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Effect Of Literary Genre And Its Impact On Individual Creative Works "The Chalk Door Novel As A Model"

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Abstract

Objectives. This study aims to examine the relationship between a novel and its literary genre, focusing on how the novelist engages with literary heritage, incorporates innovative elements, and balances tradition with originality. Specifically, it seeks to analyze the novel *Chalk Door* by Ahmed Saadawi to understand the ways in which the author builds upon pioneering achievements in novelistic techniques, structure, narrative perspective, temporal manipulation, and stylistic devices.

Materials and Methods. The study employed a qualitative literary analysis method. The theoretical framework reviewed key contributions of leading novelists since the beginning of the modern era, highlighting innovations that transformed traditional nineteenth- and eighteenth-century novelistic frameworks. The procedural analysis then focused on *Chalk Door*, examining the author's use of narrative techniques, structural choices, character development, and stylistic strategies, in relation to the broader historical and literary context.

Results. The analysis revealed that Ahmed Saadawi effectively engages with the legacy of the novel genre, incorporating both traditional and innovative elements. His work demonstrates a sophisticated balance between imitation of established literary conventions and the introduction of experimental techniques, including manipulation of narrative perspective, temporal structures, and stylistic innovations. The study highlighted Saadawi's ability to creatively synthesize literary heritage with novel contributions, resulting in a distinctive and high-quality literary text.

Conclusions. The study concludes that *Chalk Door* exemplifies the dynamic interaction between literary tradition and innovation, showing how a contemporary novelist can honor the genre's historical achievements while contributing original and experimental elements. This demonstrates the continuing relevance of literary heritage in shaping creative expression and underscores the importance of understanding genre conventions in both writing and reading contemporary novels.

Keywords: Literary Genre, Creative Writing, Chalk Door, Narrative Innovation

Introduction

The contemporary novel is characterized by its ability to explore complex realities, embody philosophical reflections, and integrate both realism and the fantastic. Such versatility enables the novelist to examine social, cultural, and intellectual issues, while simultaneously presenting imaginative worlds that resonate with readers (Vána, 2020). This duality is evident in (Azhar Kadhim Sabr & Ahmed Karyosh Jubair, 2025), which combines a rich tapestry of fantasy, mythology, and historical references with reflections on contemporary Iraqi society. The novel exemplifies how literary imagination can function as a lens through which reality is analyzed, interpreted, and aesthetically represented.

Writing a novel of this magnitude necessitates not only intellectual depth but also mastery of narrative techniques, stylistic innovation, and structural sophistication. Historically, the development of the novel has involved continuous experimentation with form, narration, and time. Early theorists such as Friedrich Schlegel emphasized the novel's adaptability and capacity to absorb elements from diverse genres and discourses, integrating them seamlessly into its own structure (Scullion & Treby, 2019). This inherent flexibility has allowed the novel to evolve alongside social, technological, and cultural changes, making it a primary medium for examining the human experience.

The twentieth century marked a pivotal stage in the evolution of narrative forms. Rapid societal transformations, global conflicts, and technological advances challenged novelists to experiment with narrative structures and thematic complexity. Arabic literature, in particular, experienced significant growth during the 1960s, as writers adopted experimental techniques and engaged more directly with Western literary trends (Knepper & Deckard, 2016). By the late twentieth century, postmodern and modernist novels increasingly employed fragmented structures, multiple perspectives, and unconventional narrative devices, reflecting the complexity and plurality of lived experience (Stephens, 2012).

Among the pioneers of narrative innovation, Henry James stands out for his contributions to the refinement of narrative point of view. Prior to James, the omniscient narrator dominated, with unrestricted access to characters' thoughts and events, often intervening with commentary that disrupted narrative immersion (Mydla, 2025). James advocated limiting the narrator's perspective, focusing on characters' consciousness to create more immediate and realistic portrayals of human experience (Lubbock, 1981, p. 147). Similarly, Gustave Flaubert experimented with temporal structures, employing flashbacks and foreshadowing to manipulate narrative time, thereby enhancing dramatic tension and thematic depth (Danahy, 1979).

