are signs of their interest in them.

He then tells us about Shambhala, the lost paradise from which we descended, and then returns again to the idea of the amino acid that makes a person in a state of renewed youth, just as in paradise, where there is no disease, sickness, or misery. Then he moves on to the story of the Asmali man who returned to extract the treasure that he had buried during the occupation many years ago, but Abu Saleh was forced to summon him (narrator) to get out the treasure that had become guarded by spiritual powers.

After that he introduced to us the character of Amal, the only female manifestation in the novel, who searches for the supernatural, to return once again to the idea of extracting treasures from caves, which require certain protocols of making intention and ablution and the obligatory presence of a sheikh (a prestigious religious leader) and incense to decipher the talismans. However, he was forced to leave for a family reason and disappeared before he reached the treasure and ordered them to stop for till he returns. Then he raised a very important issue related to people's preoccupation with trivial issues, ignoring the unsound arguments that occur in the science of geology. Most of what we have learned about the shape, size, and layers of the Earth are merely speculations and possibilities. The depth of the deepest hole made by man does not exceed 12 km, while the layers of the Earth remain much deeper than that.

The character of Amal reappears. She is the only female character in the novel and the ambitious woman who gave up all her dreams and assumed the character of an ordinary woman who works to support her family. She immigrated to Saudi Arabia with her older brother to work there, then quickly disappeared from all social networking sites. Once again she appeared and confessed to him that she had a connection to the invisible world. She offered him to accompany her to enter it, but he refused to enter a world whose maps he did not have and to which he was connected only by imaginary thoughts and writing.

Then he soon plunged into the world of metaphysics and supernatural, where the novelist presents to us the story of "Admiral Byrd," who visited the last part of the North Pole and found himself in another world located in the inner part of the Earth, and this is what "The Admiral" expressed in his diary. He found another world parallel to the world we live in, which resembles the city of Shambhala, the lost paradise, and its chief official expressed to him that he is dissatisfied with what is happening on the surface of the Earth, especially with regard to atomic bombs and wars.

He also presents to us some of the criticisms that were directed at his novel *Sons of Heaven*. He was criticized for his tendency towards peculiarity, fantasy and magical realism, instead of committing to and monitoring the tendencies and wars that are happening in our countries, which led to the migration of many people, especially from Syria towards Oman, including Sufi "Nur al-Din al-Halabi," one of the most prominent characters in his novel *Sons of Heaven*. Someone told him that he had moved from Syria to Amman with the refugees, which made him lose his mind. So how did the characters in his imagined novel turn into people of flesh and blood?

He met again with "Jamal" who returned from Britain due to his father's illness and a stroke and his overwhelming desire to excavate antiquities, especially after he heard about the discovery of the tomb of "Alexander the Great" in Jordan by archaeologists and the gold statues, deer, and manuscripts they found. Then, he met with the character of Youssef Al-Majzoub, who is a Sufi and whose sheikh has extraordinary acts, and he can be in two places at the same time, which is what they call "the secret of the step." Physical sciences have proven the possibility of this happening through the theories of quantum physics, which is the smallest part of an atom in two different places.

Then the novelist recalls the character of Youssef Al-Majzoub, who told him about the characteristics of man, because he is created from air, water, dust, and fire. If his aerial self is pure, he learns the logic of birds, and if his earthy soul is pure, he speaks to reptiles and animals of the earth. If all of these qualities are united, his luminous energy increases (if his aerial self was pure, he was taught the logic of birds, and the wind gave him its guidance so that he would not fall from it, and he understood the storms and their secrets and was saved from them. If his aquatic soul was clear, he would talk to fish and sea animals, and the waters would raise him above them, so he would not sink in them, and the waves would give him their command, so their secret would be revealed to him. If his earthy soul was clear, he would talk to reptiles and animals of the earth and the mountains spoke to him, and he knew the secrets of earthquakes and how to avoid being harmed by them. If his fiery soul was pure, he would speak to the beings created from fire and be safe from their evil, and the fire would be coolness and peace for him, so he would not be burned in it)³ Then he would enter into a state of delirium and see himself visiting a paradise that his fellowmen are not allowed to visit because of its supernatural abilities. On opening a book, the creatures depicted in it turned into real creatures, walking. It was a sacred land in which he saw the supernatural.

