

The Unreliable Narrator in Ahmed Saadawi's Frankenstein in Baghdad

Raad Kareem Abd-Aun¹, Sabrina Abdulkadhom Abdulridha^{2*}

¹College of Education for Human Sciences, University of Babylon, Hilla City Babylon, IRAQ

²College of Education for Human Sciences, University of Babylon, Hilla City Babylon, IRAQ

* sabrina2912020@gmail.com

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30880/ahcs.2021.02.01.017>

Received 09 April 2021; Accepted 01 June 2021; Available online 25 June 2021

Abstract: Narration is a complex literary concept that has been discussed and elaborated on by many literary critics and thinkers for decades. Ever since the conceptualization of the term “the unreliable narrator,” critics have come forward to mark the many possibilities were narrators may be confirmed to be unreliable, depending on flaws or certain defining markers that indicate unreliable characteristics within the literary work. This paper shall confine the means of the unreliable narrator and finalize its distinct characteristics in several points. Narrators should be tested in means of the stability of their personality, the reality of their given statements and their accordance with the implied author. Any unmistakable shortcoming will naturally affect the reliability of the narrator. The means of the unreliable narrator shall be studied thoroughly in Ahmad Saadawi's award-winning novel *Frankenstein in Baghdad* (2013) and the reliability of the narrators will be evaluated according to the proposed points.

Keywords: The unreliable narrator, The implied author, Author, *Frankenstein in Baghdad*.

1. The Unreliable Narrator: An Overview

The reliability of a narrative is measured through depending a set of approved standards and principles. Starting off, both the narrator and text should be considered to evaluate the reliability of the narrator. The nature and surroundings of the reader should be considered as well, as culture and multiple other factors may have an influence on the assessment of reliability. The origins of the concept may be traced back to when literary critic Wayne C. Booth coined the term ‘the unreliable narrator’ for the first time in his book *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961). He defines it as follows: “For lack of better terms, I have called a narrator reliable when he speaks for or acts in accordance with the norms of the work (which is to say, the implied author's norms), unreliable when he does not” (Booth 158-159). In other words, Booth insists that the narrator must be in full agreement with the ‘implied author’ in order to be considered reliable. Clearing out the difference between the author and the implied author, is that when

*Corresponding author: sabrina2912020@gmail.com

the author writes down the story, “he creates not simply an ideal, impersonal ‘man in general’ but an implied version of ‘himself’ that is different from the implied authors we meet in other men's works” (Booth 70-71). This means that the implied author has some personal characteristics of the author himself and is therefore dubbed by Booth as “the author’s second self” (Booth 71). Moreover, while a single author may reveal certain personal characteristics in the image of the implied author in one piece of narration, he may expose a set of different characteristics in any of his other works. Booth also places the unreliable narrator and the implied author within the same context, revealing that both share the idea that unreliability depends on the amount of deviation the story is from the reality of the world.

William Riggan elaborated on Booth’s idea that the narrator’s reliability is based on the reality of the implied author. His studies exceeded to involve a bigger focus on the narrator and identified how unreliability depends on the nature of his personality. He uncovers the idea in his book, *Picaros, Madmen, Naifs, and Clowns: The Unreliable First-Person Narrator* (1982), where he concludes that the unreliable narrator is in fact a first-person narrator, narrating the story from a single point of view to share his own personal experience. He specifies the nature of such first-person narrators, revealing that there are four types of narrators that are subject to unreliability. The first one is ‘the picaro,’ who is best described as having an “unheroic” character, originally extracted from a picaresque novel. This type of narrator naturally becomes a different person after facing life-changing experiences and that is why he is subject to unreliability as he unfolds the events of the narration. The second character, ‘the clown,’ might also be a questionable narrator, as the nature of his character lingers among the fact of spending his life span as an actor, where sarcasm is essential in his life. ‘The madman’ is an unreliable narrator by nature, as he interprets his surroundings differently and is proven to be unstable to analyze his surroundings correctly. Lastly, ‘the naïf’ is a character that is at odds with the norms and beliefs of the implied author and therefore is subject to unreliability as well (Webb 5). This may be best summarized by Sarah Kozloff’s description, “not all unreliable narrators are liars or murders. We take some narrators with a pinch of salt just because they are naive or limited” (Kozloff 115-116).

