

**THE INTEGRATIVE PERSONALITY IN THE NOVEL 'BAYT ABU  
BAYYUT' BY HUSSAM KHWAM AL YAHYA**

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**Abstract**

This paper aims to study the integrative personality or fictional character within the crisis of self and reality in the novel "Bayt Abu Bayyut" by the Iraqi author Hussam Khwam Al Yahya. The novel delves into the existential crisis faced by Iraq and its people amidst Western colonization during the fall of the Ba'athist regime. This study seeks to elucidate the concept of the fictional character in general and the integrative personality specifically within the context of the complex dialectical relationship between self and reality, or reality and the imagined, while considering the influence and impact between the character and other elements or components of the narrative, such as time, place, and levels of linguistic performance employed in the narrative text.

The novel sheds light on the Iraqi reality within an open temporal context that encompasses history, the present, and the future simultaneously. The author skillfully combines two narrative trajectories regarding character construction: the relationship between the self and objective reality, and the relationship between the realistic and the dreamlike or the objective and the imagined. Through this, we analyze practically the contours of the integrative personality, its nature, semantic dimensions, temporal and spatial realms "both inherited and contemporary" within the context of the author's objective and artistic vision.

**Keywords:** Integrative Personality - Bayt Abu Bayyut - Hussam Khwam Al Yahya.

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**Introduction:**

The focus of this research centers on the technique employed in portraying the integrative persona in the novel "Bayt Abu Bayyut" by the Iraqi novelist Luḥṣam Khawwām Āl Yaḥyā. The fictional character, as an integrative figure, stands as a significantly crucial element within the narrative discourse, influencing the course of storytelling in the novel based on the quality of the characters and their presentation. The research aims to shed light on the narrator's interaction with these characters, both primary and secondary, and the methods employed in utilizing these characters and the roles assigned to them. The approach undertaken in addressing this subject involved initiating a theoretical examination of the character, drawing from various sources and references established within the field of critical studies, particularly within narratology, subsequently reinforcing these concepts with practical examples derived from the novel.

The research content is divided into two sections and a conclusion. The first section provides a general definition of the fictional character and specifically explores the integrative character within the context of its relationship with narrative components such as time, place, and linguistic performance levels.

The second section discusses the author's approaches in presenting his fictional characters in the aforementioned novel, revealing their integrative nature, which amalgamates reality with the imaginative, the self with the subject, and the familiar with the unfamiliar, in accordance with the character's pattern—whether inherited or contemporary—and its openness to overlapping and diverse temporal and spatial dimensions.

The conclusion comprises derived conclusions from the research axes, in accordance with the context permissible within this study's scope.

### **Firstly: The General Framework of the Integrative Character in the Novel.**

The character stands as a fundamental element within the novel, with some critics even suggesting that the novel, in their perception, embodies the "art of character." This notion isn't surprising considering that the character constitutes the pivot of events, be it in a novel, reality, or even in history itself. Even in its earliest forms, depicted in folklore tales, epics, and the art of biography, the character assumes a paramount role as it is the entity that generates events through its interaction or struggle with reality or nature. Indeed, the character serves as a central element in every narrative, such that envisioning a novel without a character or multiple characters becomes inconceivable.<sup>1</sup>

In modern dictionaries, it's noted that the fictional character, whether positive or negative, is the driving force behind the progression and development of events within a novel. They represent one of the imaginative or realistic individuals around whom the story or play revolves.<sup>2</sup>

As indicated, "character" refers to both inherent and physical traits, standards, and ethical principles. In literature, it holds various qualitative connotations, especially concerning the portrayal of an individual represented within a novel or story.<sup>3</sup> We can conclude that a character embodies the distinguishing traits that set an individual apart from others. Each character possesses distinct features distinguishing them from others. In literature, character encompasses all the actions and behaviors undertaken by individuals to propel the narrative action forward.

The terminological concept of character has seen multiple and diverse definitions based on the varied perspectives of researchers. The notion of character represents the collective traits forming the nature of a person or living entity, encompassing inherent qualities, standards, and ethical principles.<sup>4</sup> The external manifestations, encompassing both physical and moral attributes, form the foundation of a character. Additionally, there are perspectives that define character as 'a being endowed with human qualities and committed to human events.'<sup>5</sup> It has also been defined as 'a human being of flesh and blood living within specific time and place.' Others perceive it as 'an empty structure or vessel that acquires its significance from the narrative construction, as it is the narrative that imbues it with identity.'<sup>6</sup> Therefore, a character is a human entity possessing human qualities that interact within a specific time and place; it's a construct that develops within the framework of a literary work.

Furthermore, some perceive it as 'a distinct, paper-thin entity made up of traits, symbols, and signs from which a misconception might arise.' Thus, the character exists within the realm of literature, art, and imagination, and its attribution belongs solely to that particular world.<sup>7</sup>

Indeed, such perceptions attempt to negate the existence of character as an entity with uniqueness, aiming to depict it merely as a symbol. However, nullifying the existence of fictional characters is a futile exercise because they are an essential element of the entire narrative work. The continuity of narrative art is intrinsically tied to the presence of characters. Most novels consist of events and actions carried out by these characters. Even those who refute the significance of character acknowledge the active role of this fundamental element in the story. For instance, Todorov, who believes character is solely a linguistic matter, mentions elsewhere: "Nevertheless, it is absurd to deny any relationship

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Qabbani, Hussein: "The Art of Story Writing," Dar Al-Jeel, Beirut, (No specific edition mentioned), page 68.

<sup>2</sup> Wahba, Magdy, and Al-Muhandis, Kamel: "Dictionary of Arabic Terminology in Language and Literature," Dar Lebanon, Beirut, 2nd Edition, 1984, page 208.

