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The Impact of Shelley's *Frankenstein* of Saadawi's *Frankenstein*

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Abstract

In spite of the long period of time that has elapsed since monster first appeared in English and Arabic literature, monsters still have both remarkable and effective roles in their literary texts. The roles of monster that have been created over the centuries by their writers are an indicative of the fears and the needs of societies for these monsters, thus they are modified and developed to reflect social anxieties. The aspects of onomastic meanings redo the roles of the monster in Frankenstein in Baghdad; they show entirely the exact roles and characteristics of the monster to the readers. The monster's names that are given by other characters in the novel can be used as devices to indicate the variety of literary purposes: to emphasize a certain aspect of society which Saadawi is writing on, or even the more traditional method of naming with the express intent of identifying a certain trait or expectation of the monster's personality. Saadawi names his monster several names in order to convey specific purposes. Each name has separately purpose, and simultaneously, all names have a common goal they have to achieve. The monster in Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus (1818) by Mary Shelley (English novelist, short story writer, dramatist, essayist, biographer, and travel writer) has mainly affecting on the monster in Frankenstein in Baghdad (2013) (Arabic Fiction) by Ahmed Saadawi (Iraqi novelist, poet and screenwriter).

Keywords: Frankenstein, monster, Arabic literature, Mary Shelly

1. Introduction

Monster literature is a genre of literature that combines good and evil and intends to evoke a sensation of horror and terror in its readers by presenting the evil side in the form of a monster. The victimizer is shown in the form of a monster that torments the protagonists. In addition, these sufferings evoke extreme emotions of sorrow, desolation, and isolation. The first themes and concepts of the monster appeared in the 18th century Gothic literature. The first example was the work of the English author. Horace Walpole's novel The Castle of Otranto

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(1764). However, monster literature first emerged in the 19th century with the release of Mary Shelley's Frankenstein (1818).

One of the monster novels in the Arabic literature is the winner of the International Prize for Arabic Fiction (IPAF) *Frankenstein in Baghdad.* The novel is about Hadi al-Attag who lives in the populous al-Bataween district of Baghdad. In the spring of 2005, he takes the body parts of those killed in explosions and sews them together to create a new body. When a displaced soul enters the body, a new being comes to life. Hadi call it "whatsit'sname"; the authorities name it "Criminal X" and others refer to it as "Frankenstein." Frankenstein begins a campaign of revenge against those who killed it, or killed the parts constituting its body. As well as following Frankenstein's story, *Frankenstein in Baghdad* follows a number of connected characters, such as General Surur Majid of the Department of Investigation, who is responsible for pursuing the mysterious criminal and Mahmoud al-Sawadi, a young journalist who gets the chance to interview Frankenstein indirectly. The novel offers a panoramic view of a city where people live in fear of the unknown, unable to act in solidarity, haunted by the unknown identity of the criminal who targets them all.

2. Statement of the Problem

Frankenstein apparently becomes a common sign of monster in literature since his appearance in Shelley's novel till present days. In fact, *Shelley's Frankenstein* inspires the screenwriter Saadawi to capitalize this idea and employ it to creating his monster. The monster created although different as he is from the parts of victims of killing in the Iraqi streets, but he represented the same feeling created by world monsters. Saadawi competently borrows this name form Shelly's monster and skillfully associates it with fear, violence, and isolation in the Iraqi society. The present study tries to show how Shelley's *Frankenstein* impacted the naming of Saadawi's monster.

3. The naming Process in Literature

There is a complex and difficult relationship between literary persons and their own identity. An identity is closely and intimately related to the names and name – a designation given to them by themselves or by the people surrounding them. In his study of personality, the American psychologist Gordon Allport has mentioned in his book *Pattern and Growth in Personality* (1961) that a person's name is the central point around which people organize their

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personality, that is why it so important to them. Another American psychologist, Kenneth L. Dion (2013) has stated that the parents' choice of name for their child will have an effect on the development of the personality of the child. Allport's and Dion's studies really give the basics for thinking that a person will be totally different if his/her parents have given him/her a different name than his real name. Helleland and Wikstrøm (2012) stated in their article "Personal Names and Identity in Literary Contexts" that:

> Personal names and place names are some of the most important tools of the author in the creation of credible characters placed in a literary universe that gives the impression of being authentic. The names in the novel generally will convey important information on many different aspects of the persons – family history, social setting, environment, self-image, personal ambitions, social status, and relationships between the characters. The list is more or less never-ending. (278)

Names have numerous different functions in real life, and all of these can be transferred to literature. The main condition for the reader to share the feelings with a literary work is that a reader is able to reach to the characters of the novel, their personality, and actions. Therefore, a literary work may be an appropriate starting point for the study of the process of naming and the motives behind it, particularly when it is found in the psychological or realistic kinds of novels. The process of naming as it described by the French theorist Michel Grimaud (1989), is "a deeply social, psychological, and linguistic act" (19). According to Grimaud's description of the process of naming, the choice of name is influenced by social belonging, psychologically it is related to emotion that has been reflected by the name, and linguistically names have different stylistic values which change based on different languages and geographical areas. *In Aristotle's Poetics*, Dr. Raghukul Tilak (2009) mentions that about more 300 years B.C, Aristotle underlined – in his *Poetics*, part IX – the importance of names in literature and that poetry tends to express furthermore, the name of a character in a literary work and can be used as a term of ethics, teleology, values, ideology, culture, and attitudes of varying aspects of life. Nesserlroth (1996), says "It is not surprising that theorists pay so much attention to naming in fiction since proper names are the nodal points through which actions and descriptions are interconnected" (133). In literature, authors can use a character's name to realize numerous purposes like encoding a central feature of a particular character's signification, indicating

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crucial thematic motifs and even ideological toning in a particular literary work. Nesserlroth says:

> the universal [...]. By the universal I mean how a person of a certain type on occasion speak or act, according to the law of probability or necessity; and it is this universality at which poetry aims in the names she attaches to the personages. [...] the poet first constructs the plot on the lines of probability, and then inserts characteristic names. (32)

Due to the fact that a character's name in any literary work can be seen as one of its polarizations because of the different considerations that reflect social attitudes, political experience, and ideological senses from different points of view, a literary proper name can be considered as a name that contains in itself the map of character's destiny or the motivations of the subsequent development of the storyline. In fact, the character's name has meaning that reflects the character's actions, speech, moral attitudes and so on. In his article "Meaningful Literary Names", Luca Manini (2014) states that:

> the meaningful name somehow contrasts two meanings. On the one hand, as a proper noun the name pretends to be semantically empty by definition (apart from having a purely referential, indexical function). On the other hand, it acquires a specific semantic substance as a comment on the character's personality. In other words, the playful ambiguity hinges on the name's ambivalent status as a proper noun and/or as a common noun. (164)

The motives behind the use of a particular name or group of names in a text can prove essential to fully understand and interpret the motives of that text. Thus, the study and analysis of the name system used to manifest the hidden meanings, purposes, and themes of the context in any single work to create a framework that can support the creation and use of such onomastic system helps the author to develop and state the text's goals: "literary onomastic helps to stress the utilitarian aspect of literature" (Ashley 199). Names are used for a specific purpose. These purposes vary according to the work, the author and the style of writing, but the real meanings and implications available for an author to work with are potentially limitless. Any name encountered within a text is so placed for a reason, yet it can only be fully interpreted when considered within the narrative context.

Accordingly, the names of characters in any literary works have a specific role and aims to fulfil. The author decides the pasts, fates and relationships of every character and the author

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has complete freedom to choose the characters' names to best suit their personality and role within the text.

Onomastic roles of the monster in *Frankenstein in Baghdad*

The aspect of onomastic meanings or roles of the monster in *Frankenstein in Baghdad* shows entirely the exact roles and characteristics of the monster to the readers. The monster's names that has given by another characters in the novel that can be used as devices to indicate the variety of literary purposes: to emphasize a certain aspect of society which Saadawi is writing on, or even the more traditional method of naming with the express intent of identifying a certain trait or expectation of the monster's personality.