While Seymour Chatman (1980: 233) shows the unreliable narrator as follows:

In “unreliable narration” the narrator’s account is at odds with the implied reader’s surmises about the story’s real intentions the story undermines the discourse. We conclude, by “reading out,” between the lines, that the events and existents could not have been “like that,” and so we hold the narrator suspect. Unreliable narration is thus an ironic form The implied reader senses a discrepancy between a reasonable reconstruction of the story and the account given by the narrator. Two sets of norms conflict, and the covert set, once recognized, must win. The implied author has set up a secret communication with the implied reader.

In other words, he continues the ongoing idea the unreliable narrator is related to the implied reader. He suggests that if the reader reads carefully between the lines, he may conclude some events as being unreliable or unacceptable depending on the implied author’s statements. Kathleen Wall (1994: 5) however drew attention to the fact that unreliability does not necessarily depend on the implied author only. The narrator may indicate some unreliable features whether consciously or unconsciously, if the author intentionally places markers to the narrators’ claims. The narrator may prove to be unreliable as well if he views certain events from a limited perspective ignoring other important factors. Every human perceives a certain incident differently from the other and so not all readers have to agree with the narrator.

Ansgar Nünning (1997: 85) has also expanded his studies on the concept by commenting that Booth’s definition of the unreliable narrator “sets the fox to keep the geese, since it falls back on the ill-defined and elusive notion of the implied author, which hardly provides a reliable basis for determining a narrator’s unreliability.” Moreover, he says that most critics, who depend the idea that the unreliability of the narrator depends on the implied author, are described as “ill-defined and paradoxical” (Ibid. 86). Nünning reassures that it is difficult to understand the beliefs and norms of the implied author and therefore it is difficult to evaluate the reliability of the narrator. He therefore summarizes the mechanism of unreliability “in terms of dramatic irony or discrepant awareness” (Ibid. 87). Dramatic irony is created when a gap between the value system of the narrator and the beliefs and norms of the reader is

founded. The reader starts to suspect the reliability of the narrator whenever the reader feels a lack of harmony or contradiction in the narrator's statements. The reader may then conclude and interpret the reliability of the narrator in two different ways. The first way is when the narrator may visibly reveal his unreliability in the form of statements, while the second way includes the dependence of the reader on the text where he may conclude statements having an additional meaning different from the narrator's real intentions. In this case, the narrator has no clue that he is giving additional information about himself revealing the nature of his character, and therefore Nünning initially defines the unreliable narrators as "those whose perspective is in contradiction to the value and norm system of the whole text or to that of the reader" (Ibid., 4). Unreliable narration makes the reader alter their attention from the basic story of the narration towards the speaker and the narrator's psychology and hereby Nünning has simply giving the reader a role in deciding the reliability of the narrator. Nünning declares that:

To determine a narrator's unreliability one need not rely merely on intuitive judgments. It is neither the reader's intuitions nor the implied author's norms and values that supply the clue to a narrator's unreliability, but a broad range of definable signals. These include both textual data and the reader's preexisting conceptual knowledge of the world. In sum whether a narrator is called unreliable or not does not depend on the distance between the norms and values of the narrator and those of the implied author but between the distance that separates the narrator's view of the world from the reader's world-model and standards of normality (Nünning 101).

Peter J. Rabinowitz also points out the importance of the audience that receives the narration. He reveals that any piece of narration is a piece of art that imitates things. So, some drawing on a piece of canvas can neither be considered as the real image it tends to represent nor can it be treated as a piece of canvas and some colors. So, in the case of a novel, one must consider parts of it as true and other parts as untrue. This duality, Rabinowitz claims, is decided by the recipient or the audience of the narrative. He classifies audiences into four types. The first type is the "actual audience," who are the real people who buy and read the literary piece. The author has no control on this type of audience. *The second* type is the "authorial audience" which is the kind of audience the author puts in mind while writing. He sets up several typical characteristics of his audience that includes a set of certain norms, beliefs and knowledge and composes the narration according to these characteristics. *The third* type is the "narrative audience" where he makes clear that the author imitates some nonfictional context, and the narrator is therefore an "imitation of an author". He narrates the story to this type of audience who also possesses some certain knowledge of the narration. So it is not just being like the authorial audience whom the author sets up to having a common set of beliefs and norms, but the author makes his audience pretend to be part of the context, acknowledging certain perspectives of the narration that is being set. Therefore, if the narration is historical, then the audience has a certain historical background about it and believes that the setting and the characters are real (Rabinowitz 125-127). *The fourth* and the last type is called the "ideal narrative audience." This is the audience that the author wishes to write for. It is then a combination of the authorial and narrative audience. Moreover, it is the audience that accepts all of the narrator's judgements, opinions, beliefs, norms and has a complete understanding of what the narration unfolds through each and every word. So, while the narrative audience may judge what the author comes up with, the ideal narrative audience accepts all that happens without judgement (Ibid. 134-135).

