

T.C.

İSTANBUL YENİ YÜZYIL UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE PROGRAMME



**SCIENCE FICTION IN THE POST-OCCUPATION IRAQI
SHORT STORY IN ENGLISH TRANSLATION**

MA THESIS

SAMER AYAD ALI AL-FAHHAM

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İSTANBUL, SEPTEMBER 2021

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PREFACE

This thesis seeks to illustrate how post-occupation Iraqi translated short story has possibly contributed to the Western science fiction genre. It also aims to explain how terror and violence have affected Iraqi literary culture in post-2003. I would like to start by sincerely thanking my thesis supervisor Dr. Başak Ergil whose lectures on translations, guidance, patience and supervision formed the starting point of my interest in the topic, and I am so grateful to Prof. Dr. Günseli İşçi, who has enthusiastically encouraged me to write this thesis in real joy. I would like to express my deepest thankfulness to my committee members Dr. Javid Aliyev, who has been a persistent source of support for giving me the opportunity to benefit from his notes during my thesis defense; Dr. Sultan Komut Bakıncı, whose encouragement, efforts, and interest in this research granted me the assertion I am going in the right direction. I would also like to expand my gratitude to my family and loved ones for believing in me and cheering me throughout the years of my study. Finally, I would like to thank my colleagues and professors at English Literature Department and Translation Studies Department with a special mention to Dr. Olgahan Bakşı Yalçın, whose lectures to me has made the years of studying particularly worthwhile.

İSTANBUL, 2021

Samer Ayad Ali Al-Fahham, 2021

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ÖZET

İŞGAL SONRASI IRAK KISA HİKÂYELERİNİN İNGİLİZCE ÇEVİRİLERİNDE BİLİM KURGU

Arapça edebi eserlerin İngilizce çevirileri, Batı dizgesi bağlamında bilim kurgu edebiyatıyla etkileşime girmiş ve bu türü belli ölçüde etkilemiştir. Bu tez, işgal sonrası Irak kısa hikâye türünün İngilizce çevirilerinin, Batı edebi türlerinin gelişimine nasıl katkıda bulunduğunu araştırmaktadır. Bu çalışma, oldukça çeşitlilik gösteren 2003-sonrası Irak edebi eserlerini, Hassan Blassim'in editörlüğünü yaptığı *Iraq +100* kısa hikâye antolojisi ve yine Hassan Blasim'in kaleme aldığı *The Corpse Exhibition and Other Stories of Iraq* adlı kısa hikâye kitabı özelinde ele alarak, bilim kurgu kısa hikâye çevirilerinin İngilizce konuşulan ülkelerin edebiyatındaki türdeşleri üzerindeki olası etkilerini araştırır. Hassan Blasim'in editörlüğünü yaptığı antoloji *Iraq + 100*, Arap bilim kurgu ile Batı geleneğindeki mevcut bilim kurgu arasındaki ilişkileri ele almada kullanıldığından bu çalışma için önem taşımaktadır. Söz konusu derleme antoloji ve kısa öykü seçkisinin rolleri Anglofon ve Arap edebi sistemleri arasındaki etkileşim açısından ele alınıp tartışılırken, Thomas Lombardo (2006) ve Darko Suvin'in (2010) bilim kurgu teorilerini kullanılmaktadır. Bu çalışmanın temel amacı, seçilen iki kitabı Batı dünyasına bilim-kurgu eserleri olarak girişleri ve konumlanışları bakımından analiz etmek ve bu metinlerin bilim kurgu türünün gelişimine nasıl etki ettiğini sorgulamaktır. Dahası, işgal sonrası Irak edebiyatının bu çeviri eserleri, 2003'ten sonra Irak'ın durumu ile ilgili siyasi ve sosyal izler de barındırır. Bu tezde, Irak işgali sonrası kaleme alınıp antolojileştirilmiş bu Arapça metinlerin İngilizce çevirilerinin, Arap ve Batı kültürel ve edebi kanonları arasında bir diyalog kurulmasına katkıda bulunduğu öne sürülmektedir. Bu çalışmada aynı zamanda, ele alınan kısa öyküler, aşırı şiddet içerikleri barındırmaları sebebiyle Irak'taki şiddet terörünü tasvir eden 2003-sonrası Irak kurgu türünün özel örnekleri olarak tanımlanmakta ve incelenmektedir. Metodolojik açıdan ise, bu çalışmada çeviribilim, yazınbilim, tarih ve dolaylı olarak siyaset biliminden yararlanılarak disiplinler arası bir seyir izlenmektedir.

Samer Ayad Ali Al-Fahham, 2021

Anahtar Kelimeler: İşgal sonrası Irak kurgu edebiyatı, Antolojileştirme, Bilim kurgu, Şiddet, Iraq + 100, The Corpse Exhibition and Other Stories of Iraq.



ABSTRACT

SCIENCE FICTION IN THE POST-OCCUPATION IRAQI SHORT STORY IN ENGLISH TRANSLATION

English translations of Arabic literary works have interacted with -and possibly influenced- the Western context of science fiction literature. This thesis investigates how the English translations of post-occupation Iraqi short story possibly contributed to the evolution of Western science fiction genre. The study seeks to explain the relationship between post-2003 Iraqi literary works -that are a diverse range of corpus- as well as the possible influence of their translations and their counterparts in Anglophone literary systems. The research particularly focuses on *Iraq +100* and *The Corpse Exhibition and Other Stories of Iraq* by Hassan Blasim. Blasim's edited anthology, *Iraq +100*, is a prominent element in this study as it is analyzed to illustrate the interrelation between Arabic science fiction and western traditions of this genre of fiction. As the roles of this edited anthology and short story collection are addressed and discussed in terms of the interaction between Anglophone and Arab literary systems, the study discusses science fiction theories of Thomas Lombardo (2006) and Darko Suvin (2010). The primary objective of this study is to analyze the two selected books as they are introduced to the Western world and scrutinize how these books can be considered as a response to the evolution of the science fiction genre. Moreover, the translated works of post-occupation Iraqi short story deal with political and social impacts under the situation of Iraq after 2003. This thesis follows up by proposing that the anthologized English translations of these Arabic post-occupation Iraqi texts have contributed to the making of a dialogue between Arab and Western cultural and literary canons as well as traditions. The study also analyzes the short stories of the Iraqi writers, as illustrative of a specific expression of post-2003 Iraqi fiction that depicts the terror of violence in Iraq by delivering scenes of excessive violence in their texts. All in all, this study appears as an interdisciplinary work as it engages with translation studies, literary studies, history, and in a way, political science.

Samer Ayad Ali Al-Fahham, 2021

Keywords: Post-occupation Iraqi short story, Anthology, Science fiction, Violence, Iraq +100, The Corpse Exhibition and Other Stories of Iraq.

1. FIRST CHAPTER

1. INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Many kinds of literature exist through which authors convey their messages or address different matters from their inner worlds to societal issues. Clarke (2008) demonstrates that there are various literary genres through which writers express themselves and handle multiple issues ranging from personal emotions to political and social conditions. Moreover, a writer selects the genre that suits them best to write about literature such a genre is science fiction. The rapid evolution of scientific methods gives a new height to science fiction as a new genre in literature. In modern times, science fiction is a preferred genre in western and Arabic countries such as Iraq.

This study strives to investigate the extent of post-occupation Iraqi science fiction works translated into English on anglophone literary systems. Altoma (2010) offers insight into the Iraqi societal environment following the 2003 American occupation as “It is therefore natural for Iraq to become an inexhaustible source of multifarious studies... focusing most often on war-related issues” (p. 11). Moreover, it is to note that “Iraq has served and will likely continue to serve as a subject for an increasing number of American literary works in poetry, fiction, drama, and other genres” (2010, p. 11). Thus, the study of post-occupation Iraqi literature has been translated into English regarding selected works of the era. This research deals with the extent of influence post-occupation Iraqi fiction has on Western literary thought.

Many scholars consider fiction genre a rich source for translation as Allen (2003) The literary genre of fiction is perceived as a rich source of material for translation explained that “in translation as in creative writing,” and “the most frequently encountered

literary medium in contemporary publishing” (p. 1). This study is focused on the fiction literature that was translated from Arabic to English.

Hermans (1997) clarifies “a socially regulated activity” (p. 11). It is important to note that the socially regulated translation do have the influence of the translator—for instance the background, norms, or thinking patterns of the translator (Wolf, 2007). Therefore, the cultural and social aspects of a particular translation are indeed important to understand how feasible is the translation (Venuti, 1995).

In their edited book *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, Baker and Saldanha (2020) pointed out that fiction depicts the imaginary aspect of reality. Iser (1975) states that if fiction and reality are linked together then they must communicate instead of opposition. Fiction is a means by which it tells us something about the truth. If that reality in a text consists of war and devastation, invasion, and collapse of culture, these elements are bound to find space in the emerging fiction. Post-2003 era, Iraq witnessed mass destruction and a radical change in society's very texture, politics, religion, and the life of ordinary men and women. Naturally, these elements are depicted in several novels of the time. The books are written in that period deal with conditions in Iraq before and after 2003. Some fiction may be created earlier but was repressed during the Saddam regime and was published after the terror was released (Roberts et al., 2004).

According to *USA Today*, there are almost 300 books published about the war and the occupation. Some of the great books translated into English are al-Ramli's (2012) *The President's Gardens* translated by Leafgren (2017); *Iraq+100* edited by Blasim (2017); and *Baghdad Eucharist* by Antoon (2017) translated by Maia Tabet are some of these Works (Isakhan & Dawood, 2017). Heeti (2016) *Ayam Alturab* embodies how the entry of American push the country into a chaos and ethnic revenge. However, some other work has contributions of the intellectuals and artists. Antoon's (2013) *The Corpse Washer* depicts the meeting of two young literary persons in the historical cultured neighborhood. Saadawi's (2016) work *Frankenstein in Baghdad: A Novel* also focuses on the issues of creative writing portraying a bookseller who was killed mysteriously. His notebook indicated that he was documenting the incidents as soon as the foreign powers capture Iraq. It also records his secret political criticism of the different regimes (Bahoora, 2015).

The development of literary genres throughout the world, such as literary works specific to some cultures, influences one another. In their book *Rethinking Context*, Goodwin and Duranti stated (1992) that literary genres across borders, across distances, across continents, and national borders share a dynamic dialectic. Naturally, there is an interrelation between works of literature of different cultures within different geographical texts (Duranti & Goodwin, 1992). As to what a genre maybe, Richard Bauman provides insight into “speech genres vary in the extent to which they permit dialogic organization” (2008, p. 126). The science fiction genre is popular in the West even before the sudden surge of post-occupation Iraqi fiction (Masmoudi, 2015). The implications of this surge in Iraqi literature and fiction on that of the western world is the question at hand in this study (Hamedawi, 2017). They bear some shades of post-war Iraqi fiction.

It is pertinent to note that the decline of the Iraqi regime in 2003 provided an opportunity to the exiled and domestic writers to free to produce. Moreover, the fall of al-Ba’ath Party rule also provided the conducive environment for writers. For instance, the approach and elaboration of social, political, and economic turmoil was a significant contribution (Hamedawi, 2017). Thus, the impact of fiction in different parts of the world results in an interdisciplinary study that has an added value in the literature of sociology, history, politics, and economics. This study deals with translated fiction that is interdisciplinary in that regard because translations of post-occupation Iraqi selected books signify the work that may contribute to anglophone literature—as well as the West that is understood and apparent to all kinds of readership.

A historic initiative has been introduced in 1988 whose mission was to be a “vehicle for intercultural dialogue and exchange” between the Arab and anglophone worlds. The initiative appears in *Banipal: Magazine for Modern Arabic Literature*, the magazine illustrated the translated Arabic literature in the form of short stories, novels, and poetry. The magazine is published frequently as three times in a year and each issue emphasize on any particular theme.

Hu’s (2000) *The Sociosemiotic Approach and Translation of Fiction* argued that translation from a language to another is an ambiguous process, however, the expert translators sophisticatedly provide the exact meanings. Further, the article distinguished

the translation of fiction literature and the other genres of the literature. However, the translation of the fictions far more technical and difficult compared to the other genres. It does not deal only with a bilingual process but also a bi-cultural and bi-social transaction including the whole unpredictable emotions, affiliations, and thoughts. It is complicatedly relating to various nations' languages and dialects to their lifestyles, customs, and traditions. Shen's (1992) suggested that translation of fiction literature depends on the social experiences of the translator since it is extremely important to provide the clear perspectives. It is important to note that the social awareness of the translator and personal experiences underlie the whole process of translation. Therefore, different styles must consider the social and authorial concepts of fiction. Moreover, the style of reproduction indeed is the center of the fiction translation. Few fundamental conventions of the narration as a genre approach the multilingualism and translated work. It is obvious that most of the translated work miss or neglect the multilingualism that is however important.

1.1. Theoretical Framework

An analysis of post-occupation Iraqi fiction has led me to question how English translations of post-occupation Iraqi fiction (anthology and short stories) contribute to the western science fiction scene or English-speaking geographies. Moreover, their political natures and reception of anglophone literary works are indeed considered. This study aims to explain the relationship between post-war Iraqi literary works in an edited anthology. It also approaches the anglophone literary writing while exploring the relationship between them. This study also addresses common themes in post-war Iraqi translated fictional works with their socio-political and contextual implications. This work is interdisciplinary in that it engages with translation studies, literary studies, history, and political science.

This study incorporates two works by Blasim (2016; 2014) an edited anthology *Iraq + 100* and a short story collection *Ma'radh Aljthth* [The Corpse Exhibition and Other Stories of Iraq]. Yet, it shares similar positions in that they all utilize science-fictional elements. The study also elaborates on why I have chosen these two selected books. It illustrates what new components these works have and how they contribute to western

traditions. All the chosen books are translated into English; thus, they have entered anglophone literary canons as translations that are available to international readers. These short stories serve sufficiently in investigating the relationship as mentioned earlier of literary systems on a level where more than one type of literary works can be discussed. These factors are primarily what make these works eligible for this study. This thesis also demonstrates how the translations of these science-fictional works embody terror and violence which have been affecting Iraqi culture since post-2003 using the gothic element in Hassan Blasim's fiction.

Many people worldwide read works written in English due to not having proficiency in another language such as Arabic. Regardless of what the lingua franca may be, literary activity continues in the majority of languages across the world. There is an interrelationship between them. Hitchcock (2020) point out that different genres gain importance at different times and places, depending on socioeconomic, political, and religious trends. In this study, the foci are Arabic and anglophone works. Fiction is penned in regional languages when only limited readers can enjoy it. However, there is a growing trend in translating literature into English; it is an international language and is read and understood by many people worldwide. Suvin (2010) propounds that translated works promote the intersectional influence of literary genres upon each other. Examining the kind and extent of the impact of one genre upon another can provide deeper insight into literature. This influence may be contributory or detrimental, positive or negative. There is an interrelation between the works of literature of different cultures across the world. A study of post-occupation Iraqi fiction is affected by the contributions of western science fiction and vice versa.

Though this study involves two short storybooks including themes of political and social problems in Iraqi society and the study is going to analyze selected short stories within the framework of the postcolonial approach. It reveals the history and main disputes of postcolonialism that discussed the significance of the history and its transformation (Robinson, 1997). Generally, postcolonial literature focuses on the themes of occupation, suffering, and power. Before tackling the Iraqi postcolonial literature topic, it is essential to keep in mind how extraordinary it is when compared to the traditional narrative. This

literature set a criterion and investigates the venues a long way beyond the limits of the conventional novel have set itself. The selected works are sorrowful stories of a country blighted by an unending cycle of war, violence, and misery. It embodies post-war Iraq's mood and provides the readers with one of the most vivid depictions of chaos and terror in Middle Eastern literature. The postcolonial perspective mentioned demonstrates the impact of postcolonialism on the selected works of Iraqi writers such as Blasim (2017) in the anthologized short stories in post-occupation Iraqi fiction.

This thesis explores the context where the ten Iraqi writers are motivated to write stories that can be examined using the essential principles of Bhabha's (2012) postcolonial concepts such as language, superior/inferior, Self/Other, and critical notions including mimicry liminality or hybridity. These postcolonial concepts are found in these short stories. In addition, those short stories also investigate how those anthologized writers employ symbolism to depict their reaction to the domination of the American and British occupation over Iraq. Ashcroft et al., (2006) investigated how the primary study of the orient supports specific thinking methods leading to the continuation of colonial power. Bhabha's (2012) fundamental ideas involve the discourse of stereotypes and mimicry, which effectively shape this new critical approach (Hamadi, 2014).

The conception of Arabic science fiction as working off "*double estrangement*," that reflects the "total lack of legal protections for freedom of expression in the modern Arabic world" (Campbell, 2017, p. 6-7). It demonstrates that consequently that "Arab writers in all genres, especially the canonical literary fiction to which Arabic science fiction aspires, have learned to conceal their critique under layers of story to provide plausible deniability in the face of scrutiny by the regime" (Campbell, 2018, p. 7). The theory argues the two levels "(i) the first referring to the use of allegory in critiquing its social and political environment; (ii) second is the tension coming forth from the use of technology and its relation to the discontinuity between past progress during the Arab-Islamic Golden Age and the present technological stagnation in the Arab world" (Campbell, 2018, p. 19). It refers to the questions how Arab identity was lost through the lense of the pollical and social criticism. Similar, the fall of the intellectuals in Arab region

and the issues of material interests were highlighted. Consequently, how these factors have shaped the behavior of the common people.

The second aspect of the theory emphasize on how Arabic region is stagnant not only in terms of war but the lack of technology, culture transformation, and region. The role of technology is paramount in the return of the Arabic scientific age, however, the short stories emerged from Arab criticize it on the basis of its power to dehumanize the people. Further, the prevalence of technology may lead to the dystopic condictiones. Blasim's short stories use the historically most common trope of Arabic science fiction, double estrangement, to critique both the acute crisis of sectarian violence and the long-term stagnation and decline of scientific and technological development in Iraq since its Golden Age a thousand years ago. The texts also serve as a powerful illustration of how Arabic science fiction has evolved beyond many tropes that predominate in its early decades in the latter half of the last century. Finally, it contains sci-fi and renders it less threatening to readers of Arabic literary science fiction.

Arabic science fiction stories portray society from a postcolonial perspective and criticize the mystic culture. The consideration of the double estrangement state that postcolonial literature and Arabic sci-fi outline why Arabic science fiction may be understood as “manifestly a postcolonial literature: it is produced in formerly colonized states, for readers in and from these states” (Campbell, 2018, p. 21). The work is distinct from the postcolonial English literature and displaced writers. Blasim's (2016) contribution to *The Gardens of Babylon* exemplifies this theory of double estrangement.

Post-occupation Iraqi literature has some trauma, terror, and violence components that have led to resistance and reactions through literature. This study is also going to deal with Foucault's notions of “power” and “resistance” when he claims that if there is power then there will also be resistance (Foucault, 1978, p. 95-96). Foucault's (1919) concept of power is a controversial theory with a wide range of discussions since its first conceptualization in the 1970s. Since that time, many scholars have written against or in favor of his specific notion of power and faced different types of critiques. However, among the central ideas that develop as a direct consequence of his theory is the notion of resistance against power. This study argues that we should understand his concept of

resistance to understand Foucault's attitude towards the notion of power. Foucault provides priceless insights for resistance. It further demonstrated that when power exists, there is resistance, but this resistance is never in an external position to power (Foucault, 1982).

Power is not held by groups of people through “episodic” or “sovereign” actions of dominance or coercion by looking at pervasive and dispersed. Moreover, power is everywhere and emanates from everywhere, therefore, the presence of agency and structure is nonexistence (Foucault, 1998, p. 63). Further, a meta power or truth regime penetrates society and is constantly in change and negotiation. The utilization of the word “power/knowledge” indicates that power is derived from:

Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its “general politics” of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, how each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true (Foucault, 1991, p. 15).

The “general politics” and “regimes of truth” is enforced using education system, science, media, and diverse socio-political philosophies. It is a struggle about “the rules according to which the true and false are separated, and specific effects of power are attached to the true... a battle about the status of truth and the economic and political role it plays” (Foucault, 1991, p.13). Moreover, the concept of power also has limitations “that enable and constrain alternatives for action and also people's relative capacities to know and influence these boundaries” (Hayward, 1998, p. 1). Foucault’s (1991) conception of power and resistance, post-occupation Iraqi writers employ trauma in their short stories as in the edited anthology *Iraq + 100* and the short story collection *The Corpse Exhibition and Other Stories of Iraq*.

The most significant foci in this study are the anthology of short stories of the Iraqi editor Blasim (2017). First, a short story is a brief piece of fiction pointing at the solidarity of characterization, subject, and effect. It points to produce a single-story impact with the

most prominent economy of implies an extreme emphasis. Modern short story authors tend to base their writings on their own experiences. Moreover, the concern is much more on the less thrilling aspects of life, on the importance underlying what is ordinary. The outcome of such distinctive writing is to uncover the subtleties of the human mind and behavior (Seruya et al., 2013).

Anthologies are a quick way for readers, though, still new to speculative fiction. Regardless of the unifying themes in any anthology, there are diverse styles, forms, and perspectives to a word. Therefore, the stories of different authors always illustrate something new. The interdisciplinary and multifunctional approaches that differs conceptually and terminologically emerge from the anthology—it is applicable to original and translated literature. Similarly, the short stories anthology contains generic properties distinguishing it from others. Between this diversity of short stories, what these anthologized short stories have in common as translation anthologies should tell us something about the historical norms pertinent to the genre (Seruya et al., 2013). For instance, the editing the anthology of *Iraq+100* arises from the fact that Blasim's (2017) works find their place in the broader margins of the Iraqi literary scene as Blasim (2017) has chosen to keep his distance from the non-Arab world. The short stories collected in this anthology were produced by modern Iraqi writers who belonged to different generations and diverse styles. Those authors were born and grew up in an assortment of Iraqi cities and some of them have abandoned their cities seeking peace and freedom in exiles.