<sup>3</sup> Fahti, Ibrahim: "Dictionary of Literary Terms," Dar Muhammad Ali Al-Hami for Publishing, Sfax, Tunisia, 1st Edition, 1998, page 159.

<sup>4</sup> Zaaroub, Subhiyya Odeh: "Ghassan Kanafani: Aesthetics of Narrative in the Literary Discourse," Majdalawi, 1st Edition, 2015, page 117.

<sup>5</sup> Barms, Gerald: "Narrative Terminology," Supreme Council of Culture, 1st Edition, 2003, page 42.

<sup>6</sup> Zaaroub, Subhiyya Odeh: "Aesthetics of Narrative in the Novel Discourse," Publisher: M.S., page 117.

<sup>7</sup> Al-Hajilan, Nasser: "Character in Arab Proverbs: A Study of Cultural Patterns in the Arab Character," Arab Club, Riyadh, 1st Edition, 2009, page 52.

between character and personhood, as characters portray individuals through specific imaginative techniques.<sup>8</sup> Thus, the importance of the character becomes evident as it serves as the focal point of attraction for readers. They seek stories that present vibrant characters, aspiring to acquaint themselves with new personalities and observe life's complexities. These readers engage with human-like characters that are easy for them to understand and relate to, interacting with them to comprehend their actions and emotions. Undoubtedly, compared to other story elements, they are drawn more intensely to dynamic, vivid characters that possess inclusivity, warmth, diversity, and vigor. These attributes within a fictional character captivate the reader's attention and earn the highest degree of admiration and appreciation.<sup>9</sup> Thus, characters, in another expression, are individuals from reality, supplemented or diminished by traits from the author's imaginative realm. They are dynamic, lifelike figures, aligned with reality, comprising both primary and secondary characters. They appear and disappear based on the roles they enact, aiding in the portrayal of their personalities.<sup>10</sup>

Regarding terms like "narrative character," "fictional character," and "story character," they all carry a similar connotation. Abdul Malik Mortada delineated the psychological character by stating, "The character is an artistic tool crafted by the author for a designated function. It is fundamentally a relative entity, as it does not exist outside the confines of the words, never evolving into a mere figure on paper."<sup>11</sup>

The character, being a product of imagination, is conceived and crafted by the writer to undertake various roles and convey a message to the reader. Discussing the integrative character realistically—within an ideological context—relates to the association of the integrative idea with the Arab youth movement as intellectuals demanding involvement in the core of political action during the colonial period. The nomenclature of this concept traces back to models from political movements witnessed in modern nationalities, such as the Turkish youth, Egyptian youth, and Tunisian youth.<sup>12</sup>

This passage delves into the artistic essence of the novel, portraying it as a balancing act between ideology and art, reality and imagination, or realistic vision versus artistic perception. It highlights the dynamic interplay between self and subject matter, where the subject matter comprises factual events, and the self-embodies intellectual stances, emotions, vivid imagination, and the capacity to influence and be influenced by reality.

Within the logical interpretation, novelists' endeavor to integrate fictional characters into reality is attributed to an underlying desire to break free from constraints and surpass reality toward a more beautiful, extraordinary reality. This doesn't signify an escape from reality or transcending it, as pursued by romantics. Instead, it enhances the echoes of reality as a complete context for various intellectual and artistic elements, real and imaginative, to converge. The integrative character thus bridges reality and imagination, disrupting the norms and the extraordinary, bestowing a significant aesthetic value and functionality upon the novel.

The text further explores the integrative character's openness to both the real and the imaginary, the familiar and the unfamiliar, within the dialectical relationship between the self and the subject. It emphasizes the dialectic relationship between the character and other narrative elements like time and place. Time, as a narrative technique, serves to organize events according to the characters' roles. Characters and time are integral components of the novel's construction. The appearance of any character necessitates a specific narrative time that is crucial for the storyteller in the development of events. Time in the novel operates through two important techniques: the technique of flashback and the

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<sup>8</sup> Todorov, Tzvetan: "Character," Translated by Mohammed Fikri, *Al-Haras Al-Watani Magazine*, Issue 189/190, 1998, page 106.

<sup>9</sup> Najm, Mohammed Youssef: "The Art of the Short Story," Dar Sader, Beirut, Dar Al-Shorouk, Oman, 1st Edition, 1996, pages 47-48.

<sup>10</sup> Tawfiq, Omar Ibrahim: *Arts of Modern Arabic Prose*, Dar Al-Ghaida for Publishing and Distribution, Amman, 2013, p. 84.

<sup>11</sup> Mortad, Abdel Malik: *The Contemporary Algerian Story*, National Book Foundation, Algeria, Dr. I, 1990, pp. 67/69.

<sup>12</sup> Muqalati, Abdullah: *In the roots of the Algerian revolution, the continued resistance to the colonialists through the occupation until November 1, 1954*, Shams al-Ziban, Algeria, 2013, p. 168.

technique of anticipation, involving events preceding or succeeding the current storyline. Flashback recalls events from a different time compared to the present narrative.<sup>13</sup>

