

# A Semiotic Reading of the Character Construction (Heroism) and the Significance in “Hayat” by Mohammad Ali Saeed

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## Abstract

This research is an interpretive study about the construction of the central character and the detection of the heroic role, and then the meaning and significance in “Hayat” by Mohammad Ali Saeed. The research has adopted an approach illustrated according to a semiotic model labeled as “the Cognitive Semiotic Model” (CSM). This model is concerned with determining the central character in line with textual control that passes through heroism and its quality, and then reaches meaning and significance. In so doing, the paper will pass over absurdity and incongruity and focus on building this work in its narrative process. Besides, the assumption is that reading this story as a model for the collection of Saeed’s stories, “Ahmed and Mordechai,” is somehow obligatory, since it approaches the two most important themes of the short story in general: the character and significance. It will be revealed that the central character is considered a “hero” according to the criteria that will be set in the course of the research. The character of “Ali al-Mahmoud” has constituted an important semiotic element in the development of the event, as it dominated the meaning while it is built till the end.

## Keywords

Semiotics, Heroic Significance, Central Personality, Antagonist, Intentionality, Action, Ideology, Socio-Culture and Anthropology

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## 1. Introduction

Each narrative text in particular carries within it many messages and functions, which can be referred in some way to the writer himself or his equivalent on the semiotic level, along with the reader’s framing of this in his consciousness dur-

ing the process of reading and receiving. So, because of its uniqueness and distinction, I thought I should treat “Hayat,” which was translated into several languages including English (Assadi, 2009: pp. 125-129) for its uniqueness and its social and human subject messages, instead of the whole collection same group that was translated into as well (Saeed, 1997: pp. 121-126).

The study will make use of a semiotic model that arranges the reading process. It is known as the Cognitive Semiotic Model, which was invented by Ibrahim Taha. First, I will diagnose the central character in accordance with reading textual criteria, and then deal with the meaning and significance in this narrative text. Therefore, this reading may be binding in some way to the collective reader who seeks to reach meaning and significance that are in harmony with the contemporary literary theory.

Mohammad Ali Saeed is known among his community to be a patriotic, Palestinian critic and writer who does his utmost to help the poor and the oppressed people, especially the Palestinians living under tough circumstances. It is very likely that his own biography is characterized by homelessness, poverty and imposed constant mobility together with his family until he finally settles down in Tamra, his new hometown (Assadi: pp. 4-5) explains his strong support of the hardworking man robbed of his right and land in a distressed social political reality.

The story can be seen as no more than a signifier and motto that ensures a bright heroic image, and an aspect of the intensification of the conflict between the individual and the political and security oppressive authority saturated with a spirit of revenge and lack of recognition of the right to life and existence. After that, I will monitor the central character of the story, and will clarify its heroic role by identifying it, according to four criteria that will be answered in turn. First, the quantitative criterion: Through my reading of the story, I found that the character of “Ali al-Mahmoud” is active in the narration, and has a strong presence throughout the text, as he is a recorder and a real witness to the event and its course. The narration, with its distribution between reality and soliloquy, does not detract from the presence of Ali al-Mahmoud and his connection to the quantitative protraction of the narration. Sometimes the narration slowed down due to the soliloquy, which was associated with this character, simultaneously occupied a significant part of the narration. There are other characters who accounted for a large part of the narration. These are the Sheikh, the narrator, and the men of power (soldiers), but the implicit writer or Ali al-Mahmoud remains more dominant over speech and description and steadily pushing events and narration!

Second, the qualitative criterion: through the events of the story, it has been observed that the character of Ali Al-Mahmoud is active and driving towards the progress of the event. The central character is not round unless it fills the narrative space that allows for the character’s impulse and its dominance over the event at its two poles: the temporal and the spatial. The character, as said by Hasan Bahrawi, “intersects all the elements, including temporal and spatial events”

(Bahraoui, 1990: p. 20).

It was found that the character of Ali al-Mahmoud receives great interest in the narration, directing the event and giving it its behavioral, ethical and psychological components. It lives in the shadow of its struggle for its existence and its impulse to achieve its will, even if it were humane, emotional, or erotic. It eventually does not settle unless it achieves this unique will that fills its life, not to mention that Ali al-Mahmoud struggles against authority in his existential search. This struggle is associated with the character of "Hayat," who can be considered as a shadow character of Ali al-Mahmoud. Although it cooperated with Ali, it nonetheless cannot be given centrality because it does not affect the reader and is not involved in events as Ali al-Mahmoud is. Nor is it effective in the narration, while Ali al-Mahmoud invokes Hayat at every moment owing to its presence in his consciousness and unconsciousness.

