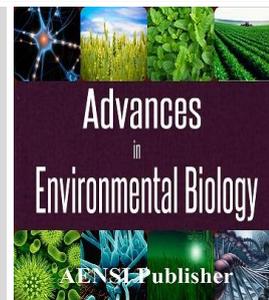




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### Realism in the literary works of Hanna Mineh

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#### ABSTRACT

Hanna Mineh is one of the greatest contemporary Syrian writers who used realism in Syria's novel for the first time. He discussed about a variety of problems in his works through this literary school, including widespread poverty in society, injustice, colonialism and its impact on the economy and social life of Syrian people, tyranny and despotism of aristocratic society towards subordinates, women who were exposed to problems of patriarchal society. He aimed nothing except pushing people towards freedom and changing their thoughts. The purpose of this paper is to present a manifestation of socialistic realism in the works of Hanna Mineh and to express his views about this school by analyzing the characters and the issues that he has dealt with in his novels.

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### INTRODUCTION

#### *School of Realism:*

According to Alashmavi "Realism in literature in general sense is defined as portrayal of human nature and life in its broadest meaning with the most accurate honesty"(Alashmavi, 1983, 177). There are two types of realism, First; Western realism that is also said as critical realism and it arose after the French Revolution. This realism was a reaction against Romanticism schools that tended towards personal feelings, diving in dreams away from reality. The followers of this school of thought believed an ingenious writer should consider the reality in his work and he should accurately portray it.

According to them, "life isn't a paradise full of truth and innocence, rather it is a place where the evil is more than good, its pain is greater than its joy and justice is nothing but a mirage and people follow their instincts in the life. Greed and deception lead them to lies and trickery, concepts such as generosity, loyalty; honesty and integrity are nothing but a figment"(The same reference, from 177 to 178). Thus we see that this realism is cynical towards life and has no hope to good end of humans.

But common realism is a term that, "Association of Soviet Writers agreed on its application in the first conference in 1934 and they accepted it as a literary school that they should apply it in all republics of the Soviet Union. Maxim Gorky had a large role in explaining this school in this conference. And this literary trend was arisen through literary works of Maxim Gorky... at first it was called new realism in order to be separated from the 'old one' existed in European literature. And it's sometimes called revolutionary realism ... and finally called socialistic realism to separate realism arisen in Western literature and art". But it should be said that "the famous Russian novelist "Dostoevsky "has established the foundations of this school. He believed that realism is superior to all other schools because it is the most extensive literary school [6].

"Socialistic realism grew in Russian literature before the October revolution. According to this school, the novel "Mother" by Maxim Gorky's is the first compilation in this school. Thus, realism is the new perspective towards the world and a realistic writer is a person who "is familiar with the hardship and adversity of life, and he is an individual who had already accepted principles of this school, he had reflected it in his work and he would also live in harsh conditions. This is not because of the fact that he had accepted this kind of life; rather he can use all of his strength to remove all the life barriers [22].

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"Ghali Shukri" said in different parts of the book (Alrevayh fi rehlat Alazab) "common realism creates all the other literary schools such as romanticism, Encryption and myth oriented etc "(56)

*School of realism in the Arab world:*

After WWII, the Arab countries experienced many problems. They had many economic and social problems due to the usurpers in the country and internal conspirators. Concurrent with this distressing situation, the literary community felt that the former process couldn't meet the needs of their age, and then there should be a new literary school that takes steps in line with current changes and this school should show the facts of the community. In fact, it can be said that: "Realism was a reaction to the Romanticism school, which made the literature of phantom world and personal emotions to change into the world of human reality so that it would cover the social and ethical issues that are useful for the reader and society, and the role of novel of fun and entertainment change into fostering ideas"[8].

Thus, realism was a dominant procedure in literature in the 'sixties and a big change occurred in the direction of novel writing" [22]. With the growth of the new school, all the characters in the stories didn't just belong to the rich and lucky people; rather the poor people (the people who have been exploited) were also part of the main character of the stories. Of course the contents had to be changed along with changing characters, and it was time for subjects like justice to be included in the story. In this new type of literature, poverty was introduced as real crisis that prevents the advancement of human evolution and provided the grounds for the circumstances of the crime, corruption, and betrayal.

Paying more attention to the deteriorating situation and distressed communities led the realistic pioneers of novel writing to address these issues further. But the purpose of realistic writer wasn't only to show the poverty and its negative and devastating effects because poverty as a social problem led the author venture to talk about the reasons of poverty and the most important issues among them was political. As a result, "most of the political crisis at the beginning of the use of realism in literature caused by the colonization of foreigners, and writers in the Arabic countries endeavored in this field such as the novels of Nagib Mahfouz who believes that political crisis are due to the colonial and cooperation of internal forces"(The same reference, 48).