This is a temporal technique through which a previous time in the narrative is recalled, constituting a fundamental process within storytelling. Every return to the past signifies, for the narrative, a recollection of its particular past, redirecting it towards prior events from the point the story has reached.<sup>14</sup> Jean Ricarder defines it as the return to a point before the storytelling, signifying the retrieval of an event that occurred prior to the current narrative point.<sup>15</sup> There are two types of recollection: internal, which retrieves events occurring within the story's timeline, that is, after its beginning.<sup>16</sup> This form refers to a past that comes after the initial moment of the story's events, and it might be delayed in its presentation or introduction within the narrative.<sup>17</sup> This external recall retrieves events that predate the beginning of the narrative.<sup>18</sup> This anticipation, also known as anticipatory narrative, is as important as retrospective storytelling.<sup>19</sup> It involves looking forward or providing pre-information, where the narrator presents a narrative section containing events with expected future indicators.<sup>20</sup> It is also defined as "any narrative segment that recounts events preceding their chronological occurrence or that can be anticipated... This narrative pattern disrupts the sequence of events in the story by presenting narrative sequences that precede others in occurrence, essentially skipping a period within the story's timeline. It surpasses the narrative point foreseeing future events and anticipates upcoming developments in the storyline."<sup>21</sup> The narrator resorts to using this technique by hinting at or informing about an event that occurred before its time, transitioning from the storytelling period to a predictive phase, anticipating the future and incorporating it into their narrative. This is intended to disrupt the chronological order of events.

Place holds a closer association with human life as humans perceive place differently from time. While time is perceived indirectly through its impact on things, place is perceived directly and tangibly, offering a material and sensory perception.<sup>22</sup> Places can be either rejected or desired, as the selection and configuration of a place constitute a part of human character construction. A place can be welcoming or desolate, symbolizing happiness or misery, stark reality or comforting dreams, representing loss or reconciliation with oneself or the community.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, a place is defined as the belonging that determines the nature of the relationship with that place itself, in terms of estrangement or familiarity. The original place holds a pivotal position for the character, fulfilling its demands and desires, providing vitality. In the absence of this vitality, the character seeks it elsewhere, resulting in detachment from the central place and connection with the surroundings.<sup>24</sup> In the context of the interaction and influence between the integrative character and the elements of time and place, there's an evident disruption of the typical pattern associated with these elements. Temporally, we observe a clear deviation from the physical timeline towards the realm of dreams or imagination, where the imaginary is imbued with

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<sup>13</sup> Abdel Hakim Muhammad, Shaaban: *The New Arab Novel, Study of the Narrative Record and Textual Readings*, Al-Mumuwarat for Publishing and Distribution, 1st edition, 2004 AD, p. 106.

<sup>14</sup> Suleiman Ibrahim, Maysaa: *The Secret Structure in the Book of Enjoyment and Sociability*, Publications of the Syrian General Book Authority, Damascus, 2001 AD, pp. 227/228.

<sup>15</sup> Al-Bahrawi, Hassan: *The structure of the novelistic form (space, time, character)*, Arab Cultural Center, Casablanca, 2nd edition, 2009, p. 121.

<sup>16</sup> Ricarder, Jean: *Issues of the Modern Novel*, Trans. Sayah Jahayem, Publications of the Ministry of Culture and National Guidance, Damascus, 1977, p. 250.

<sup>17</sup> Eid al-Hakim Muhammad, Sha`ban: *The New Arabic Novel*, ed. S, p. 107.

<sup>18</sup> Muhammad Mahmoud Al-Jubouri, Abdul Rahman: *Building the Novel according to Hassan Mutlaq (Semantic Studies)*, p. 31.

<sup>19</sup> Abdel Hakim Muhammad, Shaaban: *The New Arab Novel*, ed. S, p. 107.

<sup>20</sup> Suleiman Al-Ibrahim, Maysaa: *The Narrative Structure in the Book of Enjoyment and Sociability*, ed. S, p. 230.

<sup>21</sup> Azzam, Muhammad: *The Poetics of Narrative Discourse*, Arab Writers Union Publications, Dr. I, 2005, p. 110.

<sup>22</sup> Lahmidani, Hamid: *The structure of the narrative text from the perspective of literary criticism*, Arab Cultural Center for Publishing and Distribution, Casablanca, 3rd edition, 2000 AD, p. 61.

<sup>23</sup> Tibi, Issa: *Components of narrative discourse, the novel (Graves in the Water)*, Master's thesis, University of Algiers, 2000 AD, p. 107.

<sup>24</sup> Yaqtin, Saeed: *The narrator said, Narrative Structures in the Popular Environment*, Arab Cultural Center, Casablanca, 1st edition, 1997, p. 92.

realistic traits or reality adopts fantastical elements. This serves a functional purpose that aligns with the narrative's semantic context rather than being an extraneous addition. Similarly, spatially, there's a sense of wonder or enchantment that narrative imparts upon the actual place, liberating it from the confines of its positioning and material characteristics within the context of its relationship with the integrative character.

The influence of the integrative character extends to strike a significant chord in the phenomenon of linguistic plurality or diversity within the narrative. The amalgamation between the native and foreign languages gives rise to what is known as colloquial or vernacular language. This predominantly involves breaking the rules of the mother tongue by opening it up to others, surpassing syntactic norms under the umbrella of what's termed displacement. There's a tendency towards shorter sentences, prevalence of melody, which some critics consider not as error but as linguistic phenomena not easily dismissed due to their widespread use among various social strata and institutions, further adapted by some more than others. This is because these languages contribute to breaking linguistic norms that regulate speakers, enabling swift interaction, expression, and communication, thus relieving the burden of engagement with others.<sup>25</sup>

Therefore, it becomes imperative for the Arabic language to assimilate the seeds of this evolving linguistic consciousness, allowing it to possess a deeper ability to accurately diagnose the diversity of social relationships. This facilitates a broader, more effective, and closer-to-life circulation, marking one of the challenges of narrative discourse.<sup>26</sup>

In light of the foregoing, we will approach the integrative personality within the novel 'Beit Abu Bayyut' by the Iraqi novelist Hussam Khawwam Al Yahya. This involves examining the concept of the personality, its transformations, and its evolutionary trajectory on one hand, and exploring the nature of the relationship between the personality and the components of the novel, shedding light on the concept of integration. Integration is understood as an open structure melding within the narrative fabric, encompassing its various components and elements.

