Place-attachment as a conservation effort in the children's story series "Bait al-Ahdhar": Lawrence Buell's ecocritical perspective

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ABSTRACT

Children's understanding of the relationship between humans and the environment is a significant factor in fostering ecological awareness, which forms the foundation for future environmental coservation efforts. This research aims to describe and identify place-attachment as an effort for environmental conservation in the Bait al-Ahdhar children's story series based on Lawrence Buell's ecocriticial perspective. The type of research used in this study is descriptive qualitative with the ecocriticism approach. The primary data source is the Bait al-Ahdhar children's story series by Hadil Ghanim and Walid Tahir, with additional data drawn from books, journals, and relevant scientific articles. The data collection technique involves a thorough reading and note-taking process. The data analysis technique employs the Miles, Huberman and Saldaña model, which consists of data condensation, data display, and conclusion/verification. The results of this research indicate the presence of four dimensions of place-attachment as a conservation effort in the children's story series Bait al-Ahdhar: (1) Concentric Areas, as evidenced by a child's greater concern for the cleanliness of their bedroom compared to their house and the surrounding streets, (2) Local Archipelagos, as evidenced by a child's concern for the school environment based on a sense that school is like a second home, (3) The Historicity of Places, as evidenced by a child's concern for the worsening environmental changes in the city, and (4) Temporal Accumulation, as evidenced by a child's concern for the school environment based on learning and playing experiences in previous class. These findings suggest that place-attachment may serve as a solution for children in environmental conservation.

Keywords: Children's literature, conservation, ecocritical, place-attachment

INTRODUCTION

Childhood experiences with the environment play an important role in shaping relationship and caring behavior toward the places they inhabit. The report *Home to Us All: How Connecting with Nature Helps Us Care for Ourselves and the Earth* advocates an increased focus on connecting people with nature to inspire action for biodiversity conservation; and while it presents evidence for the importance of connecting with nature at all ages, it gives childhood a leading place (Charles et al., 2018; Chawla, 2020). In considering how real experiences can foster environmental awareness in children, Mackey's (2012) research shows that children who are given opportunities to explore their environment, make decisions and take action are more likely to grow up to be confident sustainability advocates. Through direct interaction with their environment, children can develop a love and care for nature, a sense of kinship with other living things, and attachment to places in nature (Chawla, 2021).

In examining the relationship between humans and the environment, Buell (2001) highlights the concept of place, which is referred to as place-attachment. Place-attachment is a term used to describe the profound emotional, spiritual, historical, and social bonds an individual or group forms with a specific place (Buell, 2005; Ghosal & Modak, 2023). Furthermore, place-attachment refers to the meaning that individuals derive from their relationships and interactions with the environment (Lewicka, 2005; Greer et al., 2020), which develops over time (Koller & Farley, 2019). Therefore, place-attachment constitutes more than a mere physical bond; it is an integral component of one's identity,

comprising memories, sentiments, convictions, and significations associated with a specific place (Jack, 2010).

A concept explored within the context of place psychology, place-attachment shares similarities with attachment to a person (Fullilove, 1996), because both concepts involve emotional and cognitive experiences(Bonaiuto et al., 2016; Pacheco et al., 2022). Place-attachment fosters a sense of responsibility and a desire to preserve a place. For this reason, place-attachment can be used to address issues of environmental damage (Buell, 2001). As Berry(1972) argues, without a profound understanding of the essence of a place and a commitment informed by this understanding, the environment is used in a reckless way that ultimately leads to its degradation (Lodge & Wood, 2008).

The phenomenon of place-attachment to specific place is not limited to adults, but is also experienced by children (Nekoui & Roig, 2022). For children and youth, the physical aspects of such environments may be more salient than for adults (Pacheco et al., 2022). Adult accounts of place-attachment tend to highlight their feelings for place, the meanings attributed to those feelings, and an awareness of the sociocultural influence on place-attachment. On the other hand, children understand places based on what one can do in the place, such as play and self-directed exploration (Morgan, 2010; Pacheco et al., 2022). According to Chawla (1992), the places favored by children are those that provide a sense of safety, social dependence, opportunities for exploration, and freedom of expression (Green & Turner, 2017).

Children's emotional attachment to specific places is frequently depicted in children's literature (Doughty & Thompson, 2011). In this genre, places function beyond mere background settings; they play a pivotal role in nurturing the development of children's characters and identities (Doughty & Thompson, 2011). Places in children's literature are often portrayed as dynamic spaces for exploration, learning and personal growth. Furthermore, studies of places in children's literature emphasise the importance of green spaces in developing children's environmental awareness (Wason-Ellam, 2014). This approach aligns with the principles of ecocriticism, which emphasises the important relationship between humans and the environment in literature (Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996).

Ecocriticism studies have demonstrated that discussions about place play a crucial role in applying ecological and literary theories (Ghosal & Modak, 2023). According to Buell (2005), ecocriticism refers to the study of literature with an environmental focus, as well as the theories underlying environmental critique practices. As a form of literary criticism, ecocriticism posits the fundamental premise that human culture is inseparable from the physical environment, impacting and being impacted by it (Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996), while emphasizing the respect for the right to life of all beings (Aslan & Bas, 2020).

