The Metafictional Novel: From Writing Reality to the Reality of Writing – Estrangement and Intellectual Conventions –

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Abstract

This study examines a form of postmodern narrative that adopts a metafictional tendency. It challenges ideas grounded in imitation and in a simplified realism tied to referential notions of reality. The modernist novel required a long period to regain its artistic autonomy from theories of realistic representation. In parallel, the postmodern novel needed an equally long time to recover its historical dimension and its modern aesthetic context.

This narrative works through acts of disruption and transgression. It unsettles established realist and artistic conventions. It does so to resist their supposed clarity and to prevent misleading interpretations of the oppositions that shape postmodern writing. Thus, the postmodern writer remains constantly aware of the text as discourse and as a human endeavor. Linda Hutcheon expresses this idea in her book Narcissistic Narrative (1984). Our aim is to show how narrative strategies function in metafictional texts to affirm dissident cultural values. These values tend to position texts within narrative matrices that reveal a deep epistemic vision. This vision reflects the capacity of narrative to understand both textual reality and meta-textual reality.

We conclude that metafiction is a form of self-reflective narrative writing. Its structure is built on the text's commentary on itself, its mode of narration, its identity, and its awareness. It turns these elements into the subject of its own telling through the technique of narrative recursion. Its emergence is linked to postmodern phenomena.

Keywords: narrative, metafiction, illusion, simulation, hybridization, generative models, hypothetical models, intellectual conventions, artistic conventions, variables and alternatives.

INTRODUCTION

This paper studies a narrative mode in which the novel becomes aware of itself as narrative. Its foundations rest on a major shift that followed the student uprisings in France in 1967, which soon spread across Europe, the United States, and the wider world. These events occurred against the

background of what the Arab cultural scene of the 1960s called "the critical period." They sought to unsettle the prevailing order in order to imagine new possibilities.

The metafictional novel arose on the ruins of its traditional counterpart. From this perspective, we raise several questions:

- What changes shaped modern narrative thought as it moved from self-awareness to awareness of reality?
- What are its main expressions and its key realist, intellectual, and artistic models?
- What boundaries separate the time of the traditional narrative from the time of metafiction?
- Are the forms of cultural plurality in narrative texts a kind of textual risk or technical challenge?

We assume these changes emerged through a difficult cultural and historical process. This process was driven by the high expectations of Arab societies, the harsh failures that followed, the shaking of both collective and individual consciousness, and the movement from self-awareness to self-writing. It marked a shift from dominant certainties to doubt, questioning, unrest, and transgression. It also encouraged a reconsideration of accepted truths, and opened the path toward emancipation.

This transformation moved writers from accepting reality to rejecting it, and to engaging in constant critique of local and global cultural, civilizational, and intellectual legacies. It aimed to dismantle these legacies from within and rebuild upon their remains. These shifts were felt at both individual and collective levels. Our goal is to trace the paths of transformation in narrative and metafictional writing. We examine their transition from generative models to hypothetical ones, from instability to certainty, and from the world of reality to the world of illusion and imagination. We also follow their movement from fixed intellectual assumptions to philosophical conventions, from ready-made forms to transcendent ones, from the written novel to the novel yet to be written, and from awareness of the self to awareness of the Other.

We adopt a comparative epistemic approach based on the following elements:

1. A Foundational Pause

The early nineteenth century witnessed the rise of what came to be known as realist consciousness in the novel. Philosophers such as Descartes and Locke laid its first foundations, and Thomas Reid completed its early systematic form in the mid-eighteenth century.1

Despite the difficulty of defining the term "realist novel" with precision, we may rely on a set of core ideas that shaped realism's understanding of reality, and of narrative reality in particular.

The realist view of the world rested mainly on the belief that the individual can uncover truth through the senses. The senses offer a reliable report of the world. This view was reinforced by the dominant

nineteenth-century debates on language and interpretation. These debates produced two major groups.

The first group, known as the Transcendentalists, defended the spiritual dimension of language. They believed that by perceiving the harmony between nature (or matter) and spirit, and by understanding how language mediates between them, we can see the final unity of all existence. For them, renewing language restores the original link between words and things, and thus makes communication clearer.