### **"Secondly: The Integrative Personality Between the Crisis of Self and the Crisis of Reality in the Novel 'Beit Abu Bayyut'.**

The integrative personality functions as an evolving open structure that diversifies the productivity of meaning, enhancing the artistic quality by presenting condensed scenes of a human reality renewed in every time and place. It carries an invitation to stimulate souls, to perceive and harness the sources of self-awareness and reality alike.<sup>27</sup> In the novel "House of the Fathers" by the Iraqi novelist Hussam Khawwam Al Yahya, the general structure of the character is apparent. The narrative portrays future events set in 2021, within Baghdad's context, against the backdrop of the overthrow of the Ba'athist regime, accompanied by internal and external conspiracies aiming to partition the nation into three entities: Shiitestan, Sunnistan, and Kurdistan.

The novel revolves around the central character, Mahfouz, who returns to his homeland after an absence of nearly a decade in the United States. He assumes the role of a translator working with the international peacekeeping force in Iraq. As he commences his duties, he is entrusted with a sacred task by the spirits of three Iraqi children who perished in the civil war. Through fourteen messages conveyed to Mahfouz in his dreams, each message assigns him a mission crucial to unveiling a plot to divide the country and seeking retribution against the conspirators involved in this scheme.

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<sup>25</sup> Ben Zina, Safia: The problem of the language of the novel according to Wassini Al-Araj between classical and colloquial (the novel Memory of Water as an example), Hasiba Ben Bouali University, Algeria, p. 49. See: Ashbhoun, Abd al-Malik: The New Sensitivity in the Arabic Novel (Edouard al-Khayyat's Novels as a Model), Difference Publications, Algeria, 1st edition, 2010, p. 165.

<sup>26</sup> Ben Zina, Safia: The problem of the language of the novel according to Wasini Al-Araj, M. S, p. 49.

<sup>27</sup> Experimentation in the Iraqi Feminist Novel after 2003 AD, Saeed Hamid Kazem, Tammuz Printing and Publishing, Damascus, 2006 AD, p. 237.

Within the context of the novel, there is a multitude of integrative characters, including primary ones like Mahfouz, Dunia, Captain Downey, the three angelic children, Zainab, and secondary characters such as Chef Kumar, the three troublemaking elders, Jameel bin Rabbah, Abu Alghaira Othman, Sheikh Ma'roof Al-Karkhi, Nidaa Kazim, and Mohammed Al-Khashali, the owner of the Shabandar café. Additionally, the spatial setting varies and diversifies in its relationship with temporal dimensions, serving as a space for the movement of integrative characters, displaying their effects and the nature of their transformations. This intertwines acceptable imagination with imagined reality in a dramatic style that continuously transports us away from and back to reality. The narrative space expands temporally, incorporating various temporal dimensions that crystallize the realism of the dream or the dream-like quality of reality. Functionally and semantically, there is minimal distinction between primary and secondary characters; collectively, they contribute to shaping the overall discourse, expanding the narrative's semantic trajectory.

The character of Mahfouz serves as the window through which the author gazes upon Iraq's past, present, and future. Through the crisis faced by the primary character, the author encapsulates the crisis of Iraq itself, a nation enduring harsh internal and external challenges. Mahfouz, originally an Iraqi citizen, was compelled to seek American citizenship, necessitating his departure from Iraq to the United States. Had he been accepted into the law school he had long dreamed of, studied for, and worked diligently towards obtaining a bachelor's degree to become a lawyer, as he had planned, he might have stayed in Iraq.<sup>28</sup> That's because, simply put, he's considered a traitor's son, an agent, someone undeserving of living in the country like any other decent human being.<sup>29</sup> "His sole fault lay in his father's affiliation with an opposition party to the ruling Ba'ath Party, which is a common experience among many Iraqi offspring. They were inadvertently influenced by their fathers during the political conflicts and party alignments, despite the fading voices of opposition under the oppression and dictatorship. It represents a historical gesture that successive generations bear the heavy price without committing any wrongdoing.

Mehfouz's crisis embodies the plight of intellectuals who suffered during the reign of the Ba'ath regime in Iraq. It unequivocally underscores that, for the authoritarian regime, politics outweighed everything, and free culture was considered a formidable enemy that had to be eradicated, sidelined, or rendered ineffective. In a society that failed to value culture or intellectualism, this crisis, where self and reality merge, compelled Mehfouz to leave his birthplace and seek American citizenship in 2010. This decision came after working as a translator for the US Army for a year and being granted asylum in the United States, similar to other translators.<sup>30</sup>

Through this, the character of Mehfouz unfolds and enhances its artistic depth through its symbolic capacity to carry connotative dimensions that extend along the path of individual and societal identity. It embodies the facets of reality from this confrontational angle between the intellectual and authority. This crisis deepens, accompanied by a widening social reality that is intricately linked to Mehfouz's personal life from childhood to a stage where he is determined to change his personal reality by any means necessary. This determination will grant the character a transformative and evolving nature, merging seamlessly with the concurrent integrative processes. Mehfouz's encounters with coincidences, events, and individuals will be immersed within an interactive, dialectical framework that blends the dream and reality, or the realistic and imaginary. All this aims to accomplish the mission entrusted to him by the three children who persistently communicate with him through dreams.<sup>31</sup>

This is another authentic facet reflecting the strained relationship between the individual and the social reality that has been tampered with by politics, corrupting its humanistic and ethical values under the pretext of nationalism and loyalty to the homeland. This condition, prone to generalization, is also applicable to Iraqi society under an all-encompassing dictatorial authority that follows a one-party

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<sup>28</sup> The House of Abu Bayout, Hussam Khawam Al Yahya, p. 50.