James also emphasized the dramatization of events, introducing theatrical elements to narrative presentation, which enriched the reader's engagement with characters and plot (Jahn, 2001). This dramatization, combined with techniques such as polyphony—where multiple characters present distinct perspectives—expanded the expressive capacities of the novel, as seen in works like *The Wings of the Dove* (Oki, 2024) and Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*. Furthermore, modernist and postmodernist authors, including Nabokov, Kundera, and Eco, advanced these techniques by employing embedded narratives, multiple narrative levels, and complex intertextuality, which redefined the relationship between story, structure, and reader (Garcia Landa, 1990).

In Arabic literature, these global developments resonated strongly, inspiring writers to incorporate innovative structures, narrative perspectives, and stylistic devices while retaining culturally specific themes. Saadawi's *Chalk Door* can be seen as a contemporary manifestation of this legacy, synthesizing realism, myth, and fantasy, while demonstrating the continued relevance of narrative experimentation. In particular, the novel engages with the

following aspects of novelistic innovation: (1) titles and textual thresholds, (2) narrative structures and techniques, (3) narrator and points of view, and (4) temporal mechanisms. Through detailed analysis of these elements, this study seeks to elucidate how Saadawi employs these techniques to address complex philosophical and social issues, and how his work contributes to the broader development of the Arabic novel.

Materials and Methods

Research Design

This study employed a **qualitative-analytical approach** to explore the narrative structure, textual thresholds, and narrative techniques of the novel *The Chalk Door*. The design focuses on **textual and structural analysis**, drawing on methods of literary criticism and narratology, particularly in relation to postmodernist literature. The research combines **content analysis** with **comparative analysis** of parallel texts, chapter titles, narrators, and narrative devices to uncover the author's unique stylistic and structural characteristics.

Materials

The primary material for this study was the novel *The Chalk Door* by (Muasomah & Mooduto, 2021), including:

1. Main Text: All twenty-one chapters of the novel, totaling approximately 380 pages.
2. Parallel Texts: Three preparatory texts preceding the narrative, including:
 - a) An excerpt adapted from the Babylonian creation story.
 - b) A short poem by Joseph Brodsky.
 - c) A condensed sentence from Aldous Huxley.
3. Secondary Title: "Seven Sumerian Spells for Salvation from This World," which informs the thematic and structural analysis.
4. Supplementary Materials: Notes, annotations, and references within the novel that indicate historical, mythological, and literary contexts.

Methods

1. **Textual Analysis**
 - a) Thresholds and Titles: Examined the semantic, symbolic, and narrative functions of the main and secondary titles, as well as internal chapter titles, following Gérard Genette's framework of titling functions: designation, description, suggestion, and attraction.
 - b) Parallel Texts: Analyzed the preparatory texts as reading prompts, assessing their thematic, symbolic, and anticipatory roles in shaping reader expectations.
2. **Narrative Structure Analysis**
 - a) Investigated the chapter divisions, repetition, and polyphony, and identified the use of sevenfold numerical symbolism across chapters and sections.
 - b) Examined the multi-level narrative framework, including parallel worlds, overlapping timelines, and nested storylines.
 - c) Identified structural techniques such as narrative dispersion, overlap, and repetition, and their contribution to coherence, thematic depth, and reader engagement.
3. **Narrator and Point of View Analysis**
 - a) Classified narrators into external, hero/first-person, and co-narrators, noting their role in shaping narrative perception.
 - b) Analyzed single-point and dual-point perspectives, assessing the interplay between narrator and addressee, pronoun usage, and narrative influence.
4. **Time Analysis**

- a) Studied the story timeline versus narrative timeline, covering events from 1993 to 2013, and their correlation with historical and socio-political contexts.
- b) Examined temporal mechanisms, including flashbacks, anticipation, and temporal overlap, to determine their role in plot development and thematic emphasis.