The second group, the Empiricists, followed Locke. They rejected the claim that language mediates between nature and spirit. They treated language as an arbitrary system, detached from both. They resisted attempts to explain nature through language. Instead, they explained language through nature, since nature precedes language and imposes its influence on it. Experience, not language, should therefore guide the interpretation of life, because language imposes a single perspective that does not necessarily match the natural world.2

The spread of empiricist ideas helped shape what later became known as realist writing. This writing, developed especially in the novel, sought to contain the growing disorder of the nineteenth-century world. It claimed to offer a direct and accurate reflection of reality, without the ornaments of classical style. It emphasized the individuality of characters and the detailed description of the narrative environment that surrounds events.

As Thomas G. Pavel notes, realism "is not only a set of narrative and stylistic themes. It is also a foundational position regarding the relation between the real world and the credibility of literary texts. In the realist view, the criteria of truth and falsity in the text depend on the idea of possibility—beyond logical possibility—measured against the real world. The types of realism vary according to how they describe the real world and how they define the relation between that world and its possible variations."3

Realism therefore presented itself as a trustworthy source of information, in a way unmatched before or after. Because realist writers aimed to reflect their contemporary societies, they elevated the historical moment to serve that purpose. This focus distanced them from reflecting on the linguistic medium itself. It also pushed them toward unstable worlds they attempted to capture through a descriptive instrument: narrative. For the world had become an image—"a form we can represent, conquer, and turn into an object subject to quantitative human measures and controlled by its laws."4

This general tendency shifted attention away from exploring the artifice of fictional works, since such exploration focuses on language rather than on the world. As Robert Alter states, nineteenth-century novelists were, with few exceptions, reluctant to interfere with the fictional state of their narratives. They were

not only realists but also imaginative creators caught by the power of their invented world, even as they tried to make it a faithful image of the society around them. When the goal is to challenge or unsettle historical reality by reshaping it imaginatively, one must remember—however vaguely—the unavoidable role of artifice.5

The realist novelist was occupied with other concerns. He sought to extend the life of the narrative through detailed portrayals of invented characters who, he claimed, resembled real people. He built social environments and human communities, and described events with neutrality and without emotional involvement. Through an omniscient and omnipotent narrator, he played the role of creator-seer. He responded to a desire for control inherent in the act of writing.

Alter was right to link the political and social conditions of the nineteenth century with the intellectual tendencies that shaped the novel's general features. He refers to what he calls the Napoleonic phenomenon, which emerged after Napoleon's rise. It raised a pressing question: What is the human being? People had witnessed how a single individual could become godlike or destructive. French society at the time saw the revolutionary enthusiast turn into a loyal Bonapartist, and, if necessary, into a legitimate monarchist. Literature thus shifted from questioning its own ontological status to focusing on its social function and its power to influence.

The novelist now faced a challenge: how to represent, through art, the unstable and shifting assumptions that shape human behavior, and how to embody these assumptions through a narrative form governed by its own laws—one that creates a fictional world that stands in for the real one?6 As a result, the novel became a pursuit of events and their arrangement into plots. There was little room for self-reflection, which is essential to metafictional writing. That age lacked such writing or had already suppressed its earlier seeds from the eighteenth century.

These early seeds, however, existed from the birth of the novel. The eighteenth century raised important questions about the ontology of the genre. The most famous example is Sterne's Tristram Shandy (1760–1767), a novel profoundly different from works by foundational novelists such as Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding. Tristram Shandy presents itself as a striking metafictional work. Its appearance becomes less surprising when we examine the literary influences that shaped Sterne's choices—especially Cervantes, Rabelais, and Robert Burton, all of whom were described as critics of narrative form.7

Sterne's Tristram Shandy is often treated as a foundational work in the history of the metafictional novel. This is due to the position it occupies and to the major shift achieved by this type of narrative in the twentieth century. For this reason, Ian Watt excluded Tristram Shandy from the category of the realist novel. He

writes: "... it is not a novel in the usual sense. It is closer to a parody of the novel. Sterne managed to refine an early technique and used his irony to target many narrative methods that the new genre had only begun to develop at a much later stage."8

Watt adds another remark about the narrator of this work. He states: "... yet the unfortunate Tristram Shandy remains a puzzling figure. This is perhaps because philosophy taught him that personal identity is not as simple as we tend to assume."9

The problems expressed by the narrator in this work resemble, to a large degree, those that later appear in twentieth-century metafiction. They involve a deep suspicion that marks most of its narrators. This suspicion drives them to question reliability and the claim of absolute representation that dominated realist fiction, especially in the nineteenth-century novel. It also leads them to reject the fixed conventions of writing and the absence of authorial self-critique.