Ecocriticism can make children's literature more interesting by examining nature themes and how they depict the world, offering insights into what we can learn from them (Ismail, 2024). This ecocritical approach can also be used to analyse children's literature from a variety of traditions, particularly Arabic literature. As Ahmed and Hasyim (2015) argue, ecocriticism is particularly relevant in the Arabic literary context given that much Arabic literature is deeply rooted in representations of the natural environment. Yehia (2025) make a similiar argument that Arabic literature is concerned with fostering feelings of friendliness and love for nature, a theme that emerges strongly in children's stories and poetry. Therefore, the researchers assume that an ecocritical analysis of Arabic children's literature can open up spaces for cultural exchange and contribute to the creation of a 'global dialogue'.

The present study attempts a reading of an Arabic children's literature series, namely *Bait al-Ahdhar*, written by Hadil Ghanim and Walid Tahir. The series comprises six distinct stories: *Sirrul Hayah*, *Madrasah Man?!*, *Said...Said!*, *Qittun wa Farhun*, *Dunya Tufakkir*, and *Arusah Hanan*. The overarching objective of this series is to cultivate children's awareness of their environment. This series also supports the green literature movement in Jazirah Arab, promoting environmental awareness and fostering a long-term vision of the environment through its literary works (Haque, 2023). This study will focus on three of *Bait al-Ahdhar's* stories that illustrate children's attachment to familiar places, such as house, school, and the surrounding environment. Those selected for analysis are *Said...Said!*, *Dunya Tufakkir*, and *Madrasah Man?!.*

In *Said...Said!* story, the main character is Said, a child who harbours a deep affection for a pristine, verdant, and fragrant environment, yet such a reality is a hot, smoky, and noisy city that makes

him sad and tries to improve it. Meanwhile, *Dunya Tufakkir* tells the story of child named Dunya. At first, she only cared about keeping her own bedroom clean, but with her father's guidance, she eventually learned to care for her surroundings by managing trash properly. In *Madrasah Man?!* story, the main character is Nur, a second-grade elementary school student who really cares about his school and encourages his friends and family to help repair it together.

To examine place-attachment as a conservation effort in the *Bait al-Ahdhar* children's story series, researchers used Buell's ecocritical theory. In his book *Writing for an Endangered World: Literature, Culture, and Environment in the U.S. and Beyond*, Lawrence Buell presents five dimensions of place-connectedness in literature (Buell, 2001; Spring, 2018). When Buell took up the same idea several years later, he used the term place-attachment (Buell, 2005; Larochelle & Twiss, 2023). The five dimensions of place-attachment, as proposed by Buell, are as follows: (1) Concentric Areas, where attachment to a place diminishes in intimacy as one moves outward from a central point; (2) Local archipelagos or Scattergrams, represent attachments to distinct and separate places, each characterized by profound emotional connections; (3) The Historicity of Place, defined as attachment rooted in the functions and transformations of a place over time; (4) Temporal Accumulation, defined as attachment formed through experiences at significant places in the past; and (5) Attachment to Virtual or Fictional Places, The attachment to a virtual or fictional place, defined as a place that has never been experienced in real life, exerts a material influence on individuals (Buell, 2001; Larochelle & Twiss, 2023). Nevertheless, the present study focuses on four dimensions, which include Concentric Areas, Local Archipelagos, The Historicity of Place, and Temporal Accumulation. The dimension of Attachment to Virtual or Fictional Places is not found in the *Bait al-Ahdhar* series.

The dimensions of place-attachment as theorized by Lawrence Buell have been explored in multiple studies. An example is Wajid et al. (2024) analysis of trauma and place-attachment in novel *Where the Streets Had a Name* by Randa Abdul-Fattah. Another study by Ghosal & Modak (2023) examines how an individual forms place-attachment, a sense of self, and identity in relation to forest landscapes in novel *Aranyak* by Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay. Larochelle & Twiss (2023) discuss the geographical imagination of Quebec students influenced by colonialism and imperialism. Additionally, Poursanati & Farmani (2022) investigate the role of mythical creatures as representations of nature in the works of William Morris and J.R.R. Tolkien. Another study of J.R.R. Tolkien's work, by Sjöstedt (2024), analyses the meaning of place in *The Hobbit* novels.

A review of previous studies revealed both similarities and differences with this research. Regarding similarities, previous research used the place-attachment dimension of Lawrence Buell's perspective as a basis for analyzing objects. Whereas, the differences factors pertain to the focus and object of the research. The previous studies focus on individual attachment to forests (Ghosal & Modak, 2023), the role of mythical creatures as nature representations (Poursanati & Farmani, 2022), issues of migration and trauma (Wajid et al., 2024), young people's geographical imagination (Larochelle & Twiss, 2023), and the meaning of place (Sjöstedt, 2024). With respect to the research objects, previous studies have analyzed novels (Ghosal & Modak, 2023; Sjöstedt, 2024; Wajid et al., 2024), poetry (Poursanati & Farmani, 2022), and various print and archival sources (Larochelle & Twiss, 2023).

In this study, researchers present a novel contribution that differs from previous studies. The research focuses on place-attachment experienced by children, and their efforts to conserve the environment based on place-attachment. And in this study, the object of study is the children's story series *Bait al-Ahdar* by Hadil Ghanim and Walid Tahir. The researchers' position in the previous studies was to complement and add to the data findings from previous studies related to place-attachment in literary works. Therefore, the aim of this study is to describe and identify place-attachment as an effort for environmental conservation in the children's story series *Bait Al-Ahdar* by Hadil Ghanim and Walid Tahir using Lawrence Buell's ecocritical perspective.