In *Frankenstein in Baghdad*, the monster is not given a name; however, the author does use a number of terms to describe the monster throughout the novel, including "Alshesma", "Frankenstein", "Daniel", "Criminal X", "Savior" or "Rescuer". All these terms have been called by other characters to justify and infect the hidden meanings and roles behind these names and to show how these meanings relate to the themes of the novel itself. Saadawi often makes use of the strong connection between these names of the monster and the feeling of personal identity as an element in their thematic structure; besides, the names of the monster are used as a means to control, as they manipulate or degrade other characters.

As a matter of fact, the names of the monster are a component of the unprocessed stuff that constructs the plot and is their key constituents. The monsters' names highlight a fancied space and encourage the reader to proceed through it as a participant, they can be examined as a discursive scheme as they are instrumental in the texture of the narrative: to plot, portrayal, and standpoint. The names of the monster play a very central and important role in the novel, they are linguistic and semantics signs that play a vital role in the overall of the linguistic structure of the novel. The present study will focus on one of these names namely Frankenstein.

The impact of Shelley's *Frankenstein* on Saadawi's *Frankenstein*

However, it is worth remembering that giving names in literary works is a very effective method of characterization, and one of the most effective methods of process naming is 'intertextuality'. This term is especially popularized by Julia Kristeva to signify the different ways in which a literary work is empirically made of other texts. Intertextuality as a term was

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first coined in Julia Kristeva's *Word, Dialogue and Novel* (1966) and then in *The Bounded Text* (1966). The term intertextuality is defined as "the shaping of a text's meaning by another text. Intertextual figures include: allusion, quotation, calque, plagiarism, translation, pastiche and parody" (Hallo 608). It is one of the literary devices that form the interrelationships between "anterior and posterior texts" and breeds related appreciative in separate works. In other words, intertextuality means borrowed ideas, senses, characters, themes etc., from other texts regardless of the other's belonging to written or any other kind of artistic work.

Graham Allen, in his book *Intertextuality: The New Critical Idiom*, asserts that,

> Intertextuality is one of the most commonly used and misused terms in contemporary critical vocabulary. 'An Intertextual Study of [...] or 'Intertextuality and [...] are such commonplace constructions in the titles of critical works that one might be forgiven for assuming that intertextuality is a term that is generally understood and provides a stable set of critical procedures for interpretation. Nothing, in fact, could be further from the truth. The term is defined so variously that it is, currently, akin to such terms as 'the Imagination', 'history', or 'Postmodernism': terms which are, to employ a phrase from the work of the US critic Harold Bloom, underdetermined in meaning and over determined in figuration. (1-2)

One might find the origin of intertextuality in Aristotle's theory of imitation that explains the idea that all art is an imitation. Plato also, mentions that the great role of imitation alone is appreciated to the artistic value. T. S. Eliot states the conception of intertextuality means every text is related to other texts and these relations are essential as well as constitutive for the generation of the text's meanings:

> No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead. (3)

Mikhail Bakhtin, is another founder of intertextuality, he demonstrates that the meanings of every words or utterance depend on a list of important things such as the speaker's relation to other, and other people's words or utterance's based on a specific culture in a specific time and place: "the life of the word is contained in its transfer from one mouth to another, from one context to another, from one social collective to another" (Bakhtin 201). He formulates the idea that every text has a dialogical relationship with other text and this relationship is determined by a doubly-oriented discourse as a result of a connection between generic qualities of a text.

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In his book *Deconstructive Criticism: An Advanced Introduction*, Leitch mentions that "every text is inter-text" (59). Therefore, an inter-text is "a text between other texts" (Plett 5). Thus, intertextual analysis entails that the reader/interpreter has to follow the intertextual echoes in a text to contract the text's meanings. A text deducts its meaning not from the author's text but from its relation to other texts; meanings become something that are in the network of the textual link and can be found between an "anterior text" and all the other texts – "posterior texts" – to which the text refers and relates. Nevertheless, the reader/interpreter doesn't get a stable meaning of a text because the meaning is produced from unabridged gaps between the texts and shifting and elusive meaning has always belonged to these gaps.

