

Breaking out the Norms: The Grotesque in George Walker's *Beyond Mozambique* and Neil LaBute's *Bash*

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Abstract

Living in a chaotic world which contains good and evil, justice and injustice, humanity suffers because the system of values and morality has diminished, and people are left without souls just like walking dead bodies. Humans are living in a world where purposeless killing has become trivial, something they have become habituated to as if it were part of their daily life. This current study tends to exploit the grotesque as a mode of black humour to expose some of the awful realities of our world. Both George Walker's *Beyond Mozambique* (1974) and Neil LaBute's *Bash* (1999) mirror the societies which they are part of. This study tends to apply some of the characteristic features of the grotesque to clarify the similarities and differences between the two plays under discussion.

Keywords:

Grotesque; dark comedy, Neil LaBute; George Walker; Theater.

Living in a chaotic world which contains good and evil, justice and injustice, humanity suffers because the system of values and morality has diminished and people are left without souls just like walking dead bodies. Humans are living in a world where purposeless killing has become trivial, something they have become habituated to as if it were part of their daily life. The current study tends to exploit the grotesque as a mode of black humour to expose some of the awful realities of our world. Both George Walker's *Beyond Mozambique* (1974) and Neil LaBute's *Bash* (1999) mirror the societies which they are part of. This study tends to apply some of the characteristic features of the grotesque to clarify the similarities and differences between the two plays under discussion.

By defining black humour as "a tradition which continues to produce some of the best examples of the grotesque", Philip Thomson utilizes the same binary terms to give a definition to the grotesque, which is "essentially a mixture in some way or other of both the comic and the terrifying (or the disgusting, repulsive, etc.) in a problematic (i.e. not readily resolvable) way"(16). What can be considered of an outstanding importance to Thomson's definitions, is the "unresolved nature of the

grotesque conflict [as it] helps to mark off the grotesque from other modes or categories of literary discourse" (Thomson 21). Lee Byron Jennings presents the function of this conflict in "Humour noir and Black Humor" as the stimulation of "fear and amusements in the observer," at the same time (qtd. in Winston 282).

The grotesque is referred to as the "manifestation of incomprehensible and impersonal forces and its end is to subdue the demonic aspects of the world" (Kayser 4). Christian W. Thomsen defines the grotesque as follows:

the grotesque makes the known strange through the interplay and mixing of heterogeneous parts into new and autonomous entities (vegetable-animal-human- mechanical-automatic). It partially or completely revokes or reverses recognized norms and consciously disappoints expectations. It intends to baffle, intimidate, and shock the viewer or reader to stimulate his own (critical) thought process. (200)

The response of grotesque readers depends on 'shock', 'internal shiver' and a 'sense of discomfort'. Their response to the grotesque mode is complex; "a severe and strongly ambivalent effective or emotional conflict: terror tempered by ridicule, or comic surprise mingled with a sense of the uncanny" (Remshardt 79).

The term 'grotesque' has conventional definitions like 'repulsively ugly or distorted', 'incongruous or inappropriate to a shocking degree', including 'comically distorted figures, creatures, or images'. In some cases, grotesque figure combines human, nonhuman, animal and in the case of Sir Hugo, vegetable attributes. In other cases, the corporeal deformity consists of extra body parts: eleven toes, a human tail, a third nipple or the two heads of Siamese twins. These are excessively grotesque (Edward & Graulund 2).

The grotesque, for Horace, is defined as a "series of disjointed images focusing on the distorted integrity of the body and on the impermissible amalgamation of human and beast" (qtd. in Remshardt 18). He likens the disorder created by the grotesque to a painter's efforts to draw a picture where a "human head is on a horse's neck" or a beautiful lady has a fish's tail. It is like Augustan *grottesche* in which paintings of ridiculous monstrosities were on the Augustan buildings in Pompeii and Ronic (qtd. in Kayser 20). Hume relates the opposition of ideal or normal values to the grotesque's nature. The other set of values claimed for the grotesque are 'chaos', 'death', 'the unorganizable', 'unity broken into multiplicity', 'the archaic', 'fragmentation', 'the marginal', 'no-sense', 'the

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mythological', and 'the female body'. The tension between opposed values represents the grotesque which may be a "hybrid of the two value clusters; it may be neither - nor; it may represent a third option in its own right"(Hume 79).

Geoffrey Galt Harpham argues that "grotesqueries stand at a margin of consciousness between the known and the unknown , the perceived and the unperceived, calling into question the adequacy of our ways of organizing the world" (3). Harpham's definition of the grotesque inspired Istvian Csicsery-Ronay to identify it as "life set free of law" (qtd. in Hume 80). For him, the grotesque is "an excess of energy without containing form, the irruption of the unconscious into the conscious, the irruption of the archaic or mythological into the historical, and the distortion of an ideal type" (qtd. in Hume 80). Formless energy is the basis of science fiction grotesque; Ronay says that science fiction grotesquerie concerns the "uncontainable metamorphic energies of the world". He also explains that the grotesque lies in the gap between "cosmos and chaos; the two poles that generate most science fiction" (qtd. in Hume 81). It rises up out of two primary ideas; the deformity of a perfect sort and the turning of lawfulness to chaos. The vanishing of law turns normal human conduct to savage barbarians.

In Patrick McGrath's *The Grotesque* (1989), the novel's main character Sir Hugo uses some words like odd, macabre, absurd, bizarre, peculiar, depraved, perverse, and degenerate to define the grotesque. He believes that the grotesque mode does not manifest itself only through deformed bodies or abnormal creatures; it is a way of looking at man's life to define his identity. The grotesque bodies in different literary works are described as 'having pieces cut out of them'; 'incomplete', and 'lacking vital parts. The grotesque is "an unnatural, startling, and repugnant combination of elements, the textual equivalent of madness" (Carlson 283). It means freakish, or gothic.

The story of the word 'grotesque' goes back to Emperor Nero's palace Domus Aurea which was decorated with ornaments that were unique and unfamiliar to artists of the period. After 1,500 years, these ornaments were referred to as grottesco "cave-like". