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THE GROTESQUE IN EVENTS OF PALESTINIAN VERY SHORT STORIES

Submission Date: July 02, 2024, Accepted Date: July 07, 2024,

Published Date: July 12, 2024

Crossref doi: <https://doi.org/10.37547/ijll/Volume04Issue07-04>

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ABSTRACT

Objectives:

In view of the changes that happened after Nakba which this reality wrought in all aspects of everyday life, we wish to see how this was reflected in very short stories and the extent to which writers used the grotesque in order to describe the unfortunate situation in which people found themselves, the resulting tendency to avoid the dominant ideologies and ideas and to attempt to promote marginal notions, for the purpose of stimulating the reader and restoring his equilibrium.

Methods:

In this study I will examine the use of grotesque events in very short stories written by Palestinians from three different sectors: Palestinians inside Israel, Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and Palestinians abroad. Our aim is to discover how the distorted reality imposed by the wake of the War of 1948 affected the use of the grotesque as a literary technique for expressing this reality. The study consists of two parts. In the theoretical part we define the grotesque in literature and its use by writers, especially since the twentieth century. In the applied part we analyze very short Palestinian stories of three types and examine the use of the grotesque in them.

Conclusions:

I Found that The grotesque in the stories reflects the state of decline among human beings on every level, especially in the superficial and mechanical way people treat their fellow human beings, and the lack of empathy with the other.

KEYWORDS

Very short story, Palestinian writers, grotesque, Israel, West Bank and the Gaza Strip, Palestinians abroad.

INTRODUCTION

Composers of very short fiction use a variety of devices to criticize reality, including caricature, ridicule, the grotesque, and more. Palestinian writers use these techniques to express the situation of defeated, exploited Palestinians, who are deprived of liberty and live in a world filled with contradictions, conflicts, ethnic divisions and successive defeats. These have had a negative effect on the Palestinian psyche and have made Palestinians delight in failure, defeat and poverty. The aim of Palestinian very short stories, of conveying the ideas of resistance and opposition to the situation of the Palestinians, cannot be realized without using black humor with which to express the Palestinians' bitterness and grief at their sorry situation in a way that arouses both laughter and tears at one-and-the-same time. This makes it possible to go beyond the familiar and reject the existing state of affairs through the use of irony, ridicule and rebuke, especially in two domains: politics and women. Very short stories can accomplish this more than any other genre thanks to a large number of unique features which they possess: Brevity, conciseness, density and elision. The fact that all these features are present in a single literary genre enables it to shock the reader and arouse in him a desire to improve his environment or his homeland. The elision of information and descriptions can help attract the reader's attention to the core of the story, through the use of a variety of devices, including irony, ridicule, paradox, contradiction, caricature, the bizarre and the grotesque. These devices prompt the reader into participating in a work's reception and interpretation and make him

aware of the reality expressed by the author. Directness and speed do not necessarily imply clarity and superficiality; rather, they ensure a quick presentation and the creation of a textual experience through the omission of information, characters and events that could slow down the narration. In order to stretch meanings to the utmost degree it is vital to use the afore-mentioned devices in order to express the distortion in the current situation of the Palestinians, to draw the reader's attention to it, and to push him to bring about change.

There are those who count irony and the grotesque among the most important constituents of very short stories, because they make it possible to express paradox, logical shifts, contradictions, the dominance of mental disorder, the rupture of prevailing values, and dwarfing of human beings. As such, it is based on the caricature-like and grotesque exposure of characters, ridicule, satire, the unexpected and the contradictory. The characters in very short stories are quite anonymous, lacking individual features. This is to a great extent in keeping with the age of globalization, in which human beings are encased, objectified and marginalized in their own society and suffer from a sharp sense of alienation and inferiority. In addition, very short stories and caricatures have many features in common, as noted by Jürj Shuwayt: "Both are characterized by density of time in writing or drawing, and the appearance of the elements of joy and pleasure at the presentation of a certain idea".

In many of the stories, paradox and irony in all their forms predominate. On occasion they shock and sharpen the imagination, by highlighting the paradoxes of human existence: the innocent are punished, the just are unhappy, thieves enjoy life and the diligent are pursued by the sword. Some of the stories are funny and sad at the same time, arousing tearful and painful laughter in the way they deal with pain of the paradoxes that rob us of our sleep and cause us to take another look at the chaos which pervades our society, so that we may reorganize it. There are those who maintain that the very short story "plays a special game of its own, through its play with the receiver, whom it incites to rebel, or through its dreadful texts, which describe social phenomena which expose its unwanted aspects and present the receiver with situations of laughter mixed with biting tears, giving rise to reflection of a special kind".

Very short stories are built on the extraordinary and the fantastic, since the world has begun to expose all the masks behind which it hides, such as increasing violence and lack of human values and morality, rejecting social reconciliation in favor of a skeptical attitude towards science and other certainties which mankind held in common. According to Mahmoud Shuqair, very short stories are interesting because of the irony and fantasy which they contain, through which they express the need "for us to move away for a while from our everyday concerns, in order to deride our bitter reality and to laugh at it a bit".

In what follows we analyze the way the grotesque in Palestinian very short stories is used in order to describe the people's sad situation by steering away from dominant ideologies and concepts and presenting instead marginal ideas and a reality filled

with distortion and deviation, with the aim of causing the reader to act and regain his equilibrium.

We decided to deal with the topic of the grotesque through the plot, since the latter participates in its creation and depiction, and since it possesses the features needed for refining the grotesque image which the author wishes to shape and present. Through the grotesque and illogical events the author describes a brutal, unjust world, using shocking, violent, dark and illogical scenes that reveal an unbalanced reality filled with internal contradictions. It is the element of surprise which exposes the comedy and the terror used in each story in order to express a reality lacking in rules.

The study has two parts. In Part One we survey the use of the grotesque in literature generally, and its use as a literary technique especially in the twentieth century, in the wake of the destruction which the two world wars of that century wrought at many levels. Part Two is the applied part, in which we analyze three very short Palestinian stories from three different sectors: the Palestinians in Israel, the Palestinians of the West Bank, and the dispersion. In this part we show the role played by the grotesque in the events of each of the stories.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The art of the grotesque in literature

The grotesque first appeared in literature in sixteenth-century Italy, in the form of the *commedia dell'arte*. In the following century it was adopted in France, and later also in Germany. Until that time, artists attempted to imitate nature as closely as possible, so that art depended mainly on the artist's personal skill. With time, to the skills of drawing or writing another was added: An ability to gaze into the inner reality of

things, based on one's imagination and on seeing beyond what can be observed naturally.

The art of the grotesque did not remain restricted to painting and murals, but also came to be used in other art forms, such as sculpture, architecture, jewelry and literature. In the sixteenth century we note its presence in Italy through the *commedia dell'arte*, while in the seventeenth century French poets used it in their words, as did many German poets, too. The function of poetry in general was to convey reality as it was, whether beautiful or ugly. But some Greek poets tried to use the technique of the grotesque to beautify what was ugly, and to present the ugly as beautiful. This technique was also used by Arab poets and writers.

The art of the grotesque involves a mixture of the funny and the terrifying, as in cartoon pictures, which arouse laughter and are perceived as funny, but in fact express a brutal world filled with injustice, creating in the receiver a desire to resist this injustice and to change the reality in which he lives. The grotesque illuminates dark and previously ignored aspects of human experience, and tries to get rid of them. However, they cannot actually be destroyed, so the grotesque tries to push them away as far as possible or to hide them, metaphorically, underground or in the recesses of our experience. The grotesque sheds light on the tragedy of the marginalized and the defeated and exposes mankind's ugly and brutal aspects, the decline in human values and the lack of morality. For this reason, grotesque art has been variously described as "weird", "extreme", "whimsical", "imaginary" and "deviant". These epithets were applied especially in French society, where they were used to criticize people also for their dress, movement and behavior.

The art of the grotesque attempts to move away from what is real, fashionable and traditional. It therefore appears in poetry, narrative prose and painting on two levels. A work of art can express its truth through graphic construction and iconography either through brutal caricature or through uncrystallized forms. For this reason, icons are very important in literature, and iconic figures are indispensable for the creation of grotesque art, since ethics and religion impose the use of icons and imagination on the writer.

In order for iconicity to be realized, a mythical character is needed, in order to turn our attention towards the myth. Ernst Cassirer distinguished between two types of language. One type, discursive language, is the language of science and contains mainly objective descriptions. The other type is mythological language, which arouses emotions; this is the language of poetry and religion. The language of the grotesque is the language of myth, which relies on imagery, imagination and metaphor. It is a story which evokes ideas, feelings and intuitions in a comprehensive way. The language of myth is the language of the imagination, which embodies ideas in symbolic form. By using this language, the art of the grotesque is able to embody reality in a symbolic way.