In the end, he meets the character of his friend Youssef Al-Majdoub who is searching for Sheikh Al-Murid, one of the characters in his novel *Sons of Heaven*. Most of the characters in his novel have turned into reality, and he sees himself between reality and imagination, between dream and reality, in the company of the Sheikh Al-Murid, and what he sees from his luminous wisdom, as if he is reading a book in a world of secrets and lights. Suddenly, he found in his hand a book entitled *Secrets and Lights*. Then he left his tent and found many male and female tourists. He hid the book under a pile of sand, and then returned to retrieve it, but he found nothing.

At the end of the novel, he disavowed what he wrote so that he would not be questioned or search for characters that turned into reality, as happened with his novel *Sons of Heaven*, and that what he wrote were pure fantasies and imagination, and this could happen according to what his psychiatrist in Amman told him about it.⁴

The novel is an extension of the novel *Sons of Heaven* and can be considered an integrated narrative duality. It represented “a journey in the search for the meaning of life and the secrets of the universe, and to emerge from the cocoon of foolish abstract thinking that claims that the mind does not accept what is outside the perception of the senses. However, the truth lies in the fact that it is only mind that can guide man that the ordered arrangement of the universe and the utmost precision in its making and creation must have a great power that alone is capable of doing that.”⁵

Magical Realism

Magical realism is a literary genre that captivates readers by transferring them to imaginary worlds while maintaining their connection to reality, by delving into visual, symbolic, and metaphorical images and linking reality with imagination. It is able to create vivid and surreal scenes to transfer readers to extraordinary worlds, in which the ordinary is transformed into the extraordinary by bringing vibrant colours and imaginative elements to the narrative to arouse in the reader a sense of wonder and awe.

Magical realism represents an important aspect in Arabic literature and has become a common phenomenon in contemporary Arabic novels. Many Arabic novels depend on this literary trend, and it plays an important role in shaping the identity of Arabic literature and developing it by enriching the imagination and enhancing creativity and thinking. Perhaps interest in this literary genre returns to breaking narrow realistic templates and searching for symbolization with the aim of passing political, social and religious criticism. This article will address the presence and function of magical realism in the novel *The Forbidden*

³ - Al-Qaisi, Yahya: *The Forbidden Paradise*, Arab Foundation for Studies and Publishing, Beirut, 1st edition, 2016, p. 153.

⁴ - Al-Qaisi, Yahya: *The Forbidden Paradise*, Arab Foundation for Studies and Publishing, Beirut, 1st edition, 2016.

⁵ - Saleh, Haya: *Zero Distance, Clashes of Novel and Life*, Now Publishers and Distributors, Amman, 1st edition, 2015.

Paradise by Yahya Al-Qaisi and explore its objective importance and contribution to the development of plot, character and event.

The Concept of Magical Realism

Magical realism is an innovative narrative style that has become increasingly widespread in contemporary literature. It is a literary style that combines elements of fantasy and the absurd. It reflects the hidden dimension of political, social, and cultural situations in society. This writing style impacted on narrative literature in the world and has become a distinctive modern expressive style. Magical realism is simply defined as: “the blending of the three elements of reality, magic, and imagination, or the mixing of reality with what is beyond reality in a natural blend that cannot be separated from each other.”⁶ This means that magical realism is a process of blending and interfering between the real and unreal worlds. One of the most prominent characteristics of magical realism is the blurring of reality and imagination and the difficulty of drawing a sharp demarcation line between what is real and what is imagined. It also uses symbol and metaphor to convey deeper meanings and explore abstract concepts for objects or events within the narrative to gain symbolic importance, and represent ideas that go beyond their literal interpretation.