<sup>29</sup> S. L, p. 50

<sup>30</sup> S. L, p. 50.

<sup>31</sup> S. L, pp. 43/44.

policy in both state and society. Perhaps the mentioned reasons that drove Mehfoz to escape from his objective and subjective reality, sensing or realizing that his homeland neither wants nor accepts him, are the same reasons that compelled him to return to Iraq. Even if he wasn't initially aware of the nature of this return and its purpose, gradually, these aspects unfolded for him. The integrative nature of Mehfoz's character unfolds in the later stages after his return to Iraq until the end of the novel. He actively navigates the narrative's course, establishing a network of relationships with several other pivotal characters. These characters oscillate between reality and imagination or between truth and dream, giving them a symbolic and suggestive quality that embodies the realistic and artistic dimensions of the author's narrative. As soon as Mehfoz arrives at that point on Bridge Number One, renamed from the Imams' Bridge, and begins his work as a translator for the American Captain Downey's unit, we encounter Dina, a woman belonging to the Shiite sect. She attempts to escape to Al-Rusafa, the capital of the Republic of Shia-stan, with her three children, fleeing from the oppression of militia leader Barzan and the desires of the Jihad al-Nikah princes after her Sunni husband was killed and thrown into the Tigris River. This context epitomizes either the fragility of the self or the brutality of reality and inhumanity: "On the Imams' Bridge stand the remnants of a woman, invoking the jealousy of strangers after her own kin had ceased to harbor any jealousy."<sup>32</sup>

In this context, Dina appears to symbolize Iraq in its torn, weakened, and internally divided state along sectarian lines, fueled by insidious internal forces and conspiring external influences. The place itself, Iraq, unfolds as a troubled space due to the intricacies of the dysfunctional relationships between its inhabitants in reality, or between the characters on the artistic level. This fraught space, encapsulated artistically by the Imams' Bridge, which divides the Shiite and Sunni republics, acquires attributes akin to the characters Mehfoz and Dina. It exhibits a sense of bewildering realism that almost defies comprehension and understanding, as if confronting an irrational, almost surreal reality, or a type of imaginative madness. Consequently, place and character parallel each other symbolically, bearing the hallmark of integration and transformation between what is rational and logical and what is irrational and surreal. The crisis within the character of Dina deepens significantly within the dialogue context between Mahfoz and Captain Downey, the latter being acutely aware of the convoluted structure of Iraqi society. Murder has become an identity amidst the division of Iraq into three republics (Shiastan, Sunnistan, Kurdistan), and woe to those without the credentials to belong to any of these republics.

**(The captain lit the cigarette and sat down to complete that terrifying scenario to Mahfoz:**

**- I'll tell you something: Do you know that if those gunmen captured her, raped her, and then killed her and her three children, it would be more merciful to her and her children than crossing the bridge into the territory of the Shiite Republic?**

**Yes, don't you be surprised, man, and don't be surprised, because you are new here, and you do not care about your home country, which you left for ten years. Everything has changed and things have happened in it that you could not comprehend with a passing conversation you hear during hours of duty!**

**I will tell you...**

**First, after we open the door for her, the Shiite Republic Guard will attack her, and they are like members of the Barzan militia, with nothing but the official status that has been given to them, with their spotted uniforms and IDs that they carry in the pockets of their suits only! They will ask her the same question that you asked her and translated by you:**

**Do you have a (Sh) card?**

**And inevitably, without a card, she will answer them in the negative, and there all the lessons will be poured out! You will be taken immediately to those camps: which are located in the Al-Nahrawan area, east of the capital city of Al-Rusafa, and they are vast camps extending far in the distance, Mahfoz, and they are detaining a larger number of women like this in them than they**

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<sup>32</sup> S. L, pp. 31/32.

**do not trust on their lands, firstly, and secondly, so that they do not take care of feeding them from... Their state treasury is already empty, and they are crowded there with hundreds of thousands, women, men, children, and of all ages, supported by the international organization, and barely providing them with a single meal a day, which can barely feed a small child. The war has completely destroyed the treasuries of the three countries. Even this orphan meal will not be obtained by a lonely and weak woman like this woman in those camps, because life in the Nahrawan camps has one law that applies and no other. It is: Survival to the strongest!**<sup>33</sup>

The crisis of the subjective reality experienced by Iraq and its people on various political, economic, social, and religious levels becomes distinctly evident. Within this context, the concept of a unified nation, state, and sovereignty has become null, leading Iraq into a state beyond the notion of a nation. In the face of profound horizontal and vertical divisions, Iraq has transitioned into a state where the concept of the nationhood is lost. The crises resulting from these divisions have deeply affected the entire Iraqi society, a reality that initially overwhelmed the character of Mahfouz. Each instance of realization plunged him into shock and bewilderment to the extent that he experienced dizziness, a depletion of strength, and mental and emotional turmoil.