In the story, the grotesque helps to maintain unity, and at the same time it also determines the nature of its contents, ensuring that the events are brief and continuous, with little attention to detail or description. In addition, many scenes which appear important in the stories are abridged and become meaningless, and familiar things are made to appear strange.

Authors use this way of presentation to undermine the reader's confidence in the world, by removing the

values and habits which provide confidence and balance. The reader then attempts to regain his balance by resisting and challenging the repugnant reality he faces, attempting to change things for the better, and rejecting the demonic forces that dominate and shackle the world. The authors enter the world of the unknown, an imaginary, frightening and nonsensical world, lacking in logic and dominated by chaos and hallucination. They use numerous techniques to bolster the sense of the grotesque in their art, such as masks, which are considered among the most important devices for creating alienation. All of the above ensure that the reader will be affected, and driven to want to change the social norms which suppress freedom and imagination.

1.1.1. The art of the grotesque in the twentieth century

In modern literature many opposites came to be placed together, such as the non-poetic with traditional poetry, the vulgar with the heroic, the despicable with the noble, the realistic with the romantic, the ugly with the beautiful, the depraved with the positive.

The art of the grotesque became widespread in the twentieth century, because it made it possible to depict mankind's sad state. The technique became common in all literary genres, including surrealist poetry and drama (Brecht, Ionescu, Becket). Traditional literary forms and genres no longer had a great emotional effect; stronger and more advanced techniques were thus needed in order to affect people's psyche and cause them to regain their balance and to change the bitter reality of their lives. Many genres thus attempted to distance themselves from the dominant ideologies, including socialist realism and

bourgeois philosophy, and chose instead funny animal cartoon images.

Susan Corey is of the opinion that that art of the grotesque became prominent in the twentieth century because it was capable of expressing the complex, fragmented nature of contemporary human life. It was the preferred device for evoking the religious dimensions of narrative fiction, because of its ability to create obscurity and the meanings revealed by everyday human experience. According to Corey, any writer who uses the art of the grotesque does so in the belief that life will always be obscure, that what lies on the surface is not interesting, and that what deserves to be written about lies in obscurity. Flannery O'Connor argued that grotesque art is but the reflection of the realities experienced by the writer, which are full of deviations and distortions, due to humankind's deviation from its original nature as God's creatures.

The art of the grotesque enables writers to break with the past, to challenge social norms and to cross the bounds of familiar and the natural in order to express the oppression and corruption that are rife in social institutions. It gives writers a way to present a vision that is in contradiction to the existing world, which is dominated by demonic powers, thus granting the reader moments of hope, in which he can strive for renewal and be exposed to new meanings.

The art of the grotesque has proven attractive to many women writers, because of its two main features: it promotes obscurity and strengthens the impulse to challenge the existing state of affairs. The grotesque has provided women with the ability to speak of their oppression and to criticize everything which makes

one feel isolated from the world, while at the same time it granted them spiritual liberation.

The art of the grotesque gives writers the ability to undermine facts, to question things that were erased from reality or aspects of it that had been ignored, and to expose contradictions and obscure aspects of the complex nature of human life. It broadens human horizons, and makes one aware of new experiences that attract one and promote one's connection with nature. As Bakhtin said, it gives mankind the opportunity to become exposed to another world, another system, a different way of life.

The grotesque appears in literature in a number of ways, through exaggeration, contradiction, diminution and abbreviation. The grotesque diminishes sublime ideas and models by lowering them to the material level, or by associating them with roots in the material world. In literature the grotesque presents shocking and distorted images, violent events, eccentric, despicable and distorted characters, and natural and physical transformations, such as birth, death and the seasons.

The narrative structure in which the art of the grotesque is reflected uses a number of devices, such as mingling different genres, vagueness, incomplete endings, and incongruity instead of the traditional system. According to Bakhtin, stories which are based on the grotesque are occasionally transformed into a battle arena in which the characters fight over what the truth is, and violate the norms posed by the author himself. The focus on decline and the physical and material is consistent with the act of creation in theology, which speaks of a constant act of creation in the world and its improvement.

Abbreviation is considered one of the best devices for writers of satire, because it diminishes the characters' standing and honor. This technique affects not only the plot, but also requires a style and a language of its own.