Sterne's novel also continues, in a very different way, what Cervantes began in Don Quixote. Both works present two fictional projections grounded in the imaginative power of their authors. These authors pretend to write about the whims of imagination while remaining detached from other dimensions of the self. Both novels show how the self can be constrained, frustrated, and even solipsistic, while also revealing its charm and remarkable flexibility.10

Another point of similarity is their parodic nature. Both texts revisit earlier narrative traditions with a tone of playful accountability. Several twentieth-century novelists rediscovered Tristram Shandy, including Milan Kundera and Virginia Woolf. Woolf, for example, wrote a well-known essay on Sterne and his novel. In that essay, she tried to identify the roots of the new awareness embraced by twentieth-century writers who opposed the assumptions of earlier realist fiction. She viewed this new awareness as consistent with Tristram Shandy, despite the many differences that do not amount to contradiction.

Woolf attributes the uniqueness of the novel to its direct yet deceptive style. This style grows out of Sterne's attempt to lighten the rigid conventions of his time and to speak to the reader without barriers. Woolf also notes that Sterne's way of presenting his characters differs from what we see, for instance, in Tolstoy. Tolstoy creates a character and then leaves the reader alone with it. Sterne does the opposite. He never leaves his characters. His narrator is always ready to intervene. Woolf concludes by saying that Sterne belongs more to our age than to that of his contemporaries, such as Richardson and Fielding11

Understanding the pioneering value of Tristram Shandy requires attention to the shift that shaped modern narrative consciousness. Modern fiction is built on the idea that consciousness does not reflect reality in any absolute way. It expresses a process of perception that is ambiguous, highly probabilistic,

dependent on personal experience, and endlessly variable.

Philosophical debates on the "critique of truth" helped legitimize this radical change in the treatment of reality. Reality was no longer the standard of truth. Truth itself could no longer be embodied through linguistic representation. The world came to be seen as one sees a work of art or a literary text. Reality became a narrative. As Nietzsche put it, "truths are things that do not exist precisely; there are only interpretations"12

This view created instability in the concept of reference, which had been secure during the dominance of realism. The new consciousness reduced the possibility of constructing total fictional worlds or of describing the "real" world as complete: "for it is difficult, even from a purely formal standpoint, to produce an encyclopedic description of a fully coherent system of relations. What is more likely is the use of a synthetic model or a partial description that represents a miniature plan of a possible world that is only part of our real world... We are also unable to provide a complete description even of our 'real' world, for its encyclopedic totality is merely a regulatory hypothesis, made possible by a pre-established accessibility to perception. This process even begins within the reference sciences."13

Thus, the fictional world is nothing more than a representation of the writer's awareness of his or her world. The two are not the same. This explains Virginia Woolf's claim that "narration is our reality."14 What realist writers used to assert—namely, the automatic and faithful transfer of the world into narrative—became, in modern fiction, nothing more than inherited habits. Modern novelists responded to those claims with sharp irony. Realist fiction had never matched its world. It had not reproduced events as they were. It had offered unstable, shifting, and hypothetical representations on both the social and the artistic levels.

The greatest risk in the assumptions behind realist fiction lies in the belief that "the world can be known." Writers of the twentieth century, and metafiction writers in particular, rejected this belief. They replaced it with another idea. Knowledge of the world does not arise automatically. It must be filtered through a "mental plan" that decides how knowledge is formed. Each mental plan creates a complete image of the real world. Meanwhile, the autonomous concept of the "real" world loses its function and any possible effectiveness.15

As a result, the conventions on which realist fiction relied came to appear, in light of these intellectual transformations, as arbitrary, careless, or even false. Twentieth-century fiction could not develop without redefining itself. This redefinition allowed it to move beyond the illusions of earlier narrative imitation. It opened the way for questioning what realist consciousness had taken for granted. It also carried a fear of "misreading" or "misinterpretation" by readers still shaped by realist traditions.

The modern novelist thus turned toward examining narrative form and escaping the single image of reality. This shift played a major role in the emergence of the polyphonic novel, the fantastic novel, the magical realist novel, the lyrical novel, and other experimental forms.