Magical realism is defined as “a creative trend that falls within the context of realistic theories in the novel after critical realism and socialist realism, and in which the events of actual reality are mixed with the energies of imagination immersed in (fantasy). The term appeared for the first time in Germany in the middle of the twentieth century, but it was not long before it became popular as a common trend among Latin American writers.”⁷ Magical realism is characteristic of the literary works that “express a magical, universal vision of the world, an ahistorical vision in which the boundaries between the living and the inanimate, or between culture and nature, are erased. In magical realism things and phenomena acquire distinctive properties and abilities, and we see an aspect of this reality is prior to the principles of reason and logic and the laws of causality.”⁸ There are those who believe that magical realism is “a unique literary model that combines the ancient and the modern. The ancient is represented in fantasy (*One Thousand and One Nights*, and *The Grandmothers’ Tales*, for example). The modern is represented in the use of myth in the artistic, literary and cultural concept that is crystallized in many books and works during the first half of the twentieth century.”⁹ It is also “a type of modern novel in which the narrative includes mythical and imaginative events that still maintain the character of reliability in realistic, objective visions. Furthermore, it indicates the tendency of the modern novel to reach beyond realism and reformulate the capabilities of myth, traditional tales, and legend, while still maintaining a strong social connection.”¹⁰ Western critics gave it an objective and specific definition. Todorov believes, “It is a literature that accepts the existence of reality, the natural, and the ordinary so that it can later refute them all.”¹¹ As for critic David Lodge, he defines magical realism as “peculiar and impossible events in a story whose other events tend toward realism, and it has been associated in particular with contemporary stories in Latin America.”¹²

According to critics magical realism, is linked to three important aspects: “the fantastic or mythical aspect represented by the *One Thousand and One Nights* and *The Grandmothers’ Tales*, the mythological aspect, where myth is an important aspect in shaping human imagination, and the surreal aspect, which is the most recent because surrealism was known in the beginning of the third decade of the twentieth century.”¹³ Fantasy in

⁶ - Naziman, Reda: Magical Realism in “The Salt Cities Quintet” by Abd al-Rahman Munif, Critical Illuminations, No. 29, University of Iran, 2018, p. 110.

⁷ - Arabic Language Academy: Dictionary of Literary Terms, Cairo, 2014, 2, pp. 168-169.

⁸ - Fadl, Salah: The Realism Approach to Literary Creativity, Al-Mukhtar Publishing and Distribution Foundation, Cairo, 2nd edition, 1998, p. 294.

⁹ - Abu Ahmed, Hamed: Magical Realism in the Arabic Novel, Supreme Council of Culture, Egypt, 2009, pp. 7-8.

¹⁰ - Issa, Fawzi: Magical Realism in the Arabic Novel, Dar Al-Maaref, Alexandria, 2009, p. 5.

¹¹ - Halifi, Shuaib: The Poetics of the Fantastic Novel, Supreme Council of Culture, Egypt, 1997, p. 31.

¹² - David Lodge: Narrative Art, translated by Maher Al-Batouti, Supreme Council of Culture, Cairo, 2nd edition, 2002, p. 131.

¹³ - Abu Ahmed, Hamed Youssef: Magical Realism in the Literature of Naguib Mahfouz: The Novel One Thousand and One Nights, Creativity, Third Edition, 2009, p. 98.

its general and simple meaning means penetrating everything that is realistic and reasonable, and embracing everything that transcends and anticipates this reality, whether this anticipation is negative in falling into the focus of (abnormal), (clumsy), and (wondrous), or positive in being open to everything that is supernatural and free from the constraints of the what is logical and daily. In this case fantasy here is considered a space of liberation and emotional catharsis in which the creator relieves himself of the restrictions of custom and its heavy controls.¹⁴ Todorov distinguishes between fantasy, wonder, and peculiarity, by focusing on the time of extension of the fantasy, and seeks to confine it precisely within a mercurial moment in the middle of two different worlds: peculiar and wondrous, where “fantasy takes a time of hesitation or doubt, and as soon as one chooses this or that answer, he leaves fantasy in order to enter into an adjacent genre, which is peculiarity or wonder. Fantasy is the hesitation felt by a being who knows nothing other than natural laws as he faces an apparently supernatural event.”¹⁵ In peculiarity the events that appear to be supernatural throughout the story receive a rational explanation in the end.¹⁶ The wonder suggests to us the existence of the supernatural as a result of remaining unexplained and irrational.¹⁷ As for surrealism, it is one of the pillars on which magical realism depends, which is “supra-realism, a departure from the reality as people are accustomed to it, but at the same time it takes this reality as a starting point for all the new horizons it seeks to achieve, even if they take the form of exaggerations that do not occur to the recipient’s mind. If surrealism deals with unreality, this is in order to cast a new look at reality itself so as to deepen our knowledge of it.”¹⁸ As for the myth that the writer resorts to in order to express his opinion regarding reality without fear of authority, it is closely related to magical realism, as “it is a fairy or traditional story, which usually revolves around a being with supernatural powers, and events that have no natural explanation.”¹⁹