METHODOLOGY

2.1. Grotesque events

2.1.1. In the very short story "Shadows" ("Zilāl") by the Palestinian writer 'Imād Abī Ḥaṭab (who lived in Libanon and Moved to Germany), security forces obey the orders of their superiors, although these orders violate their sense of morality:

Shadows

The orders came to shoot at the mob in the streets ...
The officers loaded their weapons ... Before they pulled the trigger the shadow of each policeman stepped forward and announced that it would not obey the order ... The shadows stood as a barrier between the security forces and the demonstrators ... The orders arrived quickly: Execute the shadows ...
From that day the executioners operated without shadows.

The story opens with an order received by the security forces, to shoot at the demonstrators. They get ready to shoot, but then a surprise happens: The officers' shadows rebel against the orders from above and tell them that they will not obey, then form a barrier that shields the demonstrators. As a result, it is the shadows who are shot and killed, instead of the demonstrators.

In this story the shadows highlight the brutality of the authorities, and at the same time they also demonstrate that the executioners oppose the orders, but are forced to carry them out, because they have

been brainwashed. Their shadows, on the other hand, have not lost their conscience and resist the orders. As a result, they remain without shadows in the end, that is, without a conscience, as if they are but tools, or ghosts, with no shadow, without their humanity. The great paradox at the end of the story is the executioners' lack of a shadow, that is, lack of a conscience, so that all hope for reform and change is lost.

The story describes a brutal reality, in which every voice that wishes to express itself freely is savagely silenced. One ironic element in the story is the fact that the shooters are called "security forces", that is, forces whose main function should be to ensure the safety and well-being of every citizen, but which in fact act to instill fear in the demonstrators and to put down every attempt to bring about change. They rob the people of security, instead of giving it to them.

The paradox in this story lies in the signs of hope that emerge from the shadows of the police officers and that act in violation of the orders they were given. This expresses the inner conflict in the minds of the officers, who agreed to serve the regime and to silence their own conscience. Shadows by their nature lack a will of their own or feelings of their own, and follow their owners wherever they go, without any opposition. But here the roles are reversed: It is the shadows who rebel and refuse to obey, while the policemen themselves are in fact nothing more than the shadows of the regime. The shadows leave the officers' bodies and rebel against them. They stand with the demonstrators against the security forces, from whom they have become completely detached. At this moment, the reader expects the policemen, after their shadows have ceased to obey them and have detached

themselves, to change their minds and stand as one with their shadows.

But this is not what happens. Shockingly and against all expectations, the security forces shoot their own shadows, which symbolize their own consciences, which are still alive in this world dominated by injustice and oppression. This act puts an end to any hope for opposition to the oppressor.

The unexpected turn of events takes the reader by surprise, and in the end the writer extinguishes the last spark of hope against oppression, the executioner's conscience. After the shadows of all the soldiers of the security forces are killed, the shadows are helpless and the executioners themselves have no choice but to obey orders, otherwise they and their shadows will be killed.

The executioner is the last station for the condemned, the point that separates life from death. The orders may come from above, but the executioner can decide for himself, if he has the willpower to do so. This can happen only in the ideal situation that represents the dream of every citizen who wishes to attain justice in this life. However, the real situation is very different from this utopia; in fact, it is a dystopia, a world of utmost brutality and injustice, and no freedom.

The story represents the fierce struggle between utopia and dystopia. In the utopia the author tries to show positive conduct which could be expected of the police officers, since they belonged to the people and should stand with them in their confrontation with the despotic regime. This is made very clear in the scene when the shadows stand as a barrier between the police and the people and protect the latter. This is something which expected by anyone who lives in a

democratic state, which provides safety and protection from harm to its citizenry. This is an image which presents an integrated world, in which the police are a model worthy of imitation, an expression of humanity and dedication to the welfare one's fellow man. However, instead of this beautiful scenario, far removed from reality, we are presented with a brutal picture of the world, a distorted reality dominated by arrogant, violent beings, beginning with the regime, through the security forces and ending with the executioner. The chain is thus closed, with no room for change and no expectation that those in positions of authority will help the simple, oppressed citizen. This comparison between the ideal world and brutal reality makes us quite certain that the dream will remain an impossibility in the face of bitter reality, despite the shadows' decision to rebel against the source of evil and to join the ranks of the demonstrators, even at the price of their lives, an act which expresses the fact that nature as a whole opposes the oppression; in fact, even the executioners are opposed to it. However, the rebellion is carried out by helpless shadows, whose very existence depends on the bodies of the police officers. The shadows can only disappear if the bodies disappear, so with the act of executing the shadows, the security forces themselves become nothing but powerless ghosts. The same is true of the executioner, who executes himself as well as his shadow, thus erasing the last trace of any possible rebellion, even in a dream.