The new novelists drew attention to the key feature that sets the novel apart from other literary forms. This feature lies in its strong ability to open a free horizon of choice and to provide great flexibility for alternatives and shifting possibilities. This trait became the only fixed element in the novel. It is also what saved it from disappearance. Instead of speaking about the death of the novel, caused by the crises that narrative writing faced, critics began to speak about the need to move beyond the exhausted realist form. Such a move requires a conscious interrogation of that form. The many social transformations and the new intellectual demands called for a fresh shape that could express them. The older shape no longer served its purpose. For this reason, the twentieth-century novelist felt an urgent need for change. Some invented new expressive forms that challenged the traditional frame of plot and linear narration and were supported by serious technical developments. Others believed in dismantling narrative conventions and undoing them, while also examining the state reached by a fading mode of writing. This mode had reflected earlier mentalities, had granted legitimacy to the novel, and had continued to shape its rules well into the twentieth century, without addressing the cultural, social, and intellectual issues of the time.

This tendency became most visible in the metafictional novel. Such works absorbed the spirit of the age to which they belonged. Their artistic structure rested on the sense of a crisis in writing, a crisis that reflected the wider crises of the new society, especially after the first half of the twentieth century. Writing became closer to its subject. It became more effective in presenting problems rather than avoiding them by relying on older rationalities or outdated sensitivities.

It must be stressed that the problem of representing reality—thought by the realist novel to have been resolved—returned to the forefront. It reappeared as a hidden narrative ground in some cases and as an explicit issue in others. The form of writing and the inclinations of the writer determined how it surfaced. Novelists began to speak about the problem of representing reality through writing itself. Each offered a personal vision. Each engaged the inherited representations that caught his or her attention. All played a decisive role in the qualitative shift that the twentieth-century novel witnessed.

2. Fictional Worlds and Metafictional Worlds

Narration is the most suitable form for expressing the potential side in the construction of imagined worlds. The creation of any imagined world requires two conditions.

The first is that this world must not violate the rules of logic in their broad sense.

The second is that the world must be wide enough or complete.

The first condition does not cancel the internal logic of certain special worlds. As for the second, the completeness of the imagined world requires the presence of a network of relations—let us call it (A). This network contains another network of relations—let us call it (A′). The wider network (A) either absorbs the smaller network (A′) or prevents it from producing what (A) does not allow as a possibility. The "real" world is the widest case of (A). It is the only possible world capable of offering an optimal base that can contain the other worlds of the type (A′).16

On this basis, possible worlds 17 may be defined as those understood as abstract networks of relations. They differ from the statements that describe them. They also differ from the full set of sentences found in a book that depicts a world. The distinction between the "real" or actual world and the fictional possible world depends on a basic idea. The first expresses the sphere of factual activity. The second depends on the author's creative will or on the varied methods through which events, characters, and places are presented. The real world usually plays a central role in determining the intended reference through the fictional worlds that surround it. These worlds draw their lifeblood from its rules.

Even though the distinction between the "world of fiction" and the "world of reality" often seems strict and artificial, its main purpose is linked to educational or ethical needs. It is difficult to construct fictional worlds that are fully independent. It is also difficult to describe our "real" world as a world of complete structure. Anyone who examines the fictional world of any novel will find a reduced and partial world. Yet this world is shaped by a set of deliberate processes that require great time and effort. For this reason, one may say that the novel is not a reproduction of the empirical world, nor is it in full opposition to it. It is, rather, an extension of that world, a form of narrative creation that forms part of our ordinary interaction with lived experience.18

The fact that the novel extends from our real world does not mean that it treats the notion of truth in the same way. We cannot, for instance, describe its statements with the categories we use for statements in our world, such as truth or falsity. Fictional statements possess their own kind of truth 19. They convey their meanings through an indirect mode. This mode often resembles the way an eyewitness gives testimony in a complicated murder case. His words are taken, in general, as truthful, even when some details are inaccurate.

A text may also contain more than one level of meaning. Myth, or the allegorical text, for example, may be formed largely, or even entirely, of false statements. Yet it can still be

accepted as a kind of allegorical truth as a whole. For that reason, it is useless to devise procedures to judge fictional sentences as true or false. It is possible that the minor truth value (micro-truth) has no effect on the major truth value (macro-truth) of the larger parts of the text or of the work as a whole 20.

From this perspective, the construction of a fictional world does not depend on respecting the truth of the "real" world. What matters is the fulfillment of the conditions of the possible fictional world. If we take the tale of Little Red Riding Hood, for example, we find that it maintains some form of respect for the truth of the "real" world. This allows it to build a coherent fictional world, even though its elements are limited to the mother, the girl, the grandmother, the wolf, the hunter, the forest, the two houses, and the rifle21. This respect appears in the wolf's ability to speak and in the survival of human characters after being swallowed by wolves.