Certainly, there are different kinds of intertextuality. It is difficult to sum all types because of the variety of intertextuality's type, overlapping among intertextuality's types, and intertextuality that exists at all levels of language. Robert S. Miola, in his article "Seven Types of Intertextuality" divided intertextuality's types into three categories, each category containing many other kinds of intertextuality:

> [category I:] comprises specific books or texts mediated directly through the author. Revision, translation, quotation, allusion, sources, conventionally understood, an author's earlier work – all belong here [...] Category II contains traditions. An originary text radiates its presence through numberless intermediaries and indirect routes – through commentaries, adaptations, translations, and reifications in other works. It exists in combination with other originary texts [...] category III, in the age of intertextual écriture, this last category consists of what any audience brings to a text rather than what the author put in. The focus moves from texts and traditions to the circulation of cultural discourses. (14-23)

Intertextuality in literature varies from intertextuality in other artistical works: in literature a text refers to a second text by title, scene, character or storyline and even sentence, and it may refer to a different category of text such as media. This kind of intertextuality makes the comparison between the reader's understandings of the text (which borrows from other text) outside of the book, and its existence inside of the book.

Intertextuality is one technique frequently used in the postmodern period. Saadawi is considered as one of the Arabic writers who utilizes intertextuality as one of the postmodern literary devices. He practices this technique in order to convey one of the most important themes in postmodern literature – "violence". Saadawi applies many kinds of intertextuality in his novel, but the study focuses on the intertextuality of the name of his monster from the

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famous adaptation film of Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* "he [Hadi]'s stolen his story from Robert De Niro Film [1994]" (Frankenstein in Baghdad 26)

Undeniably, in order to portray his monster, Saadawi resorts to two kinds of intertextuality: "translation" and "source". According to Robert S. Miola's division, the translation type of intertextuality is considered the second type of first category in which the author "transfers", "carries across", a text into a different language, recreates it anew: "the later text explicitly claims the identity of the original, its chief project an etiological journey to itself, or to a version of itself" (Miola 16). Of course, Frankenstein's name that is borrowed by Saadawi belongs to English text, so Saadawi translated the source text from English into Arabic language and reemployed it in his novel.

Regarding 'source' the second type of intertextuality that uses to portrait the character of the monster in *Frankenstein in Bagdad*. In his essay, Miola has classified this type as the fourth type of the first category: "Source texts provide plot, character, idea, language, or style to later texts. The author's reading and remembering direct the transaction" (32). In relation to Miola's subdivision of 'source', Saadawi's intertextuality of the monster's name is "source proximate". It enables the authors to borrow different items like: a character, a language, a style, and an idea from another text "The source proximate. This is the most familiar and frequently studied kind of intertextuality, that of sources and texts. The source of functions as the book on-the-desk; the author honours, reshapes, steals, ransacks, and plunders" (Miola 19).

The word Frankenstein becomes as a sign to the monster has created by his creator Victor in *Shelley's Frankenstein*. Saadawi mentions the famous adaptation film of *Shelley's Frankenstein* and the name of actor Robert De Niro to indicate that the Frankenstein is referring to the monster. Thus, Saadawi employs this name but in the Arabic original he uses "intertextuality," choosing "Frankenstein" from the old famous text and using it in the new text. Truly, "Frankenstein" gains new functions that are indubitably different from old ones. In an interview, Saadawi mentioned the reasons behind his bringing up the name of Frankenstein from English literature:

> I have used Frankenstein from an entirely western literary perspective, linked to a set of ideas related to scientist and the creation of a new human being related to the 19th century, and prepared to employ them in a completely different environment, where the individual is referring to something else and referring to Arabic society, particularly Iraqi society.