ʿImād Abū Ḥaṭab in this story makes it clear that the reality in which he lives is bitter; it is the reality of a person who has lost all hope, in a brutal world in which the regime rules the people with an iron hand and crushes any sign of change.

2. The Jerusalemite writer Ziyād Khadāsh in his story "War" ("Ḥarb") addresses the theme of the mutual ill-will between Jews and Palestinians, which is impossible to overlook, despite the attempts by some to do so.

War

I was making love to a European prostitute. Suddenly, as I burned above her, I heard her whispering flirtatiously: Boker tov ("Good morning" in Hebrew), my love, boker tov. I realized then that I was making love to an Israeli woman. My ecstasy did not prevent me from saying to her in Hebrew, a language I speak fluently, as I panted: This is the best kind of war, my little one. We both laughed, and climaxed. The strange surprise was that after my ejaculation we discovered that the color of our fluids was red.

The author deals with a daring theme. The hero is having sex with a prostitute. He thinks that she is European, but then, in the middle of the sex act, he hears her speaking Hebrew. He does not show his surprise, nor does he stop his love-making. They both climax he shows his appreciation despite his comparison of the sex act to war, and calls her affectionately "my little one". He expresses his pleasure and his excitement, despite the conflict- and contradiction-filled situation. The reader is presented with a distorted scene, far removed from reality. The author shocks us at the end of the story, when the prostitute and the narrator discover that the semen was red, in other words, that there was blood after the sex. This constitutes the second deviation from the story's expected course, the first being his description of the sex act with the Israeli woman as "the best kind of war". The latter statement constitutes an oxymoron, whose objective is to show the

contradiction between the real world and the narrator's feelings. The second deviation is the blood which the narrator and the prostitute find after having consummated the sex act. Here the narrator, although having chosen to ignore the fact that the woman he was with was an Israeli, it was a relationship that was doomed to fail, because the two nations are engaged in an endless conflict, resulting in victims on both sides, although that is not what he wants.

From the very beginning, the narrator is detached from himself. He says that he is "making love" to a prostitute, although an act of love can only take place between two lovers. He therefore imagines that such love exists with a prostitute whom he does not know at all, not even her nationality. He again becomes detached from himself when he does not exhibit any response upon discovering that she is Israeli; indeed, he feels nothing but ecstasy and pleasure during the sex act. This detachment indicates that the narrator's intercourse with the prostitute is without emotion. He tries to distance himself from his feelings and to deceive himself as much as possible, but in the end, after he climaxes and comes back to his senses, he feels surprise and realizes that this relationship cannot be natural: Although he had denied the existing enmity, their bodies could not deny the history of the distorted relationship between the two nations.

In this story the author uses the device of paralipsis. He immediately and without any introductions begins to describe the main event with no introduction ("I was making love"), followed directly by the surprise he experienced during the sex act. He does not describe his feelings, but uses numerous verbs which attest to his willing participation: "I burned", "I panted", "we laughed". Nor does she give expression to her feelings. The fact that feelings are kept out of the story makes a

strange impression on the reader. For although the narrator does mention at the beginning that he was surprised, he ignores his surprise and continues the story as if nothing happened. In fact, what happened seems to make him more ardent than ever. Here lies the contradiction between word and deed, which creates a gap for the reader, who is shocked once more at the end, filling the initial gap formed upon learning that the prostitute is Jewish.