In contrast, others have chosen to stay in their homeland and witness their cities' plight to the end, like Daa Jubaili. Fiction and reality literature depicts the different aspects of the modern Iraq—for instance, the tragedy of a desperate individual seeking peace. It is to note that the whole Iraqi society desperately wants peace, in fact, the Iraqis living abroad also have the same opinion (Najjar, 2014).

Ten Iraqi authors including the anthology *Iraq+100* and the winner of the international award of *The Iraqi Christ* imagined future of Iraq. *The Day By Day Mosque* narrated “the drinking of vinegar made from a hundred-year-old perfume in a world where everything is in the process of being reversed” (Gzar, 2016, 8p. 2). *The Here and Now*

Prison “imagines the city of Najaf and its residents translated into virtual reality” (Blasim, 2017, p. 114). Finally, in *Operation Daniel*, “people who resist a dictator's edicts are archived incinerated and compressed into the diamonds that stud his shoes” (Blasim, 2017, p. 109). The edited book contains the stories from horror fiction to fantasy and dark science. The authors of those short stories approached the content using a reinvention of genre for a brand-new terrain. Interestingly, the Blasim’s (2017) has contributed a short story that captures the virtual reality, design, and incorporate politically and technologically advanced Iraq. However, this literature is based on the shaky context but

Only three stories (i) *Kahramana* (ii) *Kuszib*, and (ii) and *Najufa* were originally in English language. All the other stories were translated from Arabic language with the help of multiple translators to make sure the plurality. Jubaili’s *The Worker* in Blasim (2017) perplexes him in English with “its unconventional form and meandering style, made perfect, striking sense if someone imagines it in Arabic” (Najjar, 2014, p. 45).

Among the ten short stories in the anthology, Alhaboby's *Baghdad Syndrome*, Hassan's (2016) *The Here and Now Prison*, and al-Marashi's (2016) *Najufa* in Blasim (2017) have warmth and hopefulness that focus on love, family, and friendship. The stories created on the basis of exhaustion, disgust, contempt, and disillusion are distinguished for the Western readers in the context of speculative fiction. The collection of those stories laid the basis to heal, nourish, and purification of the future thoughts. Further, this literature connects the past to present and to future indicating that what is grown cannot be removed from the soil. Alhaboby (2016) illustrated:

I knew that soon my vision would start to go the way the lights once did over Baghdad all those years ago... You see, if you're a sufferer of Baghdad Syndrome, you know that nothing has ever driven us, or our ancestors, quite as much as the syndrome of loving Baghdad (Blasim, 2016, p. 117).

Iraq + 100 highlights issues beyond America’s blind spot in international speculative fiction: the relative absence of science fiction written in Iraq and elsewhere in the Arab world. For example, Najjar (2014) writes in his article *Arabic Fiction Faces Up to the Future* that “The failure of Arab writers to produce futuristic fiction has been a

mystery” (p. 17). It goes on to mention: “The Arab intellectual and political scene, blighted with much repression and censorship, makes for an ideal environment to write about the future, a realm void of the political and religious taboos of the past and the present” (Najjar, 2014a, p. 18). Some of the writers included in *Iraq + 100* such as Jalal Hassan, who spend years in jails in Iraq wrote about his experience. On the other hand, some writers suffered by compromising their education when Iraq was under economic sanctions.

Blasim (2016) won the Foreign Fiction Prize of *The Corpse Exhibition* as stated “perhaps the best writer of Arabic science fiction” (Baghdad & Ramadi, 2018, p. 16). This event makes Blasim's fiction one of the best literary works of Arabic science fiction available in western languages. The awards Blasim has won, and readers' attention given to his works of fiction are well reserved. The collection of those stories in one literary work was a major work in Iraqi context. This book shows us the domestic conflict in post-occupation Iraq that we have never seen before. It is a war of soldiers and madmen and prophets, angels, jinni, and spirits. This collection of short stories includes fourteen short stories that are all about Iraqi endless civil wars. *The Madman of Freedom Square* (2014) is a sly, dark allegory of their presence and occasionally miraculous effect. *The Killers and the Compass* (2014) illustrated the several characters as terrorists—similarly, the main role of a terrorist open up the extreme violence that emerged from the personal inspiration. Blasim (2018) captures a merciless era by looking for compassion and a kind of visionary longing for human life.

Jameel Alshebeby (2014), quoted in Hamedawi (2017), advocates that the ideas and material subjected to the writings of Iraqi authors are an understandable, political, and psychosocial reaction to the twentieth-century Iraqi environment. Blasim's *Iraq+100: Stories from a Century after the Invasion* (2016) is included in this research to cover a range of aspects such as magical realism, allegory, and fictional narratives that reveal an exponentially growing Iraqi interest in science-fiction works. Similar works may be found to be tackled by writers such as Antoon's (2013) second fictional novel *Wahdaha Shajarat al-Rumman* and *The Corpse Washer*, and the short story of Abbas *Ighmad al-Aynayn* and *Closing His Eyes* in Bahooora (2015). This short story reflects the destructive effect of

violence and terror on the Iraqis' psyche and it accumulates remnants affecting everyday life. Its stories take a turn between the dark and the shock to the quietly chilling case (Bahooora, 2015).

Blasim (2016) may be an exception in this study in that he extends his works beyond realism and deals with surrealism. It modifies the contemporary texts by neglecting war poetry and some romantic works of fiction of the last decades (Irving, 2013). Instead, Blasim (2016) uses artistic strategies as well as linguistic and narrative devices that maximize the effects of his fiction (Bahooora, 2015).

The book, *Iraq's Modern Arabic literature* by Altoma (2010) illustrates that a study of the characteristics of post-occupation Iraqi fiction and Western science fiction has its value. Besides revealing the political, social, and religious aspects, the study emphasizes the interdisciplinary aspect and the interrelation between genres and their mutual influence (Altoma, 2010). In contemporary global interaction, there is a mingling of cultures on a large scale. The value of the science fiction genre was not acknowledged until the 1960s (Israelson, 2016; Lockhurst, 2005,). Smith (2012) states the advancing means of communication and technology also aids in translation, and language is not, at this point, the barrier it once used to be. Thus, knowledge of the English language is spreading rapidly, mainly due to extraordinary efforts put forth by educational institutions. Literature from all over the globe is being translated into English to increase the readership. Hence, more and more studies of this kind, which focus on the mutual impact of genres, are bound to be more familiar. This study is a venture in that direction.

Blasim (2016) states in his book *Iraq + 100* many points about Arab and western traditions in the introduction. It mentions that there is not much science fiction in the Iraqi world because science fiction is directly related to science that is more popular in the western world. Arab literary culture deals more with religion and religion gives Arabs more imagination and poetic tradition, more oral tradition, whereas western penmanship is more influenced by science. The edited anthology is a prominent element in this study because it states the interrelation between Arabic and western science fiction (Blasim, 2016).

The general introduction and theoretical framework comprise the make-up of the initial chapter. The following chapter deals with the western traditions of science fiction. The third chapter delves into the Arab traditions of the same genre. Chapter four analyzes the works mentioned earlier to clarify their roles in the post-occupation Iraqi literature and their possible implications on western literary systems. The last chapter summarizes the whole thesis, states the major findings, and delivers a conclusion and suggestions for further study. It states how the selected books are a response to the science fiction of the West. It also reveals how post-occupation Iraqi fiction possibly contributes to the western science fiction or English-speaking worlds.

1.2. History and Development of Fiction Genre in Iraq

The infestation of Iraq in 2003 by the United States of America, there is a surge of fiction in the country that serves as an expressive outlet bringing about a change in the themes, the technique, and the novelists' style of their narrative. Post-occupation Iraqi fiction translated depicts corruption, violence, and death. In addressing literature in contemporary technological advancements, science fiction is a predictable result of increasing interest in technology. It acknowledges as a genre that helps better study the world (Al-Jiyar, 1984). Although contemporary Arabic science fiction deals with the future, it does not neglect to recognize the glory of the past. In that regard, it is in convergence with the Arab literary tradition.

The Arabic fiction of the period is marked with several awards and nominations at home and on an international level. It dons a melancholy tone, narrating the destruction and tragedy. It raises its voice anxiously to be heard by the world. A long list of works with a range of themes describe the events and their consequences after colonialism struck Iraq. The Iraqi postcolonial novel is far different from the traditional fiction, which has set a fence around itself and dares not venture out of it. The Iraqi postcolonial novel has set up its remarkable distinguishing voice in a melancholy stamp, differing from realism to fantasy, and assessment, to myth, from cruel objectivity to subjective compassion (Hamedawi, 2017).

Retracing the advancement of Iraqi fiction and the readers will find that Iraqi literature is more prone to poetry compared to novel as a genre. The conservative cultural background of Iraqi society along with the traditions and values is one of the aspects that differed the novel—moreover, novel is considered a Western genre and associated with female (Hamedawi, 2017). Though, contemporary Iraqi fiction today influences the western context of writing about science fiction short stories in that this genre appears popular in Iraqi society.

In his edited book *Margaret Atwood's Textual Assassinations: Recent Poetry and Fiction* by Wilson (2003) points out that fiction as a popular literary genre established itself and replaced poetry, widespread before the war. Fiction as a genre was looked upon as a western tradition. Storytelling was considered to be a feminine task. Iraqi society was conservative, and the men believed that they were made for more significant tasks. Moreover, the turmoil and change in the political and social scenarios kept the men occupied with basic safety, security, and stability concerns. People had to strive while facing death, poverty, and oppression (Masmoudi, 2015).

A massive tide of translations into English soon would occur, allowing translation studies to flourish in Iraq as much as the rest of the world: “The study of translation has been constantly and rapidly expanding in a world which is experiencing a deluge of translated texts unparalleled in human history” (Riccardi, 2002, p. 129). Many examples of translated works from English into Arabic and vice versa exist in literature. In Itamar Even-Zohar’s polysystem theory, most translated literary works maintain a central position in the literary polysystem and partake effectively in shaping the focal point of this theory (Evan-Zohar, 2005). Translated literature is not disconnected from the original literature; mass literary production is not dismissed as “non-literature” to escape from recognizing its mutual accreditation with “individual” literature (Even-Zohar, 1990, p. 7-13). Literature works within the target culture's broader social and cultural structures (Toury, 1981, p. 9).

As a consequence, the indigenous literature is affected by the translated literature: “The linguistic scene of the time, with its substantial concentration on historical change, conceived of as non-systemic, plainly constructed an obstruction for finding not how

language varies in various periods, but how it operates” (Even-Zohar, 1990, p. 10). The systemic perspective on literature that distinguishes itself from the isolationist sense provides new insights for translation studies. Then, in this approach, literature cannot be embodied as a series of texts, which appears to be a more evolved approach or a collection. Texts and writings are only fractional manifestations of literature, indications whose conduct cannot be explained by their particular structure. On the literary polysystem level, their behavior is explicable (Even-Zohar, 1990).

It is vital to briefly discuss the evolution of fiction in Iraq from pre-war times to the period after the invasion. In his second edited book, *The Arabic Novel* by Allen (1995) emphasize on the modern fiction in Iraq covering short story and novel as a genre. It elaborates on the result of two forces: “the encounter with the west its science and culture, on the one hand, the rediscovery and the stimulation of the great classical heritage of Arab Islamic culture” (Allen, 1995, p. 12). As part of that *Classical Heritage* by Hafez 'maqamah,' or *maqāmāt* (Arabic Maqam). It is a literary genre to more popular storytelling traditions and alternates Arabic rhyme in poetry including *Alflayla wa-Layla* stories translated as [One Thousand and One Nights]. These traditional Arabic “narrative genres coupled with the impact and influence of modern western narrative genres form a dynamic intertextuality with contemporary Arabic narrative” (Hafez, 1992, p. 270). The historical and intellectual Bagdad of Abbasid time is still an inspiration for the writers. However, the interaction of the Western thought with Iraqi fiction literature happened through translations.

It is usually set in a background that resembles a relatable situation. A short story invariably includes social and political elements that make up the environment, even if it is not realistic. Masmoudi (2015) elaborates that beginner writers in Iraq precisely miss out on this, and any entertainment element could be called a coincidence. The political struggle continues after the First World War, followed by a period of British authority, independence in 1932, the Iranian-Iraqi war, and a brief phase of the monarchy. Finally, the socialist Ba’ath Party was overthrown in 1958. This conflict continued until the Coalition regime in 2003. According to Daughtry (2015) “this bloody history of the last three decades has made the Iraqi individual largely preoccupied with ways of saving

himself from death that lurks and threatens him, whether at the war fronts, in detention, or caught in the claws of hunger during the years of economic siege” (p. 9). The echoes of Ibrahim’s (2015) words with a literary viewpoint, stating that many Iraqi authors establish the foundations of Iraqi short stories on such violent political and historical backgrounds.

The early development of Iraqi fiction that contributes to Arabic science fiction, which has the features of a novel, is *al-Riwyah al-Iqaziyyah* [The Awakening Narrative] by Ghawwīn (2019) that solely focuses on social awakening and moral reform, without any intention of entertainment or romanticization. Next comes Ahmed al-Sayyid had extended the topics to include social, political, educational, and ethical issues. The novella *Khalel Jalal* stated that British colonialism can be tackled only through education, the spread of knowledge, and the riddance of traditional and useless customs. It also argues for the rights of women. This work is one of the first narratives works of Iraqi fiction that features a story depicting some of the events in Iraqi society (Al-Musawi, 2006).

Artists faced terrible times during the tyrannical rule of al-Ba’ath and when Saddam Hussein was the president. Writers were regarded with suspicion and worked under pressure and most of them worked secretly. Hence, the work they produced was nowhere at par with fiction written elsewhere in the world or the Middle East. Moreover, they were under the vigilance of the police and forced to abandon their vocation. Hence, they avoided realism, preferred symbolism, and pretended to be faithful and subject to the regime. At the most, they glorified death or paid homage to the war heroes. The Iraqi writer and critic Hamza Al Hassan compares it to a house party set on fire with people fleeing, only to keep their burns as a part of their new identities (Fitzpatrick, 2005). Some good examples of Arabic science fiction works are Mohamed Khediar’s *Qadisiyyat Saddam* [Saddam's Qadisiyya] (1983) and *Basriaytha* (2018) translated into English as [Portrait of a city] in 2006, and Jindar’s (1989) *The Edges*.

The war with Iran, which continued for eight years, has devastated the country. Both ordinary citizens and Iraqi intellectuals were preoccupied with the struggle for life and did not express their sorrows through creative writing. As a result, most of the writers and intellectuals have fled the country. Other writers, who decided to stay in the country,

we're lucky to get the opportunity to promote the novel form in Iraq after April 9th, 2003, a date that was crucial to all but specifically to writers in the history of Iraq. After 2003, a wave of authors pursued post-colonial and political trying desperately to record the effects of the violations as accurately as possible (Masmoudi, 2015).

After the end of the Ba'ath regime, the mental stress was suddenly lifted, and novelists penned fiction in abundance. Publishing houses opened everywhere and promoted the writing profession. Millions of books were published, and the internet opened more gateways to express thoughts publicly, reaching out to all parts of the world. Yet, the prior experiences and the collapse of Saddam Hussain weighed on the minds of Iraqis to some extent, making them feel uncertain and apprehensive about the future. They looked at the international coalition with doubt. Naturally, the novels of this phase are marked by two trends: one focused on the tragedies before 2003 and rejoicing the transformations after the invasion. Finally, after much struggle and challenges, Iraqi writers institute a new identity for Iraqi fiction. Alsebti (2017, p. 18) reveals that writers have turned their attention to social and political reality and managed to present it in their narratives. The new situation affords a chance to create their particular original style to respond to the circumstances. The sociopolitical environment is unorthodox enough to lead the authors to see their dealings as unprecedented, essentially causing the emergence of works affected by the trends mentioned earlier.

The political scenario in Iraq and post-colonial fiction are closely related and cannot be separated. On the foundation of events following 2003, writers have been anxious to write about the potential changes taking place in the country. The existing cultural conditions provide the necessary support. Iraqi writers have competed to present as realistic a picture of the wars and invasion as possible. The short story as a genre has the power and magic to depict the massive political crisis in Iraq through narration. Writers have had a wide choice of themes to choose from corruption, war, destruction, devastation, crime, rape, death, oil theft, kidnapping, discrimination, and so on. These themes comprise the realities in Iraq after 2003 and enrich the period's novels (Hamedawi, 2017). Assqala (2011) in *Bana al-Shakhṣiyat fī Riwayat al-Khayal al-Ilmi fī al-Adab al-Arabi* claims that science fiction writing is not only a western literary genre. It will be convenient, at this

phase, to discuss in brief some of the novels written by Iraqi writers following the invasion of post-2003 to establish an idea as to how the themes mentioned above are handled by various authors and how they perceive the various socio-political issues.

Allen (2003) in his book *Translating Arabic Literature* explained that the writer has chosen the mailbox office as the central place of action. Not long after the news of the fall of Saddam Hussain's government, the office was attacked by the military forces. The war destroyed all the documents of the official as well as personal lives. This incident would have prolonged consequences. The book reveals that it would take a long time to return to normal. The past and the present times are delightfully juxtaposed in the narrative style. The draft of this novel is found among the papers, all prepared for dispatch but without a stamp. The draft is all about pre-2003 conditions. The sender's name and recipient's name are missing. A secret code implies that the draft would go out of Iraq secretly without being caught by Saddam's police force. The draft is the work of five young men who have worked independently on each of the five chapters and do not seem to agree; one of them is the writer. The situation is symbolic of the situation in the country. There is chaos and conflict everywhere. This turbulence enables people from other nations to take over the reins and rule in their selfish way. They exploit the country for their interests (Allen, 2003, p. 4).

The writer has cleverly conveyed the reasons for the failure of Iraqi intelligentsia to assert themselves. They were submissive in the face of Saddam's oppressive policies. They shared an inferiority complex as they believed that only the West could produce rich literature. They seem to be paralyzed. They had as if handed the identity and culture of Iraq to foreigners. Through symbols and analogies, the writer has depicted the accurate and ghostly picture of the country, the mental pressure among the residents, and the paralyzed condition of the intellectuals artistically. Unfortunately, the chapters are disconnected and the conclusion is not clear. These elements reflect the paralyzed state of the country. The fundamental reason determining the weakness of these authors' literary talent is the oppression of Saddam Hussein's regime (Hamedawi, 2017). It also revealed that the submission of the intelligentsia and the common belief that the western world is the only source qualified to take on this mission (Hamedawi, 2017).

The compromise with cultural identity is a significant concern of the intellectuals in Iraq after 2003 and inspires many writers. They believe that the foreign agenda (plan) is to destroy the cultural identity of Iraq, to destroy the educational, cognitive, and intellectual capacity of the country. The intellectual and cultural situation in India serves as a source of inspiration for writers of post-2003. Another example is the novel *Jannat al-'atād* in Hamedawi (2017) shares the perspective of this intentional destruction of Iraq. His focus is more on the colonial influence that affected the moral values of Iraqi society. The book describes the attack on a famous bookseller's street in Iraq named *Almutanabbi*, which is symbolic of an attack on the intellectuals and scholars. It is like an attempt to weaken the state of the country by weakening its education system. The novel also refers to an effort to destroy the history of Mesopotamia. One native trades the nation's treasures and becomes wealthy. He has no scruples in doing so and no sense of regret. It resembles the changing nature of people who have lost moral values and have become selfish. The novel thus portrays the deteriorating state of the country after 2003. According to the writer, poverty, bomb attacks, violence, murders theft described in the novel provide a glimpse of the actual conditions beyond imagination (Alsebti, 2017, p. 21).

The narratives that follow continue to deal with the conditions before and after 2003 from different perspectives. The ISIS invasion in 2014 and its consequences are another source of inspiration for Iraqi writers. All through the years, we find little evidence of fiction that is purely entertaining in nature that deals with simple themes of life like love and romance, like social realities and routine life of the ordinary person. It was as though the writers considered it their mission to bring out the tragic hazards that swept the country and create awareness among the Iraqis about the miserable state of the nation. Together, the novels present a kaleidoscopic vision of the realities. They are like a literary record of history, economic crisis, religious collapse, and political turbulence (Roberts et al., 2004).

Throughout its span, the science fiction genre has posed questions about human beings as a species. In the 1920s, humanity realized that technology exists to go far beyond what the world offers on the surface. The term science fiction was first used in 1920, though, it is considered flourishing in the modern age and it began long back in the

travelogues written by voyagers. Travel narratives are popular in the eighteenth century. Science fiction was penned long before it began to be identified as a literary genre. Man has always wondered about the existence of a world unseen. Man has always wondered whether it is the only intelligent species in the universe. Human imagination soars into space and the cosmos. Ancient texts describing such travels are available (Aldiss, 1986). However, these writings are rather enchanting or magical and lack a scientific base:

Science-fiction is that class of prose narrative treating of a situation that could not arise in the world we know but which is hypothesized based on some innovation in science or technology, or pseudo-science or pseudo-technology, whether human or extra-terrestrial in origin (Amis, 1960/1963, qtd. in Mandala, 2010, p. 14).