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Saadawi used intertextuality by selecting Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* in two elements of his novel: the title, *Frankenstein in Baghdad* and one of the names of his monster. Firstly, regarding the title of his novel, we should underline that the title of a literary work has no longer a single function, which is to distinguish this work from the other, but it coexists with other functions whose analysis and conditions are varied and characterized by a great complexity that has increased over time: "title of artworks are often integral parts of them, constitutive of what such works are, plausibly essential properties of them" (Wilsmore 403). Here the title of the novel has achieved the descriptive function, become it is the main key to the arrival of the textual world, and lighted its dark nook in the novel when Saadawi confirms that the Frankenstein in his novel is described by the monster and not by Al-Atak. Saidi asks Mohmoud to write a story of anything about Al-Atak's creature:

> Two days later Mahmoud gave Saidi an article headlined "Urban Legends from the Streets of Iraq." Saidi liked it immediately. When Mahmoud did the layout for the magazine, he illustrated the article with a large photo of Robert De Niro from the film of *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*. Mahmoud wasn't happy when he got a copy of the issue, especially when he saw that his headline had been changed. (Frankenstein in Baghdad 139)

In keeping with the above, the word Frankenstein becomes as sign to the monster as created by his father Victor in *Shelley's Frankenstein.* Thus, Saadawi employs this name but in the Arabic version. In fact, there are many reasons that encouraged Saadawi to borrow the name of his monster from Shelley's *Frankenstein*. In this case, Victor Frankenstein creates his monster without a name but, over the years, Frankenstein identified with the name of the monster. The way in which Victor creates the monster and his various roles inspired Saadawi to use this name, frequently associated with fear, violence, isolation, replacement and restoration. Saadawi believes that the intertextuality of "Frankenstein" can be considered as one of the three images of violence in Iraq, which reflect the reality of Iraqi society during the American occupation.

The creation of the monster in Shelley's *Frankenstein* inspires the screenwriter Saadawi to capitalize this idea and employ it for creating his monster from the parts of victims of killing in the Iraqi street: "the Whatitsname was made up of the body parts of people who had been killed, plus the soul of another victim seeking to avenge their deaths so they could rest in peace" (Frankenstein in Baghdad 130). Saadawi's monster is created from different sects and religions

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to represent all Iraqi citizens: "because I'm made up of body parts of people from diverse background – ethnicities, tribes, races and social classes – I represent the important mix that never was achieved in the past. I'm the first true citizen" (Frankenstein in Baghdad, 146-147).

The change of Iraqi society after the occupation has been represented by using the parts of illegal victims in the renewable body of the monster that shifts the monster into the criminal, the monster "turned into a criminal who kills innocent people" (Frankenstein in Baghdad, 161). The novel underlines the variety of perspective of the Frankenstein in Iraqi society: he is the saviour in an area and the terrorist in another, and his being composed from criminals' parts are attributed to widening the endless cycle of killing. Thus, Shelley's *Frankenstein* is created to let readers know about a certain period of time, the nineteenth century intellectual Europe.

Saadawi's Frankenstein has performed a great role in reflecting the social environment of the Iraqi citizens during the first years of the American intervention. According to the novel, Iraqi Frankenstein represents Iraqi society from 2003 to 2010, and Saadawi confirms this idea when he uses the quotation from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* on the first page of his novel: "Yet I ask you not to spare me; listen to me; then, if you can, and if you will, destroy the work of your hands". (Frankenstein, 96)

Conclusion

Despite the resemblance in the name and the idea of creating the monster in the two novels, however, the role of each monster in each novel is completely different from the other depending on the time that the novel is written, themes, setting, and how the writers evoke a sensation of horror and terror in its readers by presenting the evil side or sometime good side in the form of a monster as it has mentioned in chapter three and four. Last but not least, the monster is attractive to both English and Arabic writers namely Shelley and Saadawi, and despite the difference in context, themes, setting the monsters play major roles in the two novels.

The study shows that the significance of the use the name of Frankenstein, at first glance, to refer the reader to the negative connotations that have become associated with the negative mention of him as a terrible monster and evil creature. Notwithstanding, the monster in *Frankenstein in Baghdad* is differed from what he is in Shelley's *Frankenstein*, ascertaining the purpose for which he is found. At the beginning, Saadawi presents the violence and sectarian strife in Iraqi society that lead to the endless cycle of violence as a monster activates for a noble mission 'retribution from criminals and revenge for victims'; however, the revenge

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proves that it is like a miraculous antidote that heals evils in society and transforms the monster

from a savior to a thug.

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