Why is the qualitative figure necessary in a literary work? It is necessary because with it, the meaning and significance of the observed text is clarified, and because it is the focus of the conflict. Without it, we lose the ability to continue the narration. It may send us lamentation, purification, or tragic attachment to it, as it is the presence of an unjust existential destiny. As phrased by Hasan al-Qabbānī,

The human character is a source of enjoyment and suspense in the story, due to several factors. One illustrates that there is a natural inclination in every human being to psychological analysis and the study of the character. Each one of us is inclined to know something about the function of the human brain, the reasons and motives that push us to act in a certain way in life. We also have an unbridled desire that calls us to study human morals, the factors that affect them, and the manifestations of this influence.

(Al-Qabbani, 1974: pp. 51-52)

Thus, studying the sketch of the character in detail helps researchers reach two interrelated goals, says critic Ibrahim Taha. One: Sketching the character explains the relationship between literary narrative and images, graph and metaphor. In other words, the use of different means such as the names of characters, time, place, values and social norms and cultural symbols points out that the literary text tends to correspond to a specific environment and setting. And, outlining the character is the author's source for placing the main character in the center, and the literary text directs the reader to the central character and its role in giving its content. Drawing the character is the author's tool for producing and presenting his characters. It is, then, an act of creation and presentation, and it is a means of form and content, and in both cases the author includes his opinion through form and content (Taha, 2015: pp. 22-23).

The vital means of drawing a character is to describe its behavior through the literary text, and this behavior is decided by the writer to lead him to the end he wants for his characters and text. It is true that the author creates a fantasy world, but the reader can imagine it.

The importance of the title in reaching the meaning of the narrative text should not be underestimated, as it is the parallel text of the literary work. Looking at the title as an independent unit parallel to the text does not negate the intimate relationship with it. Bassam Qattus sees, for example, that the title leads to the text. More important, the title is the text and the text is the title (Qattus, 2001: p. 60). In order to facilitate dealing with the title, some researchers talked about its functions, the most important of which are: the specific, defining or referential function, the descriptive function, and the tempting function. These all lead first and foremost to the text.

The relationship between the title as a parallel text and the body text may tell about the ideological affiliation of the text, whether it is a literary, cultural, political or social by “highlighting the role of thresholds in understanding the specificity of the text and by identifying an essential aspect of its semantic purposes” (Al-Hajmari, 1996: p. 7). I have mentioned the ideological function of the title, and this function departs from the internal interactions of the title with the text and proceeds towards a race with the external influences. In this regard, Abdel-Fattah Al-Hajmari makes an important note, as he sees that the text has manifold signs, some of which are related to the title, and others go outside the text, and are called “para-texts.” And if the title summarizes what follows, i.e. the text, yet it is likewise “a flash that refers to the outside-outside the text” (Halify, 1992: p. 84).

The title’s seductive ability is measured by the reader’s response to its call to be led into the text. If this ability is effective, then the reader has been involved after he crossed this threshold in the text. However, this involvement does not stop at examining the text, but returns again to the author and his literary and cultural affiliations, as well as to his social and political convictions (Al-Hajmari: pp. 10-11). In Mahmoud Ghanayem’s (2015) point,

The title is an independent text on the one hand, and is closely related to the body of the text on the other, and here lies the semiotic understanding of the title called the text-content. We believe that an integrative study that aspires to enclose the semiotic of the literary work cannot emerge from the title alone without confirming or denying that through the text. However, this in itself can be considered an achievement, despite its limitations (p. 21).

The title of “Hayat,” is central as it bears the name of one of the characters of the story and indicates the axis of the conflict or the main motif in the tensed event in the story, although it is a non-active character in the narration and is governed by the reaction of the Sheikh and Ali al-Mahmoud. Nonetheless, it does not obtain centrality the same as the character of Ali al-Mahmoud does. The latter’s character is dominant that the threads of the event intertwine and develop effectively around it. Hayat’s movement is governed by the Sheikh’s reaction, and he is the one who leads the event to develop and escalate to the end or to the moment of discovery.

The title then directs the text to an interpretive path connected to the character of Ali al-Mahmoud, although the title “Hayat” (i. e. life in Arabic) is a symbol

that constituted the life, safety and survival for Ali al-Mahmoud. Ali's centrality is obtained through the portrayal of the omniscient narrator who transmits the event synchronously, as if he held a camera and photographed the sequence of the event. Readers realize that Hayat is the complement to Ali al-Mahmoud. Although the title is biased towards Hayat, she is not endowed with movement and semiotic pursuit. Rather, it is Ali al-Mahmoud, who dominates the event and provides it with a variety of its behavioral, moral and psychological structure. His character governs the narration and possessed masculine significance compares with Hayat, whose gender affiliation does not provide her with any power in directing the event but she is connected to it in a hierarchical manner.