Hence, the factors of the unreliable narrator this paper shall apply on the text of Ahmed Saadawi's *Frankenstein in Baghdad* may be confined to the following points:

- 1- **The Narrator's Personality:** The nature of the narrator's personality must be clarified and differentiated from other narrators if the narration includes more than one narrator. Any susceptible marker may narrow the level of reliability, i.e. markers of being picaro, naif, madman or clown according to Regan's classification.
- 2- **The Narrator's Statements:** Unreliability may lie within the statements the narrator puts out in the narrative if they were identified to be contradictory or having a limited perspective in any manner.

- 3- **The Agreement between the Narrator and the Implied Author:** Some contradictory markers between the implied author and narrator may hold the narrator subject to unreliability.
- 4- **The Reader's Response (Audience):** Each reader may relate and react to the narration differently depending on his social, cultural and religious beliefs and norms. A personal evaluation of the reliability of the narrator shall be introduced depending on the data presented, the preexisting knowledge of the world as well as the standards and the norms.

These points shall classify and define the final evaluation of the narrator of the novel *Frankenstein in Baghdad* after a brief account on the novel is introduced.

2. A Brief Account on Ahmed Saadawi's *Frankenstein in Baghdad*

Iraqi fiction witnessed a series of excessive transformations since the American invasion in Iraq in 2003. Military occupation and sectarian violence ruled the streets of Iraq and quickly mass murder became a daily regularity. However, as the severe restrictions of the ex-regime slowly faded away, Iraqi authors found it easier to express their words of pains, as words of democracy and freedom topped the citizen's demands.

Ahmed Saadawi's award winning novel *Frankenstein in Baghdad* (2013) is a work of fiction that opens with the introduction of an old junk dealer who goes by the name 'Hadi the junk dealer.' He wanders Baghdad's copious neighborhoods in the search of valuable antiques. Visiting locations where horrendous explosions have once taken place, Hadi stumbles upon various shattered body parts of different humans. He decides to collect and sew parts together in an attempt to attain a full human body. All man is worthy of a burial even if only parts of him are left. It is not until Hadi finds the remaining body part, a nose, that the process of a full human body is completed. The belief that everybody deserves a proper burial, is the purpose of his act, especially after the losing his close friend and roommate Nahem Abdaki in a similar manner.

Too much of his surprise, never had Hadi expected his stitched-together creature to find the means of life. After meeting his fatal destiny in a suicide truck explosion earlier, the soul of Hasib Mohamed Jaafar, one of the guards at the Sadeer Novotel hotel, had found the opportunity of being a mortal again by merging with the corpse and becoming a full-fledged human being once more. Soon enough the creature started wandering Baghdad's wrecked streets and started to be locally known under the name of 'shisma' or 'Whatitsname' (Perry 2018). As the narration escalates, Whatitsname is accused of a series of terrorist attacks and murders and is quickly depicted by the media as a serial killer. Little do they know that he is in fact on a mission to avenge the owners of the body parts he is constructed of. With the continuation of his vendetta, he notices how a body part falls off every time he succeeds to take revenge. Fearing for his own life now, Whatitsname starts killing random people with the excuse that no human is fully innocent (Garner 2018). The novel ends with Hadi being arrested after being allegedly accused of being the figure who roamed the streets killing people. Whatitsname remains at Hadi's house, ominously watching over along the streets from one of windows.

3. Evaluating the Reliability of the Narrator in *Frankenstein in Baghdad*

The reliability of the narrator may be pointed out by reviewing several points:

3.1 The Narrator's Personality

In an opening note, the novel *Frankenstein in Baghdad* holds more than one narrator. They may be classified into the chief narrator and several other minor narrators. The chief narrator is not identified with a name but narrates most of the narrative as a third person narrator which is defined as "someone outside the story proper who refers to all the characters in the story by name, or as "he," "she," "they"." (Abrams 2009: 272). Throughout the narrative, several minor narrators appear to take the role of narrating inclusive scenes as well but from a more personal perspective. They are identified as first person narrators, defined when "the narrator speaks as "I," and is to a greater or lesser degree a

participant in the story, or else is the protagonist of the story (Ibid., 272). These first person narrators include “the writer” and the character Whatitsname. Whether major or minor characters, their reliability must first be tested through the analysis of their personalities.