5. Literary Techniques Analysis

- a) Investigated the use of fantasy, myth, metafiction, autofiction, and narrative play.
- b) Evaluated stylistic choices, such as rhythm, character presentation, narrative distraction, and the integration of historical and virtual realities.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected through systematic reading and annotation of the novel and parallel texts. Coding was performed to categorize elements such as titles, narrators, narrative levels, time structures, and narrative techniques. Analytical frameworks from narratology, postmodern literary criticism, and semiotics were applied to interpret these elements and assess their contribution to the novel's overall structure, meaning, and aesthetic value.

Ethical Considerations

The study used publicly available literary texts, ensuring proper citation and acknowledgment of original authors. Interpretations were based solely on textual evidence and scholarly frameworks without personal bias or unsupported assumptions.

Results

The analysis of *The Chalk Door* revealed several distinctive structural and narrative patterns that contribute to its postmodern literary style. The results are presented according to the main areas of investigation: titles and thresholds, narrative structure, narrators, time, and literary techniques.

Titles and Thresholds

1. The **main title**, *The Chalk Door*, functions both as a **symbolic and narrative threshold**, signaling the entrance into an imaginative, multi-layered narrative world.
2. The **secondary title**, *Seven Sumerian Spells for Salvation from This World*, reinforces the thematic focus on historical and mythological continuity and creates reader expectations for esoteric and allegorical content.
3. **Chapter titles** often employ symbolic and enigmatic language, serving as **micro-thresholds** that guide the reader through each section while maintaining thematic coherence.
4. **Parallel texts** (Babelian myth excerpt, Brodsky's poem, and Huxley's sentence) act as **preliminary cognitive scaffolds**, preparing the reader for the novel's multi-layered narrative structure.

Narrative Structure

1. The novel is organized into **twenty-one chapters**, divided into three main narrative clusters of seven chapters each, reflecting the symbolic use of the number seven.
2. Structural techniques such as **narrative dispersion, repetition, and polyphony** were consistently observed, creating overlapping storylines and a multi-dimensional narrative space.

3. Seven “parallel worlds” and repeated motifs of **ritual, memory, and imagination** contribute to the coherence of otherwise fragmented narrative sequences.

Narrators and Point of View

1. Three types of narrators were identified: **external, hero/first-person, and co-narrators**, with varying levels of reliability and involvement in the plot.
2. The interplay of **single-point and dual-point perspectives** allows simultaneous observation of multiple narrative layers, enhancing both suspense and thematic depth.
3. Pronoun usage and narrative voice shifts serve as **strategic tools** to orient readers within complex temporal and spatial frameworks.

Time

1. The narrative spans **twenty years** (1993–2013), with multiple temporal shifts, including flashbacks, anticipations, and simultaneous events in different worlds.
2. Temporal overlaps and repetitions reinforce thematic continuity, especially regarding the interplay of **memory, historical reference, and mythic motifs**.

Literary Techniques

1. The study identified extensive use of **fantasy, metafiction, autofiction, and narrative play**, which blur boundaries between reality and imagination.
2. Stylistic devices such as **rhythmical sentence structures, intertextual references, and nested narratives** were employed to create a distinctive postmodern aesthetic.
3. The integration of historical, mythological, and virtual realities produces a **multi-dimensional reading experience**, encouraging reader engagement through both cognitive and imaginative participation.

Summary of Findings

Overall, the analysis indicates that *The Chalk Door* employs **complex narrative strategies, symbolic thresholds, and innovative literary techniques** to create a richly layered postmodern narrative. These elements collectively support the novel’s thematic focus on imagination, history, and human experience, while challenging traditional narrative conventions.

Discussion

The findings of this study illuminate the intricate narrative strategies and literary techniques employed in *The Chalk Door*, underscoring its significance as a postmodern literary work. The discussion interprets these results in relation to existing literature and theoretical frameworks.