It is also worth noting that the fictional world shaped by the author contains conflicting positions. At the beginning of the tale, Little Red Riding Hood believes she can trust the wolf. This creates an internal position of confidence, shaped by the character's awareness and expressed by the author through the events. This position differs from the general stance of the reader outside the tale. The author later reduces the girl's confidence when he shows that the wolf is not trustworthy.

These narrative moves help create an interwoven referential context in which the reader compares what they already know with what they are reading. The element of suspense in the story also encourages the reader to overlook the narrative's repeated intrusions into the real world. The reader becomes eager to know the consequences of the girl's misplaced trust. At the same time, the reader feels assured that a comforting ending must appear, one that reflects the girl's innocence and goodness. This expectation is supported by the frequent use of happy endings in tales of this kind.

The fictional world, then, operates under its own conditions, which differ from those of the real world. Fiction is a means of interpreting reality. It adds interpretive features that change with narrative position and authorial intention. This means that fictional worlds are multiple. These worlds are filled with inexhaustible energies drawn from language, since their distinct mode of existence depends on it. This dependence gives them a wide margin of freedom.

This feature drew the attention of writers of metafiction. It pushed them to question the relationship between the characters of the "real" world and the characters of fictional worlds in two main areas.

The first concerns the identity of fictional characters. Such characters exist and do not exist at the same time. Their existence is based on a paradox, and it depends entirely on the linguistic utterances of the

narrative. Their appearance or disappearance is linguistic in essence. Their imagined or illusory presence parallels their paper existence, which belongs to the world of writing and publishing. Some writers of metafiction consider this paper existence the only actual mode of being and the only reliable truth.

Because metafiction exposes the techniques of writing in a direct way, drawing on the thought of Viktor Shklovsky 22, it is not surprising to find fictional characters appearing aware of their fictional nature. Their actions may arise from this awareness of their paper identity. They may even discover this identity before the reader as events progress. It seems that the tragic view of characterization is that we are unable to create real people through language. We can only create possible ones 23.

The second area concerns the problem of reference and the nature of signification. These concerns shed light on the status of fictional discourse. When a narrative names its characters, it often seeks to hide the fact that there is no real difference between the name of a fictional character and the name of a person outside the text. Both possess only linguistic existence. Metafiction exposes this fact, or investigates it directly, through its attention to the problem of reference. Characters may be given descriptive or metaphorical names that clearly indicate their function, in order to reveal the illusion that realistic fiction attempts to hide. A metafiction writer may also choose names that express absurdity, irony, or satire, as a way of influencing the reader and drawing attention to a different kind of referential relation.

What distinguishes the referential nature of characters in metafiction is that it reveals the arbitrary control exercised by the author. The author senses the arbitrariness of the linguistic relations that link characters to one another. This arises because reference has shifted from a relation between language and the world to a relation between language and itself. This shift is reinforced by the writer's awareness of the "quasi-referential" state that characterizes fiction.

The metanovel writer does not deny the existence of the "real" world; it exists and certainly persists externally. However, it is perceived partially, as a product of the subjective mind. The writer recognizes that he cannot accurately replicate the external world, yet he can contribute to it by creating literary worlds. He can also rely on the reality of writing, represented by previous fictional works.

The metanovel acknowledges that writing a novel, in general, is essentially an implicit commentary on the manner in which novels are written. This arises from the novelist's awareness of the literary genre he engages with and his attempt to apply or challenge its conventions. What distinguishes the metanovel writer from others is his disclosure of this awareness through overt comments, which vary in clarity. This

awareness of the nature of fictional writing, rooted in linguistic structures and the realism of utterances, does not prevent the writer from considering the active roles that language plays in constructing imagined elements.

The fundamental distinction of metanovels lies in their focus on their linguistic dimension. They gradually detach from the framework of daily reality and common sense, which traditionally characterize realist novels. The metanovel is convinced that fiction cannot fully replicate or represent the world—or even "represent the discourse through which that world is structured."

Thus, in discussing the metanovel, "Wu" relies on the concept of "alternative worlds." These are worlds primarily constructed with an awareness of the creators' incapacity to represent the aforementioned world or discourse. Language serves as their dwelling. They avoid engaging with notions such as faithful transmission, accurate imitation, or unified understanding, which realist novelists have historically emphasized, either explicitly or implicitly. This term is akin to Eco's concept of "possible worlds," surpassing the "Reader's Encyclopedia" without negating it, as the encyclopedia remains a necessary referential resource.