Another device which the author uses in the narration is that of "making strange", and the poetic language at the end of the story, when the two discover that their fluids are red. The story's surprise ending expresses the complex and distorted reality in which Palestinians and Jews live in every respect. Thus even if a Palestinian ignores his history and his people, the enmity with the Jews will follow him despite his attempts at pretending it does not exist. In fact, it will lie in wait for him even in his most pleasurable moments, with the ultimate result that the interaction between the two nations will consist of war and bloodshed, despite the fact that neither side wants this. The narrator challenges society's norms and goes beyond the bounds of the familiar by denying reality and resisting the feelings that should have been aroused in him upon discovering that the girl was Jewish. He diminishes supreme values such as being loyal to one's homeland and not betraying it, and enhances the value of his relationship with the prostitute, which now overtakes that of loyalty to the homeland. Exaggerated excitement and deviant strangeness are masters of the situation. Both techniques are used in order to create a grotesque reality and a mixture of the comic and the terrifying. Abandonment of rules and laws is the means used for expressing the great chaos in a person's mind, the

result of restrictions and barriers imposed by the mighty in order to enable or prevent mutual interactions, such as religious, ideological and ethnic divisions. At the beginning the story offers the reader some hope that peace will be possible if Palestinians and Jew pretend that there is no conflict between them, and substitute love and pleasure for it. The narrator expresses his attempt at integration by speaking to the prostitute in Hebrew and pretending that he has no conflict with her. He is the active instigator of the sex act and situates himself over the prostitute. However, this contradicts the actual situation of the Palestinians, who are the dominated and occupied side. At the end of the story, both are victims of these wars. The last grotesque event shocks the reader, constituting a violent scene which contradicts all the other events mentioned in the story: While the laughter, the passion and the expression "my little one" all point to joy, happiness and mutual harmony between the two characters, the ending shocks both, in addition to shocking the reader.

The painful reality is thus stronger than the two characters' hopes and moves contrary to their desires. Their dream becomes a nightmare, which constitutes the reality in which they live. In the art of the grotesque the writer puts the rivals together, distorts the laws created by humankind and rejects the dominant customary culture, but in the end of this story man proves too weak for this challenge and is defeated by the war. Reality imposes itself and scorns every human effort to overcome it. The story makes it clear how small man is when confronted with the power of reality and the will of leaders and dominant forces.

C. The Palestinians in Israel

Jerjes Khoury a writer from the village of Ṭurʿān, addressed in his story "Humananimal" ("Ḥayawsān") the lack of humanity among people as a result of the constant warfare and violence in the world.

Humananimal

After a pack of dogs found several dismembered corpses between Aleppo and Baṣra, and noticed signs of biting, kicking and piercing on them, it decided to establish a Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Humans.

In this story the author begins by presenting a brutal image in a definite location, between Aleppo and Baṣra, where a pack of dogs found dismembered corpses, victims of the barbarous things which men do to each other because of ethnic, religious and ideological disputes. The dogs see signs of violence on the corpses, such as biting and kicking, which are usually marks left by beasts of prey. What is surprising is the dogs' decision at the end of the story, to establish a Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Humans. After they saw the horrible things which happened to humans in general, and Arabs in particular, and the lack of freedom and rights, they realized that their situation as animals was preferable to that of humans, and so decided to establish an association that would ensure at least the minimal rights of humans, to life and to an honorable existence.

The information provided in this story is extremely concise. Much is kept from the reader. However, enough is provided to make the story's intention clear. Nothing is said about why there were corpses between Aleppo and Baṣra, nor are we told who was responsible for their mutilation. The reader naturally asks who did

this, man or beast? However, the author does give us some hints at the meaning. The very mention of the two cities connects the story to the events of the last two decades, in which thousands of people died because of the political or religious group to which they belonged. It evokes the inhuman brutality of ISIS, from which the people of Syria and Iraq suffered, in particular in the two afore-mentioned regions, the inconceivable acts of torture and murder committed by that organization. The words which the author chose to describe this brutality were taken from the animal world: biting, kicking, piercing, which do not convey the full horror of what ISIS did.

In this story the author uses the device of aggrandizement and debasing: The dogs are presented as superior to humans, while the humans are shown to lack humanity, because mankind kept silent in the face of the crimes against humanity committed in Syria, Iraq and the rest of the Arab world, in Yemen, Libya, Egypt and elsewhere. In the last two decades conditions have constantly deteriorated, men lost their moral values and engaged in brutal acts of violence, such as beheading, rape and murder, biting and kicking. They lost that ability to maintain dialogue in order to settle conflicts, using beastly methods that are unworthy of humanity.