**At one point, Mahfouz, feeling dizzy, crouched on the ground briefly, his strength suddenly drained. He then rose and returned to her, rushing and shouting at her,**

**"Why did you remain in the state of Sunnistan after the division?"**<sup>34</sup>

Faced with this grim reality that pressed upon Mahfouz, conflicting desires surged within him—to abandon his work and withdraw far away, returning to the United States. However, fate had led him back to Iraq with a national duty awaiting him to embrace. He was entrusted with a national role, as evident in the question posed: **"Al-Antarah Square, devoid of me, the Arab Knight statue. Where is the statue? Where is the Arab Knight?"**<sup>35</sup> This hints at the transformative nature of Mahfouz's integration. Iraq awaited its authentic Arab knight, one who could alleviate its suffering and unveil the schemes and conspiracies against it. Mahfouz was compelled to engage with the reality in all its dimensions, to confront his destiny and that of his homeland actively and influentially. He couldn't declare withdrawal amidst this turmoil without the slightest sense of belonging to the country where he was raised. Moreover, was it conceivable for him to leave this task to strangers? The Captain (Downey) seemed to know Baghdad better than him, as if he were one of its residents, loving Baghdad more:

**"Listen, Mahfouz, I know Baghdad more than you. I served in the American army in Iraq since 2003, until the US forces left Baghdad and the beginning of 2012... I became attached to this country, Mahfouz. The years passed, and I remained here even through the civil war and the official division of its territories among the three states."**<sup>36</sup>

Here, Captain Downey's character emerges as a tributary influencing Mahfouz's transformation. His realistic integration with Iraq had the most profound impact on compelling Mahfouz to reconsider his stance, fostering a conscious reinterpretation rooted in social and national transformation.

New tasks emerged for Mahfouz in service of the national public interest, necessitating confrontation and immersion in reality. This was vividly exemplified in the fourteen messages he received from the three children killed in the civil war through dreams.

The genuine transformative nature within Mahfouz's character commences at the start of the fourth chapter of the novel, coinciding with the inception of the first message received through a dream. This is further reinforced by the presence of Kumar, the elderly Indian cook, who prophesies Mahfouz's future, affirming that what he saw in his dream is indeed a deferred yet real truth:

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<sup>33</sup> S. L, p. 11.

<sup>34</sup> M. N, pp. 31/32.

<sup>35</sup> S. L, p. 35.

<sup>36</sup> S. L, p. 63.



**"There's no need to tell me your dream, my son. Just listen to me without interruption, understood! Now listen:**

**the three children. Pay heed to them, my boy! Don't ignore them; just obey. They are the ones who will guide you in what they ask of you."**

**At this point, Mahfouz shouted loudly, "Who are they... who are they..."<sup>37</sup>**

With a brilliant artistic touch, the writer transitions within the same context from reality to the realm of dreams. Kumar's conversation, in fact, was part of a dream.<sup>38</sup>

**"What should I say to Kumar? You appeared to me in my dream and spoke to me about the three children in my dreams? What will he say about me? Surely he will deem me insane without a doubt."<sup>39</sup>**

However, this dream was Kumar's knowledge without explicitly sharing it with Mahfouz or making it apparent. What Mahfouz experienced in his dream was confirmed by Kumar:

**"I've told you before that I have spiritual abilities, Mahfouz..."**

**And he followed with a second statement, smiling amidst Mahfouz's astonishment:**

**"Don't forget about the three children, my son. Listen to them and don't ignore them, as they seek refuge in you."<sup>40</sup>**

Here emerges Kumar's integrative character under the theme of spiritual abilities that transcend the laws of material reality, crossing from the rational into the supernatural. This pivotal point becomes a significant launching pad for Mahfouz's transformative journey, providing him with an integrative force that attracts contradictions and paradoxes.

The three children symbolize national unity, as their deceased father named them after components of Iraqi society (Omar, Ali, Helkurd), symbolizing the unity of Shia, Sunni, and Kurds. The roles played by the children exhibit an integrative aspect in reality, actively and significantly. The sum of the messages and information they conveyed to Mahfouz through dreams had a tangible impact, grounded in objective historical truths. They mentioned events like the 2019 Baghdad conference, Jamil bin Rabah, an IT investment company owner, the Berlin conference to partition Iraq and incite civil war, the Freedom Monument with the missing piece, and the revelation about Captain (Downie), nicknamed the Scorpion, among others.<sup>41</sup>

The realistic presence of the children is further augmented through the guidance and instructions they continuously impart to Mahfouz. This assists him in carrying out his noble task of exposing the conspiracy to divide Iraq, fuel internal discord, and uncover its conspirators. This merging of imagination with reality, materiality with the supernatural, enriches the novel's artistry, lending it a distinct aesthetic quality.

In the context of blending reality with imagination or truth with dreams, several characters arise, summoned by the nature of the task entrusted to Mahfouz. For instance, an Iraqi woman hands Mahfouz a note regarding Jamil bin Rabah. Later, it becomes evident that she is a fictional character with no tangible existence but exhibits an active, realistic behavior in Mahfouz's life:

**"While Mahfouz leaned against the iron railing of the bridge, observing passersby, a young woman in a cloak hurriedly approached. She appeared flustered, cautiously observing him. Initially apprehensive of her, Mahfouz noticed her arrival from the direction of the nearby Marjan building. She greeted him and, after noticing the Captain standing beside Mahfouz, urgently handed him a note, advising him not to**

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<sup>37</sup> S. L., p. 64.

<sup>38</sup> S. L., pp. 92-93.

<sup>39</sup> S.L., p. 93.

<sup>40</sup> S. L., p. 95

<sup>41</sup> S. L., pp. 110 onwards.

read it there. She then gestured toward the Captain, indicating that this woman had a request to compensate for a property in the Republic of Sunni-stan.<sup>42</sup> Later, it became evident to Mahfouz that she was the mother of the three children who had been killed in the civil war. Consequently, the integrative sense about the deceased young woman's personality increased due to the behavioral impact she had in objective existence, embodying metaphysical elements within the physical realm, following their distinct laws.