*School of realism in Syria:*

"This school arose in Syria during the fifties when the Syrian novelists felt that novelist's duty and mission can be to record important events and social issues, the writers mostly presented short stories in a way of this school. Then Hanna Mineh presented the novel " Almasabih Alzarq " in half of this decade as the first realistic novel in Syria"[6]". Hanna Mineh was the first person who included this literary school in novel writing by writing this novel in Syria in 1954" and this is because of his immense knowledge and familiarity with world literature, especially Russian literature.

Hanna Mineh says about the school of realism: "In the fifties of this century, with the beginning of realism and failure of romanticism, I was informed that the books of" Abdul-Azim Anis "and" Mahmoud Amin Al Alam" were published in the Egyptian Ministry of Culture. Books were written critically and in a realism way. The novel "Al-Arz" of "Abdulrahman al-Sharqawi" and realistic poems were also published in Egypt"(The same reference, 53). He also says: " I am the cipher of socialistic realism and I am delighted to be the maker of an art that shows this style in the way of mine "[5].

Hanna Mineh says about the writing of realistic novel: "In my opinion, the novel is to separate the world and to recombine it again. It is to portray the most general and the most minor issues such as passion, desire, appearance and internal modes in dealing with the issues. The novel is to clean and to wash the conscience, but I don't wash conscience in my novel because I am the author of socialistic realism in Arabic country"(The same reference. 32).

So when Hanna Mineh began writing short stories, he portrayed ordinary people as miserable, poor and in need of mercy in all his stories. And he thought that he was able to present developed realistic literature to the reader by this method. But some time later, through much study "he learned about realistic novel characters in the world, with the experience that he gained from this new literary approach, looked more closely at people's life and he found out that his style was not correct. Realism wasn't the intended concept that he thought about and he might have neglected in the collection and maintenance of his early short stories because of this misunderstanding. So he changes the way of writing towards the characters in his story"[5].

Because he came to this conclusion that although people are poor, they are courageous and inaccessible instead and while they are ill, they don't despair despite their illness, rather they hope to life and healing. As if they are imprisoned, they always follow their goal and their combat; because they hope to release and hence the faces of the people and his fictional heroes in novels aren't similar to the previous figures in the short stories because we see that they are able to create and innovate at the peak of difficulties and constraints and they feel free and smile in facing the problems.

Hanna Mineh, "in addition to some new principles of common language in novel writing that isn't separable from his realistic style, chose profound vision of humanitarian trends in the overall atmosphere of his

stories. Main characters of Hanna Mineh's story were simple, clear and easy. He doesn't cause inconvenience to the reader, but the reader becomes familiar with them easily and at the same time he also makes use of myth and cipher to change unreal into real.

Thus, his novel involves the heroes that are grappling with economic and social problems, but ultimately they find solutions to get rid of these problems. A society is shown full of contradictions and social heterogeneity through innovation and expressing the truth"[3].

"Nahlah Kamel" asks Hanna Mineh in an interview: "Given that you're a realist scholar, whether this trend hasn't made limitations for you?" And Hanna Mineh replies: "realism has opened me a way that isn't boundless. Style of Realism hasn't been created suddenly; rather its growth occurred in the number of stages. It is like all innovative schools of literature that arose over a relatively long time, from natural realism of "Zola" up to pecuniary realism of "Chekhov" and socialistic realism of Gorky. Of course the pecuniary realism had two dimensions: the past and the present, and the third dimension which Gorky added was the future. As a result, I am proud that I attributed to the tendency of realism that the realization of historical dreams, future hope and care of what we have are its characteristics. So realism is an innovative school that has a high degree of precision and intellectual beauty. When a heroic character is included in this school, fighting and dominating circumstances are also covered along with him.

But his main goal is the victory in this fight and the major role is the one that he plays in the progress of humanity. I believe that the need of literature to this school is one of the axioms; since the goal of literature on the current situation is to teach the reader. Other positive characteristics of this literature are that readers are encouraged to act in a constructive and courageous struggle for freedom and work against the retrogressive and colonial enemies.

A socialistic and realistic artist as "Andriyeh Bubuv" defined; "is striving and struggling for influence in the conflict between the new and modern ways of living and a person who aimed at helping people to make a happy life; he necessarily must put himself within the problems of life; because it allows the writer to deeply understand the laws and social change. To sum up, social realism covers all the events and it is capable to put all literary schools such as: romanticism and realism in itself".