Third, the intentional criterion which indicates that the writer chooses his characters knowledgeably and consciously, and gives each character its role based on its sensual and moral qualities and interaction that draws the recipient's attention. Hence, this criterion is connected with the writer's intentionality which is affirmed by the narrator, or the factor that objectively transfers the events to the readers and deals with the core of the meaning that flows through the stream of thought, consciousness, or conscience.

I find that the presence of Ali al-Mahmoud with its fluidity and psychological, social and intellectual motives, is intended by himself, as it constitutes the compass of the idea that was employed for it. It is the subject in the narrative work, and the writer wanted it and intended it to represent the idea of the story by introspecting the intent in its impulse through the flow of narration. It is also the trumpet through which the narrator runs and sends his thoughts and apprehensions, and in consequence, his implicit message so that it can spread in the story and breathe life in it!

Practically every creative text is necessarily intentional, not spontaneous, and when we approach the meaning we try to reach the intent, as affirmed by the semiotic scholar Hirsch (1984: p. 208). In trying to reach the meaning roughly, the reader approaches the author's intention. Literary work contains a message and the meaning is self-intended and does not deviate from the context but is framed within it.

Here the reader's role comes to decipher the intent code. The writer intended in one way or another to strike at the political military power and the negative traditional social norms. The cause of loyalty and commitment to the beloved also shines in a virtuous human way, in which a combination of idealism and realism is impeccable. Honesty and love do not usually leave the conscience. Perhaps the writer's intention is to make Hayat broadcast her soul and conscience in the spirit of Ali al-Mahmoud, as they are one soul that is ready for hugging and attachment. Even in a romantic or idealistic way, in the sludge of life with its hustle and bustle and its division between lovers, they are depicted in a scene that evokes conscience and burns imagination and lasts without obstacles but is conquered by the power of authority that undermines determination and human salvation. Impersonating the character of Ali al-Mahmoud the narrator says romantically with a tone of self reprimanding,

You often visited the Sheikh and exchanged talk, your concerns and religious and secular news. You stealthily looked at Hayat and your gaze would glitter with lust. More often than not, your looks penetrated her modest clothes took down one piece after another and rejoiced in seeing her naked. (p. 127)

Fourth, the reading criterion is a tribal condition of heroism. The reader is a partner in the narrative process and the building of meaning, and may be impressed by the actions and behavior of the character when it challenges its social and political status, and through its human inclinations which is the anthropological and semiotic tendency to keep up with the character during reading. Indeed, reading is a prerequisite element in learning about the story, and in helping to draw specific characteristics about the character so as to achieve a purposeful reading, not repetitive that caters to the dictations of the narrative situation and then expelled it from it. The reader is impressed by the central personality in its stability, sovereignty and conscious or unconscious ability, in his challenge to its expectations through functionally conscious reading. If the character violates, dazzles and exceeds the readers' expectations, it deserves to be granted the medal of centrality, which in turn benefits the active reader. The character is formed during the narration and intensifies its role and centrality to convince the reader of its privilege to possess its active role.

According to the presented criteria, it turns out that the character of Ali al-Mahmoud tends to represent a heroic role with sensory and moral qualities that show his place and his role in mobilizing the heroic role and composure, and thus we will grant it the role of centrality. Ali Al-Mahmoud revealed his goal and made the reader be associated with him more than other figures; he is a central figure without dispute.

## 2. The Semiotic of Heroism in "Hayat"

The story is approached as a narrative text according to a semiotic cognitive system as it believed this approach contributes to the understanding the story, to identify its meaning and significance later, as well as to identify the advantages of the central character, and to determine the quality of the heroism. So, this approach will be split into two basic phases after determining the core character:

First, the textual stage in which the movement of the central character in its quest to reach a state of the three types of heroism is monitored, according to three circles that may overlap or intersect in the light of this semiotic anthropological model developed by Ibrahim Taha. This model trails the movement of the central character, being a key player in the sequence of narrative and framing of the idea, as well as a factor to which the literary meaning is attached.

