

The Manifestations of Gothic Postmodernism in the Novel *Frankenstein fi Baghdad* by Ahmad Saadawi

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Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

Frankenstein fi Baghdad is the novel by the Iraqi novelist Ahmad Saadawi. The setting of the novel is the capital of Iraq in the years 2005-2006, during the American invasion, a time of chaos and terrorism that preceded the start of the civil war. This Gothic-postmodernist novel focusing on fear and death describes the crisis of identity and the fragmented subject and recreates the terror by creating an atmosphere of horror. The novel depicts the black and meaningless experience of its region. It creates a personality (monster) with a fragmented identity and is, in fact, a part of the selfhood that has been repressed. Saadawi's monster is called Shesmeh. Shesmeh or the creation of an imaginary being trying to enforce justice makes itself more frightened because the Whatsitsname (Shesmeh) must kill others and cut off their organs in order to survive. On the other hand it shows the suppressed section of human which is the creator of violence and horror. Despite aversion to violence, death will be highlighted in this novel in this way.

2. Theoretical Framework

Gothic postmodernist has changed Gothic within the paradigm of post modernism literary and has no significant difference with Gothic before this period. According to studies on Gothic-postmodernism, postmodernist theory can exhibit the same preoccupation and is obsessed with the concepts of terror and haunting: Derrida's 'hauntology', Baudrillard's 'symbolic death', Lyotard's terror in the sublime/unpresentable, and Žižek's interpretation of Lacan and Freud's 'Ding' (Beville, 2009). The Gothic principles based on fear are intensified in the postmodern novel, and the horror comes out of entertainment. The result of such anxiety and fear is the ontological exploration and the individuality proof.

Accordingly, the main elements of the Gothic-postmodern novel include fantasy, sublime terror and unpresentable and symbolic death, fragmented subject, the fluidity of place and time, hyper-reality and blurring the lines between reality and fantasy.

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3. Method

This research uses a descriptive-analytical method to study the elements of the Gothic-postmodernism in this novel. This method describes the characteristics of the Gothic Postmodernism in this novel and analyzes its effects on it by using the data which are available in the text.

4. Results and Discussion

The place and the streets become source of fear and terror because of environmental factors. This novel explores the traumatic realities of a place in which death can come at any minute. For example consecutive explosion in the street, a creature that mutilates humans, wandering ghosts, jinns, old buildings in Batavi alley, spread the unrepresentable horror everywhere and create sublime terror experience. Shesmeh as a monster comites the crimes in the middle of night in the lonely streets and alleys and it becomes impossible to separate innocent from the guilty.

Another element of Gothic Postmodernism in this novel is the examples of hyperreality due to its creation of a world of fantasy. The media play with reality and instead of reproducing reality, they produce a compact of similar images, so that they are suspended between reality and imagination. In the end of the novel, the media blames Hadi as a criminal instead of Shesmeh.

For that different interpretations of justice, media, journals, TV, political and security officials cause the loss of reality. As a result the only thing to escape from all these naming is death. It is only death can escape simulation and hyperreality.

5. Conclusion

By creating a gap between morality and knowledge, a suspense and a lack of ontological understanding, the Frankenstein fie Baghdad novel creates the sublime terror that is unrepresentative. Shesmeh or Frankenstein is an imaginary creature haunted by ghosts, and there are pieces of the body of the innocent and sinful human beings in it. This makes it hard to judge who is guilty or innocent. It is enough to turn objective terror into subjective horror. The different beliefs among the Iraqi people and the multiple features of the society are portrayed in the body of Shesmeh, but the result is nothing more than the horror. Fantasy, sublime terror and unrepresentable and symbolic death, fragmented subject, the fluidity of place and time, hyper-reality are visible in this novel. The fluidity of the place, the spreading of horror throughout the city, the horror in the alleys and houses, the reality simulation by choosing a name for the monster of the story by characters, makes the author correctly depict the sublime horror, the symbolic death and fragmented subject.

Keywords: Gothic-postmodernism, Sublime terror, Frankenstein fi Baghdad, Ahmad Saadawi

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