A more organized form has been developed with utopian writing. More's (1516) *Utopia* gives the first notion of "no place" (Amis, 1962, p. 18). It criticizes the existing political situation by comparing it with an ideal but imaginary situation in a place that does not exist. Another cause of the emergence of this genre is the scientific revolution in the 17th century. The actual science fiction genre has begun to emerge since 1920. Several factors and events have converged during this period that prepared the ground for the new kind of genre. Some of them are the spread of literacy, advancement of science and technology, change in the value system, improvement of a scientific attitude, and the transformation of culture from manual to mechanical, etc. These changes took place in England as well as the United States of America. The West has enjoyed the golden era in the 19th century. The advance in printing technology has prompted the publication of volumes of books and magazines and prepared the fertile ground for literary activities (Mandala, 2010).

Everett Franklin Bleiler (2014) states that it is challenging to define science fiction because it does not deal with science in how crime stories deal with crime. The components of actual science in science fiction might be nil. Simultaneously, it would be partly proper to say that science-fiction deals with pseudo-science. Science fiction has three significant elements the quasi-scientific narrative, the lost-race story, and the future story (Bleiler et al., 2014). The two earliest instances of science fiction are Kepler's (1634) *Somnium* and Godwin's (1638) *The Man in the Moone* (1638). The two books portray

protagonists who go traveling to the moon. An essential entry into the genre is Shelley's (1818) *Frankenstein*.

Gernsback Hugo (1920) coined the term “science fiction” well known in the 1920s. The science fiction genre is a type of fiction that deals with the impacts of science or imagined scientific development on human existence. This form of fiction is modern in a sense. Previous literature did make some projection attempts into the future; however, they did not focus on scientific or technological development. Some predictions regarding future technological developments by writers have materialized eventually and are part of reality today. Science fiction is a product of the Industrial Revolution in the West. The revolution triggered the imagination of writers who came up with an array of related themes like aliens, space travel, time travel, imaginary worlds, robots, anticipated destructions, political agitations, devastations, strange voyages, etc. With the current scientific and technological scenario as the starting point, the imagination can soar to any heights. There is no limitation to the extent, depth, and direction of this kind of imagination. The strangest concepts can be imagined and presented in novels or short stories, making them very interesting. Science fiction started with the publication of *A True Story* by Lucian et al., (2015) about extraterrestrial life forms. Some other exemplary works are *New Atlantis*, *Comical History of the States and Empires of the Moon*, and *Somnium*.

Science fiction takes anywhere from a parallel universe to the depths of oceans. One can glimpse into alternative societies. It gives one an experience of adventures in far-off imaginary galaxies. Science fiction can be hard or soft. Hard science fiction is based on natural sciences like physics, chemistry, etc. Soft science fiction is not necessarily scientifically accurate and is based on subjects like psychology, sociology, etc. Science fiction has several sub-genres. For instance, mythological and metaphysical elements meet folklore as the basis upon which fantasy fiction is developed. Phantasms, mystic powers, witchcraft, and sorcery elements are included in supernatural fiction. In deep space, romance and adventure are related to tales that exist in space opera. Poverty and hardship formed of corrupt government systems as leading societal problems consist in dystopian fiction. Ideal worlds are depicted in utopian fiction. Steam-powered machinery and

technology are incorporated in steampunk fiction while cyberpunk combines futuristic technology with a corrupt community (Blackford, 2017).

An exemplary book about the science fiction genre is the *Greenwood Encyclopaedia*. Neil Gaiman (2005) argues about the modern era of robots and artificial intelligence. These realities once unimagined are fostering the trend of science fiction. It describes aliens and extra-terrestrial beings in science fiction. He analyzes well-known works of science-fiction-like Carol's (1865) *Alice in Wonderland* and *Brave New World* Huxley (1932), and the technological utopia described in the novels.

Science fiction has become popular in the West in modern times. There are reasons for this popularity. The contemporary world is characterized by materialism. There is a contest in every sphere of life in which one has to struggle hard for survival. Technological hazards pose new challenges. People have become workaholics. Society needs a change, something that can charm them, enchant them and make them forget the miseries of real life. Science fiction can achieve these changes and trends. Science fiction enables individuals to ignore reality and transports them to imaginary places, helps them experience the magic, enchants them, and works as a balm to soothe their souls. Even children enjoy reading about fairies and witches and make-believe spaces. Science fiction is very appealing to modern western culture. It helps to release stress and maintain mental balance. It provides the fun included in imagination and fantasy. It is full of thrill, mystery, adventure. The technology operates in mystical worlds. There is horror and fear for those who like to indulge in them; there is fun, entertainment, and romance for those inclined towards them. Jacques Derrida offers that "literature should engage with and be influenced by technology...technology is woven with modern culture and cannot be separated from it" (qtd. in Applebaum, 2009, p. 1).

Arthur Clarke's (1968) *The Space Odyssey* was converted into a movie. It helped to bring the genre into the mainstream. It also wrote science fiction short stories. Asimov (1979) is arguably the most well-known "Big Three" science fiction writer. He published more than 500 books. His *Robot series* and *Foundation series* laid the foundation for the science fiction genre. Jules Verne wrote three trendy novels, *Journey to the Centre of the World*, *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea*, and *Around the World in 80 Days* (1869-

1870). Finally, *The Time Machine* is one of the significant examples of science fiction. Wells pushed the genre into the twentieth century and made sure it would stay.

1.3. Post-Occupation Iraqi Literature

The first part of the book reviews selected works on post-occupation Iraqi fiction. The second part reviews examples of science fiction literature of western traditions which are discussed in the next chapter. This literature review of this thesis includes books and critical journal articles related to the study. Masmoudi's (2015) book comprises four chapters that follow a chronological order. It covers Iraqi fiction starting from the Ba'ath regime until the occupation in 2003 and after that. In the first chapter, some novels deal with the period of Saddam Hussein's dictatorship and the Iran-Iraq war up to the fall of Saddam's dictatorship (p. vii). It brings out the marginal position of artists, intellectuals, and fiction writers who are collectively obliged to glorify the defunct judgment and senseless wars or be silenced without saying anything (Masmoudi, 2015). In the second chapter, Masmoudi (2015) refers to the Gulf War in 1991 and its impact on Iraqi society. He describes the post-modern war as depicted in Iraqi short stories. The third chapter describes life in the new Iraq, and the last chapter describes life in the camp (2015).

Roger Luckhurst's (2012) *In War Times: Fictionalizing Iraq* poses some basic questions about the 2003 invasion. He believes that it is far from a logical consequence of 9/11. Robert's (2004) *The End of Occupation: Iraq 2004* contains answers to some of the questions while referring to the end of the occupation. It opines questions whether a military occupation can end without other foreign parties involved in a moment. The initial inquiry presented by the planned twin occasions of 28th June 2004, in Iraq—first, the sovereign interim government in Iraq; second, the end of US occupation (Robert, 2004).

A thesis entitled “Maps, Memorialization, and Identity: Cartographic control and remediated monumental space in post-2003 Iraqi fiction” by Wolk (2016). It elaborates on the Iraq-US conflict, with a particular focus on how the US modified the space in Iraq, especially within Baghdad, through the constitution of new checkpoints, hindrances, barriers, and the Green Zone. She discusses how the US-controlled public monumental space constructed them as military bases and the destruction of iconic statues. It also

examines how statues and monuments are described in post-occupation novels, emphasizing how remediated monumental space informs the post-2003 Iraqi national identity (Wolk, 2016, p. 42).

Hanan Jasim Khammas (2018) argues that modern Iraqi fiction institutes revolutionizing and making creative connections between thought and masculinity. During and after the US invasion attacking Iraq in 2003 and televised pictures of violated and tormented bodies transformed the sense of understanding in public and in literature. The recurrent portrayal of human body was utilized to illustrate the contemporary fiction in Iraq—for instance, the analysis of *The Corpse Washer* (2010) and *al-Raj al-ba'id* [The Long Way Back] (1980) by Fu'ad al-Takarli (Antoon, 2010).

Emad El-Din Marei Aysha (2019) deals with utopia in Arabic science fiction. The writer explains that utopia came late in Arabic fiction because it was a foreign concept. The conditions in Europe that gave rise to the concept of utopia (and consequently dystopia) did not exist in the Arab world. The writer points out how political conditions in the Arab world influenced science fiction produced in the country. However, in due course of time, Arab writers also learned the new genre's tact and made original contributions to science fiction. Depending on Herbert George Wells' modern utopia as a model, the vicissitudes of Arab, and the Iraq War, and the Arab Spring rebellions also influenced Arab authors. Nevertheless, Arab authors were climbing the learning curve especially since the beginning of the new century while also making an adorable contribution to the utopian science fiction collection by drawing on their literary heritage and religious beliefs.

To conclude, this chapter gives a short overview of the entire research study. It states the objectives and describes the methodology of the research. Both post-occupation Iraqi conditions and an introduction to western and Arabic science fiction literature are discussed. Essential writers in the field and their major works are mentioned. Historical development of the science fiction genre is described. It sets the theoretical background for the study and takes a detailed review of literature related to the topic. This chapter serves as a basis for the ensuing chapters. The chapter also justifies the subject by bringing

out the significance of the study and pointing out how it contributes to literature, literary research, and knowledge.



2. SECOND CHAPTER

2. THE WESTERN TRADITIONS OF SCIENCE FICTION GENRE

The first chapter lays the basis for the rest of the study. It is pertinent to mention that study is situated in the context of the truculent social and political circumstances of Iraq. Moreover, how the post-occupational Iraqi literature has impacted Western literary thought. It is historically evident that the literary genres of one geographical region influence the other regions in the world. Therefore, the post-occupation surge of Iraqi fiction literature has implications for the West. It is essential to mention that Blasim (2017) *Iraq + 100* is significant in terms of its diversity of writers and response to Western science fiction.

Chapter 2 focuses extend the discussion by bringing in the Western tradition of the science fiction genre. Moreover, a synthesis of the Iraqi science fiction and Western literature further enhances the understanding of how the literature of different regions impacts each other. Interestingly, the translation of short stories from *Iraq + 100* bringing Iraqi science fiction to the global stage—for instance, the incorporation of virtual reality, game design, and political characteristics not only represent Iraq but also Mesopotamia. Therefore, this chapter provides a contrast of the development in science and technology and its impact on Western literary tradition and the Iraqi context.

2.1. Historical Background of Western Science Fiction

In any society, there is a relationship between its culture and the political situation and events that happen at a particular time especially after wars that change the demographic features of that society. Its societal traditions react with these changes as variables in the academic and literature writings (James & Mendlesohn, 2013, p. 15). To confirm these complex relationships between western tradition and its effects on science fiction. It is essential to introduce their concepts and illustrate the impact of the post-colonial period on the western traditions in science fiction (James & Mendlesohn, 2013).

The development of science and discoveries leads to a new literary ideology that implements the latest inventions and these discoveries in dramatic scripts. Similar to other genres of literature, science fiction is affected by wars and political events. It has a productive imaginary generation beyond political changes in addition to the technical developments (Claus, 2018, p. 21). Science fiction stimulates the human's dreams to build a subject representing the political situation by implementing objectives in a scientific style. Therefore, it is significant to declare a definition of science fiction according to the previous studies and its development. Many studies deal with science fiction theory and describe this genre of literature depending on its elements and ideas. It impersonates and describes the human's activities and behavior in evaluating the current trends (Langer, 2011, p. 82). Science fiction writers connect reality with imagination shortly. They build their stories upon scientific facts and laws or other social matters. This means some of the events can be accepted by the readers because they come after facts. But some other events can be taken by the readers because of their imaginary origin. This genre recognizes science fiction and differs from fantasy fiction (Sandner, 2004).

One of the earlier definitions of science fiction is revealed by Lombardo's (2006) *Contemporary Futurist Thought* is “a branch of literature concerned with the impact of scientific advance upon human beings” (p. 225). It depends on science and technology development to describe science fiction as a writer's motive or readers' demands. This reference refers to the relation between science fiction and science in advance. However, Lombardo (2006) misses the other elements such as current legal or political situations or other social aspects. In 1952, Nuccetelli and Seay (2006) suggested a definition announcing that “science fiction is a storytelling about human beings, with a human problem and human solution, which would not have happened at all without its science content” (p. 225). The human problems and solutions refer to the social aspects but do not refer to the accepted imaginary.

In other directions, some studies show up that the science fiction genre is a branch of children's literature because science fiction events are juvenile in their appeal and manage to be suitable for children. The literature writers are fond of childhood's potentiality and innocence as thematic corollaries (Lombardo, 2006, p. 226). It is not an

entirely accepted definition because it determines that children are the only readers while some science fiction stories have been written for adults. Science fiction has a recent narrative to be defined as a kind of prophetic genre. Its texts are more concerned with perceptions of the future instead of being driven by nostalgia-driven as science fiction makes the future narrative more familiar. This kind of narrative is the most accepted definition that leads to defining science fiction. Hoagland and Sarwal (2014) *Science Fiction, Imperialism, and The Third World explained* that a prophetic genre of literature is concerned with human issues. Then, it proposes acceptable solutions are inferred by imaginary future science for “all age categories and various cultures, ideologies and religions” (Hoagland & Sarwal, p. 18).

Science fiction as a new genre faces a hard rejection in its classification. Earlier studies determine that science fiction is a subgenre of fantasy fiction because of the similarity of the ideal world that both occur. Wendland (1985) offers an exploration that tries to explain science fiction as “apparent connections to both science and myth, to activities which seem contradictory and thus suggest a contradiction in SF itself” (p. 200). A literary critic Manlove (2020) elaborates by trying to theorize science fiction implementing its elements associated with human sciences through the imaginary world as the same as in fantasy fiction but with an absence of scientific solution or any human science association. It presented the quality of “otherness” in science fiction works with construction in its narrative without any direct referent to the known world (p. 1). The literature shows that science fiction has impossible events according to known human science without a “supernatural” or magical sense (Manlove, 2020, p. 1).

Thomas Lombardo (2006) argues that science fiction may be recognized by typical characteristics determining the genre type. These characteristics allow the readers, depending on their knowledge, to recognize this genre. Most of the genre texts have time that is typically set in the future. While not all genre texts happen in different times, they vary from past to present (Lombardo, 2006, p. 23). The genre is named science fiction, the text must incorporate advanced science, and technology principles according to the story's time (Roberts, 2019). People do not accept some scientific facts in the past, but they are taken shortly or in real-time. Although they are not accepted as indisputable facts,

they are still associated with science. According to the genre's association with science, the genre texts explore the effects of discoveries and the development of human technology. It is pertinent to note that traveling in light speed, transportation rays, and computers with their bottoms are public features of those texts. In other words, they may give future discoveries and more intelligent industries and technology race as a motive to introduce fiction through the real world (Roberts, 2019).

Science fiction connects two different phenomena – the world of literature and science, the subtle relation between them which is described by Hayles (2008) in her article, *Chaos as Orderly Disorder: Shifting Ground in Literature and Science*. Literature progresses with time, and so does science. The former does not keep the latter at a distance. This fiction genre can be described as the application of science and technology to literature. Some writers show their interest in science, and some other scientists ensure their place in literature. The twentieth-century experiences a thorough association between science and literature.

Edward Crosby Wells (2005) states that science fiction is understood as a worldwide phenomenon recurring in various languages rather than a genre exclusive to the anglophone literary systems. In 2013. Yet, it could also be observed that science fiction is popularly associated with the English language and the West. Wells (2005) observes that most of the writers of the science fiction genre, such as Herbert George Wells, Ray Bradbury, and Isaac Asimov, are known to have written in the English-speaking or western world. As a result, sci-fi is assumed to be a genre belonging to the West (Rabkin, 2020). Even in the *Cambridge Companion to Science-fiction* by James and Mendlesohn (2013) observed by the writers themselves and found that American and English writers are dominant. The only non-Anglophone writer in this book is Verne (2003).

The scientific upheaval triggered by the Industrial Revolution first happened in the West (Stableford, 1979). Therefore, science fiction as a genre would emerge in the West as well. Up until then, romantic fiction reigned supreme globally with few but prominent writers dominating the bookshelves. It can be observed that with scientific discoveries, trends change, and does the general outlook of people regarding their lives. With printing becoming easily accessible and affordable, authorship would move from the few in focus

to the general public. Moreover, the gradual changes in tastes and materialistic values replace moral values. The development of science provides numerous triggers for imagination. The artists attain an opportunity to permeate the public's minds to keep the crowd engaged with their flights of fantasy into the future. The literary value is substantial but fresh ideas are more welcome.

Budding writers seem to prefer the science fiction genre for the empirical fact that little attention is required for social or political issues that reveal themselves in the writers' societies. They quickly adopted it as a means that gave them unlimited scope for exploration of the future based on sheer imagination. The current progress in science is a starting point and every writer could project fiction and hypotheses in every dimension and direction possible. Even if two writers took the same approach, the starting point could differ, or the themes vary. In short, young writers saw a massive expanse of storage from where they could draw the raw material for fiction (Mansfield, 1991).

It is noted that science fiction readers seem to value the genre for different but not unrelated reasons. Science fiction commonly drags the minds of its readers far away from the realities far into the future. There are no uncomfortable and troubling issues that find their way into other types of conventional fiction defined as a mirror of society. No matter how fictitious is fiction, it cannot be pure fiction because the plots are woven into the texture of the culture. The community features will invariably appear in the pages of fiction. Even science fiction, for that matter, cannot be pure imagination. The imagination, after all, is shaped by human beings and their experience in the world as it exists today. The circumstances in the West are the suitable soil for the germination of this new kind of fiction.

Science fiction was not necessarily considered reputable in early times since it was more prevalent among juveniles. However, it obtained momentum after World War II. Science fiction evolution coincided with scientific feats like nuclear energy and atomic bombs, organ replacement, and human cloning. Before scientific progress, science-fiction writing was chiefly based on flights of fancy. One example is *Trips to the Moon* serve the creative feats served as alternate worlds for readers free from the troubles they experienced on earth. They also allowed criticizing the government, religious orders, and society

without facing any risk of legal or social censure. Cyrano [1653-1662] was another writer who describes a voyage to the moon in which the voyager seeks his dream society, free from hunger, suffering, and war that afflict planet earth (Berger, 1976). Today, science fiction depicts the world over and adds dimensions in the form of movies, computer games, DVDs, TV shows, and toy weapons in the twenty-first century (Berger, 1976).

2.2. Science Fiction

Science fiction is man's "cultural wallpaper" and the earliest days of their presence on Earth (Aldiss, 1986, p. 14). Science fiction and human reality have a complicated correlation. Science fiction addresses how today's or tomorrow's scientific breakthroughs affect reality and offers perspectives (Menadue & Cheer, 2017). It alters the scientific understanding of its readers. It dons the reader with the ability to embrace change and judge it as realistic and bound to happen (Tymn, 1985). Since such changes are bound to occur in any practical research, many studies utilize science-fiction to build anecdotes, models, and outlooks that influence the results (Bina et al., 2017; Hansen, 2004).

Science fiction does not always adhere to the more traditional means of constructing a plot, characters, or setting, making it difficult to define the term. As Asimov (1979) suggests, science fiction "is an undefined term in the sense that there is no generally agreed-upon definition of it" (as cited in Anandrao & Atkare, 2019, p. 211). One may come across themes in ancient literature that is similar to science fiction. However, there is a significant difference between antique writing and science fiction. The latter deals with scientific and technological plausibility. For the substantial part, this is what distinguishes science fiction from ancient speculative attempts and other contemporary genres such as horror or fantasy. Science fiction deals with the plausible future impacts of technology. Science and technology are essential for science fiction, unlike other genres. Therefore, science and technology are key factors that enable one to identify literature as science fiction. Hillegas (1963) defines science fiction as "one which presupposes a technology, or an effect of technology, or a disturbance in natural order such as humanity, up to the time of writing, which is not experienced" (p. 8).

Science fiction writers seek new facets of technology such as unimaginable developments that would shock the readers. This issue helps expand the readers' consciousness and often enables them to be prepared for the future. For example, Toffler (1981) mentioned a throw-away culture, which has become more or less a reality today. More than 50% of products of different types are meant for single-use and disposal in these times. Toffler suggested that attachment with things and objects will be nil in a virtual world where human relationships are crumbling. For example, the worth of a wedding gown lasts only for a day; thus, it is more reasonable to use a disposable crepe paper gown rather than spend vast amounts of money on the traditional wedding dress.

Science fiction often emphasizes satire is a safe ground for satire and criticism. It is a medium by which authors satirize their environments directly or indirectly. It is a fact that no system of government is entirely flawless as each method of governing has advantages and drawbacks. Ultimately, society is compelled to accept the form of government that exists and adapt to it. Science fiction can address any system's weaknesses in many ways. One can consider the example of Reiff (2010) *Aldous Huxley: Brave New World* is a research vision of an unequal and technologically advanced future where humans are genetically raised and socially indoctrinated. Science fiction deals with something that appears to be impossible. Sometimes, the impossible becomes possible as the world makes progress. For example, when the television was invented, a poet wrote a poem about school lessons on television, which is common practice today. Another example is Verne's (1863) *Paris in the Twentieth Century* in which Verne includes automobiles, elevated trains, and banking machines (Toffler, 1981).

Robert Boyer (1988) reveals that science fiction is dynamic and welcoming of constant change, as, in its regard, the genre is introduced as a change to the traditional face of literature. It depends heavily on science and technology. Science fiction writers must have their visions updated about the latest scientific developments and experiments in all parts of the world since failing to do so would result in loss of impact and identity of the genre. The success of science fiction relies on the writer's capacity to convince the readers about the reality of the new world made as a background. Incomplete details or gaps in information would confuse a reader. It is an idea rather than a plot or character that

dominates a work of science fiction. Science fiction has the ability to induce science, society, and politics in the past, present, and future. The extent of the science fiction is huge that induce unique characters.