Titles and Thresholds

The symbolic function of the main and secondary titles aligns with Genette’s (1997) theory of paratexts, which emphasizes the role of titles as thresholds that mediate the relationship between text and reader. The main title, *The Chalk Door*, operates not only as a literal entry point but also as a metaphorical gateway into layered temporal and spatial dimensions. The secondary title complements this function by establishing thematic expectations around myth, history, and salvation, which echoes Eco’s (1984) assertion that titles guide interpretive frameworks for readers.

Narrative Structure

The division of the novel into three clusters of seven chapters illustrates the deliberate use of numerical symbolism, which contributes to thematic cohesion despite structural fragmentation. This finding resonates with prior studies on postmodern narrative techniques, where repetition and dispersion serve to destabilize linear storytelling while simultaneously creating patterns that facilitate reader comprehension (McHale, 1987). The concept of “parallel worlds” in the narrative reflects the postmodern emphasis on multiplicity, intertextuality, and non-linear temporality, demonstrating how narrative complexity can enhance reader engagement and interpretive depth.

Narrators and Point of View

The use of multiple narrators with shifting perspectives aligns with Bakhtin’s (1981) notion of polyphony, whereby distinct voices coexist to produce a dialogic and multi-dimensional narrative. By alternating between external observers, first-person heroes, and co-narrators, the author manipulates reliability and intimacy, which encourages readers to actively negotiate meaning. These findings support previous research indicating that postmodern texts often employ multi-perspective narration to challenge singular interpretations of reality (Hutcheon, 1988).

Time

Temporal layering, including flashbacks and anticipatory sequences, emphasizes the interplay between memory and history, a recurring motif in postmodern literature. The twenty-year span of the narrative, coupled with overlapping events, reinforces the notion of time as non-linear and subjective, consistent with Genette’s (1980) concepts of anachrony. This manipulation of temporal structure enables the novel to bridge historical, mythological, and imaginative realities, enriching its thematic and cognitive dimensions.

Literary Techniques

The extensive use of fantasy, metafiction, and intertextual references reflects the author’s commitment to postmodern aesthetics, where boundaries between reality and imagination are fluid. Techniques such as nested narratives, rhythmical sentence structures, and interwoven historical and mythological references contribute to a multidimensional reading experience. These findings corroborate earlier studies that highlight the capacity of postmodern literature to engage readers through cognitive and aesthetic participation (Hutcheon, 1995).

Implications

This study demonstrates that *The Chalk Door* exemplifies how narrative complexity, symbolic thresholds, and aesthetic innovation can converge to create a rich postmodern literary work. The novel’s layered structures and narrative techniques provide valuable insights for literary scholars, educators, and writers interested in exploring the pedagogical and cognitive potential of postmodern storytelling.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the analysis, *The Chalk Door* demonstrates a sophisticated use of postmodern literary techniques that enhance narrative complexity and thematic depth, with the main and secondary titles functioning as symbolic thresholds guiding readers into layered interpretations of myth, history, and human experience. The novel’s structure, divided into three clusters of seven chapters, reinforces thematic cohesion while accommodating narrative fragmentation, and the use of multiple narrators and shifting perspectives creates a polyphonic discourse that encourages active reader engagement and interpretive flexibility. Temporal manipulation, intertextuality, and fantastical elements further exemplify the novel’s postmodern aesthetic, reflecting a deliberate blending of reality, imagination, and historical context. Consequently, the study confirms that *The Chalk Door* is a notable example of

contemporary postmodern literature, employing literary techniques that stimulate cognitive, aesthetic, and interpretive engagement. It is recommended that literary scholars conduct comparative analyses with other postmodern works to explore recurring narrative strategies and thematic symbolism, that educators utilize the novel in curricula to teach critical thinking and narrative analysis, and that writers study its narrative techniques—particularly the use of multiple narrators, temporal layering, and intertextuality—to enhance creative writing skills. Additionally, future research could expand to reader-response or cognitive literary studies to gain deeper insights into how readers interpret, navigate, and emotionally engage with postmodern narratives like *The Chalk Door*.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. All research processes, analyses, and interpretations were conducted objectively and independently, without any financial, personal, or professional relationships that could influence the outcomes of this study.

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