Samir Saeed, critic Lebanese, said in an article titled "Hanna Mineh and realistic novel on forte" written in the journal (Alneda): "Hanna Mineh has clear orientation in realism, this is not true that he was just sitting on peak of pain and sorrow and the failure surrounded him; rather he is victorious in combat in the world level and individually, in eternal silence, his cheerful heart on sharp spears, through the style of realism, because he has not changed his style even once and he has taken steps in this school with all his faith. "

### 5.3.2. Realism in the works of Hanna Mineh:

One prominent example of realism in the literary works of Hanna Mineh is the trilogy of his biography because he completely presented true picture of his personal, family and social life. Hanna Mineh says: "I must write about the things that are current and tangible for people in their life so that people would be interested in reading. When the novel "Baqayasoor" was published, I received dozens of letters that the character of mother in this novel is like their mother. So we should give examples that people love or hate them in life". All the events and happenings of the society of that time along with people's lives, especially the problems of the poor and suffering people are well illustrated in this trilogy.

One of the most famous works of Hanna Mineh is "Al-Shams Fi Yavm Qaym ". Dr. Najaha- Al Atar has written an introduction at the beginning of this book "This novel is very different from the other novels that I have read in terms of foresight; since so many things have been discussed about the myth and mystery and new things have been told. Indeed, this novel explores the truth. Its success is due to the fact that exploring has been maintained; because talking about the truth is very difficult and the whole story is full of human experience that can also be useful throughout history. Grandeur and solidity of people in suffering days, cloudy days and their faith to the point that daylight finally arrives and the world wakes up "(Preface to the novel, 8-9). Alyater novels can be included in Hanna Mineh's works. Hanna Mineh says: "If somebody asks me how I used the style of realism in this novel, I will answer that all the literary schools have been embedded within realism: Dialogue in the novel "Alyater" is rich and delicious and the purpose of this story isn't emotional psychology, rather the goal is to discover the nature of the human but I have used psychology to understand what is going on inside people and to equate inside and outside world of the people "( Minneh, Resalate Ela Emraat Nast Esmoha, 2008, 10). Hanna Mineh, realistic Syrian novelist, has continually covered community events of twenties of the last century up to the present in the story. We see in his stories that simple and hardworking people in the community work and then fail, but they stubbornly persevere their work. Every day we see these people but we do not care about their pains, sufferings, joys, concerns, and dreams. But realist Hanna Mineh knows them and makes us know. His vision is realistic and historical and he speaks about the events that Syrian people have experienced at that time, at the same time psychology do not neglect individuals, recognizes the general issues in the society and shows them in details. Sometimes, even he goes further and examines the reasons of coming to existence of the colonial powers and the suffering that the people of poor nations tolerate and introduces these

nations to the world; because many governments hide the truth and don't let their people know the reality and then portray the fact in the way that agrees with their interests. Like the novel "Hamamh Zarqa' fi Alsohob" where an English-speaking nurse refers to political facts covered by the English government. Hanna Mineh Sometimes tries to introduce real face of superpower in order to awaken the people of the world. Thus he gives all readers political and social awakening and awareness, he discusses about Power agents and weaknesses of colonized countries like the novel "Alnar bayna Asabeh Emrah."

Hanna Mineh's literary works are prominent because he imagines the life of the ordinary and suffering people and this is due to the fact that he touches and watches the real facts. He takes the facts and lives with the characters of his story and tastes the flavor of the strikes on their bodies; since thoughts of critical realists rotates on two major axis " An individual isn't alone in life and he is representative of layers of social class. It is not enough in realism that each author has an excellent talent for storytelling, rather he or she must have moral and social obligation and loves what's worthy of love and loves what forms perfect human"(Dastqei, 1999,64). As a result, the realistic author should aim to get the community's needs from within the community because there are many thoughts and beliefs in the world and it is the point that Hanna Mina has done in his stories; since his life story in the trilogy of his biography is actually similar to lives of Syrian people prior to World War II and how they lived under the conditions of the French colonial. He has described terrible days of the poor people in the community of that time. Hanna Mineh has also introduced his parents in a realistic manner in his biographical trilogy, in the novel "Sharaf Qateh-Al Tariq" and "Ashiya men zakariyat tefooliyati".

He introduces his mother in the novel " Sharaf Qateh-Al Tariq " as: "When I was little I always thought that my mother's face isn't different from God in kindness, purity and brightness" . He writes about his mother's self-devotion as; "there is no pain and suffering greater than mother's pain towards her children. She stayed awake and watchful in the abandoned garden of mulberry until morning in winter. The house that was like a dark tent and wolf's voice came from everywhere; it was surrounded by thieves and robbers. If bad accident occurred, Shouting and asking for help would be useless because no one could hear our voices. When we slept, nothing remained except the eyes of my mother were constantly fearful and revolved around the wall; her ears were listening to the sounds of the smallest voices and finally the distracted nerves. Fear was around her every moment lest thieves would break the window, destroy the roof and damage her children [9]. Hanna Mineh has precisely written this content in the novel "Sharaf Qateh-Al Tariq" page 24.

He said that my mother always suffered from two things in her terrible life: "the first one is a poor life of a farmer and the other from my father who was not responsible for the family"[14].