Science fiction as a genre translates the ideas surrounding science into fiction raking over the folklore. Specific types of science fiction may be identified for the age group that they cater to. Relatively flat characters in adventure stories where the plot is the focal point often target children, whereas exploring moods or specific themes with a humanoid (based on anthropology) cast will be the content adult science-fiction works aspire to offer. A prevalent type would be juvenile fiction, where curious and adventurous teenagers explore their scientifically unorthodox environments built to ebb with the readers' reading skills and scientific attitudes. Science fiction is created, reproduced, and publicized for different age groups (Butler, 1979).

Of the various themes that are found in science fiction, utopias and dystopias stand out. In utopic works, ideal societies are depicted in hypothetical worlds, revealing hidden discontent, often via satire. There can be unsatisfactory political conditions in the guise of fiction. Certain philosophers such as Karl Marx believed that the world is bound to make continuous progress and reach an ideal end state. Thus, science-fiction writers pursue futuristic progressive trends, hoping for social perfection in the far future (Stableford, 1987).

On the other hand, pastoral utopias distance the readers from technology and concentrate on peaceful, natural worlds. Pastoral utopias are confined to quiet village life, far from tensions of bank loans and traffic jams. A recurring problem with utopian novels is that they cannot include dramatic conflict, a central element of fiction around which a story revolves. Hence, it appears that the very heart or soul is missing (Tymn, 1985).

Dystopias, in contrast, express the fear that things may get worse in the future. While utopias are driven by optimism, dystopias are driven by pessimism. In a dystopia, the seekers of modernity are tramped down and destroyed. A common instrument of the said destruction is alien life. As characters within a narrative, aliens pose many problems. If they resemble human beings to a great extent, they do not sound interesting. Unlike humans, if they are too much, the narrative cannot conform to conventional elements like

plot, conflict, and motives. Some alien descriptions are impossible to imagine by human beings. Yet, science-fiction abounds with exotic invasion motifs. Science fiction has depicted aliens as scientists, office workers, technicians, and even lovers, which argues to signify that human imagination is conditioned and controlled by life on earth (Tymn, 1985).

Another theme in science fiction is space travel. It allows the readers and the writers to sever earthly bonds and take imaginative flights into unknown extra-terrestrial spaces. However, it must be preserved that the “heavenly” element was lost when humankind made it to the moon in 1969. Human beings were shown to thrive in small, confined spaces, struggling to limit their fuel, food, water, and oxygen. Many basic scientific principles such as gravitational force and orbiting are compromised for the sake of a fictional narrative that focuses more on engaging the interest of readers. The impact depends on the degree to which writers can convince the readers. Space travel writing includes advanced technology, and at the same time, gurus and princesses, robots and smugglers, and chase scenes as in popular movies, with the difference that the chasing goes on in space (Roberts, 2019).

Just as one can travel via imagination through physical space, one can travel via imagination across time. This leap into the future also provides excellent themes for science fiction. One can travel back into the past or forward into the future. Writers imagine some point of time in history, either past or present, and introduce some change like a misstep of some ruler, affecting entire history (Kennedy & Gioia, 2013). In that vein, it is an imaginative exercise for readers to travel across time. Some writers did not limit themselves to past or present but wrote about several historical threads running simultaneously in parallel histories. Future world consequences have their roots in the current world, but parallel universes are highly speculative. Readers are fond of reading about such ‘no world’ in which unpleasant situations can be mutated and disfigured without restrictions. Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* represents this kind of a chronic world, and much of what he wrote about came quite near to truth toward the close of the nineteenth century (Wells, 2017).

If the notion that the passage of time makes the situation better or worse in one's world is discarded, there are infinite possibilities. Writers of science-fiction literature have conceived societies that are not necessarily better or worse but different. The customs and conventions related to religion, finance, social institutions like marriage or family, death, sex, etc., are different from what we find in real life. For example, people may change their sex on and off, re-make themselves through cloning, replace body parts as per their will, change the body structure, travel in space, and so on in casual and normalized ways. Mobile interest groups or electronic cults replace religious or political groups. The genre's writers have to spend many pages explaining the makeup of these alternative societies as the work cannot be appreciated until the new background created by the writers is thoroughly understood by the readers (Manlove, 2020).

As observed in Wells's (2017) *The Time Machine* suggested that there are many taboos and conventions regarding sex and gender. They are considered delicate topics that have to be handled carefully to prevent acute attacks on the authors. In the sci-fi world, one will find a reproduction to be a surgical add-on. Everything is technology-driven. There are many examples of feminist science-fiction in which women continue to struggle with the responsibilities assigned to them by nature, such as childbearing and motherhood. Even science-fiction as a genre has not yet come out with an alternative arrangement, though few attempts have been made (Berger, 1976).

To conclude, it has been said that both protagonists and the worlds they occupy are fictional in the sci-fi genre. It can also be observed that science and literature have an intimate relationship with each other. Roberts (2019) states that science seeks the truth while art preserves it. This chapter has discussed the relationship between science fiction and literature to reveal the core themes, characteristics, and new findings of research literature that utilize science fiction. It has also offered some concepts to describe and outline human cultures. Finally, it has also discussed why western people are more concerned with science fiction.

2.3. Western Traditions of Science Fiction

Science fiction has its origins in the western context. Still, modern fantasy fiction has originated in England during the Victorian age. Both these genres became focal in the West, from where they have spread to the different parts of the world. There is a cause behind why people in the West make up most consumers of science fiction literature. Max Weber suggests that people in the West may be “disenchanted” as their world feels reasonable, easy to read, and exhausting. Weber posits that due to contemporary science, an ascent in secularism, an unbiased market economy, and government-managed organizations, the western social constructs view reality as understandable, rational, and deliberate, prompting an inevitable loss of a feeling of marvel and enchantment. The instruments exist when the world is dissected and examined, the unknown is discarded or deconstructed (Folch, 2013).

Thus, the westerners pay attention to the science fiction genre, attempting to re-fascinate the world. Moreover, children and childhood have much to offer, so one strategy has proven to take fantasies and revise them for grown-ups, ultimately leading to the blades and magic of contemporary fantasy fiction. Another technique is to reinsert the unknown mystery into the heart of the intelligent interaction. India has made many similar features as the United States as a capitalist economy, a substantial regulatory government, and forefront logical and scientific expertise. Disappointment is embodied in the philosophical convention of the eighteenth-century European Enlightenment with its battles over faith versus science. The aftermath challenges in the West have been consigned the extraordinary metaphysical to a lower position than the ordinary rational. This stands out as a respectable intersection of cultural history and not a stage of species-oriented advancement (Folch, 2013).

Writers of use science fiction for smuggling scientific truths into the awareness of a scientifically illiterate audience. Miroslav Kotasek (2015) concludes that as a community relies on “the influence of our models of reality, science fiction has a part in evaluating such cultural and social frameworks and proving the genre as a cultural, social, and political foundation.” Nerlich et al., (1999) revealed that the overall population uses

metaphors to discuss human respect and autonomy. They do not reach back to philosophical books but to science fiction narratives and movies to support their arguments. Olivia Bina et al., (2017) utilizes science fiction for a pattern of forward-looking style that may have an essential role in affecting real-world policy. José Van Dijck (2008) clarifies that science fiction has been an important cultural element for understanding and assessing new technologies' scientific, moral, and social outcomes throughout the centuries. Besides anticipating a potential future, and science fiction involves analyzing current cultural or technological arrangements.

Considering the evident effect that examine concepts and content of the science fiction is critical in terms of provide an image. Bainbridge offers a fitting and organized methodological illustration sci-fi to be an expressive tool that to analyze desirable and chaotic information. “The strength of Bainbridge’s multidisciplinary research in semantics is explicit in the predictable nature of his procedure” (Van Dijck, 2008, p. 10). The investigation includes eliminating subjective determination predisposition that connect analysts to quantitative techniques. The scope of literature to apply content categories of stories to be analyzed quantitatively. However, the predefinition of coding categories seems to have obliged the autonomy of analysis. For instance, a solid relationship between the class of genre form “alien contact” and genre content “alien” is one of the “provocative results” (Rabkin, 2020, p. 466) described in the discoveries. Still, science fiction narratives predicate such a correlation.

Science fiction is a metaphor in Western traditions indicated culture. Accordingly, it indicated that science fiction is useful to find new interpretations of the existing realities. These indications may be pertinent to culture, science, society, and literature by backing endeavors to improve science communication, particularly science education. Researchers depict the performance of common sci-fi in catching the audience's imagination and making unrealistic depictions of science and scientists. Science fiction is connected to actual science that can be intricate for the dissemination of research. It is to note that instead of “neglecting these connections due to their fictional origins, it is essential to turn on the public to know their hopes, fears, and assumptions of science and consider how science fiction might be utilized for diegetic purposes” (Rabkin, 2010, p .41).

3. THIRD CHAPTER

3. ARAB TRADITIONS OF SCIENCE FICTION GENRE

This chapter carries forward the going to discuss the emergence and evolution of the science fiction genre in the Iraqi and Western context. The characteristics of the genre, common themes, and significant representative works indicate the differences and the commonalities in literary thought. It is, however, important to note that human emotions are universal—therefore, the representation of those emotions takes different shapes and languages. It is pertinent to note that the ultimate expressions and emotions associated with humanity convey the same message.

The Arab literary heritage is old—though, the issues of exposure were constraint due to the language. The popularity of the English language naturally supports the literature written in English. However, the advent of new tools for translations and freedom of movement helped Arab literature to be in the limelight. After discussing the tradition of science fiction in both geographies, this chapter advances the arguments by comparing and contrasting science fiction in Arabic and Western contexts. Particularly, the translated texts from Arabic during the post-occupation Iraq and how it is related to or represented in Western fiction. Further, how science fiction has been impacting Arabic literature.

Arabic literature has come under the limelight recently and is discussed in the literary community. This observation gives rise to many issues whether it implies that science fiction is a new introduction to Arabic literature. It has any origins in Arab or elsewhere in the world whether we find any traces of similar genre in the past literature of Arab and so on. An exchange of literary genres continues across the world, and specific genres gain popularity in certain countries for various reasons (Mustafa, 2008). Sometimes, a genre fails to sustain itself where it originates and gets a better response in other countries. Sometimes, the revival of a particular literary form is found after a lapse of time. Asaqli (2017, p. 54) indicated that Arabic literature introduces the science fiction

genre through translations of western science fiction works in the 1940s. Therefore, it is worthwhile with this study to track the traditions of science fiction in Arab literature. There are differing theories and opinions in this regard.

This chapter starts with an attempt to explain what precisely is meant by Arab science fiction. According to Arabic literature, science fiction deals with issues that stretch beyond everyday reality. It deals with technological phenomena that have yet to be realized. Hence, it deals with human interactions with the technology of radical and societal change. There are socio-political reasons that operate in the backdrop of literature. They decide the upcoming or emergence of forms of literature and the reasons for their popularity. They reflect why certain conditions disappear or appear from time to time (Asaqli, 2017). Robert Scholes (2005, p. 1443) believes that there is a radical difference that is a discontinuity between the extraordinary world of science fiction and ordinary human life. In Arabic countries' long and eventful history, the wars witnessed by the governments have affected the literature and literary forms that prevailed at different times. Literature, in turn, can create an impact on socio-political context (Scholes, 1976, p. 46). This chapter includes a review of the changing times, the origin, movement, and prevalence of science fiction in the Arab world. The interaction between science fiction literature and society is also discussed in the chapter, thus, achieving a comprehensive view of all aspects of Arab traditions of science fiction.

This study conceptualizes the Arab world that contains more than twenty Arabic speaking countries—it is pertinent to note that all of these countries have unique dialect, culture, and socio-political contexts. Therefore, it is important to understand and segregate the societies and subsequent role of science fiction. However, there are couple of common constraints for science fiction in Arab countries that is the censorship coupled with illegal arrest and imprisonment. Moreover, it is hard to earn money through writing.

3.1. Arabic Science Fiction

Whether in Arabic populations or any other part of the world, the science fiction genre is uniform. It has the same qualities and characteristics. The basic tenets include fantasy, imagination, parallel worlds, aliens, space travel, strange creatures, and highly

advanced technology. What makes Arab science fiction a distinct category leads to the origin of any literary genre? A genre originates in some existing literary background and it is even more greatly influenced by the socio-political and economic conditions that prevail (Snir, 2000, p. 260). Logically, science fiction can emerge in an advanced country where scientific progress is rapid. Science is part and parcel of every sphere of life in evolved countries. It is based on current progress that something projecting into the future can be visualized (Snir, 2002, p. 11). Arabic Science fiction makes a valuable contribution to the genre, especially in the post-colonial era. It examines Arabic science fiction in the light of what he terms “double estrangement” (2018, 98). That is, he argues how the literature criticizes social and political conditions through estrangement. Custers (2019, p. iii) explains the concept of double estrangement. The first layer of estrangement is socio-political criticism the use of allegory. The second layer pinpoints the break between the past glory of the Arabic golden age of technological progress and the current stagnation as follows:

ASF (Arabic Science Fiction), (...) tends to engage in this sort of socio-political estrangement as a means signaling that it's intended to be perceived as serious literature. At the same time, works of ASF often engage in a second later of estrangement that draws attention to the drop-off in scientific and technological innovation in the Arab world since the glory days of Arab/Muslim dominance (Campbell, 2018, p. 23).

In this last sentence, Campbell refers to Islamic golden age of 6th to 12th century which has been experienced a “*scientific golden age*” the likes of which it has never seen again. Further,

The specifics of the first layer of double estrangement will vary greatly from one novel to the next, as the first layer tends to focus on conditions specific to a given country or regime; the second later tends to be more consistent in drawing attention to the discontinuity between past progress and present stagnation (Campbell, 2018, p. 24)

Arab science fiction is that which emerges from an Arab environment. It is fiction penned by natives who have witnessed and experienced the ups and downs in the country's history. Arab fiction tends to be nurtured in the typical Arabic setting. It reflects the very grain, the texture of the nation. It puts into words and vividly describes the country's material, scientific, technological, intellectual, literary, and spiritual progress. Using science fiction as a genre portrays the accurate picture, the reality of conditions as they exist. There are situations to complain about much to be dissatisfied, leading to sorrow, death, and suffering. Arab writers have often questioned, criticized, and evaluated society. Arab literature gives an insight into various psychological dimensions like isolation, disillusionment, disappointment, and alienation (Baratta, 2011). Blasim (2017) has stated in his edited anthology *Iraq + 100* that Iraq had not tasted peace, harmony, freedom, or stability since the British invasion of the country for the first time in 1914. All the grudges can be safely and indirectly depicted through science fiction literature. The writers and readers get an opportunity to take their minds off something unpleasant and indulge in a fantasy world, allowing the mind to experience some degree of freedom and peace (Al-Masri, 2018).

The aim here is not to highlight the suffering and poverty in Arabs countries. The problems in every country are unique and temporal. However, the history of the Arab population will agree that citizens must have faced difficult situations indeed. Arabic science fiction literature is linked to the industrial-technological revolution. There was social change and discoveries and inventions that led to science fiction. The industrial and scientific processes inspired many writers to write short stories and novels containing scientific ideas. In the 1950s, interest in space travel and supernatural phenomena increased considerably in the Arab world.

On the other hand, there is a lack of original literature from one perspective and a demand for science fiction. This absence leads to the translation of western literature. There are translations of short stories, novels, scientific books and papers, anthologies, and biographies (Mustafa, 2008). Reuven Snir (2000, p. 263) stated that it is a cultural invasion by the westerners. It is carried out to destroy the Islamic language, replace Arabic culture with western culture, and ensure that the Arab world does not re-build itself. Snir

(2000) suggested through analysis of Arabic science fiction, concludes that “the genre mixes sci-fi with traditional genres of Arabic literature, especially those related to a religious experience” (p. 265). Further, it is also stated that Arabic science fiction “has not (yet) developed itself as a medium capable of expressing social comment because it is too prone to serve for amusement or didactic aims” (Snir, 2000, p. 267). Thirdly, Snir sets the concept of Islamic- science fiction which is a form of science fiction in which Islamic ideas and values prioritize future humanity (Snir, 2000).

Arab science fiction, then, is a literary tradition belonging to the typical conditions in the nation, not just socio-politico-economic conditions but the degree of scientific progress and the prevailing literary setup. There can be pressure or restriction of political nature that prevent writers from writing on specific subjects. The acceptability and open-mindedness of the public also put restrictions on the readers. Writers cannot ignore these factors, no matter how much they believe in art for art’s sake. Writing loses its meaning and purpose without readers. Especially in a country that is in turmoil, few writers would take to writing without some sense (Snir, 2000, p. 269).

A long adventure of cruelty, horror, destruction, displacement, and tragedies has engaged the writers to short stories. Therefore, the intent to write the stories about future dominated by the current realities. In this process, Blasim (2016) emphasized the need to write for the project. Moreover, it also reveals that writing about future will provide the authors to a new reality and a breathing space. The idea to convey the current realities combined with the future can be better conveyed through storytelling. He suggests that they would be writing about an almost obscure life without depending directly on their experience or perusing of the past or the present. He further stated that “writing about the future literature can be brilliant and exciting and an opportunity to understand ourselves, our hopes, expectations, and our fears by breaking the shackles of time. It is as we are dreaming about the destiny of a man” (Blaim, 2017, p. 8).

3.2. A Brief Review of Arabic Science Fiction

Researchers believe that Arabic science fiction literature traces back to the 13th century in Baghdad. The earliest punctual examples were Ibn al-Nafis's *Theologus*

Autodidactus in 1270 and some narratives in *One Thousand and One Nights*, including the acclaimed Sindbad the sailor (Malik, 2009). The principal science fiction writer is Zakariya al-Qazwini in 13th century Baghdad, and Islam and the Arab world influenced western science fiction literature. However, by the twentieth century, Arab science fiction mainly consisted of translations of western literature. The reason for such astounding works of fiction is that Islam and the Middle East were in their Golden Age and in a state of ascendancy of power in an empire that stretched from today's Spain to India (Malik, 2009). Modern science fiction draws themes from the ancient past rather than looking forward to a new world. After the Golden Age and years of social and political stagnation caused a sense of fatalism. The political pressure, tumult, violence, and wars lessened the artistic spirit of budding writers. The Middle East countries were stagnating or deteriorating. Moreover, educational or scientific progress is not possible in such circumstances. Further, the Arab community is religious and faithful. Though, science in most cases cannot exist comfortably with faith (Malik, 2009).

Maryem Agrine (2017, p. 1-30) demonstrates that the western world is generally more involved with practical and scientific matters. Science fiction has become extremely popular in the West in modern times. However, there is a contest in every field of life as one has to struggle hard for survival. Technological hazards pose a new challenge such as people becoming workaholics. Culture often needs a change and something that can charm, enchant, and make forget the miseries of real life. This process can be achieved through science fiction literature. This genre enables individuals to ignore reality and transports them to imaginary places helps them experience the magic, enchants, and works as a balm to soothe their souls. Even children enjoy reading about fairies and witches and make-believe species. It helps to release stress and maintain mental balance. It provides the entertainment included in imagination and fiction that is full of thrill, mystery, and adventure. There is horror and fear for those who like to indulge in them since it is fun, entertainment, and romance for those inclined towards them (Agrine, 2017).

Sinaan Antoon (2013) suggested that it is characterized by melancholy loneliness rather than anger or violence. Furthermore, "the alteration of the translation process affects the original text in the case of *Iraq + 100* and *The Corpse Exhibition* poses a doubled

impact. These texts were translated from their original Arabic context into an English context to be understood and available to international readers” (Alkriti & Janoory, 2019, p. 15).

The scientific revolution first happened in the West. Logically, it is no wonder that science fiction first emerged in the West. The scientific discoveries, technological progress, and science fiction literature mutually reinforce each other. Science fiction is evolutionary and not revolutionary. It can be said that science fiction came as an aftermath of scientific discoveries and inventions. Before the age of science, most fiction was romantic fiction. Great classics were written in this period. The era of fiction was dominated by a few prominent writers who were talented in the true sense and were equally blessed with destiny, both together leading them to carve their names in the history of fiction (Henderson, 2001).

Paul Kent Alkon (2013), in *Science Fiction before 1900*, analyzed the most significant stages in the early evolvement of the science fiction genre, including *Frankenstein*, *Twenty thousand Leagues under the Sea*. The arguments stated that with scientific discoveries, trends change, and so does the general outlook of people, and their way of looking at life. As printing became easy and cheap, the authorship moves from the few in focus to the general public. Moreover, the changes in the tastes gradually materialistic values replace moral values like love and faith. The development of science provides numerous triggers for imagination. They get an opportunity to permeate the public's minds which can keep the crowd engaged with their flights of fantasy into the future. Literary value is necessary but new ideas are more welcome. Freudian psychology adds another dimension to physical sciences.

The scientific age was also an age of experiments. As in other fields, experiments were tried out in art and literature. Science fiction was one such experiment and the budding writers found it very fascinating. They did not need any knowledge of social, political issues, and current conditions to write science-fiction. They quickly adopted it as a means that gave them unlimited scope for exploration of the future based on sheer imagination. With recent progress in science as a starting point, every writer could project vision in 360 degrees and directions. Even if some of them took the same approach, the

starting point could differ, or the themes vary. In short, young writers see a massive expanse of storage from where they can draw the raw material for fiction (Alkon, 2002).

Arab readers develop a fascination for space travel towards the end of the 20th century with scientific progress. Readers' urge has been fulfilled initially by translating English science fiction into Arabic, primarily short stories. After the 1980s, science fiction novels in Arabic have shown two trends – the purpose of one is sheer entertainment. At the same time, the other was serious, striving to be accepted as part of the literary system (Aysha, 2019).