METHOD

This study includes descriptive qualitative study with the ecocriticism approach. The primary data sources are the quotation and figure from the *Bait al-Ahdhar* children's story series, specifically *Said...Said!* by Walid Tahir, as well as *Dunya Tufakkir* and *Madrasah Man?!* by Hadil Ghanim, published by Daar as-Syuruq in Egypt in 2008, and each story comprises 24 pages. The secondary

sources include findings derived from materials not directly related to the primary sources, such as books, articles, and journals that validate or support the research data. In this study, Data was collected by the reading and note-taking technique. The data collection process began with repeatedly reading the *Bait al-Ahdhar* children's story series to gain a deep understanding of the narratives. The researchers then selected and marked relevant data using a note-taking technique to record elements falling within the scope of Lawrence Buell's ecocritical theory.

The data analysis employed the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña method, which consists of three stages: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Miles et al., 2014). *first*, data condensation stage, researchers sorted the obtained data, grouped data relevant to the research focus, and discarding that which was irrelevant; *second*, data presentation stage, researchers presented the condensed data in a concise manner using a table; *third*, conclusion drawing/verification stage, researchers drew conclusions based on the presented data and interpreted it in accordance with Buell's dimensions of place-attachment.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Results

Based on an analysis of place-attachment as a conservation effort in the children's story series *Bait al-Ahdhar* based on Lawrence Buell's ecocritical perspective, the researchers found four dimensions of place-attachment as a conservation effort: (1) Concentric Areas, are illustrated through a character named Dunya, a child who initially only cared about the cleanliness of her bedroom, yet through her father's guidance she expands her concern to encompass the house and the surrounding environment, and learns recycling practices; (2) Local Archipelagos, are illustrated through a character named Nur, a child who shows concern for his school by inviting his friends and family to work together to repair the damage at his school based on his sense that school is like a *second home*; (3) The Historicity of Place, is illustrated through a character named Said, a child who is concerned about the worsening environmental transformation in his city and motivated to restore it; (4) Temporal Accumulation, is illustrated through a character named Nur, a child who shows concern for his school by inviting his friends and family to work together to repair the damage at his school based on the learning experiences and playing experiences in the previous class (In the first grade of elementary school). Table 1 below provides an overview of place-attachment as a conservation effort in the *Bait al-Ahdhar* story series:

Table 1. Place-attachment Dimension as a Conservation Effort

No	Dimensions of place-attachment	Form of place-attachment	Form of Environmental Conservation	Children's Story
1.	Concentric Areas	Dunya's sense of intimacy with a place diminishes as she moves away from the bedroom	Properly disposing of trash and learning recycling practices	*Dunya Tufakkir*
2.	Local Archipelagos	Nur's attachment to his school is based on his sense that school is like a *second home*	Collaboration in planting, painting and decorating the school	*Madrasah Man?!*
3.	The Historicity of Place	Said's concerns regarding the city's environmental transformations	Ambition to rectify the environmental degradation in urban areas	*Said...Said!*
4.	Temporal Accumulation	Nur's attachment to school is based on his experiences of learning and playing in the previous class	Collaboration in planting, painting and decorating the school	*Madrasah Man?!*

Discussion
Concentric Areas

According to Buell, the most recognized way to describe place-attachment is the concept of Concentric Areas. Concentric Areas illustrate that attachment to a place diminishes in intimacy as one moves away from the central point (Buell, 2001). The closer a person is to the central point, the highest

attachment and emotional connection. Conversely, the farther one is from the central point, the weaker the attachment and emotional connection. The central point is typically the one that is the place most familiar, most frequently visited, and has the strongest *Sense of Place* (Buell, 2001; Relph, 1976; Grimshaw & Mates, 2022).

In the story of *Dunya Tufakkir*, Dunya shows a high attachment to her bedroom, which serves as her private space for playing, sleeping, studying, and calming herself. Dunya, a young girl, takes great care to keep her bedroom clean. After her cousins played in her bedroom, she immediately cleaned it up by organizing toys and collecting trash. However, without further consideration, Dunya threw the trash outside her bedroom door instead of putting it in the designated trash can. This behavior is illustrated in the following quotation:

<div dir="rtl">

بدأَتْ دُنْيَا تُنَظِّف غُرفتها وتجمع القُمَامَة.

وبدون تفكير، رمت كل ما لا تريده خَارِجَ الغرفة.

بابا: ما هَذَا يَا دُنْيَا؟

دُنْيَا: يا بابا، الْمُهِمُّ أَن غُرْفَتِي نَظِيفَةٌ!

بابا: فَكِّري قَلِيلاً يا دُنْيَا .. أَلَيْسَ هَذَا بَيْتَكِ؟

دُنْيَا: عندي فكرة! نَرْمِي القمامة مِنَ الشُّبَّاكِ!!

بابا: فَكِّري مَرَّةً ثَانِيَةً. أَلَيْسَ هَذَا شَارِعَنَا؟ تَخَيَّلِي المَنْظَر... لَوْ كُلُّ وَاحِدٍ رَمَى فِي الشَّارِع.

