

# The influence of world literature on the Iraqi novel

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**Abstract:** *The Iraqi novel has undergone significant transformations with the influence of world literature, especially Western, since the beginning of the twentieth century. This influence came through multiple channels such as early translations of the works of Cervantes and Gorky, literary magazines, and scholarships that allowed direct interaction with Western literature. Iraqi novelists have adopted innovative narrative techniques such as stream of consciousness (as in the works of Fouad al-tikrali), socialist realism (in the absence of Tama Farman), and intermittent chronological narrative. It also absorbed philosophical themes such as existentialism and absurdism, and adopted postmodern and meta-narrative techniques (as in Frankenstein in Baghdad). These influences enriched the Iraqi narrative, enabled it to combine originality and modernity, and raised it to the standards of contemporary world literature.*

**Keywords:** literary influences, Narrative techniques, Western literature, Iraqi novel, Postmodernism

## Inspired by new narrative techniques

The Iraqi novel has also been influenced by world literature, especially Western literature, which has led to the use of various techniques. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the Iraqi novel has witnessed great developments and has been influenced by many cultural, political and social factors. One of such important factors was world literature, especially Western literature. The Iraqi novel was influenced by the narrative styles and new techniques brought by Western writings, which enriched the Iraqi narrative texts and broadened their artistic and intellectual horizons.

## 1. Early influences of Western literature

### A. Translation and cultural interaction:

- First translations: translations of Western literary works began to arrive in Iraq in the early twentieth century. She translated works such as " Don Quixote" by Miguel de Cervantes and " mother " by Maxim Gorky, which opened a new horizon for Iraqi writers.
- Literary magazines: Iraqi literary magazines published articles and criticism about Western literature, which contributed to the transfer of modern literary ideas and techniques to Iraqi readers and writers.

### B. Interaction with Western literature:

- Education and scholarships: the travel of many Iraqi students to the west to study led to their direct interaction with Western literature, which influenced their writing and narrative styles.
- Direct influence: Iraqi writers ' reading of Western literature, such as the works of Victor Hugo, Tolstoy, and Dickens, directly influenced the development of the Iraqi novel.

## 2. New narrative techniques

### A. Stream of consciousness:

- Definition: stream of consciousness is a narrative technique aimed at depicting the inner thoughts and feelings of the characters directly and unstructured, as they flow in the mind of the characters.
- Influence on the Iraqi novel: many Iraqi novelists were influenced by this technique, such as Fouad al-tikrali in his novel "The Distant return", where he used the stream of consciousness to present a deep psychological depiction of the characters.

### B. Realistic style and socialist realism

- Western realism: Iraqi writers were influenced by the style of Western realism, which focuses on depicting everyday life in its finer details.

- Socialist realism: some Iraqi writers have been influenced by socialist realism, which is concerned with depicting class struggle and social transformations, such as the absence of Tama Farman in "the palm and the neighbors".

#### C. Intermittent chronological narrative

- Technique: it consists in presenting the story non-linearly, in which narrative time is manipulated.

- Influence on the Iraqi novel: many Iraqi writers have used this technique to present a complex and multi-layered narrative, such as Sinan Antoine and Ali Badr in their works.

### 3. New topics

#### A. Existentialism:

- Definition: existential philosophy focuses on individual freedom and the personal meaning of life.

- Influence on the Iraqi novel: The Iraqi novel was influenced by existential themes by addressing issues of identity, pluralism, freedom and personal meaning, as in the first Iraqi novel by Mahmoud Ahmed El-Sayed "Jalal Khaled", albeit insinuatingly.

#### B. Absurdity

- Definition: absurdist philosophy holds that life is meaningless in the face of chaotic reality.

- Influence on the Iraqi novel: Iraqi writers were influenced by the absurdity in depicting the complex and chaotic Iraqi reality, such as Abdul Rahman Majid Al-Rubaie in the novel "tattoos", which reflects his leftist tendencies, which focused on the time of arrests and defeatism after 1958.

### 4. Modern literary influences

#### A. Postmodernism

- Definition: postmodernism is a literary movement that rejects traditional methods and uses irony, intertextuality, and parody (criticism in a satirical way, or comically belittling).

- Influence on the Iraqi novel: Iraqi writers used postmodern techniques in their novels, such as Ahmed Saadawi in "Frankenstein in Baghdad", where he deals with ridiculing social and political reality in a fantasy way closer to science fiction, where the novel later also returned from the category of these novels.

#### P. Meta-narrative

- Definition: meta-narrative is a technique in which a narrative is used to comment on itself and on the nature of the narrative itself. As William Gass put it: "a story that draws attention to itself, being a work of art that asks questions about the relationship between the story and reality". In other words, by Gass's definition of meta-narrative; it is a type of self-confessed narrative, in which the nature of the stories themselves is commented on, enhancing the reader's awareness of narrative techniques and their differences.

- Influence on the Iraqi novel: Iraqi writers have used meta-narrative to present narratives that reflect on the nature of the stories themselves, adding a new dimension to their literary works. Ferman's taste in his works was influenced by realistic and socialist narrative styles, as in "the palm and the neighbors".

- Narrative techniques: use realistic narrative techniques to depict the daily life of the Baghdadis in fine detail.

Fouad tekkerli in his works was influenced by the stream of consciousness style, as in "distant return". He presented a deep psychological depiction of his characters through the techniques of internal narrative and stream of consciousness as a human sensation interacting with his surroundings.

Ahmed Saadawi in his works used postmodern and meta - narrative techniques, for example, in "Frankenstein in Baghdad". His narrative techniques dealt with ridiculing social and political reality using modern narrative techniques.

**Conclusion:**

The Iraqi novel was greatly influenced by world literature, especially Western literature, which led to the use of new narrative techniques that positively influenced its development. By drawing inspiration from diverse narrative styles such as stream of consciousness, realism, intermittent chronological narrative, and modern postmodern techniques. Iraqi writers have been able to present literary works that combine originality and innovation, and reflect the complex and chaotic Iraqi reality in new and innovative ways. These influences have contributed to the enrichment of Iraqi literature and its expansion to include diverse human and intellectual experiences, making the Iraqi novel an important part of modern world literature.