The term magical realism was associated with Latin American novels in the period called the “vogue” in the sixties of the twentieth century. This style was a reaction to the realistic and naturalistic novels - influenced by the French novels of Emile Zola - that interacted with the social and human reality in Latin American countries in the late nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. The novel at that time attempted to literally document realism to reveal the social ills that spread in society at that time, the most important of which were the cruelty of natural conditions and the ferocity of the wealthy classes’ exploitation of the weak, marginalized classes. This led to the emergence of novels that simplify reality and present flat characters, bright white or black. The rich and the feudal lords are cruel and corrupt, and the hired peasants and the poor are innocent victims. The basis of the magical realism method is to narrate unusual or extraordinary events and incidents within the folds of natural events immersed in realism and ordinary details so that they appear as if they are an integral part of the daily reality of life for the characters such as the incidents that were mentioned in many of the stories of *One Thousand and One Nights*.²⁰

Magical realism has its roots in ancient Arabic literature, which includes fantasy literature, so “the Arab heritage roots give us the right to have a long history in magical realism. These roots appear in many books and works, among which we mention *One Thousand and One Nights*, *the Book of Crowns in the Kings of Himyar*, *Popular Biographies*, *Wonders of India*, *The Journey of the Seraph*, *Stories of the Prophets*, *Stories of the Qur’an*, *The Book of Songs* and many other books that fall within the fields of narration with the concepts we know now.”²¹

¹⁴ - Bin Nawar, Bahaa: Fantasy in the Contemporary Arabic Novel, an Analytical Thematic Approach, unpublished doctoral thesis, Hajj Lakhdar University, Batna, Algeria, 2012, p. 9.

¹⁵ - Todorov, Tzvetan: An Introduction to Fantasy Literature, translated by Al-Siddiq Bou Allam, Dar Sharqiyat, Cairo, 1st edition, 1994, p. 44

¹⁶ - An Introduction to Fantasy Literature, p. 59

¹⁷ - An Introduction to Fantasy Literature, p. 63

¹⁸ - Ragheb, Nabil: Encyclopedia of Literary Theories, Egyptian International Publishing Company - Wongman, 1st edition, 2003, p. 347

¹⁹ - Fathi, Ibrahim: Dictionary of Literary Terms, Dar Sharqiyat, Cairo, 1st edition, 2002, p. 57.

²⁰ - Al-Batouti, Maher: The Mother Novel One Thousand and One Nights in World Literature and a Study in Comparative Literature, Hindawi Foundation, United Kingdom, 2022, pp. 191-193.

²¹ - Abu Ahmed, Hamed: Magical Realism in the Arabic Novel, Supreme Council of Culture, Egypt, 2009, p. 15.

The amalgamation of the imaginative appearance with the realistic essence is a necessity imposed by the nature of fictional art, which is impossible for it to be completely realistic, or immersed in fantasy. The relationship of art with reality reveals an important aspect of magical realism because true art depicts reality from multiple and different points of view, and maintains the ability to amaze and excite the recipient by coming up with mythical and fantastic stories derived from the popular imagination, which makes the recipient an active partner in producing meaning. Art possesses magic and cannot get rid of it, for there is “a remainder of magic that cannot be eliminated completely because art without this remnant of its original nature is not art at all. Art in any of its forms, whether serious or humorous, aiming to persuade or suggest, rational or abandoning reason, committed to reality or deep in imagination, must be connected to magic in some way. Art is necessary for a person to understand the world and change it, and it is also necessary because of this magic inherent in it.”²² Artistic work for the artist is “a conscious mental process and not just emotion or inspiration. It is work that ends with the creation of a new image of reality that represents this reality as man understood it and subjected it to his control.”²³

Manifestations of magical realism in *The Forbidden Paradise*

The constituents of magical realism in *The Forbidden Paradise* are evident in three features:

First: Fantasy

Fantasy is “what is mentioned in a narrative text of supernatural events or phenomena that cannot be explained mentally.”²⁴ That is, what is fantastic relates to unusual and unfamiliar matters that are difficult for the recipient to interpret in his real world. It is literature based on “the interpenetration of reality and imagination, transcending causality, and employing impurity, transformation, distortion, and the game of the visible and the invisible, without forgetting the reader’s confusion between two contradictory worlds: the world of sensory reality and the world of perception, illusion, and fantasy. This confusion is what throws the recipient between the states of logical expectation and unnatural astonishment in the face of a supernatural event that is not subject to the norms of reason and nature and their laws.”²⁵