### 2.1. Pre-Action Stage

#### 2.1.1. Lack (Goal and Motivation)

It is a human characteristic. From a psychological or socio-human point of view,

the individual feels the complex of the shortage and always tries to fill and overcome this deficiency. Significantly, the deficiency comes from the lack of reconciliation between the human, spiritual, materialistic and intellectual needs of the individual and the requirements of the external reality represented in the preparation of the human or socio-cultural effort for the observed existential situation. Thus, the character in the literary work in particular seeks compensation amid the shortage through the compensation mechanism. The central figure represented by Ali al-Mahmoud tries in the light of the police pursuit by the soldiers to attain self security, safety and psychological and social stability. In practice, what relieves the central personality in its quest is the relationship he weaved and lived in with Hayat, as she is the refuge and asylum under the life of the soldiers' pursuit, which drains him of his life. Eventually he finds the house of the Sheikh a refuge in the midst of shocks and dilemmas, just as Said Mehran in the Najib Mahfouz's novel, *The Thief and The Dogs*, resorted to sheikh Sufi Janidi, resorted to sheikh Sufi Janidi, whenever the situation narrows down.

### 2.1.2. Desire

It is a mechanism to ensure the progress of the central personality which seeks through awareness and movement to achieve its desire. Examining the personality of Ali Al-Mahmoud, one sees his definite desire to protect Hayat, who married the Sheikh in the wake of the request of the Mukhtar (the chief of the village or the chosen man), the Sheikh's brother, based on the insistence of Ali himself. Hayat's marriage to the Sheikh is necessary for the central character because it helps him continue his struggle both on the personal and collective levels. Hayat is an indispensable presence in the life of Ali al-Mahmoud, as a motif that is repeated in his various stations in the story, which made it easier for him to survive in the shadow of the soldiers' pursuit and become the "wanted popular hero.: "Ali al-Mahmoud. Give in and you will be safe.... Don't attempt to resist... Don't try to escape" (125).

But Ali al-Mahmoud's desire for his anthological existence is that Hayat must not be absent from his life to alleviate his suffering and to be able to resist. Perhaps Hayat's marriage to the Sheikh with the blessing of the Mukhtar was a rash decision. It intensified his torment. So, Ali is seen through the monologue blaming the Mukhtar and himself:

"The consequences of your deeds" Ali continued thinking, "would be costly, *Mukhtar!* So you married Hayat to your brother!

"And how did you, Ali, want the *Mukhtar* to behave? As if you had forgotten that it was you who asked him to protect Hayat and her family and keep them in the village. Did you not appeal to *Mukhtar* for help and exact an oath from him (for the sake of the dearest to him) that he satisfy your desire? Did you not promise him that you would be one of his men and fulfill his orders? Did you not promise that you would leave the country? Did you forget that? And did you forget your promise to him when he held his moustache, the symbol of his manliness and promised you that Hayat and

her family were the apple of his eye? True.... But I couldn't, I could not leave," Ali admitted to himself. (126)

### **2.1.3. Mental, Physical-Planning and Emotional Ability**

It is very clear that Ali al-Mahmoud's character as a central figure summoned his mental and emotional abilities through the process of his struggle and life while looking for the meaning of his life. This process is surrounded by difficulties at the existential level and sincere platonic love. He has recruited his natural and intellectual subtlety in order to achieve his threatened existence. The soldiers continue to hunt down Ali al-Mahmoud, as he is wanted by the government for posing a threat to the State. In response, he has taken shelter at the house of the Sheikh, the Mukhtar's brother, the house which provides him with safety and memories, especially since Hayat has become now the Sheikh's wife. Ali al-Mahmoud's personality is strongly present in spite of the danger that threatens his survival. He has always managed to escape from the tight fist of the security forces, owing to his mental and planning safe and sound.

The central character is looking for the meaning for its life. Ali has mobilized his mental energies derived from the unconscious, and fostered by love to redeem the homeland despite the cruelty of the occupier who insists to break Ali's will. On the other hand, there is the other type of love that has satisfied Ali's self and his erotic tendencies towards Hayat, which suggest that Ali can go on his way while enjoying the elements of intelligence, courage and manly perception.

### **2.2. Action**

This stage is characterized by the attempts of the central character, represented by Ali al-Mahmoud, to realize his dream and promise through quest. Ali has recruited his wits and abilities in order to progress and achieve his will. Hayat was the inner voice to complete what was echoing inside his chest, to achieve this gentle, driving love and urgent sexual desire, even if it means he has to wait for this dream to come true in the future. As for Ali al-Mahmoud, he should have a better emotional and existential view than not, especially as he fights soldiers who keep chasing him and want him alive. Every time he escapes from them with an ability so amazing that parallels the policemen's intelligent schemes to hunt. Ali al-Mahmoud's character has proved to be free to move through the narrative, revealing his hopes through monologues and subconscious awareness, and moving him between reality and imagination and an escalating monotonous, dreamy romance. It must be pointed out that there are auxiliary factors personal and impersonal, and external and internal and, sometimes restricting factors, which in turn may affect the character's movement in the narrative in the process of the character's pursuit of the goal it has sought.