دُنْيَا: مَعَكَ حَقٌّ يَا بَابَا. لا أَحبُّ أَنْ يَكُونَ شَارِعُنَا قَذِرًا!! (Ghanim, 2008a).

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Dunya began cleaning her bedroom and collecting the trash.
Without thinking, she threw everything she didn't want outside the bedroom.
Papa: What is this, Dunya?
Dunya: Papa, what matters is that my bedroom is clean!
Papa: Think for a moment, Dunya… Isn't this your house?
Dunya: I have an idea! Let's throw the trash out the window!
Papa: Think again. Isn't this our street? Imagine the view if everyone threw trash into the street.
Dunya: You're right, Papa. I don't want our street to be dirty!

In the quotation, Dunya demonstrates a strong concern for the cleanliness of her bedroom but shows less awareness of the environment outside it. When she disposes of trash outside her bedroom door, she reveals a lack of responsibility for the cleanliness of the house as a whole. Following this act, her father advises her, helping her understand the importance of maintaining the cleanliness of the entire house. However, after being advised to take care of the house, Dunya takes the initiative to throw trash out of the window onto the street, believing that the street is not part of her private space and, therefore, not her responsibility. Her father again advises her, explaining that the street is a shared space that must be kept clean.

Dunya's actions of throwing trash in front of the bedroom door, as well as her subsequent decision to throw trash through the window, reflect a lack of understanding regarding the long-term effects of these actions, particularly because the impacts are not immediately felt by her. Furthermore, the shared responsibility of maintaining the house and the street can reduce Dunya's sense of ownership, thereby necessitating parental guidance. Subsequent to her father's guidance, Dunya's connection to her environment is strengthened. With this development, Dunya disposes of trash in its proper place and learns to manage trash better, as illustrated in the following quotation:

<div dir="rtl">

دُنْيَا: شُكْرًا يا بَابَا والآنَ مَاذَا نَفْعَلُ بِالْقُمَامَةِ؟

بابا: قَبْلَ أَنْ تَرْمِي أَيَّ شَيْءٍ فَكِّري ...واسْأَلِي نَفْسَكِ سُؤَالَيْن: هَلْ يُمْكِنُ أَنْ أَصْنَعَ مِنْهُ شَيْئًا مُفِيدًا؟

ثُمَّ اسْأَلِي نَفْسَكِ: هَلْ يُمْكِنُ أَنْ يَسْتَفِيدَ بِهِ آخَرُونَ؟

دُنْيَا: فَهِمْتُ! وَالْبَاقِي أَرْمِيهِ فِي سَلَّةِ الْمُهْمَلَاتِ! (Ghanim, 2008a).

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Dunya: Thank you, Papa. Now, what should we do with the trash?
Papa: Before throwing anything away, think…And ask yourself two questions: Can I make

something useful out of it?
Then ask yourself: Can others benefit from it?
Dunya: Understood! And the rest, I'll throw it into the trash bin!

This quotation shows how environmental awareness values are instilled through responsible trash management practices. Dunya's father encourages her to consider the potential benefits that can be derived from recyclable materials before disposing of them. Through her father's guidance, Dunya came to understand the significance of the reduce, reuse, and recycle of trash. After comprehending the importance of maintaining cleanliness, Dunya was invited by her father to visit Qottamiyah to learn about recycling. Accordingly, Dunya's personal attachment to her environment strengthens, thereby contributing to the mitigation of environmental degradation (Buell, 2001).

Based on this analysis of the development of a sense of responsibility and understanding of the environment, it was revealed that Dunya's place-attachment regarding the bedroom, house, and street creates concentric areas, as illustrated in Figure 1.
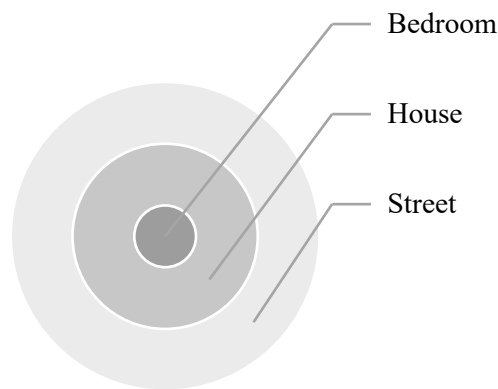

Figure 1. Dunya's Concentric Area

As illustrated in Figure 1, Dunya's place-attachment can be understood through concentric areas beginning with her bedroom as the central point. The bedroom is Dunya's most comfortable private space, which she perceives as a sanctuary and a place for solitude, as shown by her efforts to keep it clean. Beyond this, Dunya's attachment weakens at the level of the house, as the house is a shared space used by all family members and is considered a collective responsibility. Furthermore, Dunya's attachment diminishes even more at the level of the street, which is a public space belonging to the community at large. Therefore, it can be concluded that the farther a place is from a private bedroom, the weaker Dunya's emotional attachment and sense of responsibility toward it.