Since ancient times, literature has tended toward fantasy and peculiarity for the sake of enjoyment and suspense. Aristotle says: “We should seek help from fantastic tragedies. As for the epic, we can go in this way to the unreasonable things that arise from it, especially the fantastic things. Fantastic matter calls for enjoyment, and the sign of this is that when people tell a story, they all add their own fantasy to add enjoyment.”²⁶

In *The Forbidden Paradise* fantasy enters the narrative space too early to delineate its boundaries that give it a magical and fantastic quality. The novelist begins by describing the lost paradise: “If I had not heard the music of its letters with my ears and inhaled the scent of its perfumes with my nose, and felt the hidden secrets of it with my hands, and tasted the fruits of its orchards with my mouth, and entered the doors of its walls with my body, I would have said this is nothing but deception, illusion, and delusion.”²⁷ Thus, he combines reality and illusion, and he relies strongly on the senses instead of the mind, as if he is living in a state of delirium, and thus psychologically preparing the recipient to enter with him into peculiar and fantastic worlds.

²² - Ernst, Fisher: *The Necessity of Art*, translated by Asaad Halim, Egyptian General Book Authority, 1998, p. 23

²³ - *The necessity of art*: p. 16

²⁴ - Al-Qadi, Muhammad, et. al, *Dictionary of Narratives*, Muhammad Ali Publishing House in association, Tunisia, 1st edition, 2010, p. 285.

²⁵ - Hamdawi, Jamil: *The Fantastic Arabic Novel*, Al-Hewar Al-Mutamaddin electronic newspaper, *Literature and Art Axis*, No. 1740, 11/20/2006, <https://www.ahewar.org/debat/show.art.asp?aid=81285>

²⁶ - Aristotle: *The Art of Poetry*, by Abdul Rahman Badawi, House of Culture, Beirut, 2nd edition, 1973, p. 69.

²⁷ - *The Forbidden Paradise*, p. 9

The Sufi (mystic) dictionary and religious symbols are strongly present in the novel, as the writer addresses some of the Sufis' standings and extraordinary acts, such as powerful intuition and divine manifestation in the human self, as well as his use of religious symbolism through the character of (Isa bin Maryam), peace be upon him, in his saying, "I do not speak to people except as a symbol."²⁸ This increases the degree of ambiguity of the text, due to the presence of the Sufi side of condensation that obscures the meanings and elevates them to the standing of mystery and astonishment that is generated by the recipient when he approaches the creative text, but he quickly exonerates himself as he describes that what he is experiencing is a state of delirium and sub-consciousness as a result of the revelation and inspiration dictated to him. In the saying, "Do not hold me accountable for what I say or what I rave about here, for I do not speak to people except in symbols, and after that, or perhaps before that, there is a scribe who dictates to me. I have no power or strength. I do not advance or delay anything. Rather, the matter is pressing for me in its time, and falls within its position. When the exact time comes, I write it without modification or change."²⁹ Sufism is one of the richest aspects of heritage with the paranormalities, fantasies, and peculiarities in the history of Arabic literature, as it exceeds the ability of man to take him beyond reality and ascend him to the world of imagination and the dungeons of what is peculiar and fantastic.

These signs and hints by the writer are all entrances to prepare the recipient to enter this peculiar, fantastic world. He realizes that many people believe in such peculiarity and fantasy, no matter how high their positions or how diverse their cultures are, as if he is referring to the subconscious states that a person goes through, and things become confused for him and he no longer knows where the truth is, so he remains oscillating between reality and unreality: "Sometimes I am him and sometimes I am someone else, and sometimes I am myself asking for questions and worry, and waiting for sunshine."³⁰ Thus, the question remains in the reader's mind about what is forbidden paradise and how do we reach it? Does it lie in marital happiness, or in money or in the purity of the soul? Each of us waits for his lost paradise, and searches for it according to his conviction and belief.