The word "human" is only mentioned at the very end of the story. Humans are mentioned only as dismembered bodies, which cannot affect the course of the story. No human character appears in it, only distorted, dismembered and disfigured remnants, evidence for the brutality and lack of values among mankind, whose "humanity" has become an object rather than an agent. In this text it is the dogs who are active. They have the ability to determine what will happen, to accomplish things which the Arabs are

incapable of. The dogs realize that humans are in dire need of being saved, and try to do what they can, something which men have not done for their fellow man, especially for those who speak the same language and have the same customs, because they were raised to hate each other kill each other in cold blood.

The name of the story, too, points to the distorted nature of reality. The Arabic title Ḥayawsān is a portmanteau word created by the author, consisting of ḥayawān ("animal") and insān ("human being"). The word here refers to the fact that human beings have become animal-like in their behavior and in the way they resolve conflicts, while the animals have begun to behave more humanely. The word thus presents the animals as more human and the humans as more animal-like. Neither of the word's constituent parts appears in its full form. The hybrid word created by the author is fitting for describing the kind of human beings encountered in our times, and its animals, which the author considers to be wiser than humankind.

The dogs in the pack, after they had seen the mutilated human corpses, came to an agreement among themselves, something which the Arabs are incapable of, in line with the popular saying: "The Arabs agreed not to agree". The idea expressed by this saying is clearly reflected in this story, in which the dogs all agreed, without any debate or reservations, to establish a "Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Humans". After just two verbs, "found" and "noticed", it was immediately decided to create this Society, in contrast to the Arabs, who hold one summit meeting after another and cannot come to a decision that would put an end to the acts of barbarity that afflict the Arab world, which remains as it is, despite the shameful situation in which it finds itself.

RESULTS

In the present study we discussed the use of the grotesque in Palestinian very short stories in three distinct sectors: Inside Israel, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and the Dispersion. It discussed the grotesque as it appears in the narrated events. The study found that the use of the technique of the grotesque can be discerned quite clearly from a number of aspects. The grotesque in the stories reflects the state of decline among human beings on every level, especially in the superficial and mechanical way people treat their fellow human beings, and the lack of empathy with the other.

DISCUSSION

The story "Shadows" by 'Imād Abī Ḥaṭab deals with escalating violence, the brutality with which the regime treats its citizenry, and the lack of conscience it instills in its security forces so that they will do whatever the authorities demand of them.

Ziyād Ḥadāsh's story "War" describes an attempt to disregard the hostility between the Palestinian and Jewish nations and to pretend that love between the two characters is possible, only to be surprised in the end by the traces of war on their bodies, which refused to ignore reality.

Jeries Khouri's "Humananimal" reflects the growing violence in the Arab world, which has become a single entity in which the people are oppressed. In the story, humans have deteriorated so much that animals take their place and take steps to solve the problems created by humans.

All of these stories share the theme of the citizenry's helplessness, its lack of protection, and its need to

escape from reality, by ignoring it and becoming indifferent to one's principles, language and humanity.

CONCLUSION

The technique of the grotesque was used in describing the events in order to evoke a sense of strangeness in the reader and to shake his faith in a world that has gradually become ever more brutal, and has been taken over by forces of evil, who force the citizenry to give up the values, customs and language which grant them a sense of equilibrium, confidence and security. The grotesque in the stories we examined here appears in a number of different ways, including through the use of exaggeration, paradox and diminution. These devices serve to diminish the status and honor of the protagonists. They are also used to distort language and to highlight the way the characters' deviations are reflected in the language they use to express their distorted needs and ideas.

Very short stories have played an important role in presenting this reality, thanks to their unique constituents, which enable them to highlight the relevant themes and create a powerful message that can affect the reader's mind. The most important of these constituents is paradox, used prominently to expose the gap between wish and reality. This gap is constantly widening, and individuals feel ever more alienated from their contradiction-filled world which is ruled by the forces of evil. The authors express this state of affairs through the use of irony, contradiction and satire.

The grotesque is used mainly to create a feeling of strangeness. The distorted nature of reality, admittedly described in exaggerated form, evokes a sense of strangeness. The technique helps shed light on certain

details in the narration or on prominent features of the characters, and can also be used to distort language so that it is no longer consistent with logic, and to create images that arouse disgust and whose incongruity, irrationality and exaggeration inflame the imagination. All of the above contributes to creating in the reader an aversion towards the image or the event, and drives him to its antithesis, and arouses in him a desire for movement and change, and for rejecting the dominant culture which controls society. Strangeness is used frequently in association with political themes, through which the author aims to criticize the ruler's policies and the way he treats his nation.

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