The Story *Dunya Tufakkir* corresponds to Buell's dimension of concentric areas, which posits that the attachment to a place diminishes in intimacy as one move away from the central point (Buell, 2001). Dunya feels deeply attached to her bedroom, and this level of attachment is influenced by a *Sense of Place*. A *Sense of Place* encompasses the emotional connections that develop through experiences and interactions in a specific place (Relph, 1976; Grimshaw & Mates, 2022). Dunya's strong bond with her bedroom demonstrates a more profound *Sense of Place* compared to her house and the street. This notion is further reinforced by Chawla's (1992) assertion that children often prioritize personal spaces, such as their bedrooms or other areas that serve as sanctuaries or places of solitude (Green & Turner, 2017).

Dunya's act of cleaning her bedroom of trash can be seen as an early sign of environmental awareness. Therefore, parents play a crucial role in encouraging children to maintain cleanliness in wider areas, from the house as a family space to the streets as public spaces. In accordance with the findings of Kartikasari (2024) and Faridy and Rohendi (2021), the role of parents is a crucial factor in instilling environmental values through responsible trash management. Thus, the concentric areas dimension illustrates that a child's level of environmental concern is influenced by feelings of attachment developed through personal experiences and parental guidance.

Local Archipelagos

The dimension of Local Archipelagos is a concept that refers to an attachment to various familiar places that are frequently visited, even though these places are located far apart (Buell, 2001). This dimension of place-attachment highlights an individual's relationship with places beyond their private residence, such as schools, parks, or workplaces, which can function as a *second home*. These places, although geographically dispersed and distant from one another, hold significant personal value and form a network of meaningful places, which Buell refers to as Local Archipelagos (Buell, 2001).

Buell also refers to the second dimension of place-attachment as the Scattergram, defined as attachment that is not centered on one particular place but rather is attached to all places that are perceived as significant (Buell, 2001). Understanding this dimension is particularly important in the modern context, where individual mobility is increasing and attachment to places involves more than just the primary residence. Thus, the local archipelagos or scattergram dimension reflects an individual's emotional connections with various decentralized places, creating an interconnected network of meaningful locations.

In the story *Madrasah Man?!,* it is illustrated that Nur returns to his school after the summer vacation period, feeling happy and excited. Nur is a student of the second grade of an elementary school. As he enters the school gates, Nur is saddened by the dead plants and damaged walls. He is concerned about the state of his school, as it is the place where he spends most of his time. The following quotation illustrates this condition:

<div dir="rtl">

بَعْدَ قَلِيلٍ، نَظَرَ نُور حَوْلَهُ ثُمَّ قَالَ لِأَصْحَابِهِ: أُنْظُرُوا .. لَقَدْ مَاتَ الزَّرْعُ الَّذِي كَانَ هُنَا!

رَدَّ وَائِل: نَعَمْ وَجُدْرَانُ الْمَدْرَسَةِ أَيْضًا مَنْظَرُهَا قَدِيمٌ، لَكِنَّهُ ضَحِكَ وَقَالَ: أَهِيَ بَيْتُنَا؟! هَيَّا نَلْعَبْ!

فَكَّرَ نُورٌ أَنَّهُمْ يَقْضُونَ أَكْثَرَ أَيَّامِ السَّنَةِ فِي الْمَدْرَسَةِ، وَأَنَّ أَمَامَهُمْ سَنَوَاتٍ كَثِيرَةً حَتَّى يَنْتَقِلُوا لِلْمَدْرَسَةِ الإِعْدَادِيَّةِ.

.(Ghanim, 2008b)

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After a while, Nur looked around him and then said to his friends, "Look... the plants that used to be here have died!"
Wael responded, "Yes, and the school walls also look old." But then he laughed and said, "Is it our house? Come on, let's play!"
Nur thought about how they spent most of the school year at school and how they still had many years ahead before moving to middle school.

In the quotation, Nur's concern for the school is evident from his worry about the dead plants. This shows his emotional attachment to the school. Although his friend Wael downplays the school's condition, Nur realises that it is very important to him. This attachment is formed because Nur spends most of his days at school, learning, playing, and socializing. Similarly, Wael's invitation to play indicates the creation of shared experiences that strengthen their emotional and social connection to the school.

After seeing the damage in the schoolyard, Nur entered the classroom and found that his desk had also been damaged. He then asked his teacher, Ms. Fatimah, about the cause of the damage. Ms. Fatimah explained that the damage had occurred over time and was partly due to the play activities of Nur and his friends, as well as the fact that the school had not received any government assistance. In response, Nur extended an invitation to his friends and their families (his father, Huda's mother and Uncle Maher) to work together in the restoration, as reflected in the following quotation:

<div dir="rtl">

كَمَا غَرَسَ خَالُ ماهر زَرْعًا جَدِيدًا في الفِنَاءِ. وَسَاعَدَ التَّلَامِيذُ الْمُعَلِّمِينَ فِي طِلَاءِ الْجُدْرَانِ وَتَزْيِينِها بِالرُّسُومِ الْجَمِيلَةِ!

كَانَ يَوْمًا جَمِيلاً .. عَمِلَ فِيهِ الْجَمِيعُ بِمَرَحٍ: الْمُعَلِّمُونَ وَالأَهَالِي وَالتَّلَامِيذُ ..

وَزَّعَ النَّاظِرُ عَلَيْهِم الشَّايَ بِمُسَاعَدَةِ وَائِل... ثُم قَالَ لِنُور: ''شُكْرًا لَكَ عَلَى هَذِهِ الْفِكْرَةِ الرَّائِعَةِ وَالْمَجْهُودِ الْكَبِيرِ.'' (Ghanim, 2008b).