Exposing the mentality of society

The novelist manipulates fantasy in his novel to expose the social reality of society and transcend social taboos. Despite the novelist's constant and tireless attempts to know the facts through frequent contemplation and search for knowledge to advance the human self, especially with scientific and technological development and the entry of the third millennium and the computer, the mentality of society still lives in states of delusion through the use of supernatural powers, the desire to change the miserable social reality, and the lack of religious motivation. They revolve around the character of the novelist, who is a central character in the novel and often assumes the role of the omniscient narrator, out of their desire to "cure from strange diseases and solve the problem of impotency for the sake of marriage, or pregnancy, and getting rid of the ghosts that inhabit their bodies, or bringing to them the wandering lover..."³¹ and all the lost paradise in their view. Thus, the novelist reflects the society's view regarding the crises and bad circumstances they face in life and seeking help from the world of jinn and sorcery without caring about the religious aspect. Such perceptions meet with the inherited stock of folk tales and beliefs. The more a person suffers and the more calamities he faces on the ground, the more he must turn to imagination to find his dream of change and salvation. In a state of helplessness, man resorts to searching for miracles, extraordinary acts, and dreams, and "I almost cry sometimes at people's state they have reached of humiliation, confusion, the search for extraordinary acts, and even the desire to seek help from the world of the jinn."³²

²⁸ - The Forbidden Paradise, p. 9

²⁹ - The Forbidden Paradise, p. 10

³⁰ - The Forbidden Paradise, p. 10

³¹ - The Forbidden Paradise, p. 12

³² - The Forbidden Paradise, p. 12

After that the narrator presents a group of stories that he encountered, in which the characters ask him to change their fateful reality, as if he were carrying a magic wand, condemning him to magic and the ability to sorcery through his previous novel, *Sons of Heaven*, not considering the separating boundaries between reality and creative imagination. This phenomenon was not limited to the illiterate; rather, strangely enough, affected even the elite. The doctor of antiquities seeks the help of charlatans to uncover the location of antiquities and treasures, and the architect, despite having the cornerstone of technology and corresponding with the narrator by e-mail, wants to be a follower of the Awaited Mahdi and other characters and stories that he referred to.

The events of the novel go beyond reality to everything that is imaginary. Most of the novel's characters believe in searching for treasures, troves, hidden worlds, and paranormalities, and the possibility of exceeding human ability, out of their belief that "man is created from air, water, dust, and fire. If his airy soul is cleared, he knows the logic of birds, and the wind gives him its guidance, then he will not fall from it, understands the storms and their secrets, and survives them. If his aquatic soul is clear, he speaks to fish..."³³ Thus, "people have been misled in a systematic way, in science, geography, religion, history, and even medicine, and everything that would inform people of the facts, and awaken their latent abilities. They are mere lies that are broadcast morning and evening, in newspapers, television channels, cinema films, in street advertisements, student books, army barracks, and temples..."³⁴ In these places ignorance has descended upon the people, "it is an overwhelming curse, which does not spare a doctor or a bulldozer driver, but the subject of jinn is found in the Qur'an, and I believe in it, regardless of my education."³⁵

Thus, writing became like a curse that haunted him everywhere, "Oh, the trouble I got myself into by writing that novel, which began to haunt me day and night, while imagination in it mixed with truth, and research with interpretation, but how few contemplators and how many dreamers and obsessed were."³⁶ This made him disavow the novel. He admitted that he had been subjected to a severe state of depression, and psychiatry had proven that he was incapacitated and should not be taken into account for what he said. He was surprised "by a novel published in Beirut under the title - *Forbidden Paradise* - and it appears to contain nothing from me except my name, as I have no relation to it in reality, and I don't really know who put my name in it and made me bear the burden of it... It's all pure fantasy and imagination, according to what my psychiatrist at Al-Rashid Hospital in Amman told me. The wave of depression was intense, and the pressure on me was enormous, and that's why he gave me a report proving that what I might say or I write is unreliable."³⁷

Science Fiction

According to what is stated in the Dictionary of Meanings, science fiction means: "A literary or cinematic genre in which the imaginative story is based on speculative scientific discoveries, environmental changes, space exploration, and life on other planets."³⁸

It is "that branch of narrative literature that deals in an imaginative way with human response to every advance in science and technology. This type is considered a type of adventure story, but its events usually take place in the distant future or on planets other than Earth, and it embodies human reflections on the possibilities of the existence of other life on the celestial bodies. This type of literature has the ability to be