3.1.1 The Chief Narrator

For the most part of the narration, the chief narrator takes the role of narrating the events of the narrative. On an initial note, it seems that this narrator has access to the spiritual world, capable of seeing where souls set off after leaving their physical beings:

With his hand, which was made of primordial matter, he touched the pale, naked body and saw his spirit sink into it. His whole arm sank in, then his head and the rest of his body. Overwhelmed by a heaviness and torpor, he lodged inside the corpse, filling it from head to toe, because probably, he realized then, it didn't have a soul, while he was a soul without a body (Saadawi 2018: 37-8).

Witnessing the integration of a soul with a body, is relatively a deviation from realism and rather takes a turn into the world of magical realism. Having such privilege will naturally lead most readers to consider it as a factor of unreliability. The chief narrator also shows factors of skepticism whenever quoting the character of Hadi the junk dealer. Beside the statements made during the whole narration, devoting a full chapter under the title “The Liar” to expose Hadi’s personality is certainly a matter that should be considered. The statements the narrator delivers on behalf of this persona are thought of as unreliable at first especially with the continuous emphasis that Hadi is a well-known deceiver whenever narrating his story at his favorite cafe in Baghdad. Despite the lively enthusiasm that befalls the listeners, most of them have known that Hadi always spices up the events of his stories with deceptive details for the sake of enjoyment and attention: “It was Hadi the junk dealer, Hadi the liar, as the customers in Aziz’s coffee shop called him” (Saadawi 2018: 49). This reputation has been his trademark of his stories and slowly all of his life actions. After Whatitsname’s series of murders, for instance, Hadi is being held suspect instead and is eventually convicted to be the criminal as he is locally known to have referred to similar features in the story of his creation: “The guy’s a liar,” said Saidi. “Yes, but maybe this is the criminal we’re looking for. What color was his skin? Did he have scars from bullet wounds or injuries that had been stitched up?” “I have no idea. It’s all based on the fantasies of some lowlife, my friend.” (Saadawi 2018: 135). Despite all accusations, it actually appears that the only true story Hadi had possibly told was the story of his creation; Whatitsname. It is Mahmoud Al-Sawadi who kept track of the details of this specific story that highlights this fact. He finds that this specific story does surprisingly not seem to have any contradicting or additional details every time Hadi narrates this specific story: “He sat down to resume his story, and Mahmoud, who was hoping to catch him out, was disappointed to find he hadn’t changed any of the details” (Saadawi 2018: 24). In addition, the narrator does also not specify any false statements related to this story, leaving the reader skeptical of whether to consider this story as a real one or not. The effects of lying is a damaging action as it leaves the public in constant doubt. The label that is given to Hadi this time is not applicable to his story and contrarily opens the door to a first marker of unreliability of the chief narrator.

3.1.2 The Writer

Near the end of the novel, readers are briefly introduced to a minor narrator who simply goes with the name of “the writer.” This narrator hurls the narrative into the realm of unreliability by saying: “He fooled me. But don’t we always do that? Today he deceived me and tomorrow I will deceive someone else, also with good intentions, and so on” (Saadawi 2013: 253). The writer allegedly points out that deception is one of the main characteristics of mankind and that all, including himself, are deceivers. With such a statement, the reader inevitably rethinks and question the reliability of this narrator and might even reconsider all that has been narrated before. Readers might therefore reread the text again, to evaluate and analyze the events of the novel from a new and total different perspective. On this

account, the personality of the writer does therefore have a marker of unreliability despite the somewhat believable narration he has unfolded.