Among the characters that helped the protagonist, Ali al-Mahmoud develop and advance is the Sheikh, who despite his marriage to Hayat, Ali al-Mahmoud's beloved, helped Ali to gain security and calmness amid the bitter reality and hell that he undergoes. The Sheikh made his home, the place where Hayat, his wife,

lived, a refuge that sheltered Ali against security men. Although she married the Sheikh with the blessing of the Mukhtar, she remained vividly present in the consciousness of Ali, who continued to call her whenever the events culminate and his friends desert him. She is the objective balance to his suppression and opportunism. Her existence is an exception in his life and helped him to pursue his search for his goals and prevented him from regression in the circle of reactions and the process of construction and demolition.

Interestingly, an action does not fulfil itself unless it is met by a counter-act, which evokes a sense and conscience towards self-cleansing. In "Hayat," reality is interspersed with imagination through consciousness and unconsciousness. What justifies this interspersion is that the narrative work mimics the human and the instinctive psychological situation, and imaginatively displays the human situation, by bringing down the human situation to our reality in dealing with human nature in its socio-psychological situation, as a means of variation of what socialist realism is based on.

On the other hand, there could be factors that hinder the narrative act. Soldiers or security officers surrounded Ali al-Mahmoud, when he sat in the Sheikh's house, to achieve security, safety and psychological and emotional reassurance. In his introspective thinking, Ali reveals that he wanted to get engaged to Hayat, and he even had asked the Mukhtar, as the traditions dictate, to visit her parents and propose to them as the respectful representative of Ali. But, later he apologized, because his life was unstable and risky. As a resistance man fighting power of oppression and occupation his life was in danger. Explaining his complex situation in a very smart way, he addresses himself disapprovingly,

In spite of this, you got back to him the next day to apologize and withdraw your request because you carry your soul on your palm; the troops pursued you and wanted you to die. But you survived over and over and over again, thanks to your smartness, boldness and experience. The stories about your derision of them and escape from their grasp have become the common talk among village folks. And the troops' embitterness and persistence on catching you were increasingly intensified. You made not only youths and adults but also children laugh at them. Your stories have turned into heroic series," he concluded proudly. (126)

It might be said that Ali tends to believe the Mukhtar did not care for his safety and left him on the battlefield on his own. The Mukhtar, as Ali maintains has abandoned him when he was under difficult circumstances where he needed help to stop the authority police from pursuing him. What intensifies Ali's feeling of disappointment is the fact that he has helped the Mukhtar conquer his opponents in the elections.

I was the one who stopped the rise of his competitor and confined the competitor to his home. The folks of the village are still asking and wondering, 'Why was that man silent and resigned to his place and no longer

wanting to attain the office or share it? (126)

All this indicates that in the process of its development, the protagonist is hampered by obstacles that discourage him from completing his mission to reach the acme of his heroism. The road to success is confronted with many obstacles at the level of action, and the protagonist achieves his goal with great difficulty. The obstacles are much more than the aids in the character's journey towards achieving the act in the narrative work. From a semiotic point of view, the character is considered an object and functioning factor that fuels the conflict towards the addressee in the dramatic act arising from the psychological and existential state of the central character.

### 2.3. Post-Action Stage

I have examined the protagonist, Ali al-Mahmoud, by adopting the anthro-semiotic vision. Man is made up of flesh and blood and not only as a character on paper. He is placed at the center of literary work and the textual meanings and connotations are linked to this central character dominating the events of the story. Although there were gaps in the sequence of the event at the intellectual level, the event did not detract, and the central character was able to bear the simple concern of the simple man defending his land. The difficult circumstances did not prevent him from enjoying the radiance of emotional or sensual love associated with Hayat, who, in fact, laid the path of his life. Ali al-Mahmoud was able to reconcile between the honest national struggle and the emotional direction and the courageous love that needs noble manliness and not sheer masculinity that preserves this love and shares it with those who deserve it without desecrating the sacred sense of family honor. According to the outline of the character of the protagonist, Ali Al Mahmoud, in the circle of the triple heroism (the full hero, the no-hero, the partial hero,) it is very clear that Ali is affiliated with the first type. Owing to Hayat and her husband, the Sheikh, who sent Ali to the bathroom to hide from the police, knowing that his wife was bathing, Ali is qualified to be crowned as a full hero. This is revealed at the end of the monologue in this final scene of the story, which creates the final and eloquent touch of this exquisite story:

“And you entered the bathroom, Ali al-Mahmoud! Hayat was bathing naked. You saw her, yes, but, in spite of yourself, you saw her fully and modestly dressed.”