³³ - The Forbidden Paradise, p. 153

³⁴ - The Forbidden Paradise, p. 34

³⁵ - The Forbidden Paradise, p. 29

³⁶ - The Forbidden Paradise, p. 18

³⁷ - The Forbidden Paradise, p. 201

³⁸ - Dictionary of Meanings: /Science Fiction/ <https://www.almaany.com/ar/dict/ar-ar>

a mask for political satire on the one hand, and for contemplation of the mysteries of life and the divine on the other hand.”³⁹

In the Arabic Encyclopaedia, science fiction is “moving across the horizons of time, on the wings of a dream enriched with new scientific achievements, and the authors of science fiction stories often knock on the doors of the future with their predictions without a specific time. In science fiction stories there is a broad view of the world in which science is included. It blends its facts with the writer's imagination, and events are drawn that transport the reader to the future or to the past, exciting and astonishing him. The bond between science and imagination is a deep and cohesive, and whoever writes in this type of literature will only succeed with a broad scientific culture that he uses in the events of his stories and novels.”⁴⁰

Science fiction combines fantasy and peculiarity and the future may or may not achieve its ideas. This literature combines wild imagination on which fantasy is built, which has no connection to the sensible. It does not remain fixed within the boundaries of known reality, and differs from fantasy literature in using a degree of imagination because it links itself to scientific facts while we realize that the writer resorts to fantasy to express realistic concerns, and he is realistic in his own way.⁴¹

Science fiction is based on making the recipient believe that it is scientific and real. The fantasy discourse provides solutions to convince people to believe them and the process of realistic events, so science fiction literature relies on fantasy as a means, not an end.⁴²

Science fiction in this novel seems out of place, as the character of Patty, the spiritual medium or spiritual teacher, carries a message to humans from a mysterious side. She was able to “communicate with the sublime spirits of our human ancestors who were here tens of thousands of years ago, and who had a very advanced civilization on Earth, and now they live in the sixth dimension...”⁴³ She also appears through her talk about flying saucers and the hollow Earth.

Second: Mythical feature

Myth has special place and a close connection with magical realism. The writer projects it onto the new reality, to mix reality with myth. Thus, events emerge in a new guise and with new connotations as a result of this mixing. Man, by nature, needs to “create myths and rely on them in order to give meaning to his existence and he can, through them, resist and transcend historical determinism. Therefore, he turns cities, events, and material and moral things - and even his dreams and fantasies - into myths that have a common function, which is to stop the wheel of time.”⁴⁴ Moreover, since ancient times, man has resorted to myth to explain those mysterious matters of his life, and to satisfy his desire to search for truths, relying on a vast world shrouded in myths, illusions, and fantasies.⁴⁵ Myth did not stop there, but began to deal with worldly and realistic topics in human life. It sometimes enriches the religious belief of peoples. Myths have a function which is attempting to explain an incident that occurred in the past or justifying a ritual that has become obsolete and whose beginnings have been forgotten or a ritual or an institution of present-day human institutions to justify the strength of its connection with society, which originated or created it in a certain historical era, and to unify a group around it.”⁴⁶ Among these myths is what is mentioned about the

³⁹- Majdi, Wahba, Al-Muhandis, Kamel: Dictionary of Arabic Terms in Language and Literature, Lebanon Library, Beirut, 2nd edition, 1984, p. 187.

⁴⁰ - The Arab Encyclopedia: Science Fiction Literature/ <https://arab-ency.com.sy/>

⁴¹- Al-Dayoub, Samar: The Metaphor of Science, Studies in Science Fiction Literature, Syrian General Authority for Books, Ministry of Culture, Damascus, 1st edition, 2016, p. 31

⁴² - The Metaphor of Science, Studies in Science Fiction Literature, p. 32

⁴³ - The Forbidden Paradise, pg. 44

⁴⁴ - The Realism Approach to Literary Creativity, p. 295

⁴⁵ - Masoud, Mikhail, Arab Myths and Beliefs Before Islam, Dar Al-Ilm Lil-Malayin, Beirut, 1st edition, September 1994, p. 25.