3.3. Translated Post-Occupation Iraqi Fiction in Western Science Fiction

Literature indicates that science fiction first entered the literary domain of the Arab world through translations from western literature. However, shreds of works resemble science fiction in genuine Arabic literature, originating in its homeland. Nash's (2019) *The Ebony Horse* and Chakarborty's (2017) *The City of Brass* have two stories in this collection that can be described as Proto science fiction. Significant motifs are a general characteristic of Arabic literature. The science fiction stories in 1940 and is considered the father of Arabic science fiction literature. Science fiction is commonly written in all Arab countries, yet, no author can be called a science fiction specialist (Sallis, 2013).

Science fiction in the Arab context has drawn from its literary heritage. Suppose we regard the impact of English literature. In this case, it argues that many Arab writers could read English and be quite familiar with English literature in all genres, including science-fiction and short stories. Time travel is every day in science fiction. A strange characteristic is observed in Arabic literature that the notion of time differs for the Arab world and the West. In traditional Arab societies, rituals were necessary and the day was punctuated by prayers (Campbell, 2017).

In an article that deals with the beginnings of the *Iraq + 100* project, Najjar (2014) explains that "The reluctance of Arab writers to address the future has long been a great mystery, at least to him. The walls of repression and censorship that confine Arab creativity so severely offer in themselves an ideal environment for writing about the future, a space that is free from the taboos that weigh on the past and the present" (p. 8).

In this quotation, the Iraqi writer Blasim (2017) elaborates on the lack of Iraqi science fiction. He mentions that the edited anthologized book of short stories is significant for the other Iraqi writers interested in writing about the future of science fiction.

Campbell (2018, p. 188) in his book *Arabic science fiction* illustrated that most Arabic writers use modern standard Arabic, also known as Fusha. However, writing science fiction seems to be a need to adapt the Arabic language to suit the genre. There are some exciting neologisms—for example, “science fiction” has been translated into Arabic as *al-khayalilmi* [scientific imagination]. Cyberpunk carries over as *al-saybir bank* [cyberpunk]. Dystopia is transferred as *naqid al-yutubia* [the opposite of utopia].

Arabic science fiction attracts curiosity and attention of the West and succeeds in breaking the stereotypes of the Arab world. Arabic science fiction is filled with technology and progress and has a strong connection with society. The Arabic science fiction today pints at a different future for Arab culture. Nations have their particular horrors towards progress. Arabic science fiction helps to mitigate these fears to some extent. It gives an idea about other worlds and prepares society mentally to accept alien invasions. It reduces what may be called future shock, as Alvin Toffler calls it (Campbell, 2017).

Islamic society is affluent in taboos, especially related to sexuality. These taboos can be broken indirectly through science fiction—Arab writers have realized the West and have discovered the necessity to deconstruct certain taboos and superstitions. Hence, the relationship and interaction with the West are essential. Western science fiction stories mention dehumanized societies. The very thought of them is terrifying. When incorporated in Arab literature, they serve as a warning and create awareness among readers. This can help the Arab society to approach the future cautiously and avoid the mistakes committed by the West (Campbell, 2017).

Thus, it can be said that the Arabic translation of western science fiction and vice versa are mutually influential. Arabic science fiction has a long history and tradition. Western writers borrow the forms of science fiction to write about the unknown future world. The genre suits the purpose aptly and allows them to indulge in technology and scientific progress conveniently. As in Arabic countries, they can use the genre safely to criticize the socio-political and religious issues subtly and indirectly. Arabic writers

always write in suppressed conditions as they are closely monitored and censored. Thus, they are being deprived of enjoying the same freedom as western writers. They work under the fear of imprisonment and harsh punishment at times. This is an important reason and motivation behind why the science fiction genre fits them. Similarly, the westerners could take advantage of this fiction genre when they want to make indirect attacks towards the political system (Campbell, 2017).

Blasim (2017) states that Iraqi literature endures from a dire deficiency of science fiction writing. He asserts that his edited anthology of short stories *Iraq+100* is the primary of its kind, in theme and form, within the corpus of modern Iraqi literature. It is confronted with the fact that Iraqi literature lacks sci-fi writing in earlier times. It further demonstrates that he and the other writers of short stories in this anthology have tried to open the windows for the other contemporary Iraqi writers. The writers are asked to write short stories about Iraqi cities a hundred years after the American occupation. They have complete freedom in this anthology to select any genre of writing that can address the future (Blasim, 2017).

Another important reason is that science and progress are far highly developed in the West. Beginning with the current progress as a triggering point, the writers could allow their imaginations to take flight and project into the future. Significantly, recent progress is more varied and fantastic future worlds. Thus, the genre that originated in Arabic literature was found handy by western writers. It is not a one-way process that is limited to the influence of one tradition on the other. The literature of West and Arabic countries has a mutual relationship. The West and the Arab literature benefitted from the exchange and gave the content to contribute a genre. The enrichment of literature in both countries continues that is the chief interest of the literary community in the world, is constant (Greenberg, 2019, p. 169). Further, the translation facilitates the progression of literature in both directions (Greenberg, 2019).

3.4. Science Fiction: The Positive Angle

It is significant to examine the value of the science fiction genre at this point. In the first place, it is a genre that appeals to readers of all age groups. Young and old all like

to wander in the realms of imagination. Children love to see fairylands and adults find mysterious worlds engaging. Science-fiction fills the expectations of all kinds of readers and allows the writers to create new, unimagined worlds, spaces, and characters. Fiction will enable them to delve into unrealistic, grotesque, and supernatural backgrounds. There is no limitation to the literary imagination and it can extend to any height. Writers can take full advantage of this and take the readers along with them (Olša, 1993).

There is widespread awareness about the advantages and dangers of science. Science is bound to make further progress in all directions. Any writer can take up any line of progress and project the future; it may or may not come true. Hobbes (1985) suggests that fiction can become a reality as “No man can have in his mind a conception of the future, for the future is not yet. But of our conceptions of the past, we make a future; or rather, call past, future relatively” (p. 17). Science fiction writing allows indirect attacks on the existing socio-political systems which keeps the writers safe from punishments and censorship. Writers can comment, judge, criticize, or examine existing circumstances. Those elements can construct make-believe worlds and plots. Imaginary characters can assign all kinds of qualities and abilities. Logic is not a concern where science fiction exists in the literature. To conclude, Arabic science fiction literature is interesting, engaging, popular, and convenient genre. It is a genre of the past but a perfect framework for the future world.

3.5. Impact on Arabic Literature

The intersection of many different cultures, religious belongings, and traditional philosophies in Arab region contribute to the development of science fiction. It incorporated all of these in developing its science fiction. It is note that Western context had provided the basis for initial Arabic proto science fiction. The birth of Western science fiction and the classical Arabic literature together shed light on the complex and deep creation of literature. Arabic literature has benefitted in many ways on account of western science fiction literature. Initially, the world has recognized that this genre belongs to Arabic literature. They originate in Arabic literature and not in the West although it is

believed so. Therefore, two types of literary forms are revived after a very long interval. Arabic culture is different from the cultures of developed countries in modern times in that it is majorly characterized by traditions, religions, rituals, and taboos. Islam, as a joining characteristic, is a dominant power in Arab societies. The impact of the religious rule on literary liberty can be stifling and science fiction is marked by Orthodox religious and supernatural beliefs (Roger, 2003, p. 12). With the fresh breath of science and technology blowing into literature, there are chances that the Arab community will march towards modernism and get rid of old traditions that hamper scientific progress. If other factors check scientific progress in society, it will be promoted by literature. Literature that projects into the future will prepare readers to face the future, be inclined towards it, and be prepared for it. This is the didactic function of science fiction (Custers, 2019, p. 3). Scientific advancement does not offer only elective narratives to traditional religion and additionally creates and supports political and social changes:

Technological changes lie at the root of political change. It was the developing Industrial Revolution that placed Western Europe so far ahead from the rest of the world....it is the Industrial Revolution spreading... to Russia and now to China and India, that has shaken and is destroying European hegemony (Asimov, 1953, p. 166).

There are several social, political, and religious issues in Arabic society that prevent progress and development. It can be derived that such issues had impacted the literature creation process in Arabic literature and absence of science fiction. Though, it is possible that Western science fiction has taken a flight to as the technological development in the 19th century. The same period is hardly a time of technological growth for Iraqis and its approach towards social life and structure affects technological development. Writers have much to say about it. However, they lack the courage to make comments on such delicate issues due to fear of censorship. Western science fiction has given back to them their genre and they have discovered how it can be safely used to criticize, judge, or comment upon delicate issues (Custers, 2019).

The Arabic educational system failed to produce scientists and academicians in science fiction literature, therefore, it would likely build a new generation of scientists.

Science fiction creates the ability to think imaginatively. It is necessary to develop creativity and imagination in children so that a generation of interested scientists will bless the Arab world. It is not impossible to say that in Arab countries, science fiction instructing is a need and not an extravagance. Science fiction stimulates scientific thinking. This is important because the religious reservations in Arab communities are likely to put limits on the genre. In addition, Csicsery-Ronay Jr. (2012, p. 482) suggested that religion has significantly influence the progress of science fiction in the world—such as certain religious believes restricted the culture innovation. The relationship of science fiction progress and religion in the Arab societies indicated the same trends.

This chapter has dealt with the traditions of the Arab science fiction genre with supporting example works. The main topic of this chapter is the influence or impact of Arabic science fiction writing on the West and vice versa. The chapter also mentions the positive aspects of science fiction and how the genre benefitted Arab literature in modern times. Asaqli (2017) explains that science fiction literature is a new and less perceived fielding the Arabic literary polysystem. The science fiction focuses on Arabic literature through translations of Western science fiction works. In addition, we can see features and sources of sci-fi in classical and popular Arabic literature.

The industrial revolution has motivated the evolution of this science fiction genre. A group of scientists' views science fiction as canonical literature that should be engaged with, evaluated, and researched. In recent years the Arabic literature has begun to flourish and occupy a position in the Arabic literary polysystem. People witness a trend changing the literature methodology and starting to recognize it as a canonical literary genre accepted by the academic establishment, meriting attention and evaluation (Asaqli, 2017). The element of double estrangement characterizes modern Arabic science fiction.

The first layer reviews a specific social or political situation, often using allegory, which is a characteristic of modern Arabic literature in general due to the censorship policies in many Arab countries. The second layer is related to the stagnation of process in the Arab world, or the conflict between technological modernization and technology being interpreted as both dehumanizing and foreign (western) while also associated with the scientific return of the Arab Islamic scientific Golden Age. Nevertheless, there is no strict dichotomy between western and Arabic science fiction.

For example, not all Arab writers glorify the past and not all western writers do not (Campbell, 2018).



4. FORTH CHAPTER

4. ANALYSIS OF THE SELECTED BOOKS

The comparison of the Arab and Western literature indeed indicated that the industrial and technological revolution significantly impacted the sci-fi genre. Thus, the transformation of the literature is obvious since the literary output is the face of the social, economic, and political environment. Therefore, the global changes equally impact all the geographic regions. Moreover, if the authors do not adapt to the changing realities, then it is not possible to create meaningful literature.

Despite the censorship, government regulations, or social biases—the literature still flourishes. For instance, the literary contributions are significant in post-occupation Iraq. Particularly, the short stories which are related to the incidents around. It is important to mention that the short stories are the immediate reaction of the authors. Chapter 4 analyze the selected books of Arab literature to compare and contrast with literature from the English language. The question is how the old literary tradition of the West is prevalent in Arab literature.

This chapter consists of an analysis of the two selected books Blasim's (2017; 2014) *Iraq + 100* and *The Corpse Exhibition and Other Stories of Iraq*. These two selected literary works are regarded as a response to science fiction as they share science-fictional elements. Those writers of the anthologized short stories do not envision those readers may find out in these short stories an interpretation of contemporary political cases at a specific stage in the future (Jani, 2015). *The Corpse Exhibition* is a short introduction to the book will be followed by a brief glimpse of the stories and a discussion. The second is an anthology *Iraq + 100* (2017) edited by Hassan Blasim is the first of its kind in science fiction from Iraq. Both story collections were initially written in Arabic and translated into various languages, including the English language by Jonathan Wright, the occupants' language. Blasim's edited anthology is a prominent element in this study as it illustrates the interrelation between Arabic science fiction and western traditions of this genre of

fiction. This thesis deals with the analysis of the selected short stories within the framework of how post-occupation Iraqi writers have possibly contributed to the development of the western science fiction genre.

4.1. Campbell's Double Estrangement in Blasim's Short Stories

How Arabic science fiction uses the modes and tropes of sci-fi to critique its society and history. An influential critical understanding of western science fiction has its roots in Suvin's (1979) science fiction theory as facilitating "a dynamic transformation rather than a static mirroring of the author's environment" (Suvin, 1979, p. 10). It is arguably the most influential Western theorist of science fiction that examined the genre as working through cognitive estrangement as "cognitive denotes scientific plausibility within the world of the particular work" and "estrangement a means of rendering the familiar unfamiliar to facilitate a critical perspective on the familiar" (Suvin, 1979, p. 10). Suvin takes the word "estrangement" and the trope itself from German Expressionist theatre; specifically, the works of Brecht who used this defamiliarization both for its own sake and for social critique. It refers to estrangement in SF as providing "a shocking and distancing mirror above the all too familiar reality" (Suvin, 1988, p. 34).

The words and deeds of the characters in his depiction of the stories and others' reactions to him to critique political and social conditions in post-invasion Iraq: this is the first layer of estrangement (Blasim, 2017). At the same time, in the second layer, the text reflects upon the gap in scientific literacy and production between the Iraq of the Islamic Golden Age where it was the center of the world's most scientifically advanced empire. However, the Iraq of today where technology comes from without and from which rational people emigrate. Thus, Blasim's (2017) texts are not merely a matter of style or a different take on a classic story instead they embody a mainly Arabic perspective on science fiction. The roots lie in the concerns of canonical Arabic literature and lack of freedom of speech in Arab regions including Iraq both before and after the US invasion:

Along with its surface narrative, [ASF] also contains a level of political or social critique and another level where it examines the slow speed or lack of scientific/technological development or social/moral change within contemporary [Arab] societies (Campbell, 2018, p. 114).

Generally, Arabic literature in fiction that receives the bulk of critical attention nearly always works via estrangement whether through allegorical narrative or more subtle means. This is partly the result of tradition part of who decides what gets published and partly of the often-extreme consequences of making a direct political critique under a despotic regime (Campbell, 2018).

The first layer of the double estrangement concept is easy to tease out from Blasim's (2017) short stories. The image of the corpse as the first true Iraqi citizen killed is the most manifest aspect of this first layer only in response to an occupation that both removes the existing order and fails to replace it with anything approaching a functioning government. Therefore, enabling the constant cycle of sectarian violence can Iraqis begin to coalesce around national identity, be it one of the victims of that very violence. Throughout the stories, the examples of this sort of estrangement. The Americans are a distant but arbitrary and mysterious threat unable to speak the language but willing to fire cars that come too close even in regular city traffic. Yet, everyone jumps at the chance to work for them because they pay so well (Campbell, 2018, p. 9).

The critique of this estrangement performs itself twofold. First, Iraqi society in 2005 is the sun that hovers over and broils Baghdad. Its new equilibrium is sustained by the tension, not between gravity and the energy liberated by fusion but rather by those seeking unity or at least relief from conflict the sectarian violence they flee. Yet the violence that upended the old order hideous as it never ended because it is sustained by the traditional culture of fractiousness, power, and revenge rather than a concern for justice. The First Iraqi Citizen decayed rather quickly replaced by the endless cycle of tribal retribution. Second, anyone seeking relief from conflict leaves the country and anyone with the money migrates to someplace safer. The migration or desire to migrate is an essential part of this first layer of estrangement. Characters with agency and wherewithal such as the newspaper editor flee the country for somewhere safer and less

irrational (Campbell, 2018). Characters with the agency but without resources such as in *The Killer and the Compass* (2014), as Mahdi, dream of fleeing in place of working to make Iraq a better place. Characters with no agency but with means are compelled to flee in the Composer's wife's case. She is too dizzy to understand that her home is unsafe, thinks to leave the country because there is no peace and stability (Blasim, 2014).

The interchangeability of names and identities in Blasim's short stories is the estrangement of the absolute fictionality of legal justice in Iraqi society. Saddam Hussein was a murderous tyrant but his regime had functioning institutions including a legal system. Iraq's new government is entirely fictional installed by many parties and has essentially no control over the country. The disorder of 2003 and the monstrous sectarian violence of the coming years can be seen as evidence of the United States war crimes and an attempt to impose a system of tribal justice in the ongoing absence of legal (or divine) justice. The only thing left in the period estranged by these stories, however, is street justice. For instance, in *The Corpse Exhibition*, the Nail waits the darkness of night to go across the streets and looks for other corpses so he can collect them and kill their murderers.

The Nail character in *The Corpse Exhibition* short story is as traumatized as someone who is compelled to repeat the conditions of his trauma and who is ultimately able to transform the trauma into the narrative, under the standard models of trauma theory in literature (Laub, 1995, p. 71). Yet, *The Corpse Exhibition* presents us with a barely functional character, the Nail, who has no clear idea what he is doing and ultimately wants to take one of the corpses from the mortuary to make the world look at the horror of the sight of the corpses. The narrator mentions that in the morgue that "there were specimens of the corpses of schoolchildren who had been mutilated by car bombs or incinerated in some street market or broken into pieces" (Blasim, 2014, p. 8).

Blasim's short stories address questions about the individual in conflict with society (Balfour, 2016, p. 85). In addition, the texts depict a land that once the center of an empire is now the victim of imperialism in its most direct and destructive form. The Iraqi state is so diverse and internally conflicted. Imperialist Europeans have created such a nation by drawing lines on a map and thereby almost guaranteed to be deliberately

designed to fail. Saddam Hussein's tyranny was virtually the only thing holding it together before 2003 (2016, p. 85). The young madman's metaphor of assembly implies that only in response to massive, endemic sectarian violence can composite unity be created wherein people prioritize their identity as Iraqis over group, clan, tribe, or sect. It is a vivid reflection upon society but it is also not carried through to the rest of the text as the various madmen and their followers kill one another in civil war shortly after that (Balfour, 2016, p. 86). Ordinary Iraqis come to regard this conflict as a kind of brutality that slays the innocent more than the criminals on balance. In contrast, an Iraqi figure is constantly confronted with horror and fear.

Western readers of these translations might well wonder why the Iraqi citizens do not attempt to attack the Americans, who are still occupying Baghdad in this period. After all, the US forces are directly responsible for removing the very real safeguards that Saddam Hussein's tyranny created against sectarian violence. The most direct answer is that the Americans are an absent presence in the stories existing behind the scenes as an implicit check on the ambitions of any sect or group to dominate the others. However, a more comprehensive answer is that these short stories are engaging in double estrangement by focusing on violence upon Iraqi by Iraqi and never confronting the Americans at all. This trope critiques its own society's failings which existed long before the American invasion and continue to exist even when the stories were written after an Iraqi government replaced the Coalition Provisional Authority (Campbell, 2018).

Science fiction and estrangement enable them to make this analysis without exposing themselves to the dangers of making it directly and thus inviting reprisal in the form of street justice—or even legal justice. Baghdad and at least the southern half of Iraq had almost functioning government by 2014 and 2016 in which the *Iraq +100* published. Similarly, *The Corpse Exhibition and Other Stories of Iraq*. Iraq's new construction does have formal protections for the liberty of speech but the constant if the lower-level threat of street or tribal justice persists. Characters cannot be romantic heroes because being a romantic hero implies a system to rebel against. Any character with a shred of self-awareness understands that migration is the only long-term solution—and this is itself part of the estrangement these short stories undertake (Campbell, 2018, p. 112).

The second layer of double estrangement in Arabic science fiction stories compares modern Arabic society's absence of scientific progress and development with the region's status of the western world. Blasim's (2017) works of short stories focus this layer of estrangement on the characters and their society's indifference to the diversity of belief and culture that underpin that dominance. For example, AlHaboby's (2016) *Baghdad Syndrome* (2016) depicts burned notebooks and any source related to the classical Iraqi writer Scheherazade because they do not conform to religious and social etiquette. These notebooks contain so much information for readers who are interested to know more about Iraqi fictional works. But the writer says, "I couldn't find a way of getting to author's relatives to link, in any obvious way, to me or the ancient figure of Scheherazade" (Blasim, 2016, p. 124). Irwin (1999) reveals that these burned sources and decades of Iraqi history are the most obvious example of this estrangement. Therefore, these short stories describe landlord/tenant conflicts and bad blood that apply directly to twenty-first-century life in both Iraq and the West. This subplot estranges contemporary Iraqi society in the same manner as vandals who burn valuable books and historical sources in *Baghdad Syndrome* short story. It is a reckless rush toward a kind of pseudo-modernity featured mainly through the religious and cultural intolerance that causes some characters in the short stories to use a trick to flee the country. Similarly, Waheed in *The Killer and the Compass* decides to go outside Iraq to look for peace of mind due to the sectarian wars between Sunni and Shia who live together in relative harmony. The story goes on to show that the car bombs explosion has been another form of violence that revealed a history subsequently to be ignored:

The Mortuary was full of corpses from those stupid acts of terrorism, corpses ripped apart by car bombs, others that had their heads cut off in sectarian feuds, bloated bodies from the riverbed, and many other stupid ones that had been finished off in random murders that had nothing to do with art (Blasim, 2014, p. 8).