**Close to this character is the elderly sheikh who accompanied Mahfouz to visit the shrine of Sheikh Ma'ruf Al-Karkhi, a Christian who converted to Islam. He disclosed to Mahfouz the reality of the ongoing forgery and conspiracy regarding the national elections:**

**"The sheikh pulled him by the hand and made him see thousands of ballot boxes stacked in iron containers, locked and sealed. The locks automatically broke, and their doors opened, astonishing Mahfouz. He wanted to speak, but the sheikh responded:**

**'Capture them, my son, especially the numbers and data on the containers hanging on their doors, as they will expose their deceit, providing evidence of their plots against Iraq.'**

**Mahfouz captured them all while strolling among the towering containers. Upon returning to the sheikh, the moment he placed his hand on Mahfouz, he collapsed unconscious.**

He opened his eyes to find himself near the sacred shrine, surrounded by some religious men. He asked them:

**'Where is the sheikh? The sheikh who was just here, where is he?'**

**One of them replied..."**

"There is no sheikh here, my son! You came in alone from the door, and suddenly you fainted.<sup>43</sup> The character of the sheikh plays a pivotal role in revealing the hidden truths of reality, dispelling - on a realistic level - the deception of sectarian and religious divides among people. It exposes - on a metaphysical level - what may not be evident to the naked eye, the facts that many aim to conceal or falsify, allowing them to be lost in the depths of a fabricated history.

The author's use of colloquial language within the narrative, as seen in the aforementioned phrases ("Where is the sheikh? The sheikh who's coming? Where is he? / There's no sheikh / You came in alone from the door"), draws our attention to the sudden transition from the artistic space to the realistic one. It immerses us into the event, as if we witness and hear it directly, without mediation. This technique skillfully embodies the psychological reality that overwhelms the character of Mahfouz, causing shock due to the nature of the shift between the real and dreamlike experiences he encounters alone.

Within the linguistic diversity between colloquial and formal Arabic, the author allocates a substantial space for it in certain instances, indicating an artistic awareness of employing this variation and using colloquial language as warranted by the context. This is evident in the dialogue between him and Dunya, the woman threatened with rape and death. (Tell me, how do they live there safely?

- When conditions worsened in Stan's Sunna, I planned for this. I crossed the border and entered the camps, and I was about to commit suicide, and then I would not be able to check on my children, who would receive direct care from the international organization that isolates orphans from the rest of the detainees in order to protect them from killing and other things. At that time, I will be grateful for death, which frees me from the bitter reality that I live every day. I die feeling the embrace of men eating my flesh every day.<sup>44</sup> Here, the author favored the use of colloquial language that resonates with the intense dramatic situation involving the threatened character, Dunya, facing rape and death, and the shocked character, Mahfouz, confronted with an unbelievable reality. The adoption of colloquial language in this context embodies the heat, depth, and realism of the situation, bringing the reader closer to experiencing

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<sup>42</sup> M. N, pp. 249/250.

<sup>43</sup> S. L, p. 36.

<sup>44</sup> S. L, pp. 182/183

its emotional and realistic dimensions. It immerses them in its existential significance concerning the setting and the characters. The situation, on an artistic level, seems unable to bear the weight of formal language, which might confine it within the constraints of art or imagination. This demonstrates the author's awareness in capturing the present moment and selecting a linguistic level that aligns with its nature. It imbues the language with an artistic character fused with reality, carrying a narrative that seamlessly merges the real and the imaginary, a dialectical context brimming with rich connotations that enrich the narrative structure.

Additionally, within the context of discussing integrative characters, we encounter the character of Nur al-Din in the Shabandar café. Her presence oscillates between truth and illusion, prompting the reader to envision Mahfouz imagining her as a manifestation of his delusion. This character holds the task of unveiling deception and misleading young men, resembling the practices of religious figures using various means under the pretext of jihad and upholding the truth's word. I am an Arab boy from an Arab country and a Muslim. I was deceived and misled, Mahfouz. They recruited me online. I didn't know them; I just received messages from them. They asked me to fight in Iraq because the Americans invaded, and I agreed... As soon as I arrived, they gave me an injection in my arm and a pill to take... They told me that the injection and the pill would encourage me to fight and remove fear from me. It was only a minute until...

**- Until what? What's your name?**

**- My name is Nur al-Din, and I continue:**

**Just a little like this, as you see me now...**

Similarly, the character Rafa, who appeared before Mahfouz at the Church of Our Lady of Peace, drenched in her blood due to a knife embedded in her heart, reveals the atrocities committed by the claimants of jihad, the warlords, and the religious terrorist militias claiming to support and purify Iraq from disbelief and infidels:

**"I've seen it, Mahfouz, the massacre! We did nothing to them; we were just praying, and our Father, Father Addi, was praying to the Lord for peace in Iraq, but they killed him. My name is Rafa. They told me you would come and relieve me of my pain.**

**- How do I relieve your pain and remove all those stabs from your body and chest? And this knife embedded in your heart?**

**- Don't believe their lie about my murder. Can you uncover the truth? In your chronicle, write that we've been praying since the birth of Christ on this land for peace, for the bloodshed to stop. You'll relieve me and those souls... I have found peace now. May God protect you, my brother... May God protect you.**

**At that moment, the knife fell from Rafa's chest, and the bleeding from her body ceased. Not only her body, but even the blood that filled the altar also retreated and disappeared behind the crucified image of the Lord Jesus Christ suspended on a wooden cross in the middle of the sanctuary.<sup>45</sup>**

Rafa personified a new integrative character tasked with exposing the deceit of warlords, Jihadists, and religiously-motivated criminals by revealing their shared aim of control, power, and fostering division for selfish, morally bankrupt purposes that lack any sense of nationalism or humanity. Their atrocity was purely diabolical, devoid of any human, ethical, or religious semblance.