3.1.3 Whatitsname (Shishma)

Whatitsname is a compilation of people co-joined. He is a supernatural being that resembles the creature in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Despite this description in different parts of the novel, a remark in local journals have described him, as nothing but a mere "figment of Hadi's sick imagination" (Saadawi 2018: 178). On a scale of considering him a co-joined creature, the Whatitsname is inevitably unreliable. Aside from being the most unnatural of creations whose appearance and mannerisms differ from humans, he is a creation of a collection of different human beings whose essences are not quite known from when they were still alive. The intellectual power generated from this creature's mind can therefore not be considered as dependable as the audience lacks the truth of its originality. It might have been the mind of a doubtful human being, like a madman, a professional liar, a criminal or any other probable unreliable personality. However, what is more to question is whether the whole narration is actually done by this monster. Many statements made by the chief narrator show that the Whatitsname is not seen by anyone but Hadi and Elishva who have both been considered as mad at some point in the narration. In a scene, none of the neighbors in Al Bataween area was curious enough to visit Elishva, when she claimed that the Whatitsname was her long-lost son, Daniel. No neighbor in Al Bataween has seen Whatitsname and were just interested in seeing Elishva happy. Ironically, they were curious enough to meet her grandson Daniel, when he came to rescue his grandmother from the deteriorating situation in Iraq and take her to safety: "Umm Salim and some of the other neighbors had come forward, surrounding her in growing numbers. Umm Salim actually touched Daniel's arm to make sure he was not a phantom" (Saadawi 2018: 228). The reason behind their unwillingness to visit Whatitsname, whom Elishva believed to be her son, might be simply because they believed that Elishva was mad and labeled her as such considering what she stated was nothing more than her imagination: "Many thought of Elishva as just a demented old woman with amnesia, the proof being that she couldn't remember the names of men – even those she had known for half a century" (Saadawi 2018: 9) and that is why some suspected that this character is nothing but a thief or intruder that made use of Elishva's poor eyesight and humble house and take it as his shelter just as Abu Salim, her neighbor claimed: "The taciturn old man confidently asserted that this visitor was a thief or some other kind of criminal who had tricked Elishva into believing that he was her son and was using her house as a hiding place" (Saadawi 2018: 88). Others however believed that she was one with supernatural powers as her neighbor Umm Salim is shown to have believed: "Elishva's neighbor Umm Salim believed strongly, unlike many others, that Elishva had special powers and that God's hand was on her shoulder wherever she was." (Saadawi 2018: 9) The existence of Whatitsname depends then on personal evaluation considering the narration of this character on one hand and considering the statements made by the chief narrator on the other. In both cases however, a marker of unreliability is promising one.

3.2 The Narrator's Statements

3.2.1 The Chief Narrator's Statements

As the book nears its concluding scene, a final hint leaves reader to question the narrator's reliability by the statements that are made. The chief narrator describes how Hadi is looking in the mirror being shocked at the resemblance between himself and Whatitsname: "As he looked closer, he detected something deeper: This wasn't the face of Hadi the junk dealer; it was the face of someone he had convinced himself was merely of his fertile imagination. It was the face of the Whatsitname" (Saadawi 2018: 258-9). It is a moment that makes readers think of several possibilities; first off that the narrator is unreliable wanting to convince the reader that Hadi and Whatsitname were two different people all along but they are in fact the same character. Second, Hadi had to bear a curse as punishment for creating such a being. Third, Hadi was a madman and his creation had actually never found life. This is just a single unsettling matter that leaves the reader open to clear out a final and proper decision on his own behalf as the narrator's statements are quite contradictory and undemanding. The narrator has left not

only Hadi in open questions here but leaves the existence reality of Whatitsname and the sanity of Elishva in question as well. The chief narrator is therefore undeniably unreliable again.

3.2.2 The Writer's Statements

The writer has been unfolding his story of how he bought the recorder from Mahmoud Al-Sawadi in a quite reasonable way. However, and as has been mentioned earlier, all his statements may be untrustworthy, especially after his remark that all people are deceivers.

3.2.3 The Whatitsname Statements

Regardless of being a creation or an imaginative character, the monster Whatitsname takes in a physical role of being a narrator himself. He unravels his own personal experience and secrets of existence in chapter eighteen, recording his story on Mahmoud al-Sawadi's recorder. Whatitsname may be considered unreliable for the contradictory remarks he gives in the statements:

The young madman thinks I'm the citizen that the Iraqi state has failed to produce, ... Because I'm made up of body parts of people from diverse backgrounds – ethnicities, tribes, races, and social classes – I represent the impossible mix that never was achieved in the past. I'm the first true Iraqi citizen, he thinks (Saadawi 2018: 140).