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Uncle Maher planted new plants in the yard. The students helped the teachers paint the walls and decorate them with beautiful drawings
It was a beautiful day... Everyone worked happily: the teachers, the parents, and the students...

> *The principal distributed tea to them with Wael's help... Then he said to Nur: 'Thank you for this wonderful idea and great effort.*

The quotation shows the success of Nur's invitation to collaborate in restoring the school. His collaboration with friends, family, and teachers reflects his level of commitment to the school, stemming from his and his friends daily learning, playing, and socialising in the school, which has led them to view the school as a *second home*. Collaborative activities such as planting, painting, and decorating demonstrate how a place-attachment can foster a spirit of cooperation that enhances the physical environment and strengthens social bonds.

The *Madrasah Man?!* story illustrates the concept of children's attachment to places according to dimensions of Local Archipelagos or Scattergrams. Nur's place-attachment is not confined to the home as a mere residence, but extends to other significant locations, such as the school. This is in line with Rieh's (2020) assertion that children who spend more time in the school environment experience an increased sense of ownership, as school often becomes a *second home* for many of them. Nur's routines of learning, playing, and socialising at school serve to foster an emotional attachment to the school. As Buell (2001) asserts, places hold meaning when they are familiar and frequently visited.

Ultimately, it is the bonds formed through learning and social activities at school that play a pivotal role in shaping attitudes towards the environment. Nur's emotional connection to his school inspires a sense of responsibility to protect his surroundings, encouraging him to engage in activities such as tending to plants and maintaining school facilities. This suggests that children's activities at school can foster conservation-oriented behaviour, because, as Chawla (2020) asserts, children who frequently interact with their environment tend to show greater concern for its sustainably and care for it. Thus, the Local Archipelagos dimension positions the school as a *second home,* which nurtures children's sense of responsibility and concern for preserving it.

The Historicity of Place

The third dimension of place-attachment, as posited by Buell, pertains to the attachment that emphasizes the function and transformation of a place over time (Buell, 2001). According to Kent Ryden (1993), for those who have developed a *Sense of Place*, a place is not only seen physically, but also characterised by an invisible layer of usage, memory and meaning (Buell, 2001). Therefore, a place cannot be regarded as a stable, self-standing structural entity; rather, it is a space that undergoes continuous changes through human intervention or natural processes (Buell, 2001; Rivera-Barnes, 2009), irrespective of whether those changes are positive or negative (Buell, 2001).

In the story *Said...Said!*, Said's place of residence undergoes a transformation that is both physical and functional. Said is a young boy residing in Egyptian city. He loves observing the trees along the roadside and the scent of flowers. But in fact, the trees have withered, and the scent of flowers has been replaced by the odors of vehicle exhaust and industrial pollution. It is possible to interpret this phenomenon as a representation of the transition from rural to urban life, which is characterised by substantial alterations to the natural environment and infrastructure. This transformation is exemplified in the following figure 2 and quotation:

Figure 2. Transformation from rural to urban life (Tahir, 2008)

أُحِبُّ أَنْ أَرَى فِي الطَّرِيْقِ شَجَرًا... شجرًا..
وَلَكِنِّي لَا أَرَى إِلَّا هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ الْمَرِيضَةَ بِجِوَارِ الْبُيُوتِ.
أنا أَحِبُّ أَنْ أَشُمَّ رَائِحَةَ الْوَرْدِ...
وَلَكِنِّي لاَ أَشُمُّ إِلَّا دُخَانًا .. دُخَانًا .. دُخَانًا .. (Tahir, 2008).

I love to see trees on the road... trees...
But I only see this sick tree next to the houses.
I love to smell the scent of roses...
But I only smell smog... smog... smog...

As illustrated in Figure 2 and the quotation, Said's living environment has undergone significant changes that have caused him discomfort. The trees providing shade along the streets wither, and the fragrant scent of flowers has been replaced by the smell of smog. These transformations have not only diminished the beauty of the environment, but also impacted Said's physical and mental health, causing him profound concern.

Said is aware of the changes occurring in his environment. He directly experiences the negative impacts of environmental changes that affect his daily activities. In this regard, he recognises the importance of improvements to maintain the sustainability of nature and the environment. Said expressed his concerns about environmental transformation to his parents, as seen in the following quotation:

سَأَلْتُ بَابَا: كَيْفَ أُغَيِّرُ هَذَا يَا بَابَا؟
سَأَلْتُ مَامَا: كَيْفَ أُغَيِّرُ هَذَا يَا مَامَا ؟
قَالَ بَابَا: لِنُفَكِّرْ مَعًا مَاذَا نَفْعَلُ فِي مَشَاكِلِ الْبِيئَةِ!
قَالَتْ مَامَا: تَعَالَوْا نَتَعَاوَنْ مَعًا، فَمُشْكِلَةُ تَلَوُّثُ البِيئَةِ... مُشْكِلَتُنَا جَمِيْعًا (Tahir, 2008).

I asked Papa: How can I change this, Papa?
I asked Mama: How can I change this, Mama?
Papa said: Let's think together about what we can do about environmental problems!
Mama said: Let's work together, because the problem of environmental pollution... is our problem, all of us.