Structurally, it's worth noting the semantic parallelism among the different characters embodying the presence and absence simultaneously—the young woman, the elderly sheikh, Rafa, and Noor Al-Din. These characters are only comprehended by Mahfouz, each revealing to him a crucial piece of knowledge, substantively contributing to his task, and artistically, enriching the narrative's integrative force actively.

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<sup>45</sup> S. L., pp. 216/217.

It's imperative to examine the significance of the settings forming semantic parallels within the narrative context concerning these characters. Despite the variations in sectarian affiliation, religious context, ideology, and culture (the church/Rafa, the elderly sheikh/the Karakh shrine, Noor Al-Din/the Shahbandar Café), their national allegiance unified them under the homeland, symbolizing the nurturing crucible where various affiliations and references meld. This convergence of spatial branches underscores the threats to Iraq's unity and forewarns of its fragmentation, as articulated by these characters. This gives the locations a transformative nature, symbolizing the shift between reality—representative of colonization, sectarianism, backwardness, and division—and the potential—symbolized by immunity, vigilance, enlightenment, and national unity. So,

**Where are you uncle Mahfuz**

**Yes, I am here! Why did you lie to me about Nidaa Kazim?**

**We didn't lie, Uncle. He truly sent you the tablet and the message. We are all deceased, and we assisted you in everything... We are spirits just like him. He, too, has passed away, and his spirit is pure! He helped and guided you through his spirit. Don't worry; you're not crazy, and the Samaritan tablet was kept in his house. He bought it before he died and hid it there. He's the one who sent it to you, or rather, his spirit. Your name is inscribed there today.<sup>46</sup>**

All of this served as evidence that the events he experienced were real and not merely creations of his imagination, even though their source was somewhat transcendental. These characters collectively carried a symbolic dimension, drawing nourishment from the duality of self and other, reality and dreams. This dialectic context bore the vivid, tangible traces of its actual effects, accomplishing a balanced duality between reality and art, ideology and imagination. It ensured the progression of transformation and dramatic evolution linked to sequential revelations. The author intentionally distanced himself from the conventional, purposefully rupturing it by exploding its anthological or transcendental dimensions. This held the significance of miracles realized as actuality, albeit beyond the comprehension of the mind due to their unique, contrasting nature with the stratum of reality and its laws.

These symbols emanate from a variety of sources, interweaving the real, imaginary, and dreamlike to uncover concealed aspects of reality and hidden truths masked behind multiple dense veils of various titles and intentions. Within this context, these diverse connotations unfold, propelled forward by carefully selected characters. The author meticulously constructed these characters functionally and semiotically, aiming to lay bare the reality, reveal it, and seek paths toward national and social guidance, addressing diverse national segments and components. This occurs within the framework of an interactive and dialectic relationship between the self and the subject on one hand, and reality and imagination on the other. It should be emphasized that the various integrative characters, with their metaphysical existence and transient presence with their realistic effects in the subjective reality, formed, within the context of the narrative, noticeable sequential episodes within the growing dramatic transformation series of the main character (Mahfouz). They constituted rich artistic, meaningful, and functional tributaries that deepened and expanded the trajectory of the principal character's movement and their semantic space. This occurred within an interactive, dialogical context based on influence and impact. These diverse characters endowed Mahfouz with an escalating kinetic momentum drawn from a range of truths and data representing the hidden genuine motives behind the veil of subjective reality. This endowed a dual, distributed dimension to various levels, both realistic and dreamlike, contemporary and prospective, material and ontological, concurrently.

## **Results**

The analysis suggests two key findings regarding the construction of characters and their trajectories in the novel "House of Abou Beit":

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<sup>46</sup> S. L, pp. 283/284.

1. The author deliberately constructs characters to achieve a dialectical interaction between two paths: the path of self and reality on one hand, and the path of reality and imagination on the other. This fusion operates both horizontally, in terms of societal realism, and vertically, in the relationship between material and ontological realms. This mechanism grants depth and seriousness to the characters, symbolically inferring meanings that transcend individuality towards social, national, and existential dimensions. The author adeptly maneuvers within the space of character portrayal, delineating features, qualities, and linguistic expressions that oscillate between formal Arabic and colloquial dialects. The characters are skillfully molded with an integrative construction, revealing a shifting and evolving nature that reflects a profound understanding of the authentic relationship between reality and art.
2. The characters in the novel embody an open structure through which the author reveals various intricacies of reality and self, unfolding within a dialectical context that extends temporally into historical, contemporary, and future dimensions. Proficiently employing suggestive and high artistic skills, the author captures different facets of life within the framework of the relationship, both spatially and in connection to the novel's setting in Iraq. This includes political, social, religious, and cultural aspects, thus encapsulating the author's realistic and artistic vision simultaneously.
3. The author, through significant characters, embodies the imperative for the individual to rise at both the national and societal levels. This is depicted through a confrontational relationship that elevates the dramatic inclination with objective reality. Here, the self becomes an active agent in shaping or influencing events rather than a defeated entity resigned to or submissive to reality. Consequently, a positive self-image emerges at its finest level through the direct confrontation of the self's weaknesses, fragilities, and vulnerabilities, propelling it to draw from elements of faith and genuine strength. This transformation enables the self to transition into a phase where it confronts reality, impacts it, and works towards changing or mitigating its oppressive and tyrannical aspects. The underlying essence throughout is freedom, across various levels, starting from individual freedom and culminating in national freedom, traversing through societal freedom.

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