Despite his belief of his perfection and mission of avenging the murdered however, Whatitsname's actions slowly turn into crimes, as he longs to remain alive fearing he might die after some his body parts start to fall off. He for instance decides, after a lot of hesitation, to take away the life of an old man to replace his sightless eyes:

Now blind, I took some cautious steps forward until my shoe hit something. Bending down, I felt around for the warm body of the frightened old man. The bullet had hit him right in the skull. He had been expecting death to come from the upper floors of the buildings or from the ends of the streets in front of him, but it had come from behind (Saadawi 2018: 154).

As he offers a sense of guilt of confession to admitting to such a crime, he quickly soothes his conscious with an excuse:

The old man was a sacrificial lamb that the Lord had placed in my path. He was the Innocent Man Who Will Die Tonight. So that was that. He had been going to die in a few minutes, or within half an hour at the most. The bullets from the fighters were bound to hit him, and he would have died right there" (Saadawi 2018: 155).

His unsettled and controversial mindset proves yet again that he is a narrator that cannot be taken as owning a reliable series of thought. Another mark of unreliability has yet again been confirmed.

3.3 The Agreement between the Narrator and the Implied Author

Before testing the agreement between the narrator and the implied author, the characteristics of the implied author should be identified first. Beforehand, it is noticeable that the implied author unfolds the narrative as if it is a report. This shows how journalism and overall writing has impacted the revelation of the events and the way the narrative has been presented. It is the impact of Saadawi's employment in the field of journalism and he clearly presents that part of his life in the "author's second self" or the implied author. He has worked as a journalist for the BBC'S Arabic service in 2006 and reportedly stated that he has seen "not just dead bodies—body parts. Many body parts" (Hankir 2018). Furthermore, the implied author seems to show the importance of assistance and support during times of turmoil and disorder regardless of faith and social differences:

Members of the congregation would stand in line after Mass to hear the voices of their sons and daughters dispersed around the world. Often people from the surrounding Karaj al-Amana neighborhood—Christians of other denominations and Muslims too—would come to the church to make free calls to their relatives abroad (Saadawi 2018: 14).

Aside from religion, the implied author also seems to be fascinated by the supernatural and ancient traditions. He believes that people who lose their lives would have their souls wandering around the places they wished to be and the things they wanted to do, like being with their loved ones or taking revenge. This is well represented when Hasib's ghost wanders the streets of Baghdad and then visits his family, wife and infant daughter. The astrologers and their activities in the narrative, as well as Elishva's capability of summoning Saint George from a painting beside her cat's somewhat supernatural behavior all mark the attachment and wide interest in the world of superstition. He also shows extreme appreciation for the traditional Baghdad architecture and antiques. A new age may have approached, but the beauty of history, like Al Bataween area, should not be destroyed nor forgotten: "The lane had been empty since morning, and many of the residents had managed only a silent, wary peek from the rickety old mashrabiya, or wooden latticed windows, that overlooked the lane" (Saadawi 2013; 60). Another characteristic is the visible impact the American invasion has had on the implied author. The implied author reflects devastation and destruction implying the doubt that the country shall ever witness another chance to pull itself from the rubble of destruction. The devastation seems to have taken its toll on people and the implied author as well that it quickly appeared to be a natural daily routine describing that such acts did not halt people's lives any longer:

Ambulances came to pick up the dead and injured, then fire engines to douse the cars and tow trucks to drag them off to an unknown destination. Water hoses washed away the blood and ashes. Hadi watched the scene with eagle eyes, looking for something in particular amid this binge of death and devastation. Once he was sure he had seen it, he threw his cigarette to the ground and rushed to grab it before a powerful jet of water could blast it down the storm drain. He wrapped it in his canvas sack, folded the sack under his arm, and left the scene (Saadawi 2013; 25-26).