The transformation of the trees from a verdant and beautiful state to one of wither, accompanied by the shift from fresh air to smog, prompted Said to solicit his parent's counsel on solutions to ameliorate the prevailing condition. Said's sensitivity to changes in the urban environment shows that Said has a *Sense of Place*, which enables him to understand the changes that occur because, as Ryden (1993) argues, a place is characterised by invisible layers of use, memory, and meaning. Such as Said's memory of shady trees and the scent of fragrant flowers. Said's concern about the destruction of his environment also reflects his affection for the place, which aligns with Buell's (2001) assertion that the stronger a person's attachment to a place, the greater their concern for its preservation.

The *Said...Said!* story corresponds with the dimension of place-attachment, which focuses on the function and transformation of a place over time (Buell, 2001). Said is acutely aware of the deterioration of his surroundings. Said's concern for his surroundings includes his fear and worry about the worsening of his living place, as well as his desire to care for the environment. As Irvine et al. (2019) explain, when environmental problems reflect broader concerns about threats to values, including national values, children can use them as a way to express their worries about the world they live in.

Said's awareness of the environmentally damaging changes to the city ultimately motivated him to participate in the repair and maintenance of his surroundings. This was because these changes immediately disrupted his daily activities and took away things he once loved, such as the scent of flowers and the sight of green trees, making his feel the personal impact of environmental damage. In line with the findings of Jamal, Yusof, and Sultana (2023), through direct experiences with environmental change and degradation, children's attachment develops into meaningful awareness that

fosters a sense of responsibility toward nature. The Historicity of Place therefore plays a crucial role in shaping children's environmental awareness and commitment to sustainability amid urbanisation.

Temporal Accumulation

The fourth dimension of place-attachment is the temporal accumulation, which refers to the attachment to a place formed by the accumulation of experience at each place considered important in a person's over time (Buell, 2001). This dimension shows that place-attachment is shaped not only by physical experiences in a place, but also by the memories and feelings formed over time. Each experience contributes to memories that shape a person's perception of a place, influence their interactions with others, and become an integral part of their self-identity (Buell, 2001).

In the *Madrasah Man?!* story, Nur feels more confident when returning to school after the summer break. Unlike the previous year, Nur is no longer afraid because he is older and is now in the second grade. He is happy to meet his friends because they will be in the same class again. Memories of his own first grade experiences make Nur feel more comfortable at school and influence his perception of the environment and how he interacts with his friends, as shown in the following quotation:

عِنْدَ بَوَّابَةِ الْمَدْرَسَةِ، وَدَّعَ نُورٌ أُمَّهُ وَسَلَّمَ عَلَى مُعَلِّمَتِهِ الْجَدِيدَةِ: الْاسْتَاذَةِ فَاطِمَةَ. ثُمَّ انْطَلَقَ فِي فِنَاءِ مَدْرَسَتِهِ وَهُوَ فَرْحَانَ.
لَمْ يَكُنْ نُور خَائِفًا مِثْلَ الْعَامِ الْمَاضِي، فَهُوَ الْآنَ أَكْبَرُ. لَقَدْ أَصْبَحَ فِي الصَّفِّ الثَّانِي الْابْتِدَائِيِّ!
وَجَدَ نور أَصْحَابَهُ، وَ فَرِحَ جِدًّا لِأَنَّهُمْ سَيَكُونُونَ مَعًا فِي الْفَصْلِ نَفْسِهِ مِثْلَ الْعَامِ الْمَاضِي (Ghanim, 2008b).

At the school gate, Nur bid his mother goodbye and greeted his new teacher, Ms. Fatima. Then he went into the schoolyard, feeling happy.
Nur was not scared like last year; now he was bigger. He was in the second grade!
Nur found his friends and was very happy because they would be in the same class as last year.

In the quotation, Nur's confidence when entering the schoolyard stems from his experiences in first grade. Playing and learning with his classmates in previous year has played a significant role in shaping his identity and influencing the way he interacts with his friends at school. Furthermore, Nur's attachment to school is also influenced by the fact that he is in the second grade with his old classmates. Ultimately, memories of past experiences strengthen Nur's connection to the school and foster a sense of ownership and identity.

Nur's accumulation of experiences at school include learning and playing with his friends, as well as embarrassing moments, such as jumping on the benches, hanging on classroom curtains, and picking plants in the yard. Nur feels embarrassed when he remembers the behaviour he and his friends engaged in. Therefore, these memories foster a strong sense of ownership, motivating Nur to take action when he notices damage at the school. sense of ownership makes him feel responsible for repairing the school environment, as shown in the following quotation:

تَذَكَّرَ نُورٌ كَيْفَ كَانَ هُوَ وَزُمَلَاؤُه يَقْفِزُونَ فَوْقَ الدِّكَاكِ، وَيَتَعَلَّقُونَ بِسَتَائِرِ الْفَصْلِ وَيَقْطِفُونَ الزَّرْعَ مِنْ الفِنَاءِ! .. شَعَرَ بِالْخَجَلِ!
سَأَلَتْ هُدَى الْأَسْتَاذَةَ فَاطِمَةَ: «لِمَاذَا لَمْ تُصَلَّحْ هَذِهِ الْأَشْيَاءُ»؟ رَدَّتْ عَلَيْهَا الْاسْتَاذَةُ قَائِلَةً:
«لَقَدْ طَلَبْنَا مُسَاعَدَاتٍ مِنَ الْمُحَافَظَةِ، لَكِنَّ الْمَدَارِسَ كَثِيرَةٌ وَالْأَمْوَالَ قَلِيلَةٌ فَيَجِبُ أَنْ نَنْتَظِرَ حَتَّى يَأْتِيَ الدَّوْرُ عَلَيْنَا».
لَكِنَّ «نور» لَمْ يَنْتَظِرْ. فَفِي الْمَسَاءِ اتَّفَقَ مَعَ وَالِدِهِ الْأَسْطَى حَسَن النَّجَارِ... (Ghanim, 2008b).