It should be noted that the possible or alternative nature of these worlds connects metanovels to the realm of literary creation, which, according to metanovelists, is real, solid, and credible, resembling the empirical realism of objects in our physical world. The essence of literary language is not found in mirroring statements from factual research but in the capacity to generate something new—a coherent and stimulating heterocosm, or another world. This world may differ significantly in its system and harmonies because it offers an optimal path for engaging with the raw realities of life, which lack organization and cohesion.

As Frank Kermode observes, "The world is our beloved manuscript. We may not see it as Dante did, as an ideal system united by love in a single volume, but we delight in considering it as a place for living and reading, a space where we can move back and forth according to predicted correspondences, spatial-temporal conjunctions, and oppositions, to uncover hidden secrets, establish comprehensible relationships, and formulate suitable logic. In this way, we satisfy ourselves in interpreting an unfollowable world, as if it were a narrative construct created by those we might call experienced readers or insiders. The world and the book may, in despair, be multiple and frustratingly superior; we confront them alone, aware of their arbitrariness and lack of bias, recognizing that they may be mere narratives shaped by our crude interventions and their susceptibility to our cunning interpretations."

Kermode's notion of the book, in contrast to the concept of the world, carries significant analogies. What is particularly relevant here is the alignment between empirical daily

reality and the tangible reality of the written word—the printed page constitutes a material reality. As Eco clearly states: "The 'real' is a symbolic expression, and the 'real world' is any world to which its inhabitants refer as the world in which they live. Yet at this precise point, the world ceases to be real; the real becomes a linguistic construct, like a personal pronoun or a demonstrative noun."

While our previous discussion differentiated between fictional worlds and metanovel worlds, one can also identify points of convergence between them. This strengthens the connection of the metanovel to the literary tradition—not through mere imitation or subjugation to artistic conventions, nor by complete transgression, but through an engagement with the literary genre informed by heightened awareness and a temperament that may verge on extremity. Ultimately, the metanovel remains a radically characterized narrative, focusing on its intrinsic problematics and presenting them bare before the reader. It shifts attention from the outcomes of the narrative process to the narrative process itself.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the metanovel world is one in which the novelist returns to the original horizon of freedom, the context in which the novel first emerged. Through this horizon, the novel established its "laws and theories" while revisiting and reassessing past works. According to Kermode, the history of the novel is the history of forms that were rejected or altered through parody. Parody necessarily involves both deviation from and preservation of certain writing conventions. The work being imitated remains in the background of the imitating work, of critical commentary, or of the disregard typical of the absurdist movement. From this, we can conclude:

- The metanovel seeks to navigate the reality that it cannot entirely escape the influence of artistic conventions that shaped the history of the novel and endowed it with normative authority. It achieves this navigation by imagining a novel that is oblivious to predetermined rules. This leads to a rejection of generic dominance and revitalizes contemporary fiction, which addresses more particularized factors. The reader's engagement with the metanovel world is intensified because it reveals the figurative nature of the narrative process, even while its connections to everyday reality remain ambiguous and veiled in chatter. For example, it is intriguing to consider characters as readers themselves. Borges reflects on this, asking: "Why are we unsettled by the idea that Don Quixote might be reading the novel (written) with us, or that Hamlet might watch the play Hamlet? I believe I have found the reason: these reversals suggest the following: if characters in a narrative can form readers or spectators, we, the readers or viewers, are imagined."

- Following this perspective, existence in many metanovel worlds

becomes a comprehensive text in which a group of interpreters—readers and authors with conflicting inclinations—converge.

- Finally, we propose that researchers expand their work in literary and critical studies, situating their investigations within the broader context of interdisciplinary and cognitive research. This approach can yield more fruitful results for both narrative writing and scholarly inquiry.

Footnotes

1. Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel, trans. Thaer, Dar Sharqiyat, Cairo, 1st ed., 1997, p. 17.

2. For further details, see:

3. Patricia M. Roger, "Taking a Perspective: Hawthorne's Concept of Language and Nineteenth-Century Language Theory," Nineteenth-Century Literature, March 1997, Vol. 1, No. 4, p. 438.