Highlighting this fact reveals his internal pain as well as his abominable disgust for anyone, regardless the social position, who could possibly manipulate or benefit from such horrendous acts or from war in general. These actions should not be thought lightly of. He also implicitly shows his anger with the United States' decision to invade Iraq for its false accusation of Iraq's possession of weapons of mass destruction. This accusation costed people the loss of their loved ones, their country and different psychological disorders for whoever was lucky to remain alive. An example is Hadi lost his friend Nahem Abdaki: "The shock of Nahem's death changed Hadi. He became aggressive. He swore and cursed and threw stones after the American Hummers or the vehicles of the police and the National Guard (Saadawi 2013; 28). He also exposes his anger for the corruption of government officials and formal representatives as they speak in favor of the government rather than admitting their shortcomings and crimes: "A government spokesman appeared, answering journalists' questions with a smile. He assured them that the government had thwarted the terrorists because, according to intelligence, al-Qaeda and remnants of the old regime had planned a hundred car bombings, but the coalition forces and the Iraqi security services had foiled all but fifteen of them" (Saadawi 2013; 31-32). These general sentiments and personal revelations do for a part match the three narrators of the novel. War has a certain and everlasting impact on people and may leave an eternal conflict or disorder in both physical and mental terms. The chief narrator's unsettled narration comes in accordance with the implied author panic that no good future will meet the country's horizon. However, the way it is unfolded without much sentiment does not match the inner pain and anger of the implied author. It is as if the way he is reporting the events minimize the emotions to a rather insignificant level. His statements that constantly suggest Hadi and Elishva's madness also raises questions of reliability. Such a reputation does have its limits sometimes and both these characters have tolerated a lot more than to be judged with such an accusation in every action they take part. This leaves another marker of unreliability on the part of the chief narrator. The writer seems to go in accordance with the implied author as he also shows that an unstable environment may be seen as a chance of manipulation. Lying and other forms of manipulation are benefiting properties in such devastating environments and such properties are barely noticeable in

times of chaos. Lastly, Whatitsname also goes in accordance with the implied author as he is a being with an aggressive and repulsive nature. He shows his deep anger and unfair faiths of the country and seems to take his revenge on his own as the government displays nothing but injustice and corruption.

3.4 The Reader's Response (Audience)

Following the interpretation of reliability of the narrators in terms of personality and manner of narration, as well as studying their agreement with the implied author, it is left to the reader to evaluate the reliability of the narrators accordingly. The different norms and social standards play a decisive role on evaluating the reliability of the general context. Therefore, the chief narrator may be considered unreliable in the general context of how Iraq is portrayed, if it were to be evaluated by the common Iraqi reader. Iraqi readers may view the novel a misrepresentation of Iraq. Such an interpretation is understandable as the narrator excessively portrays the country and specially Baghdad as a warzone not allowing a ray of hope to outshine the density of the gloomy clouds. It might even move the Iraqi reader to consider fleeing from Iraq as a proper option, as the idea of immigration is evident in different scenes of the narration leaving Baghdad behind for selfish opportunists: "The dire state of the country offered opportunities only to the bold and adventurous, and Faraj was not short of a sense of adventure. Gangs were on the rampage in the streets of Baghdad, and people were abandoning their homes or shops for fear of being kidnapped or killed" (Saadawi 2013; 185). Residents like Elishva had therefore no other choice but to leave their properties and memories behind: "She didn't want to see her house disappear before her eyes but wanted to remember it as it had always been, tidy and clean and smelling of the people who had lived in it and passed through it" (Saadawi 2013; 190). With their patriotic manner of thinking, they hold the chief narrator accountable for being unreliable as they see the aspects of hopelessness and darkness as a temporary factor rather than a permanent one. It is almost a moral obligation and patriotic duty to come together as united citizens to recover what has been destroyed. Other nationalities might not hold the same interpretation and therefore may not evaluate this as a factor of unreliability as they do not share the live experience, knowledge and background of the common Iraqi reader. Mass media has confined itself to showing the negativities of post-war Iraq in a way that portrays the country in a similar manner the narrator has portrayed. From a more detailed perspective, the chief narrator may be somewhat reliable when mentioning the existence of Whatitsname. He succeeds in convincing readers of its existence in the novel, despite his few encounters with the various characters of the novel. His physical recording on Al-Sawadi's recorder as well as his violent meetings with Hadi on one side and emotional meetings with Elishva on the other, also assure his physical existence. Moreover, it also assures that Hadi and Whatitsname are two different personas and not the same character, despite Hadi's twofaced nature and Elishva's supposed madness. That is why the narrator's attempts of trying to deceive the reader of his inexistence are unsuccessful. His drifting away from the implied author to express an outrage of Iraq's situation concludes, along with the earlier mentioned reasons, that he is a narrator with a high level of unreliability. The writer may be considered to be somewhat reliable, despite the comment he makes of all people being deceivers. This does not specifically imply that he is in fact making up the scene, yet he practically reveals that lying is a card everyone draws somewhere during his lifetime, especially in terms of benefit. Lastly, Whatitsname seems to have multiple reasons for unreliability. His fused physical being of different people as well as unsettling nature and personality trigger the fact of unreliability. His emotional commitment to the old Elishva yet violent meetings with Hadi reflects not only different personalities but his instability as well. These are genuine reflections of different humans Whatitsname it created of, which sparks the rights of considering him to be unreliable. However, his use of a physical body to successfully express revenge, rage and extreme pain for Iraq's current situation goes in accordance with the implied author's anger of Iraq's catastrophic fate. From this side, he is quite dependable. To conclude the matter, despite his guaranteed role and agreement with the implied author, he still is highly unreliable as no truth or wrong can be confirmed with such an unsteady creation.