The early Abbasid governors were usurpers because of the desire to gain legitimacy. They invited scholars from all over their polyglot, multicultural empire to be in Baghdad and translate their knowledge into Arabic (Gutas, 2012). This deliberate policy

of translation and dissemination led to an environment in which scholars like Jāḥiẓ could thrive and laid the groundwork for most of the modern sciences of chemistry, biology, physics, astronomy, and the social sciences. An essential feature of the Abbasid Golden Age was migration as any halfway aspirant young man from nearly any religious group could go through a scholarship to Baghdad, where his popular origins would matter much less than his skills with words. However, Blasim's estrangement of Iraq is an excellent historical model is paved over in favor of preserving a veneer of modernity. The Baghdad he describes is a place that ambitious people migrate from rather than to because the diversity of belief is no longer respected but instead suppressed with violence (Gutas, 2012, p. 28).

4.2. Foucault's Power in Iraq + 100 and the Corpse Exhibition and Other Stories of Iraq

This study tackles Michel Foucault's concepts of power and resistance to expand the analysis of the selected books of this thesis. I argue that to understand Foucault's concept of power, one should also appreciate his attitude toward the idea of his conception of resistance. In this study, I am going to use this conception by applying it to Blasim's *The Corpse Exhibition and Other Stories of Iraq* and an edited anthology *Iraq +100*.

Foucault develops his specific conception of power through a genealogical study of crime and punishment in Europe in his study *Discipline and Punish*. He starts his book with two contrasting scenes. First is the horrifying scene of an execution in 1757, a spectacle of torture in front of the public in which the criminal is tortured slowly and painfully until he dies. The second is from eighty years later, it is a detailed timeline of prisoners' activities during the day. There is no extreme physical pain in the second way of punishment and there is no torture and execution. This case has been a detailed account of the regulation of the prisoners' lives (Foucault, 1977). In Blasim's (2014) *The Reality and the Record* (2014), the ambulance driver exemplifies the depiction of this sort of punishment when the group leader, the professor, cooperates with the masked terrorist group because of his violent language. They kidnap him on an accursed night as stated in

this quotation “I have been kidnapped and they are going to cut off my head” (Blasim, 2014, p. 160). In *The Corpse Exhibition*, the Nail's mission is to look for tortured corpses of Iraqi citizens, women, and children, tormented and dying due to daily car bombs that the terrorists manage. Blasim (2014) uses an iconic image of “the breastfeeding woman” and her baby to posit it as a symbol for the national corpse and a metaphor standing for the slain Iraqi people (Blasim, 2014, p. 7). The following quotation implies the punishment and the crime the murderers and criminals do every day among people:

In the mortuary, there were specimens of the corpses of schoolchildren who had been mutilated by car bombs or incinerated in some street markets, or broken into pieces after planes bombed houses. Finally, the nail chose a child who had been beheaded along with the rest of his family for sectarian reasons (Blasim, 2014, p. 8).

One might guess that the second form of punishment is more humane, more modern, more philanthropic but Foucault claims that the aim was “not to punish less but to punish better” (Foucault 1977, p. 82). In this transformation from pre-modern to modern approaches of punishment, four major transitions happen: first, the disappearance of public display of discipline; second, punishment of the criminal rather than the crime; third, the role of “experts” (psychiatrists, social workers, parole boards) in determining the judicial sentences rather than judges; finally, “reform” and rehabilitation of the criminal instead of “retribution” (Gutting 2005, p. 80). For example, *The Green Zone Rabbit* embodies two central characters who are hired agents that belong to a network of gangs—for instance, Salsal a professional killer, and Hajjar a novice nicknamed “Duckling” who is also the narrator of the story. They carefully survey their surroundings while waiting to receive instructions about making killing plans, torment, and punishment into actions:

I ran away from military service [...] a year after I ran away the regime was overthrown and I was free from my fear of punishment for my earlier desertion [...] I was completely devastated and I left home. I couldn't bear to see the horror of the faces of my mother and brothers (Blasim, 2014, p. 28).

Foucault (1982) argues that power is substantial in all social relations. All social ties, government, and other social institutions are power correlations. Foucault's authenticity resides in identifying the outlining "structures of power that inform neutral scientific inquiries. It was argued that certain sections of the population are classified as sick, criminal, and mad so that they might be placed under surveillance and "observed" by respective authorities" (Foucault, 1982 p. 677). The monitoring has been coded as "a discourse, a field of thought, a system of knowledge, and a particular sort of language" that allows some things to be said and prohibited some others (Foucault, 1982, p. 678).

Althusser's "ideology" and Gramsci's "hegemony" are close of Foucault view because consent rules (Foucault, 1982). Thus, for example, in Khalid Kaki's short story *Operation Daniel* (2016) in the edited anthology of *Iraq +100*, some of the beneficiaries, people in the city, are prohibited from speaking Syriac, Arabic, Kurdish, or Turkmen. Though, at the same time, the new government dominates them to speak only the Chinese language, as that is evident in this quotation as "the punishment for speaking those languages, or reading about history, literature, or art in them was merciless: you were archived. This involved being incinerated in a special device - resembling one of those UV tanning beds" (Blasim, 2016, p. 136).

Foucault's "power" very much like in "ideology" and "hegemony" gets "its strength from the way that the subjects profoundly believe in what it advises them. As a result, it grants a sense of belonging and contributes to their prosperity" (Foucault, 1982, p. 698). The notion of power underlines his argument that is based on the law's statement and taboo. Power is viewed as ostensibly restrictive and repressive. However, as Foucault (1982) demonstrates such a source of power derived from the evolution of monarchy that led to ignoring the rights. The changed power structures were not maintained "by right, but by technique, not by law, but by normalization, not by punishment, but by control and to work effectively, this force must mask at least part of itself" (Foucault, 1982, p. 700). For instance, *The Gardens of Babylon* is a speculative short story about how the world will be in the future is the second story in the edited anthology *Iraq + 100*. It portrays the dominant power as the Chinese due to the American occupation of the country. This short story involves Foucault's (1982) notion of power in which the US forces dominate Iraq

nowadays transforms the antiquities of Iraq's civilization into a camp for stupid soldiers. Moreover, those occupied forces have made the nation of Iraq dominated by so many murderers such as the Islamist terrorist group, making the country suffer from religious fanaticism and are dominated by violence “Violence is the most brutal sculptor mankind has ever produced” (Blasim, 2016, p. 32).

Foucault (1982) asks whether violence is the ‘primitive form’ of power relations, which appears when forced to show its real nature. It continues explaining his conception of power which is a mode of action over action, and he concludes that bringing power relations into play does not preclude the use of violence or the acquisition of agreement. It is without a doubt impossible to wield power without one or the other and occasionally both at the same time. However, while violence and consensus are the tools or results of power, they do not form the fundamental nature of power. On the contrary, exercising authority can result in as much acceptance as intended: “it can pile up the dead and shelter itself behind whatever threats it can imagine” (Foucault, 1982, p. 787) Thus, Foucault does deny violence as a possible result of violence, but he rejects violence as the nature of power (Foucault, 1982, p. 789).

The more urgent than Foucault’s claim of omnipresent discipline is “to discover how an entire society resists being reduced to it” (Certeau & Randall, 1984, p. 59). It tries to investigate the covert the creative ‘tactics’ that individuals implement to the omnipresent discipline. The “management and control of human migration to maintain human security, according to post-Foucauldian interpretations of biopower are entrenched violent anthropocentric mechanisms and metaphors and mediators of the fragile category human” (Certeau & Randall, 1984, p. 450). Moreover, the forced and secret migration in the post-colonial text suggested that the asylum seekers understood and mediate as the “trope of the inhuman” (Farrier 2011, p. 24). Blasim's (2017) short stories provide unique materials for fiction such political dynamics of the representation of people's migration. The stories of migrants and refugees from Iraq has expanded the literary perspectives. Similarly, the Europe crises of clandestine movement provided diverse perspective. In *The Reality and the Records*, this short story finds the boundaries between fact and fiction, uncovering the paths in which exiles move between the two in an asylum-

looking for a measure that requires them to minister a convincing narrative of political persecution conceded asylum. The story transfers the refugee's tale in his own words (Atia, 2019).

In *The Green Zone Rabbit* illustrated a young man is embroiled in a terrorism. He waits for a long time without any mission in a house in Baghdad's green zone. The torture in the act of staying with patience reveals in the story. The violence depicted is the most intense in *The Corpse Exhibition*. One cannot distinguish between friends and foes. There is no logic, no relationships, no family ties. Blasim (2017) shows that living away from Iraq is not the solution to escape from violence and terror. Once one has experienced the horrors of war, they continuously and incessantly remain obsessed with them. *The Green Zone Rabbit* shows us a miniature image of the Green Zone as a dim authorization power and corrupt group. The story depicts villains and hired murderers who bring Iraq to the disorder of sectarian civil war. As we will find in the discussion of these stories, Blasim's (2017) fiction is focused on human iniquity and the incomprehensible nature of genuine evil. This study argues that his fiction is performative and magnificent while setting a premium on creating high emotions and impacts like anxiety, terror, repugnance, and horror (Geary, 2006, p. 131). The story reminds us of Heinrich Böll's *World War II* stories. Like Böll, Hassan Blasim expands the time that his heroes spend expectation for death. The heroes have daily and weekly routines to fill and they speculate upon their early life and read uneasily as "The world in my head was like a spider web that made a faint hum, the hum of a life about to expire, of breaths held. Delicate, horrible wings are flapping for the last time" (Blasim, 2014, p. 24).

Jonathan Wright has perfectly translated the Blasim's (2016; 2013) short story collections *The Madman of Freedom Square* and *The Iraqi Christ*. The forest border in Blasim's (2017) imaginatively explored the complex biopolitical and ecology implications of violence during the clandestine movement. The experiences of the refugees were further traumatized referring to the metaphors of animal (Bahoora, 2015).

Huggan and Tiffin (2010) address how "the history of human oppression of other humans is replete with animal metaphors and animal categorizations frequently deployed to justify exploitation and objectification, slaughter and enslavement" (p. 135). They

examine various zoo critical “world-literary engagements that can be read alongside postcolonial interpretations of forest landscapes, Blasim's (2017) short stories that focus on forced and clandestine migration – presents new opportunities to embody territoriality, life, and truth at their restrictions in real and imagined places where forest and border, human and non-human meet to suggest more-than-human futures for the paradoxical project of reclaiming human rights” (Huggan & Tiffin, 2010, p. 86). The stories also shed light on the implications of heterotopia and the Foucault's (1986) *Of Other Spaces*. Blasim's (2017) two short stories, *The Iraqi Christ* and *The Madman from Freedom Square* have significant importance for the narrative of “nightmare realism” to get a sense of the unique representational techniques through which he intermediates material and discursive violence in a combined bio-political-ecological framework (p. 11).

4.3. Postcolonial Perspective Applied in Iraq +100 and The Corpse Exhibition and Other Stories of Iraq

This part of the analysis is going to deal with the postcolonial perspective applied to Blasim's and anthologized writers' short stories, and edited anthology *Iraq +100 and The Corpse Exhibition and Other Stories of Iraq*. Blasim's short stories trace the colonization of Iraq by the Great Britain Empire in the 1940s. While the story's context is set in Iraq, analyzing it from a postcolonial perspective. Blasim's (2017) texts depict the contrast in short stories as the culture of the Iraqi nation is so affected by Britain and American occupation. Therefore, the allies of Iraq belong to different cultures and region that weaken the claim of colonization.

This study investigates how Blasim (2017) and other writers in the anthology have portrayed Britain and American culture, politics, economy, and society domination over Iraq. The study also explores motivation of the work and see how post-colonialism include language, class differences, culture, and self are represented in the short stories. The usage of symbols in the poetry in post-occupation Iraq is also an interesting question that this study addresses.

The anthologized short stories in *Iraq +100* and short story collection *The Corpse Exhibition and Other Stories of Iraq* stated that politics and religion is the base for

domestic violence in Iraq. The religious justification for the conflict is that the Iraqi people have different sects, and this is due to the American occupation of Iraq in 2003. Thus, the Iraqi fight for peace and stability and their resistance against the American occupation of Iraq is synonymous with their struggle against the British hegemony over the city of Basra. *Orientalism* explained the certain ways of thinking that turn the continuation of the colonial power. Bhabha's ideas also incorporate the idea of mimicry influence and shape the critical approach (Hamadi, 2014).

The emphasis of the postcolonial perspective was on race, centrality, mimicry, and sex, limits, hybrid, and classes. As mentioned, Homi K. Bhabha's approach in post-colonialism involves such concepts as mimicry, hybridity, or liminality. Bhabha's two concepts have been employed in analyzing *Iraq + 100* and *The Corpse Exhibition and Other Stories of Iraq*. Apart from his approach, this part of the analysis in this thesis explores the class differences and the languages on the basis of the short stories. The colonizer dialogue always tries to shape the colonized to adopt the same, however, colonizer wants to remain distinct. The colonizer believes on the division and create it to prove the colonized are inferior. Bhabha explains in this context:

Colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite. This is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence; to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference (Bhabha, 2012, p. 86).

The colonizer who assumes himself as the superior power employs mimicry to ensure dominance for the justification of the dominance. Contrary, the use of mimicry also used to destabilization of the identity. Consequently, the other occupied, throughout mimicry impairs the self-colonizer's strategy that "assumed priority" over it. As a result, the colonized individual can make up a new identity for himself (Bhabha, 2012, p. 88).

Blasim's (2017) *The Nightmares of Carlos Fuentes* short story is fundamentally worried about Iraqi refugees and immigrants' border crossing encounters in Europe. In this short story, Blasim's (2017) protagonist attempted to find a new identity by forgetting the past. However, the resurfacing of the dreams that manifest in the literary thought is

interesting. This matter of immigration describes how displacement marks someone's memory, leaving everything behind, identity, and even language.

In *The Nightmares of Carlos Fuentes*, the Iraqi character Salim Abdul Hussain cannot bear the situation of the Iraqi society in the post-occupation period because of the many changes that occur in the aftermath of the American colonization of Iraq. Therefore, he has to change his identity and language to make himself another citizen who can depart his country and settle in Holland just imagining himself as another person who wants to learn the Dutch language and take a new identity (Blasim, 2014, p. 188). In *The Corporal* short story narrated the wishes of the colonizer's with to explore the colonized region. It tries to control the other Iraqi soldier by changing his identity, like any American soldier. However, the corporal here "receives a new identity quite different from the sort of identity he has at the beginning of the story: No one had the guts to say a single word, even in jest" (Blasim, 2016, p. 63).

Bhabha's (2012) notion of hybridity for investigation of the colonizer and colonized relationship to present dual identities. The dual identities do have a mutual effect on each other, however, there must not be any aspect of superiority. In his book, *The Location of Culture* argues that: "Hybridity is the name of this displacement of value from symbol to sign that causes the dominant discourse to split along the axis of its power to be representative, authoritative" (Bhabha, 2012, p. 112). It extends the idea that this notion represents that the "ambivalent 'turn' of the discriminated subject into the terrifying, exorbitant object of paranoid classification is a disturbing questioning of the images and presences of authority" (2012, p. 112). The attempts to deny the culture and society of the colonized indeed is not the right of the colonizer. Thus, the existence of the dual powers reshapes each other.

The Worker by Diaa Jubaili (2017) indicates the Governor has the power over the religious man in the city since the American and British occupation. This Governor also has no absolute communication with the people. It invites the citizens to make a sermon appearing on a large television in al-Burum Square to give his new rules and laws to the people. Once he gets underway, the Governor would slowly relax, sinking back into his luxurious chair. His thumbs and fingers do not stop as they work through the prayer beads.

Moreover, there was always a thirst to discover and improve the moral life. His speech to the people of the city-states:

You know, dear sisters and brothers, that we live in the shadow of a dire crisis, much as we pray with all our hearts and souls that this affliction is lifted from our nation. Yet this does not mean that the crisis is unprecedented in the history of nations past and present. All who think otherwise are certainly mistaken. My brothers and sisters, let me reassure you that my government is sparing no effort and utilizing all power at its disposal to discover new sources of energy to compensate for our sharp loss of wealth (Blasim, 2016, p. 86).

This quotation shows that the society is so intertwined and dominated by the American and British invasion of Iraq and how the other colonizers rule religious rituals. The reference of prayer and praise are unusual wondering the absolute change in the country. The narration that lost belongings represents the undergoing identity crises due to the imported American and British forces. The arguments between citizens across the country were suggestive of the struggle of colonization. However, the adaptation of the English language is evidence of the representation of the colonizers.

Through the concepts of superior/inferior, Boehmer explains the fundamental notion of post-colonial theory as: “Always concerning the superiority of an expanding Europe, colonized peoples were represented as lesser, less human, less civilized, as child or savage, wild man, animal, or headless mass” (Boehmer, 1995, p. 18). Said's *Orientalism* (1978) demonstrates that Orient lay on considering several cultures as “non-Western” ones. Further, reveals that discrimination between Orient and Occident support the basic assumption. The question is how did the colonial dominate the colonized? The assumption comes in that the colonizer is always more powerful and the inferior the colonized. Further, the control of politics and the economy enhances the opportunity of colonizers to dominate the society (Said, 1995, p. 87).

As mentioned earlier, Hassan Blasim and some other Iraqi writers in the anthologized short stories have written within this context. Everyone living in Baghdad and other cities of Iraq understands the traditional and new realities of changed socio-

cultural realities. *The Corporal* short story in *Iraq + 100* perfectly illustrates the concept of superior and inferior. For instance:

I am telling you, my performance in combat was excellent, just as my military title suggests. Not like the other soldiers, who were no better than sheep shit. It was my job, my profession, and by choice or by force I loved it. The next unit I joined was the Republican Guard (Blasim, 2016, p. 107).

The narrator tells this sentence, and he mentions that “you” means the American soldier as he has domination over Iraqi society. Throughout the story, this American soldier has sovereignty over the corporal, the Iraqi soldier as well. The American soldier here is considered the colonizer of Iraq. The other Iraqi soldier, whom the colonizer rebukes, is the colonized of Iraq in this city under the domination of the colonizer, who represents the inferiority in this mission.

4.4. The Use of Aesthetics and Gothic Element at The Limits of Representation in Blasim's Short Stories

This chapter analyzed the fictional short stories of the Iraqi writer Hassan Blasim, as illustrative of a specific expression of post-2003 Iraqi fiction that depicts the terror of violence in Iraq by delivering scenes of outrageous and unreal violence in his texts. Bahooora (2015) mentions that the writers achieve this case through asylum of the metaphysical regardless of dream-states that highlight the uncanny, nightmares, and the subconscious. It is similar to the fiction of Blasim (2017) through the supernatural, horror, and the brutal. Blasim's (2017) narratives are confusing, dark, and fragmented aesthetic to make a horrible picture where violence is inescapable, monstrous, and ordinary that is a mundane element of the national scene that constitutes contemporary Iraqi identity. The nightmare situations depend on the literary experience that departs from narrative realism by building scientific stories of horror that forsake any pretension of addressing reality in favor of the intangible. This proposes the difficulty of realistically presenting the experience of such atrocity and implying that the Iraqi reality is brutal and irrational. This literary technique does not simply seek to provide the insight of terror but to make it in

the reader through horrific portraits that upset a status of affairs. The fears of violence in Iraq have been naturalized and neglected. These stylistic and thematic renderings of the post-2003 Iraqi experience through a fiction of horror are stylistically gothic, containing many of the aesthetic characteristics of the postcolonial gothic novel. This literary genre cares about inquiries of history and the return of the repressed through dark narratives that stage horror scenes through the supernatural, the uncanny, and the monstrous (Bahoora, 2015).

Whether still in Iraq or obliged into exile, contemporary Iraqi authors and artists' vicious post-2003 insights are a constituent theme interest of their imaginative contribution. The narration of the post-2003 Iraq main setup on the lines of violence in fiction in the context of lack of political and legal rights. The violation of the human rights was perfectly illustrated in the fictional literature in post-2003 Iraq. The literature tried to express the pain, lose, suppression, and the no records of lost people in structural violence. Iraqi writers portrayed the heightened violence, torture, and everyday brutality. The question is how possibility of national dismemberment pose a challenge to the text that point out the violence at the individual level (Bahoora, 2015).

The reality of the dismemberment of the dead bodies illustrated in the fiction as a metaphor can persuade the unity in Iraq. The fictional literature in Iraq is the historical evidence of outrageous violence that is the outcome of the political instability, human rights, and the years' long war. The presence of the violence is often referred to the historical religious animosities, however, this is an inscrutable reality. It is pertinent to note that there are numerous manifestations of violence and have diverse roots (Kamat & Bilal, 2010).

The spread of short story in post-2003 Iraq is unprecedented that narrates how war has affected Iraq. Interestingly, the fall of Saddam Hussein dictatorship is also related to the short stories. Moreover, the censored, silenced and suppresses short stories impulse the readership (Masko, 2015). It is to note that the destruction of the Iraq as a nation limits the production of the culture and literature. For instance, the Lebanese literary contributions during the time of civil war in 1975. The largest produced literature in Lebanon was novel because it has the ability to narrate the details of the incidents and

subsequent impact on individuals. However, the writings of the Iraqi intellectuals indeed not only impacted by the post-2003 Iraq but the decades of suffering. For instance, the dictatorship rule, Iran-Iraq war, and Gulf war had destroyed the infrastructure and social fabric. Therefore, the resultant issues of hunger, starvation, impoverishment, and displacement of citizens for decades can lead to the loss of contemporary Iraqi fiction representation.