There was night and there was the birth of a new story. (127)

It was the rebirth of a new hero free from the obsessions, the wounds and the pathological imaginations of the past, that made him ready to face the challenges of the times with confidence, composure and a more stable and determined heart.

Therefore, the heroism and new birth of the protagonist, Ali al-Mahmoud, would not have been possible without the push of the Sheikh's hand, who boldly

and transcendently rose above egoistic factors and achieved true awareness of the meaning of honor and compassion. However, the beauty and excellence of this story is not only restricted to the maturity of the vision, the richness of the content and meaning, but goes beyond all of this to the artistic form in terms of storytelling, treatment and skill in using the symbol in the narrative work, as a radiant essence that illuminates the text and increases its depth, inspiration and significance.

My belief that the central character deserves the title of heroism came by virtue of the compatibility or condescension of language with meaning, without involving practical philosophy in the trap of narrative work, and because the character reached its goal. Ali was able to evade the security men in spite of the strict siege. The Sheikh, the auxiliary figure, played his role in a very amazing manner and thus attained a position that rose to full symbolism, and open ending. Thus, the achievement of heroism became a soft process, requiring no supernatural subtlety or miraculous deeds. Nor did it need attaining a remarkable act of social, cultural and human nature. Rather, the hero emerged with simplicity and elegance without carrying a philosophical and human thought of great value. All he possessed was a simple soft language and a clear idea that helped him to reach the essence of his idea crystallized through the narrative with the aid of language.

Commenting on the link between the character and language, Nabila Ibrahim maintains,

In every story work, the character is determined through the area that this work is related to. What is more, it is determined by the level of language that undoubtedly distinguishes one writer from another. No matter what the case is, the character in the modern fiction has become part of the structure of the linguistic text; it is certainly determined only by language and through the movement of speech. Just as time and space and their function in the work have changed, so the more time and space building and their function in cutting modernity have change, the concept and function of the hero have changed. Besides, like space and time, the hero is no longer determined by certain traits. The hero became a public figure, or the man—the image, or the man-the ghost, the man who tries to unite his self that is scattered in more than an “I.” It is as if it were a group fighting together, or as if it were a place where events and compulsive forces collide. And, in consequence, the anecdotal personality no longer has full presence it enjoyed by having a distinguished voice among other voices. It has become confined in the language standing behind the words that suggest that there are those who say and testify and comment in a language characterized by instability and indefinability... Then there is nothing left but to look for it in all the stories provided by the styles of linguistic quirks. (Ibrahim, 1992: pp. 172-173)

Perhaps it must be said that our time is no longer the age of the filming of the

ideal heroism, because it is an illusion. The problems of life at the local and global level are too difficult for a single hero to win, even if he is a story hero. In general, it can be alleged that modernist storytelling depicts a marginal or pathetic tragic hero, either because he can no longer resist, or because he is unlucky; he is destined to live the age of contradictions at its peak, where it is difficult to find ills and causes.

### 3. Second: Post Reading Activity

What guides this study is the theory of reading or post-text reception, which, as Jonathan Culler maintains, reveals the interpretive processes of readers. In his view, different readers produce different interpretations, which this theory must explain. As readers differ in meaning, they may follow the same interpretive norms, but the reading conventions readers endorse while approaching a certain genre are not valid for another. Furthermore, these conventions also vary from time to time, but as a structuralist, he affirms that the theory is concerned with the synchronic systems of meaning rather than with consequential historical systems (Selden, Widdowson, & Brooker, 2005: pp. 76-77).

After approaching the central character from an anthropological aspect due to its being a human entity, now the discussion will endorse a semiotic point of view as it is a linguistic and dynamic entity. It is very clear that the writer Mohammad Ali Saeed has painted his character according to the personified classic structure, so that the central character moved from one situation to another along with the hierarchy of the plot from beginning to escalation and tension to the denouement, resolution, or revelation. Indeed, the protagonist has been approached through tracing his movement and the achievement of heroism absolutely in a way that intensifies meaning and significance, considering that meaning and significance are linked in one way or another to the central character.

The central character is a realistic witness to the event, to what this character sought to achieve, to his will and to his human and existential desire. The writer in his story comes from a living reality of contradictions. His human status is not exceptional, but an association that represents a broad sector of those who live his life, and the bitterness, distress and deprivation he suffers in order to fill the shortage. In other words, the writer desires to turn his distress into a safe situation in his solution and travel, instead of remaining hunted living a continuous escape from the authorities.