4. Conclusion

With the evaluation of reliability of the narrator, several demands are required, and characteristics must be evaluated. As a first step of evaluating, specifying the narrator (s) is an utmost priority. Identifying the number of narrators, if having more than one narrator, should be notified. The personality of the narrator(s) should be pointed out afterwards as well as initial markers of unreliability may be evident here. In *Frankenstein in Baghdad*, Whatitsname is for instance considered to be highly unreliable as he is the creation of a collection of people who naturally have had different personalities and backgrounds. Unreliability must also depend on the evaluation of the events and the statements the narrator offers. Signs of contradiction in statements may be a marker of unreliability as well. The Whatitsname's contradictory sentiments concerning people is distracting the reader. His sense of guilt followed by an instant unsympathetic excuse that he is valid to kill anyone is very concerning to limit his unreliability even more. The agreement between the narrator and the implied author is also a factor that should be tested. Some disagreement may lead to the consideration of unreliability. The chief narrator's emphasis on Hadi's lying nature does not fit the implied author's in between assertion that the story of his creation is not a lie this time, reveals some disagreement between the narrator and the implied author. The general thought of Elishva's madness is also in disagreement with the implied author's beliefs that there is a nature beyond what people may perceive. Declaring the supernatural as an existing item does not mean in any terms that Elishva is in fact a mad woman. This failure of accordance between the implied author and narrator is a factor of unreliability as well. In brief, to consider the reliability of a narrator, several testing procedures are necessary for a proper evaluation of reliability.

Acknowledgement

The authors express their sincere gratitude to the Centre for General Studies and Co-curricular, Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM) for its support.

References

- [1] Abrams, M.H. and Geoffrey Galt Harpham. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Ninth Edition. Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2009.
- [2] Baldick, Chris. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- [3] Booth, Wayne C. *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961.
- [4] Chatman, Seymour Benjamin. *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*. London: Cornell University Press, 1980.
- [5] Garner, Dwight. In 'Frankenstein in Baghdad,' a Fantastical Manifestation of War's Cruelties." *The New York Times*. (Jan 22, 2018). Accessed on July 31, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/22/books/review-frankenstein-in-baghdad-ahmed-saadawi.html>
- [6] Hankir, Zahra. "The Job of the Writer is to Give a Voice to Unknown People." *Literary Hub*. (June 19, 2019). Accessed on Nov 17, 2020. <https://lithub.com/ahmed-saadawi-wants-to-tell-a-new-story-about-the-war-in-iraq/>.
- [7] Kozloff, Sarah. *Invisible Storytellers: Voice-Over Narration in American Fiction Film*. London: University of California Press, 1988.

- [8] Nünning, Ansgar. "But why will you say that I am mad?" On the way Theory, History, and Signals of Unreliable Narration in British Fiction." *AAA: Arbeiten aus Amerikanistik*. Vol. 22, No. 1 (1997): 83-105.
- [9] Perry, Sarah. "Frankenstein in Baghdad by Ahmed Saadawi Review – Strange, Violent and Wickedly Funny," *The Guardian*. (Feb 16, 2018). Accessed on June 30, 2019. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/feb/16/frankenstein-in-baghdad-by-ahmed-saadawi-review>.
- [10] Rabinowitz, Peter J. "Truth in Fiction: A Reexamination of Audiences." *Critical Inquiry*. Vol. 4, No.1 (Autumn, 1977): 121-141.
- [11] Darell Jodock, *A Christian View of Inter-religious Relations: A Modified Excerpt from Engaging Others, Knowing Ourselves*. Collegeville Institute, 2016
- [12] Saadawi, Ahmed. *Frankenstein in Baghdad*. Translated by Jonathan Wright. New York: Penguin Books, 2018.
- [13] Wall, Kathleen. "The Remains of the Day" and Its Challenges to Theories of Unreliable Narration." *The Journal of Narrative Technique*. Vol. 24 No. 1 (Winter, 1994): 18-42.