⁴⁶ - Ajina, Muhammad: Encyclopedia of Arab Myths about Pre-Islamic times and their significance, vol. 1, Al-Farabi Publishing House, Beirut - Lebanon, 1st edition, 1994, p. 14.

caves of the Himalayas and that they are secret passages leading to “a secret city with an advanced civilization called - Shambhala - which means in Sanskrit - the city of peace and tranquillity - and the people of the country has a firm belief that its inhabitants are characterized by great wisdom, advanced science, and high morals...”⁴⁷ Among the myths that appear in the novel are those related to treasures and troves, that they are guarded by what is called the Rasad (watchers), who are a group of jinn. “The command to open the cave was attributed to what they are called Rasd, who guard its gateway. They are invisible beings, but their effect is clear in attacking the seekers and causing them harm from paralysis to madness or death.”⁴⁸

Third: Surreal feature

Magical realism is closely related to surrealism because the writer of magical realism needs to depart from reality into unreality to come up with experiences that are suitable for application to his reality, and to combine imagination with reality to address social issues. This can only be achieved through surrealism, which aims to: “tear apart the familiar boundaries of known reality by introducing new relationships and new contents not derived from traditional reality into literary works.”⁴⁹ It seeks to reveal souls in crisis as a result of the pressures of life and social conditions, so we find it trying to reveal a new reality that goes beyond actual reality. It also tries to find a world more beautiful than the real world. These worlds were always imaginary that go beyond reality to everything that is unfamiliar and metaphysical, and aspiring to the hidden dimension with all that the significance of the third eye holds of fantasy. “Some spiritualists today describe the third eye as being located in the forehead area of the face, or what is called the forelock, and they seek to activate it... It was present among our previous ancestors as a third eye in the back of the head, and it is responsible for intuition or the sixth sense, as they call it. Its important aspect is helping to see in other dimensions that are above -the third dimension- which we see with our eyes today. That is, it is able to capture worlds that have a higher frequency and vibration of its etheric waves. Then this eye atrophied and retreated with the decline that occurred in humans.”⁵⁰ The novelist combines some Sufi ideas and beliefs on the tongue of Youssef Majzoub with their surreal dimension to transport us to a vast imaginative horizon “my sheikh Ibrahim told me about his previous sheikhs that he heard them talking about many creatures in the layers of the earth. He mentioned to me: Some of them have large ears like the ears of elephants, which they cover themselves with. There is a nation that has human bodies and the heads of dogs or wolves, and a nation with the faces of its people on their chests without necks ... and there are those with blue skin and green bodies.... There are nations that lie in watching for humans and a day will come when they will cross the countries of the earth in which they are imprisoned, to reach to reach he surface, where they creep from every corner, occupying the earth and wreaking havoc on it.”⁵¹

Conclusions

The novel *The Forbidden Paradise* by the novelist Yahya Al-Qaisi was written in an intense poetic language dominated by the Sufi lexicon, through which the novelist oscillates from searching for worldly treasures, such as searching for treasures and troves, and the presence of imams and supplications in order to decipher the hieroglyphs and find the treasures, which are ideas that are widely present in the mentality of young people and are discussed secretly, to search for treasures, to searching for knowledge and universal luminous truths and trying to draw inspiration from religious events such as the Isra and Mi'raj. His characters and beings also go outside the usual framework of time and place to challenge nature.

⁴⁷ - *The Forbidden Paradise*, p. 62

⁴⁸ - *The Forbidden Paradise*, p. 28

⁴⁹ - Ragheb, Nabil: *Literary Doctrines from Classicism to Absurdism*, Egyptian General Book Authority, Cairo, ed., 1977, p. 230.

⁵⁰ - *The Forbidden Paradise*, p. 51

⁵¹ - *The Forbidden Paradise*, p. 155

Yahya Al-Qaisi's novel is one of the cognitive novels that is based on research, investigation, and contemplation, and does not depend only on the story and its details, but at the same time it is based on the idea of giving the illusion to truth, which is the thin dividing element between the physical and the metaphysical, through which the novelist assumes the character of the all-knowing narrator who is sometimes in control of the narrative and who is hidden at other times. He sometimes hands over the reins of the narrative to other characters, as the characters of the novel turn into characters of flesh and blood. In the end we find the idea of the writer evading his thoughts, as he stated at the end of the novel that he disavows his thoughts as if they are delirious, that he is crazy, mentally ill, and suffers from depression, and that what he says or writes is unreliable.

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