Here readers become aware of the issue of inequality in their surroundings. After witnessing the painful life of the protagonist, they realize that the life of stalking and running away is not a plague or curse. Because people want to live their entire lives with dignity, they sometimes have to pay their lives and resist injustice and the curbing of freedoms, colonialism and occupation of their land. Like his protagonist, the writer is not satisfied with the reality in which one lives strangely deprived of freedom and dignity. Thus, he lets out a first-rate human

existential cry, so that readers will not pollute their souls with false courtesy and hypocrisy, and endorse clean, vibrant, chaste and premeditated love that is connected to the lifeline, by forgetting the hatred and illusions that haunt people.

Perhaps what Ibrahim Sa'd ed-Din said about the image of the hero in this story is worth quoting and examining:

The image of the struggling hero reappears to us in the story of "Hayat," which is one of the best stories of Saeed's collection, and the most profound and distinctive on the artistic and objective levels. The hero here is not a perfect or complete mental image, but a living being created of flesh and blood, who possesses elements of strengths and weaknesses, superiority and shortcomings and defects and achievements like all average human beings. So where does the heroism lie? From the people themselves and from their faith in the justice of their cause, and their confidence in victory no matter how much sacrifice and complexity of the path. Our hero here—Ali al-Mahmoud—the stalker and wanted by the occupying forces is led by destinies to hide in his beloved woman's house, who is also the dream of his life, "Hayat." The circumstances desire that she got married to somebody else. And in consequence, he continues all the time a capture of his old dream and unbridled desires, until he is conquered by weakness in the end as he feels the army forces has tightened the noose on him... He intends to surrender but the hand of his opponent, the Sheikh grants him the life-jacket in the best form of dedication, self-denial, love of the homeland, and transcendence of personal sensitivities and alleged pride. The honor of man is the honor of the whole country, and it is hiding in the bathroom...." (Sa'ad ed-Din, 2011: p. 34)

This brings the discussion to deal with the image of the hero in an impressive form that may be shocking and negative. He is likely to be a person who has experienced moments of refraction and weakness, or a Palestinian who has lost touch with the reality of political struggle and has himself become accused of having a state of coexistence with the occupation, or has lost hope that occupation will end. The issue has been discussed by Ala' Karajah, who maintains,

The prevailing trends, on the word of the argument of Abdul Rahim al-Sheikh and many critics, have fallen in the contradiction of dismantling of the hero and turning him into a "natural human being" under occupation. In view of this standpoint, the new heroes were unable to end the Zionist colonialism of Palestine, so that the lives of Palestinians would become normal. (Karahaj, 2021: p. 16)

In this context, Abdul Rahim Al-Sheikh says:

A new image of the Palestinian hero emerges; he becomes a figure in the midpoint between the characters of the hero and the villain. He does not possess the traditional qualities of heroism such as: courage, daring, altru-

ism and tragedy of fate or glory, but has ordinary human features in which virtues and vices are naturally mixed. This is because in the narrative work, as well as in the new film product, the themes of contradiction experienced by the Palestinian are addressed, and the question is the extent to which literary works as well as Palestinian cinema films tend to normalize with the occupier. It is here that the destabilization of heroism or its stuttering in the light of the variables not the constants that engulf our homelands and the Arab world appear to us. This is reflected in literature and other creative works of art, such as theater and cinema. (Al-Sheikh, 2014: p. 104)

The drastic political events that took place after the Oslo Accords (1993) have cast their shadow over the central character and the performance of its heroic role to gain it in an innovative type. As we know, there were radical political and social transformations that took place at this period at various Palestinian levels: politically, socially and culturally. This caused writers to be reluctant to create the central character in the spirit of the full heroism because these writers lost belief in the existence of a true hero who plays his role in his existential place, except if he were a legendary character facing a cosmic destiny. But he may be a tragic hero whose tragedy lies within him because of his sense of inferiority and his need to compensate for his weakness and setback, and his inner inevitable determination to achieve his goal, no matter how much sacrifices and quirks he has to experience and fail to avoid!

But the problem with the stories of modernity is that,

When the self rejects reality, and it no longer finds a verifiable alternative, it suffers from self-vibration. This has been strongly reflected in the content and form of the story. As soon as the self attaches to the subject, it is displaced to transcendentalism away from the experience of reality. Thus, the relationship of the self to the subject remains constantly shaken, as a result of the large gap between transcendentalism and experimentalism. (Ibrahim, 1992: p. 178)

In response to the aforementioned semantic reading, it can be said that that the central character has exhausted his own powers in order to preserve his life, and the life of his beloved, namely Hayat. With his sincerity, courage, munificence and attachment to life, he replaced life with a romantic anthological life that transcended spatial existence into beyond transcendentalism.

