Aesthetics of Place in Huzama Habayeb’s Palestinian Diaspora Novel “Before the Queen Sleeps”

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Abstract

Drawing upon the structural criticism approach which “views places as active components of the structure of narrative discourse which influence and are influenced by other components,” this study examines the novel “Before the Queen Sleeps” by Palestinian author Huzama Habayeb in an attempt to shed light on the aesthetics of places with regard to the different manifestations of them, their symbolic dimensions, various psychological projections, the manner in which they evoke the memory of the heroine, and the relationship between them as places of diaspora and exile.

The importance of the present work is threefold. Firstly, due to the lack of scientific research on the novel in question (despite its importance), this study gives heed to the novel’s value and merit by analyzing and critiquing it. Secondly, it sheds light not only on the Palestinian diaspora in general, but rather on the Palestinian female diaspora specifically, depicting the suffering of the Palestinian woman in the diaspora through her relationship with other places outside of Palestine. Thirdly, it examines a novel written by an author who experienced life as a Palestinian female in the diaspora firsthand. It conveys the sense of “places” from the level of literary imagination to the level of reality based on historical facts on the one hand and personal experiences on the other hand.

Keywords: Aesthetics of place; Diaspora novels; places of asylum and exile