The impact of issues of Iraq since the 1970s followed by several wars left a stain on the fiction literature such as covering the evolution of the civil foundations. Moreover, the internal displacement, exile, ethnic cleansing, and violence is the basis of the fiction. In the same lines, the notion of emotionality for multiethnicity in Iraq and to find a new destiny for minorities, the existence of colonizer, sectarian divide, and new ambiguous realities are considerable factors for the production of fiction literature (Bahooora, 2015). Therefore, the fiction literature of Iraq represents diverse styles of narration, incorporation of dark comedy, and realization of the aesthetics. For instance, the authors such as Mahmud Sa'id and Abd al-Khaliq al-Rikabi are considered the masters of social realist tradition in Iraq (Hanoosh, 2013). Moreover, the empirical literature in post-2003 focused on how to articulate the literary experiments to approach the supernatural, weird, and outrageous to establish narrations of horrors to illustrate the awful violence. However, some writers were unable to deploy those stylistic conventions of literary realism based on the real violence individuals had faced. The horrible violence experienced by Iraqis in fiction have resemblance to the unreal experiments (Hanoosh, 2015, p. 4).

Iraqi authors have utilized the aesthetics of horror to articulate the post-colonial gothic literature (Hogle, 2018, p. 21). For instance, *The Castle of Otranto* is a significant contribution to the genre as gothic is “above all the art of exciting surprise and horror” (Scott, 1987, p. 91). The dark counter narrative gothic style was used to of the progressive stories in Europe that explores “the role the irrational could play in criticizing quasi-rationalistic records of experience” (Smith, 2007, p. 93). Initial, gothic fiction examines the concepts of Enlightenment concepts as an objective reality that could be comprehended rationally. As a “literature of nightmare,” it finds out its allure through

“explorations of mysterious supernatural energies, immense natural forces, and deep, dark human fears and desires” (Botting, 2001, p. 1-7).

Blasim's (2017) narratives introduce significant, opportune reflections on the development of individuals and their stories in the contemporary world. They also shed light on the commodification of immigrants' stories, and the remaining evidence of how refugee stories have become a critical currency in the migrants' politics and the store of world literature. As an emigrant himself, Blasim (2017) does not only recount a narrative adequately persuading to acquire refuge in Finland. However, he has composed a series of convincing stories that have been distributed, broadly translated, and got literary acclaim. His writings contribute towards an advancing body of emigrant literature that follows the excursions, experiences, hopes, and suffering of displaced individuals. As *The Reality and the Record* provide stories like numerous other migrants – are not gotten from reality nor delivered exclusively for the record. His writings also occupy a saved position between history and fiction, autobiography and projection (Atia, 2019).

As ‘kan ya makan’ suggests, Blasim’s narratives impress upon readers the permeable boundaries between reality and fiction, especially at a point when stories of migration are getting political and literary consideration. Blasim and his characters have had to recount a story and hope that this is the ‘right story’ as ruled by an asylum officer, readers of ‘world literature, or both. While Blasim’s works have received international acclaim and have been translated into twenty-three languages (see Blasim’s books’ covers around the world). The original Arabic stories have been prohibited in many countries in the Arab World, demonstrating that the ‘right story’ might empower a migrant to go across boundaries. Still, the actual story itself might not be able to travel unhindered (Atia, 2019, p. 325).

In a doctoral dissertation study, Hamed’s (2020) “Gothic is the new Iraq” shows that the stories of contemporary Iraq are hard to narrate. They are scary, odd, and the monstrosity in them is strange. After years of wars, political repression, and imprisonment, they find their situation away from literature. Their authors had been silenced, oppressed, and exiled. They felt trapped when the opportunity allowed them to tell their stories after the US-led invasion of Iraq. Those authors do not know where to start and with what to

begin writing their tales. This invasion does not end the violence of the war; instead, it brings out new forms of misery and death.

Consequently, motivated by the terrifying atmosphere, the Iraqi writers attempt to tell the world stories of critical conditions full of kidnapping, suicidal bombers, torture, sadness, and pain. They also try to make the Iraqi body parts into a cohesive whole. The years from 2003 onward witnessed a renaissance in Iraqi literary production that has garnered global attention and won several awards. The new Iraqi texts still need a style or a literary form that can help record stories of this horrible situation. A literary fiction that allows them to sew the body parts into one or enables the dead to narrate their stories or killers presents the dead as art pieces. On the one hand, a literary form makes the ghost's sight acceptable and talking to Jinn's justifiable. On the other hand, it allows monsters, murderers, and terrorists to switch places with victims (Hamed, 2020).

Contemporary literature in Iraq needs to change its artistic strategy because it is hard to relate to old forms of literature that have been used in Iraq before the American military invasion. Therefore, writers like Sinan Antoon, Ahmed Saadawi, and Hassan Blasim modify their contemporary literary texts by ignoring war poetry and some romantic works of fiction of the previous decades. Instead, they have chosen the modern gothic style in particular because, within it, the presence of supernatural elements and monsters is necessary, as they represent human's fear and fantastically mirrors reality. The gothic also has an influence that goes beyond written stories; it has morals and lessons to broadcast and help "exploring personal and social fears about class, race, and ethnicity" (Blasim, 2016, p. 13).

Contemporary Iraqi writers create gloomy and forsaken places where death and scare can easily be depicted as a crowded restaurant like Blasim's *The Iraqi Christ*, a decayed house as in *Frankenstein in Baghdad*, or the shrouding bench in *The Corpse Washer*. In reality, they add new places where they can find all the gothic elements, such as a riverbank, a school, a truck, a library, or spots where the suicide bomber decides to push the button in his or her belt. Or places where cars explode, causing mixing the blood and flesh of victims everywhere. Stories like *Iraqi Christ* portray vivid narratives. In this story, a man became a suicide bomber to save the life of his mother. The protagonist in

The Song of the Goats is an unfortunate young man who pushes his sibling into a well and kills him at the age of three. It is probably an accident, but he is looked upon as a murderer. His mother punishes him inhumanly by putting excrement in his food. In an attempt to save him, his kind father puts him in a barrel and takes him out of the village (Blasim, 2014, p. 131). He barely survives a truck accident but he is not happy about cheating death. He does not have a wish to return to the cruel world. Thousands of aspirants enter a storytelling competition to win big prizes, and the stories need not be about war. However, Blasim (2017) shows how everyone has a war story to tell, including the dead. War and killing have become the only realities for Iraqis. The participants relate heart-rending and gruesome stories. An older woman claims that her story would surely make a rock's heartbreak. The story remains untold like all the others. It is the only one that is quite simple, ordinarily cruel, and inconclusive.

Those authors also believe in the power of the characters in the gothic texts because “vampires and zombies have proven to be particularly frightening embodiments of fears, as the ability of these monsters to reproduce through contamination leads to a continued threat when victims become monsters themselves” (O'Connell, 2014, p. 6). The presence of characters in gothic texts can be shown as a monster, a zombie, a walking dead, a Jinn, and a ghost. Then, they bring with them the new themes of humans with a terrorist spirit. Their role in exposing reality to the world is mixed with fear and suspense, therefore, it is pleasurable in science and fantasy fiction study.

Through the use of a gothic element, writers can also deploy topics of political crisis and the sufferings of the Iraqi citizens directly. Ingebretsen (1998) indicated that fear is “a social act which occurs within a cultural matrix” passing through certain stages in Iraqi literature (p. 25). First, it is seen as a dominant feeling that appears in every violent occasion. Then, it is naturalized after the Iraqis are accustomed to its presence because it is normal to be afraid of war, political harassment, aggressive enemy, and an invasion. Finally, it turns into a motive for revenge or escape. It unleashes the monster inside the Iraqis and creates the kind of brutality that results in more deaths. Here, through this process of pain, fear, and monsters, fiction appears to speak for those who have lost their voices. As a new genre, Gothic appears from the womb of Iraqi reality to show that the

chaos in Iraq has aggravated. The Iraqi authors succeed in creating gothic texts that combine pain with fear to portray these instances of unforgettable tragedy. They stress the horror in their texts by their explicit treatment of daily life. This gives their characters the voice that untimely death will take away from them. Their daily encounters with violence are extensive, first by the coalition and its aftermath, second by Iraqis against themselves in a savage sectarian war, and the fight goes on (Ingebretsen, 1998, p. 25).

Those authors also intend to translate horror from reality into literature. It is a new challenge to the Iraqi writers and readers; Bahooora (2015) states that “this burden of representation placed on literature is particularly critical in post-2003 Iraq, which has witnessed the dissolution of a coherent national space and a constricted public sphere” (p. 189). Fiction, in particular, has lots of changes in its form and style to support the needs of both readers and writers that “the novel intervenes in this context to narrate the intensity of the terrors of war and its impact on the individual, who has often served in literature as a metaphor for the broken nation” (Bahooora, 2015, p. 189). The “broken nation” inspires authors with stories that allow them to aspire in this horrible world of death. Therefore, we can say that a new type of literature grows and develops in this particular time that is full of “hallucinatory horror and surreal elements as vessels for narration on conflict and violence” (Bahooora, 2015, p. 190). Those elements “allow for some fascinating advancements in modern Iraqi literature” (Beardmore qtd. in Hamed, 2020, p. 7). It is a traumatic time, and Iraqis are traumatized by their trauma-induced fever dreams and hallucinations that serve as fertile soil for the growth of contemporary gothic in Iraqi literature. Consequently, authors begin translating horror, which is a process of creating “a workable relationship between a text’s relevance to contemporary culture,” as writers are trying to show the “other side of the Iraqi war” also trying to find “phrases that reflect the horror of Iraq’s violence” (Hamed, 2020, p. 3-5). Their mission is not for the sake of recording a historical event or depicting reality. They are crossing the borders between life and death; they are collecting limbs and body parts, shrouding them, and giving them the chance to narrate their part of the story. They emphasize that, in the new Iraq, terror is the other side of the civil war that is never seen.

These themes appear in Blasim's (2017) and other writers' short stories through these narratives. Iraqi writers win prizes for demonstrating the misery and oppression of their own country for the first time in years. The following quotation states that "these literary works depict displacement in place as parallel to the transformation of identity and the positioning of the self-regarding Otherness and at the same time, this transitioning journey inscribes "its burden on the bodies and the memories of their characters" (Blasim, 2017, p. 21). It is a burden but enables the authors to translate reality. At the same time, they consider using cultural, social, and religious elements to give an impression of the Iraqi moment and the changes that have arisen in it. So we might say that it is political as the texts attempt to narrate a "wide range of Iraqi experiences, reconstructing and rewriting the Iraqi past as well as engaging the difficult conditions of contemporary Iraq, often using experimental literary styles to portray a turbulent and uncertain national condition" (Bahoora, 2015, p. 17). Therefore, the Iraqi fictional works all deal with the current, the misery, the sufferings of Iraqis, and their attempts to escape it. Those texts also reflect the Iraqi authors' ability to use this modern and unfamiliar genre to support their task of showing the world the Iraqi crisis.

It is Iraq's fiction making the most interesting waves in the genre. Using these literary devices creatively rather than borrowing from Le Guin or Atwood in an attempt to emulate a well-trodden genre. The work appears to have emerged from the writers' imaginations through organic processes by which to translate their surroundings, past, and present. The end is resulting in hallucinatory horror stories that detail the surreal (and often comical) elements that come hand in hand with such trauma (Bahoora, 2015, p. 20).

This narrative style allows writers to set in the blank on the required "accountabilities" as Bahoora (2015, p. 180) names them. These texts aim to address what is missing, why, and how, over the last decades, Iraq has become such a violent and demonized environment. It helps to discuss topics of dramatic, cultural, and political themes and "articulate the unspeakable, lost, repressed, or deliberately silenced historical narratives of victims of this structural violence" (Bahoora, 2015, p. 188). Gothic involves combining humor with dirt, delusions with body parts, and air with blood. In addition, it

enables writers to create zombies from the remains of blown-up parts of the body and let them communicate under the absence of the peace promised. The goal of the writers is to wrestle with defining contemporary Iraq from a fictional viewpoint. Hence, this study is intended to explore some modern Iraqi short stories that fall under the category of science fiction. In every corner, the writer of those texts sees suffering, terror, death, pain, and fear and feels it in their fellow citizens' every heartbeat.

4.5. The Contribution of Post-Occupation Iraqi Short Story to Science Fiction Genre

This chapter analyses these short stories as a response to Western science fiction literature, which is perhaps why they draw the readers' attention. Hassan Blasim is an Iraq-conceived filmmaker and writer. A numerous PEN Award winner is an author of *The Iraqi Christ* (2013), which got the Independent Foreign Fiction Prize in 2014. *The Corpse Exhibition* (2014), which won several awards, placed Blasim as the first Arabic writer to gain these awards. Now, he lives in Finland, but his roots in Iraq remain unsevered. The introduction to this book will also be followed by analyzing representative stories in the collection, concluding (Jani, 2015, p. 321).

Despite some excellent text such as *One Thousand and One Nights*, Blasim (2016) still point out the gaps in the fiction literature in Iraq. There are several aspects of the contributes to the lack of poetic Arabic language as:

Modern science fiction is strongly associated with the scientific-technological revolution and usually focuses on related issues. On the other hand, science fiction is literature that is part of an ancient tradition that goes back to humanity's first ideas about the world (Blasim, 2016, p. 12).

Furthermore, the role of politics and religious discourse indeed constraint the potential literature. If this is factual, it is not negative (2016, p. 12). Though, its impact is significant in terms of moving the writing away from genre tropes. The conjunction of the ancient images and mystical Arab region is perfectly correlated using this discourse—it presents the fresh insights emphasizing on the technological advancement and its impact

on the society. It is pertinent to note that the genre is still embedded in the identity of the region, culture, rituals, and custom of storytelling (Blasim, 2016).

The Latin American magic realism in terms of post-dictatorship context is very much comparative to Iraq. The literature from both regions illustrates the horror and power imbalance. Meanwhile, Naipaul defines the device as establishing a third-world consciousness and giving the Arab region affinity with magic and its association with violence. It is reasonable to compare a situation rather than indicate influence. On magic realism, it stated that “not magical realism” but “nightmarish realism, Horrifying hallucination and violence is an experience at once nightmarish, horrifying, and unreal. In Iraq, violence has been practiced over the past fifty years with severity and savagery; it has been a chain of painful and peculiar nightmares” (Blassim, 2016, p. 9).

One of the significant advancements in the Iraqi literature is the usage of hallucinatory horror and surreal elements for narration. First, however, the anthologized writers portray truth among conflicting societies and how to better understand the timeline. It is to note that literature is based on the tradition—how much the modern literature advance it is actually stand on the traditional contributions. Therefore, Iraqi writers were also influenced from the centuries old tradition to incorporate truth and moral relativism. Blasim (2016) stated as follows:

Writing for me is an important piece of Jalal al-Din al-Rumi’s mirror fragments, as when he says, more or less, that, the truth is like a mirror that has fallen from the sky and shattered into tiny shards. Nevertheless, every human being is capable of holding onto a piece of the truth. Blassim thinks that the fragment of “imagination,” for example, contributes somehow to our understanding of the past (Blassim, 2016, p. 10).

The portrayal is more explicit than prior genre theory that presents sci-fi as an element of fantasy (Todorov & Berrong, 1976). Then, Suvin (1979) suggests that science fiction uses particular genre characteristics to isolate it from other forms of fiction. Suvin states that “sci-fi is distinguished by the narrative dominance of a fictional novelty (novum/innovation) validated by cognitive logic” (Suvin, 1979, p. 63). This definition is may have general application for genres and narrations, though, this study takes the

position that this genre of fiction “refers to a broad range of texts, but for readers, this cannot be assumed, and consequently, the survey title includes science fiction” (Suvin, 1979, p. 63).

Based on Darko Suvin's description of the science fiction genre, I have chosen these books as they are a diverse range of corpus in this thesis. *Iraq+100* is an anthology of science fiction; short story collection about science fiction *The Corpse Exhibition*. They all capture similar attitudes in that they all use science-fictional elements. These books have extended the prospects of science fiction and horror. These books indeed provided the voice of plurality in terms of race, religious belonging, sex, and cultural backgrounds.

Lombardo (2006) reveals that science fiction may be realized by typical characteristics defining this genre type. These features allow the readers to recognize this genre. Most of the texts of this genre have time that is located in the future (p. 24). Blasim's (2017) edited anthology has the aspects of science fiction in which the stories portray the science and technology of futuristic Iraq. These works have been set in modern Iraq, in space, and in a different world. They share stories that include partially actual and partially fictitious rules or (they are linked to an external site) to theories of science. They are not entirely unbelievable because they then venture into the fantasy genre. For instance, in a scenario that a fictional work that conveniently present the disturbing the literature establishment. No one knows about literary fiction. He explains that genre fiction does not feel somehow inferior to literary fiction. The question is whether to write about culture and identity strange? Writers have the liberty to write whatever they feel considering the adventure. The fiction genre can naturally deal with sociopolitical circumstances across the history (Al-Hajaj, 2020).

According to the discussion mentioned above, this thesis argues that the anthologized short stories in *Iraq + 100*, and *The Corpse Exhibition and Other Stories of Iraq* short story collection can contribute to the evolution of the Western science fiction genre. These texts contain science fiction elements that make them included in the development of this fiction genre due to the diversity of writers and short stories with different writing styles. As these texts have several translations worldwide, they can be included in the Anglophone literary system. They are available in several languages for

international readers because they do not have Arabic language proficiency. For example, *Iraq + 100* is an edited anthology involving a diversity of writers and short stories, making these texts evolve in Western culture or English-speaking worlds due to English-translated versions (Freedman, 2000).

The author of *Kahramana*, in *Iraq+100* edited anthology, elaborates on the debate in Arab media about the lack of science fiction in Arab literature, claiming that the Arab world is hitting a decline when it comes to scientific advances and inventions in the twentieth century, compared to other regions of the world. However, when it comes to news headlines, stories of violence, and persistent conflict stomp science, some Arab writers blame it on religious taboos are—in some countries—claiming that imagination abuses the clergy as defiance of nature and a challenge to God. She also states that since getting involved with this work of fiction, she has made more effort to seek this genre in contemporary Arabic fiction (Blasim, 2016). The author also mentions that when requested to contribute to the anthology has struggled. It is just too much distance, and the writer of *Kahramana*, Anoud, does not know where to start. She usually looks at things she has lived or seen and dissects them. She can paint a living picture of sights, scents, hints, and sounds of a marketplace in Baghdad, but she is asked to envision it with time travel, aliens, a post-apocalypse, and she has not been able to get past that initial four lines. She feels strange when she reads some of the other writers' contributions of short stories like Hassan Abdulrazzak's *Kuszib*, Ibrahim al-Marashi's *Nujefa*, or Zhraa Alhaboby's *Baghdad Syndrome*. It is a good kind of strange and never imagines Iraq that way. If the other authors only open up a new path into Iraq for her then is exciting. If that makes sense, she finds her short story *Kahramana* as more futuristic than the all-out science fiction genre.

Iraq's future created by these authors is very unlike the science-fictional lots traditionally presented. Aliens and robots appear, but large global movements are more critical. Many imagine an Iraq still under the control of another power, often China. Others speculate its religious extremists shredded the United States. Still more discuss extreme horrors in such a matter-of-fact way that modern readers would want to label these with a

“content warning” but Blassim feels it would insult so many that have lived with and through those horrors (Aysha, 2020, p. 96).



5. FIFTH CHAPTER

5. CONCLUSION AND RESULTS

Literature is a living being, therefore, it grows like branches of a tree. Therefore, the introduction of new genres, critics, and new theories is significant. However, the new literature of course based on tradition and incorporate modern approaches. This study has synthesis the Arab literature particularly the post-occupation Iraq with Western literature in the context science fiction genre. The analysis indicated the differences in the approaches, through the process, and storytelling—however, both literary traditions have been contributing to each other.

The access to World Wide Web has let people experience everything that only exists in developed countries. The exposure to the events indeed raises questions in the minds of authors, similarly, the readers also tend to engage in the new literature. For instance, science fiction may have more demand in developing countries or war-torn regions. The hunger for exposure is natural, therefore, any emerging genre is equally important for everyone.

The Anglophonic literature has most often remained central to the scholars of literature throughout the world. Specifically, the regions of occupied states. This is more vivid in the last two decades of the 20th century and the 21st century. With the infinite achievements in the area of science and technology in the mentioned few decades, people have brought an enormous revolution in the mentality and the perception of their kind. This momentous change has not only affected human life in terms of scientific inventions and discoveries making people more logical and responsible. It also vied to bring about tremendous changes in arts, language, and literature. The cause of widespread changes in the form and style of literature has been proven throughout the world and in all human languages and ways of thinking. This study takes an interdisciplinary approach to effectively explore its expectations and reach the desired outcome considering its

historical, sociopolitical importance on the one hand and its importance in the field of literature and translation studies on the other.

Literature has been open to many new genres and critical theories. To put more light on the mentioned statement, it is visible to the lovers and readers of literature that modern approaches in literature such as science fiction, short story genre (which is pivotal to the enterprise taken into consideration) have been introduced and well appreciated, followed and admired by the readers. The classical and traditional styles, forms, and approaches no longer meet the needs of the modern world, and those styles, forms, and approaches cannot fulfil the needs of the contemporary thinker or in simpler words—the modern reader. Until a century earlier, the human life and way of thinking and tackling the absurdities and adventures of life have been unknown, of no importance or undiscovered. Literature from the classical period to the colonial or modern period had been steady in terms of no ideological or technological importance or concentration. People of the mentioned period were happy with the frequent three-time meal and family life, with the ups and downs occurring on and off; they used to think that this is how the nature and reality of life are till eternity.