Ibrahim Taha also relates to this point. He confirms that,

Life is legitimate and responsive and submissive to those who claim and demand it. The end of the story came to light, reflecting this green idea in a scene that brings the example to reality as no one has ever gathered before. The story at the end confirms my belief that the strangest romance is realism, and Abu Ali [the writer] in this story eliminates the regular boundaries between what is inside and outside, between the individual and the total and between what is romantic and what is realistic, and bind between them

in a strange convergence. Removing or diluting strict limits at the very least is a sign of exit from each institution, and bypassing the institution means an uprising against the method of organization, classification and identification. This act contains chaos and chaos is modernity and modernity erupts against monotony to create a new chaos that will later become a system removed by another revolution. (Taha, 2011: pp. 37-38)

If a question is asked concerning the character's style in terms of its social human employment and role in the story, the answer will consider the notes of the seminal pragmatic critic and philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce, the creator of "icon theory". He saw in the practical seminal circle that the character had a triangular division: iconic, indexical and in the end, owing to the skill of the reader it becomes symbolic.

In practice, the depiction of central characters in modern and contemporary narrative tends to towards considering it a symbolic entity, exercising its mental and physical, mental and emotional activities based on cognitive existentialism. It cannot be amputated from a social-intellectual collective that haunts it monotonously. Put differently, it represents a pre-painted environmental model (Eco-Literature Dialectical), and it must live it or reformulate it on the basis of its vision and intellectual theme for which it lives and resists. Thus, it lives an ideological struggle with its ongoing raging struggle inherent in its will, albeit on paper, if realism is unable to find solutions to these cosmic and local problems, which sometimes turn to metaphysical solutions, reaching a solution that appeals to the reader and perhaps the writer after the continuity of the existential solution in the anthro-semiotic circle.

In this narrative case, the central character of Ali al-Mahmoud can be considered as symbolic, rather than iconic. As for Hayat, she is iconic because she bounces back to the image of its reference to life. Some critics see in the icon the following:

It is just a shadow of reality, taken for granted by every criticism directed at any mediation through external relations. The icon is the rewriting of reality and writing in the limited sense of the word, is a partial case of iconography. (Ricoeur, 1976: pp. 54-57)

Ali al-Mahmoud's character expands to be symbolic, for it helped to produce and develop the event. The reader follows it sensitively with affection and amazement as it carries out the central conflict, embodying the national resistance act that stands at a crossroads, not just producing propaganda statement. It carries free ideology, which rejects injustice and struggles to undermine it, because its presence in the text and its circle of action was a challenge to the authority and its tools. The power with its oppressive and compulsive instruments gives rise to an anti-self-reaction. This struggle, which Ali al-Mahmoud has touched on in consciousness and practical existence, applies to honest and resistant work even in Cuba, in the American continent. It is because resistance is an

existential human condition in which the hero raises his abilities and his skills to achieve his humanity. He does not recognize geographical boundaries since he is infected by a virus that moves freely in the current of time and space, especially when the whole reality is exceptionally. Hence, the resistance becomes a legitimate way of extracting rights by seeking decent livelihoods in a multicultural state, nationalities, minorities and religions.

#### 4. Conclusion

This study has explored the mechanism of employing the central character and knowing its signs through textual tools, which do not deviate from its pre-determined qualities and movements: dynamically, interactively and socially throughout the narrative text. This step is necessary to determine the centrality of the personality, the basis in which assumes the importance and actions that guarantee its centrality. Therefore, the central character, Ali al-Mahmoud has been given the attribute of complete undiminished heroism, according to the dynamic semiotic model (C.S.M) in pursuing the central character and its course to achieve its goal, which tunnels in the course of security, safety, romantic love, living freely on his historical land and resisting injustice without being subjected to the pursuit of brute power.

Ali al-Mahmoud's character was fully starred as he achieved his goals. His quest, his social belonging, ideology and anthropological behavior clearly contributed to the manifestation of the central character's heroism.

Finally, the semantic lesson after reading was the need to continue and maintain the national and existential struggle to reach a decent life. Besides, there was an emphasis on the political human love that is far from being tolerated at this socio-political stage, which necessitates the defense of freedom and dignity and the continued legitimate struggle against power and the ruling institution. The study also revealed the weaknesses of society, which is constrained by social and customary constraints, conspiracies and fear of the other. Therefore, the structured revolutionary path should be adopted to bring about a change in the values of social, political and human justice in our societies. There is no harm if the change takes the direction of a pragmatic practical philosophical approach, if socialist or monetary realism does not succeed in bringing realistic solutions that satisfy the taste and opinion of the individual and society in the age of openness and globalization.

#### Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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