4. Thomas G. Pavel, Fictional Worlds, Harvard University Press, Massachusetts, 1986, pp. 46–474.

5. Approaches to Modernity and Postmodernity: Selected Dialogues from Contemporary German Thought, trans. Muhammad Al-Sheikh and Yasser Al-Taie, Dar Al-Tali'a, Beirut, 1st ed., 1996, p. 13.

6. Robert Alter, Partial Magic, p. 97.

7. Robert Alter, Partial Magic, p. 101. Tristram Shandy consists of nine volumes, beginning in 1718 and ending in 1713, five years before the birth of its protagonist, Shandy. Shandy undertakes narration from the moment of his consciousness. Narrative focus shifts from his destiny to his family, environment, and inherited traits. This structure highlights digressions, interruptions, and intrusive narrative interventions, reflecting the narrator's isolation and uncertainty about self-knowledge. Stern challenges the prevailing rules of novel writing in his era: narrative time is non-linear, episodes appear incomplete, and pages contain omissions and gaps. Incorporating non-narrative texts within the novel is a distinctive feature of Stern's writing, continually questioning the boundary between the fictional world and the narrative text.

Inger Christensen, The Meaning of Metafiction, p. 11.

8. Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel, p. 26.

9. Ibid., p. 26.

10. Robert Alter, Partial Magic, p. 113.

11. For further details, see: Virginia Woolf, "The Sentimental Journey," in The Common Reader – Second Series, ed. Andrew McNeillie, Hogarth Press, London, 1986, pp. 78–85.

12. Paul S. Mklowitz, Metaphysics to Metafictions: Hehel, Nietzsche, and the End of Philosophy, State University of New York Press, New York, 1998, p. 115.

13. Umberto Eco, The Role of the Reader: Exploration in the Semiotics of Texts, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1984, pp. 221–222.

14. Robert Alter, Partial Magic, p. 154.

15. For further details, see: Andrzej Gasiorek, Post-War British Fiction: Realism and After, Edward Arnold, London, 1995, pp. 183–184.

Polyphonic novels are those that feature multiple narrators. No single narrator monopolizes the perspectives of characters; they are allowed to express themselves freely, without imposition or appropriation. Notable Western examples include Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury and Darrell's Alexandria Quartet. In Arab literature, examples include Fathi Ghanem's The Man Who Lost His Shadow and Jabra Ibrahim Jabra's In Search of Walid Masoud.

Fantastic novels contain the marvelous or supernatural. According to Nodorf, they depend on the reader's hesitation between reality and imagination, sometimes involving the participation of characters themselves. Symbolic interpretations are generally not allowed, to preserve the reader's hesitation. Examples include Kafka's The Metamorphosis and Salim Barakat's Jurists of Darkness.

18. For further details, see Thomas G. Pavel, Fictional Worlds, pp. 50–51.

19. Umberto Eco defines a possible world as one that provides a network of potential relationships through interrelated hypotheses. These, in turn, generate potential individuals and their possessions. Since some of these possessions or supports are actions, the possible world also contains potential events. As these events are not factual, they rely on the assumed existence of individuals. In other words, possible worlds are imagined, credible, and reflective.

20. See Umberto Eco, The Role of the Reader, pp. 219–223.

21. Linda Hutcheon, Narcissistic Narrative, p. 89.

22. Eco illustrates this using Hamlet: relying on Shakespeare's fictional world, a statement such as "Hamlet was a bachelor" may be considered true, while "Hamlet was married" is false, despite philosophical claims that narrative sentences lack factual reference. Simultaneously, a student claiming Hamlet married Ophelia may gain points on an English literature exam, as the logic provides narrative credibility.

23. Umberto Eco, The Limits of Interpretation, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1994, p. 64.

24. Thomas G. Pavel, Fictional Worlds, p. 17.

25. Umberto Eco, The Role of the Reader, pp. 220–221.

26. Shklovsky's concept of defamiliarization in literature closely aligns with metanovel writing: "laying bare the device." For further detail, see Patricia Waugh, Metafiction, pp. 65, 92.

27. Elizabeth Dipple, The Unresolvable Plot: Reading Contemporary Fiction, Routledge, London, 1988, p. 55.

28. Patricia Waugh, Metafiction, p. 100.

29. Linda Hutcheon, Narcissistic Narrative, pp. 40, 42.

30. Frank Kermode, The Genesis of Secrecy: On the Interpretation of Narrative, Harvard University Press, London, 1979, p. 145.

31. Umberto Eco, The Role of the Reader, pp. 223–224.

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