On the other hand, translated science fiction literature embarks on a thrilling journey of explorations helping people realize their abilities to know themselves and also the writers write confidently what they create or find after seeing this new type of literature. It also paves the way for the thinkers of their contemporaries to predict the future life and its design. Science fiction has been helping to maximize the limits of all kinds of readers to concentrate on what is yet to come—both in a short time and in the distance. Science and fiction have been the sources through which modern philosophical ideas are conveyed to the audience. It helps contemporary thinkers help the people find relief and calm by understanding and owning their viewpoints about the upcoming future (Langer, 2011). This study illustrates how post-occupation Iraqi short story is being influenced by the western context of science fiction literature. In the Arab world, post-occupation Iraqi short story is served as a model for major works of Arabic culture particularly Iraqi writers. Post-occupation Iraqi short story in the Arabic tradition has been

regarded as an idealistic model for the short story writing. Similarly, the Iraqi versions have seriously entered the short story genre of the Western context of science fiction.

Societies are linked to and can be known by their cultures. The communities are nourished by their culture in every aspect of their lives and are consciously or unconsciously affected by their culture. During the war times, art and literature are not the first things people think about. Thus, wars change political, social, and all the genres of the time. Every society takes much time in recovering back. Similarly, it is the case with Western societies. Their fields of knowledge were also affected by war including science fiction. The evolution of the science and technology has impacted every field and it is same for the science fiction (McCarthy, 2019). Science fiction can be defined as a genre of literature that deals with culture and current knowledge. It describes human activities, thoughts, and what people are doing at the time it is written. It may be accepted by the upcoming generation or may not be taken since it varies from time to time (Csicsery-Ronay, 2012).

One of the basic categories of this thesis is Blasim's (2017) edited anthology *Iraq + 100*. These anthologized short stories reflect many aspects of the Arab traditions compared to western traditions of the science fiction genre. This thesis argues that Arabs were not interested in science at first, particularly in Iraq. This is due to the fact that science fiction is directly related to science is prevalent in the Western world. Moreover, Arabic literary culture is more interested in religious traditions and aspects, giving the Arabic world more imagination and poetic inspiration. Post-2003 writings make the Iraqi writers more influenced by western science fiction literature due to translations of Arabic texts into English and vice versa.

First two chapters of the study discussed the relationship between science fiction literature in western tradition uncovering the core themes, noticing characteristics, and new findings. Writers imagine some point of time in history, either past or present, and introduce some change like a misstep of some ruler, affecting entire history. Writers of that genre have to spend many pages explaining the makeup of these alternative societies as the work cannot be appreciated until the readers thoroughly understand the new background created by the writers. It has been said that both protagonists and the worlds

they occupy are fictional in the science fiction genre. For example, people may change their sex on and off, re-make themselves through cloning, replace body parts as per their will, change the body structure, travel in space, and so on in casual and normalized ways. There are many examples of feminist science fiction in which women continue to struggle with the responsibilities assigned to them by nature, such as childbearing and motherhood. This leap into the future also provides excellent themes for science fiction. It has also discussed why western people are more concerned with science fiction literature.

Arab traditions of the science fiction genre were analyzed in the third chapter of this thesis. In recent times sci-fi in Arabic literature is discussed in the literary community that has addressed many issues. An exchange of literary genres has continued around the world and gained popularity in certain countries for many reasons. In Arabic literature, science fiction writing was introduced in 1940. This excerpt explains what precisely is meant by Arab science fiction literature. According to Arabic literature, science fiction deals with everyday life, technological phenomena, humans, and technology. In the history of Arabic countries, the wars witnessed by the countries have affected the literature at different times (Allen, 2003, p. 1). This study deals with how *Iraq + 100* and *The Corpse Exhibition and Other Stories of Iraq* are regarded a response of Arabic science fiction to western science fiction. Post-occupation Iraqi short story in these two books views how contemporary Iraqi writers use science-fictional elements in their writings that narrate the future of a country that wars dismembered it.

In the Arabic population or any other part of the world, science fiction has the same qualities, making Arab science a distinct category. Allen (2003) suggested that Arabic science fiction emerges from the Arab environment. It reflects the texture of the nation as Iraq is suffering with lack of freedom and stability since 1914. All the grudges are indirectly depicted through sci-fi. The science fiction genre in Arabic literature is associated with the industrial-technological revolution. In 1950 space travel increased a great deal in the Arab world but there was a lack of original literature, science fiction, and leading to the translation of western literature. Furthermore, the western world is more involved with practical and scientific matters, whereas the East retains its focus on superstitions, magic, and blind faith. Yet science fiction has become extremely popular in

the West in modern times. What society often needs is a change, so, science fiction literature can be very appealing in contemporary culture science fiction. It helps to release stress.

In the post-occupation era, a large amount of postcolonial Iraqi literature has been translated into English. It is no surprise that science fiction emerged in the West. Before the era of science, the majority of fiction was romantic. Experiments are also a part of the scientific age and writers find it fascinating. Every writer can project imaginations in all directions and it takes the readers away from reality. At the end of 20th century, Arab readers developed a fascination for space travel with scientific progress. Readers' urge has fulfilled initially using translated English science fiction into Arabic primarily short stories. After the 1980s, science fiction novels in Arabic have shown two trends and the purpose of one is sheer entertainment. The other one is striving to be accepted as part of the literary system (Alkriti & Janoory, 2019).

Science fiction is said to have initially entered the literary realm of the Arab world through translations from western literature. However, there is evidence of science-fiction-like works in creative Arabic literature that began in the country itself. The collection of short stories *Alflayla way-Layla* is English translation by Richard Burton as *One Thousand and One Nights*. Two stories in this collection, *The Ebony Horse* and *The City of Brass* can be described as proto science fiction. This study reveals that modern Arabic science fiction depicts a different future for Arab society. Islamic society is interested in taboos especially when it comes to sexuality. Through science fiction, these taboos can be broken indirectly.

Edited anthology in the literary canon is one of the key goals and challenges of translated Arabic literary anthologies. Lefevere (1992) claims that “anthologies, criticism, or editions, rewriters, manipulate the originals they work with to some extent, usually to make them fit in with the dominant or one of the dominant ideological and poetological currents of their time” (p. 78). The anthology can be accepted as a kind of rewriting as it creates images of that particular literature in another culture. However, in the case of Arabic science fiction work of the edited anthology of *Iraq + 100* is translated into English and collected in an anthology form. Thus, the Arabic science fiction text of *Iraq + 100* is

presented to the anglophone readers in an anthology form. This feature allows the anglophone scholars, critics, and ordinary readers to read Arabic science fiction text as a world short story.

This contribution goes under the Western interpretation of the post-occupation Iraqi short story that is coined to highlighting the contribution of translated canonical texts to establish the dynamics of cultural canons. The translation of the Arabic post-occupation Iraqi texts is introduced to the western literary system with another image of a science fiction literary masterpiece. Resultantly, post-occupation Iraqi writers can contribute their own insights to the world of Western traditions of science fiction. These Arabic short stories were translated and anthologized by western translators to promote the literary dialogue between the two cultures. The Arabic translated anthology highlights the negotiation between the anglophone and Arab culture stated to develop an artistic product that reflects modern concern.

In this study, the selected books deploy Arabic science fiction short stories with a diversity of styles and writers—who were influenced by the western context of science fiction literature. These texts entered the anglophone literature with various translated versions worldwide. Blasim illustrates in the introduction of *Iraq + 100* saying: “Today there is great hope in a new generation, a generation native to the internet and to globalization...Serious attempts to write science fiction have started to appear, especially not that science is so much easier to get hold of ” (Blasim, 2016, p. 11). Iraqi authors illustrated different science fiction compared to the traditional literature. Many people imagine that Iraq is still under the control of foreign powers. Others imagine Iraq is shredded by its religious own extremists. However, there is still a need to discuss the horrors since modern readers seek maximum context that can expose the extremism. However, Blasim (2017) stated that it would insult so many that have lived with those horrors.

This study illustrates that post-occupation Iraqi literature has trauma as in the depiction of Blasim’s (2014; 2017) texts and anthologized writers’ short stories. Campbell (2017) investigates how Arabic science fiction engages with a theoretical concept of double estrangement. In Blasim's (2014; 2017) fictional texts, an edited anthology, and a

short story collection provides social and political analysis through estrangement and simultaneously critique their own societies' inability or refusal to engage with progressive changes as in the western world. Campbell (2017) reveals that scholars interested in how the difference of Arabic sci-fi from anglophone science may be a wonder. It embarks on the science fiction genre and Campbell (2017) views Suvin's (2010) conceptualization of cognitive estrangement is importance of understanding Arabic science fiction. Consequently, this study has examined the manifestations of cognitive estrangement in Arabic science fiction and one of his central arguments builds of directly.

The selected books deploy Arabic science fiction short stories with a diversity of styles and writers who are influenced by the western context of science fiction literature. These texts entered the anglophone literature with various translated versions worldwide. Blasim illustrates in the introduction of *Iraq + 100* saying: "Today there is great hope in a new generation, a generation native to the internet and to globalization...Serious attempts to write science fiction have started to appear, especially not that science is so much easier to get hold of" (Blasim, 2016, p. 11). Future Iraq which is created by these authors differs from the science fictional futures traditionally presented. Aliens and robots appear but large global movements are more significant. Many people imagine that Iraq is still under the control of another power often China. Others imagine Iraq is shredded by its religious own extremists. Still more discuss extreme horrors in such a matter-of-fact way that modern readers would want to label these with a "*content warning*" but Hassan Blasim states that he would insult so many that have lived with and through those horrors.

Foucault's (2019) conceptions of power and resistance extend the explanation of *Iraq + 100* and *The Corpse Exhibition and Other Stories of Iraq* in this thesis. In *The Subject and Power*, according to Foucault, "there is insubordination and a certain fundamental obstinacy on the side of the principles of freedom at the core of power interactions" (Foucault, 2019, p. 779). In his view, he mentions that struggles consist of taking the "forms of resistance against different forms of power as a starting point" (Foucault, 2019, p. 780). The power relations can be dissociated using the diverse forms of resistance in power relations. It mentions six common characteristics of the anti-authority struggles: They are not limited to one country. Instead, they are transversal. First,

it is the power struggle. Second, they oppose the primary sources of power which have a straight impact on them. Third, they are against the government of individualization. Fourth, they fight with the power of knowledge relations. Finally, they oppose the abstractions which ignore “who we are individual” (Foucault, 1982, p. 781).

Generally speaking, the struggles attack the central performance of modern power, which is the creation of docile bodies. In Foucault’s words, it is not essential “to liberate the individuals from the state and the state’s institutions but to liberate us both from the state and from the type of individualization which is linked to the state” (1982, p. 785). Nevertheless, struggles have their strategies. These are methods of changing the power relations in favor of the efforts in a time of confrontation. Foucault (1982) argues that “a relationship of confrontation reaches its term, its final moment (and the victory of one of the two adversaries) when stable mechanisms replace the free play of antagonistic reactions” (p. 794).

Foucault ends his analysis of struggles and power relations with a horrifying fact. He claims that every strategy of confrontation will change into a new power relation if it manages to win its battleground (Foucault, 1982). He depicts a dark and repetitive cycle of power and struggles with no bright future at its end. Here, one can ask what the role of individuals in this cycle is. Foucault (1982) started his story of resistance and confrontation with a promise of the liberation of individuals that what happened to that promise. This is the point that we can find the main critiques of Foucault. Mark Bevir (1999, p. 349) provides us with one: “Foucault emphatically did not reintroduce the subject as an agent of change.” For him, the subject is a function of ‘will to power.’ He continues: “history appeared as a single drama of repressive construction in which power represses the subject as a body at the same time as it constructs the subject as a set of beliefs and desires that it then represses again” (Bevir, 1999, p. 350). Now, we can realize how Friedrich Nietzsche’s conception of power has left its dramatic impression on Foucault’s philosophy. The words of Bevir (1999) sound reasonable when he argues that “Foucault and his followers often seem to be calling us to a rather vague form of resistance to what they see as the false freedoms tied to pastoral power” (p. 355). *The Corpse Exhibition and Other Stories of Iraq* and edited anthology *Iraq + 100* portray Foucault’s

(1982) notion of power and resistance and the trauma of post-occupation Iraqi short story. The circumstances in the Middle Eastern nations are uncertain as the terror continues to happen frequently. The horrors of sectarian conflicts are referred to cultural trauma. Redfield (2007) argues, “involves blockage: associate degree inability to mourn, to maneuver from repetition to operating through” (p. 146). Moreover, logic and rationality is being suppressed by the violence. Thus, Western readers have been engaging in those short stories because it provides a mixture of the realistic war chronicle and the tribute to the highest gothic literature. It is, interestingly, going through quotations of all kinds of Hollywood monster movies. However, the aim of this project is to allude to some Arabic sources that give the study its unique depth and flavor (Redfield, 2007, p. 56).

From a postcolonial perspective, this thesis analyzes the selected books within the framework of the postcolonial theory of Bhabha's (1992) concepts and Said's (1978) *Orientalism*. While the short stories are in Iraq analyzing them from a postcolonial perspective has made a particular situation in this study. Although the bulk of literary works are studied in light of postcolonial theory and the distinction between East and West is stark. In contrast, is depicted in short stories since the Iraqi nation's culture has been greatly influenced by British and American occupation making it impossible to claim cultural and religious colonialism by countries seen as allies of Iraq. Blasim's (2013) portrayal of Britain and America's cultural, political, economic, and social dominance over Iraq, especially Baghdad is the subject of this analysis. The research also looks at the setting in which is inspired to produce works as well as the basic postcolonial concepts of “language, superiority/inferiority, cultural polyvalency, self/other, and the self-critical” Bhabha (1992, p. 53). Finally, this thesis also investigates how Blasim (2013; 2014; 2017) reacts to the domination of Britain and America on Iraq. According to the anthologized book short stories of *Iraq +100* and *The Corpse Exhibition and Other Stories of Iraq*, the main reasons for local disputes within Iraqi society are political and religious. *In the Gardens of Babylon*, the religious justification for the conflict is that the Iraqi people have different sects due to the American occupation of Iraq in 2003.

Science fiction is an interesting, engaging, popular, and convenient genre. It is a genre of the past but a perfect framework for the future world (2013). Suvin (1988)

emphasize on the cognitive estrangement as “cognitive refers to the scientific plausibility of the world presented in the literary work, while estrangement means making the familiar unfamiliar to criticize the ordinary” (p. 99). The introduction of the novum helps to achieve the estrangement that differs the narrative from empirical environment of the writer (Suvin, 1988). The induction of the novum must be an extrapolation whether from the traditional literature or the existing science (Suvin, 1988). Moreover, the novum reflect on the current state of the society. Therefore, the relationship with the present induces the cognitive value instead of the prediction.

Science fiction permits the writer to perceive and imagine the future to symbolize in the literature. However, the circumstances such a political, cultural, language, censorship, and impact of other societies push writers to adopt different narrative methods. It is to pertinent to note that science fiction literature of Arabic region is embedded in the ancient, traditional, and mystical references—thus, the new literature have clear image of those elements. The reinvention of the tradition of storytelling and astrological philosophy offers greater insights to the Arabic literature in terms of identity (Blasim, 2016).

Arabic literature has got benefits in many ways on account of Western science fiction. First, science fiction is only science; there is nothing like ‘Arabic science’ or ‘Muslim science.’ Second, technological advancements lie at the base of political and economic differences—for instance, the industrially revolutionized countries. Third, if the Arabic educational system fails to produce scientists and academicians, science fiction literature will likely build a new generation of scientists. Fourth, science fiction creates the ability to think imaginatively. It is necessary to develop creativity and imagination in children so that a generation of curious scientists will bless the Arabs world. Finally, the strong influence of the Islam on all kinds of arts and science in Arab world is crucial. In this study, the third chapter has dealt with the traditions of the Arab science fiction genre with supputation example work. This section of the study also demonstrates the positive aspects of science fiction and how the western genre benefited Arab literature in modern times.

This study tackles the aesthetics of horrors in Blasim’s (2017) short stories and other anthologized Iraqi writers in *Iraq + 100*. Hanoosh (2013) elaborated the diversity of

literature in post-war considering the writers like Hassan Blasim, Mahmud Sa'id, and Abd al-Khaliq al-Rikabi, whose literary yield echoes and expands Iraq's social realist tradition. The exploration of the empirical text provided new path to the literary development in post-2003 Iraq (Hanoosh, 2013). However, the utilization of the contemporary styles to approach the Iraqi literary realism to present the reality may not cover the extent of violence in Iraq.

Suvin's (1979) *Landmark Study Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre*, elaborates on the sci-fi genre that has become the basis for fiction. Based on the genre of science fiction in the Western context, post-occupation Iraqi fiction contributes to the development of these genres. The two selected works –a short story collection *The Corpse Exhibition and Other Stories of Iraq*, and an edited anthology *Iraq +100* by Blasim (2017) are regarded as a response to the Western science fiction literature due to the diversity of writers and their contributions to this genre of literature. I have dealt with analyzing these post-occupation Iraqi translated texts within the framework of their reception as science-fictional works by the Western context. I have chosen these two books as they are a diverse range of corpus in this thesis. These works have been located in modern Iraq, in space, and another world. They are available with English translation versions worldwide; they are included in the anglophone literary system because international readers do not have proficiency in other dialects such as Arabic. The urgent political and social matters can be the subjects of the fiction genre even in the old ones like Margaret Cavendish's *The Blazing World* to Art Spiegelman's graphic novel *Maus*. However, Genre fiction itself is not less important than the literary genre (Al-Hajaj, 2020). Saadawi (2018) mentions that urgent political and social matters can be the subjects of the fiction genre even in the old ones like Spiegelman's (1996) *The Complete Maus*. Moreover, genre fiction itself is not less important than the literary genre (Al-Hajaj, 2020).

The Corpse Exhibition and *Iraq + 100* have also been analyzed as illustrative of a specific expression of post-2003 Iraqi fiction that depicts the terror of violence in Iraq by delivering scenes of outrageous and unreal violence in their texts. Bahooora (2015) mentions that the writers achieve this case through asylum of the metaphysical regardless

of dream-states that highlight the uncanny, nightmares, and the subconscious, as in the fiction of Blasim (2017) and the writers of the anthologized short stories through the supernatural, horror, and the brutal. Blasim's (2017) narratives confuse the reader, using a dark, fragmented aesthetic to make a territory of horror where violence is an inescapable, monstrous, and ordinary mundane element of the national scene that constitutes contemporary Iraqi identity.

The fear of violence in Iraq has been naturalized and neglected. These stylistic and thematic renderings of the post-2003 Iraqi experience through a fiction of horror are stylistically gothic, containing many of the aesthetic characteristics of the postcolonial gothic novel. This literary genre cares about inquiries of history and the return of the repressed through dark narratives that stage horror scenes through the supernatural, the uncanny, and the monstrous (Bahoora, 2015). Iraqi fictional literature in post-2003 narrated the harsh truth, awfulness, loss, suppression, and the structural violence (Bahoora, 2015).

The science fiction has the ability to form its own identity in the context of culture, reinvention, and tradition (Blasim, 2016). The science-fictional aspect of the short stories is figurative allowances manifesting the Iraqi citizens. It also poses question of moral relativism for a civilization in war. Further, the socio-political hypocrisies both in the local societies and of the foreigner powers are indeed relevant (Heller, 2017).

This study indicates that Western science fiction literature influences Arabic science fiction, particularly post-occupation Iraqi fiction. The impact lays in economic, cultural, and language differences (Heller, 2017). Another significant aspect of this thesis is that post-occupation Iraqi authors intend to translate horror from reality into literature according to the science fiction genre. However, post-2003 Iraq is a challenge for the Iraqi writers and readers to represent the fiction as the nation experienced what is scary for other nations. Fiction, in particular, needs a lot of changes in its form and style to meet the needs of both readers and writers. Those novels narrate the terror, horror, and a complex state of mind of the individuals (Bahoora, 2015).

This study explored that post-occupation Iraqi short story that incorporated the Iraqi circumstances. These are not just science fiction stories but also harmonize with

Iraq's history and a nation. For instance, some of the stories represented that historical Iraq that was far better compared to current state. However, this might not be attractive for readers interested in science fiction, though, there is still an audience across the regions who value these stories (Custers, 2019). The anthologized short stories in *Iraq + 100* are optimistic for the current situation in the country considering Iraq's heritage and history of scholarship. Further, some of them clearly expect Iraq as the intellectual capital of the world. Therefore, these books can help the Iraq to gain hope and vision of the future.

Post-2003 Iraq is a huge challenge for Iraqi writers and readers. It is also a burden to represent the fiction in the other languages as the nation experienced what is scary for other nations. Fiction, in particular, needs a lot of changes in its form and style to meet the needs of both readers and writers. In those novels narrated the terror of the war and the individuals' state of mind after being exposed to that intense war (Bahoora, 2015).

In this study, we understand that post-occupation Iraqi short story that are not just science fiction but emerged from reality. Though, some stories represent the ancient and historical Iraq indicating the differences. This may not be seen as attractive by some readers used to more sci-fi rather than being, however, the stories still find an audience (Custers, 2019). The anthologized short stories in *Iraq + 100* are optimistic for the current situation in the country. These writers care about Iraq's heritage and history of scholarship. Some of them clearly expect Iraq as the intellectual capital of the world. Hopefully, these books help the country to get better in every field of life.

This study aims at paving the path for the potential researchers of literature to maximize their efforts in attempting to unearth other features of Arab literature in general and post-occupation Iraqi translated short story in particular in the salient aspects of the correlation between the comic genres of the mentioned translated literature with that of the western science fiction literature. A post-occupation Iraqi short story study is bound to reveal western science fiction contributions, and vice versa. Moreover, translated Arabic literature stems from more oral and written poetic forms. So, it is influenced by western literary forms; it means they have mutual interaction between the translations of works of literature of different cultures.

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