Nur remembered how he and his friends jumped on the benches, hung on the classroom curtains, and picked plants in the yard! he felt embarrassed!
Huda asked Ms. Fatimah: "Why aren't these things fixed?" Ms. Fatimah answer:
"We've asked for help from the local government, but there are many schools and few funds so we have to wait our turn."
However, Nur didn't wait. At afternoon, he agreed with his father, Mr. Hassan, who was a carpenter...

Based on the quotation, Nur felt responsible for participating in the repairs because he and his friends had caused some of the damage through their play activities in their previous classroom, and he

was uncomfortable with his learning environment being in disrepair. Therefore, instead of waiting for government assistance, Nur invited his friends and their families to work together to repair the school on the holidays. This shows that Nur has formed an attachment to the school based on his experiences with friends in previous class. As Buell (2001) asserts, these attachments develop from meaningful memories and experiences.

The story *Madrasah Man?!* illustrates place-attachment based on temporal accumulation, which refers to the attachment to a place formed by the accumulation of experience at each place considered important in a person's over time (Buell, 2001). In line with the findings of Pacheco et al. (2022), repeated experiences of places during childhood can lead to lifelong bonds with those places, which function psychologically in a similar way to interpersonal attachments and ultimately shape one's identity. As Buell (2001) asserts, the places an individual has experienced in their lifetime can act as an unconscious shaping force in the formation of their current identity.

Nur's daily experiences at school, such as her learning and playtime activities, gradually fostered a sense of attachment to the school. This assertion is in alignment with the findings outlined by Ellis (2005), which state that experiences such as learning, playing, and sharing moments in class gradually shape identity and foster a sense of ownership to the school. This identity and sense of ownership formed through previous class ultimately motivated Nur to invite his friends and parents to help preserve the school environment. Thus, the dimension of Temporal Accumulation formed the foundation for children's efforts in environmental conservation.

The findings of this study indicate that childhood is a period when an individual begins to build relationships with important places in their lives, such as home, school, and the surrounding environment, which ultimately shape a sense of ownership and responsibility for preserving those places. School becomes the primary place for children to learn, socialize, and play, thereby forming emotional bonds and a sense of attachment to the place. However, after school, children often spend time at home and are less connected to the places around them. Therefore, parents play a crucial role in helping children understand the importance of the places around them, including a sense of ownership and responsibility toward those places and the environment.

This study provides a foundation for explaining place-attachment in children's literature, specifically the connection children have with their homes, schools, and environments, as well as the relationship between children and parents in interpreting the meaning of place. It is hoped that through this study, educators and policymakers can gain a better understanding of how children's experiences with places and environments shape their identities and awareness of environmental sustainability. Furthermore, parents can be supported in comprehending the significance of place as part of the child's developmental process, as well as their role in accompanying the child's activities.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that in the *Bait al-Ahdhar* children's story series, place-attachment functions as an essential foundation for children in conservation efforts. The researchers identified four dimensions of place-attachment that shape children's environmental awareness in the series, namely Concentric Areas, Local Archipelagos, The Historicity of Place, and Temporal Accumulation. The dimension of Concentric Areas is evident in the character Dunya, a child who shows greater concern for keeping her bedroom clean than for maintaining the cleanliness of her house or the surrounding streets, as depicted in *Dunya Tufakkir* story. The dimensions of Local Archipelagos and Temporal Accumulation appear in the story *Madrasah Man?!*, which is reflected through the initiative of a child named Nur, who engages his friends and family members to repair damaged school facilities. Meanwhile, the dimension of The Historicity of Place is evident in the character Said, who demonstrates a desire to improve the deteriorating condition of his city's environment, as depicted in *Said…Said!* story.

This study demonstrates that children's concern for the environment begins with their relationship to places that feel most personal to them, such as their bedrooms. The bedroom serves as a place for them to rest, play, learn, and calm themselves, so when the space becomes messy after various activities, they immediately tidy and clean it. Beyond personal places, children also care about places where they spend most of their day learning and playing with friends, which encourages them to keep these places

comfortable so that learning and playing activities can take place pleasantly. Outside of these two places, children also show concern when given opportunities to interact directly with the environment, so when they observe changes that disrupt their activities there or remove something they previously enjoyed, they make efforts to restore it.

Although this study has described place-attachment as a conservation effort in the children's story series, it still has limitations. The first limitation is that this research is based solely on one theory, namely the ecocritical theory based on place-attachment by Lawrence Buell. The second limitation is that place-attachment is only focused on the ecocritical field, without considering aspects of geography, culture, and social-politics. Therefore, the researchers suggest that future research could explore place-attachment in children's literature using an interdisciplinary approach from various relevant fields.

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