He sometimes criticized his mother's behavior as he says: "mother is always crying and miserable and she is the person who wanders most of the time" [9]. He said in another section of the same book that: "My mother was always afraid. God bless her, she was always seeking fear to fear, and if there was no scary thing, she would create it" (The same reference, 109).

He condemns his father in his novels "Bqayasoor and Al-mostanqa"; a person whose clothes were consistently torn from the front, not the back and he was shamefully weak-kneed confronting two things: one was wine and the other was women. And he was stupid and incredibly irresponsible for family. He was a gypsy man and did not come home for a long time even monthly and he left his family in poverty, hunger, cold and heat (Mineh, 2004, 6 and 7). He writes about his father's negligence towards affairs in the novel "Al-mostanqa" as:"My father lives only in the present, not more; he doesn't deal with the past and tomorrow as if his life is summarized in the present "(P. 68).

Hanna Mineh was also very realistic in introducing women in his literary works. He explained about true aspects of many women. He says: "I don't give women absolute perfection in my story. That is why I want to keep my trust in portraying a Syrian woman. I have been trying to awaken Syrian woman and show her confusion and ignorance in some stages of 20th century. However I avoided to show this wakening in places that didn't exist such as the works: (Baqayasoor, Alyater, A-shams fi yavme qayem, Almorsad) "(Hamareneh, 2001, 88). He refers to real and tangible examples of Syrian women in his own stories, for example we see Barbara as corrupt and west-oriented woman who doesn't have any responsibility towards his home country because she is in favor of the French presence in her country and she has relationship and cooperation with them. As she is a sample of disgraced and corrupt woman, whenever she couldn't use her feminine guile to achieve her goals, she would resort to her power and influence among the French.

We see another female character in the story "Al-shams fi yavme qayem". This woman is the most important and adventure maker, she is basement dweller whose father was killed by one of the landholders and then poverty forced her into prostitution; But she kept the value of her own and it made her distinguished, this value was that she didn't let anybody or anything capture her spirit "But her tragedy does not end with only his action in the life rather she resists in the hardships and sows revolutionary spirit in her nature, then helps to a disillusioned youth from a wealthy family to stand against his family's beliefs".

Hanna Mineh views many women realistically in the novel "Al-salj yaati men Al-nafezeh": as "Um Khalil," who is a stupid woman and talkative as "Gramophone" or the wife of "Juzayf" who is stupid and

unreasonable and just think superficially. Juzaif hurts her husband by comparing her life with her sisters and stops her husband's political campaign.

Hanna Mineh has also a realistic approach in dealing with social and political issues of his community as he states that "anyone who does not know his hometown, he can't know any other country" (Nak, Mineh, 1991, 258) as well as he states in another section of the novel "will there be a day that we can get rid of oppression, cruelty, sacrifice, to be exploited by others, and poverty? How long Board of governors will continue to play with us." (The same reference, 67)

Hanna Mineh wants the readers in the novel "Al-daqaal" to enter political activities consciously, because revolution is useless without knowledge and people must know their main enemy (France) not because of "being West, but rather because they are colonial" (P. 284). Hanna Mineh in the novel "Nahayat Rajul Shoja" expressed his concerns about social and political events of port, living and job of workers and cruelty of the port chief. Workers who are working from morning to night with very little salary and when bad accidents happen for them at work, not only are not supported by them but also are blamed, punished and questioned. Hanna Mineh states a painful case here: "handling in a large ship, one of the workers fell, and his leg was amputated below the big iron and when he is taken to the boss instead of compassion and cure, he became extremely angry and says why they have ever kept him so that the other workers would see him. Then, he callously ordered to throw him into the sea" [19]. He states in the novel "Al-nar Bayna ASabeo Al-Emraat" : "If blacks have authority in their films, it is accomplished to deceive the people of other countries. The only thing that blacks are equal to other Americans is in some military affairs. It is due to the fact that they are going to make them die as it happened in Vietnam. Blacks are even prohibited to enter restaurants in all the states of America and they are forbidden to dwell in places where whites live. I've seen this with my own eyes in Boston." (157)

He narrates Tailor's speech: "O my son learn to play for people, they listen your talk because they are great and manly. But they do not know to whom and how they pay attention. Tell them that you belong to them. Like an army commander, stand at the beginning of line, but remember that if the commander turns back, the flag of the army will fall and the people will disperse".

#### *Conclusion:*

literature of Hanna Mineh is prominent because of his realism and his adherence to the issues of the poor and dominated people. He shows all the conflict and social change in the society in his literary work as well. Hanna Mineh states conditions of realism in the novels through criticizing and analyzing the facts in a clear manner, his general understanding of social aspects, his emphasis on manifestations of poverty and corruption and having confidence to the future through social campaign, experience and dedication.

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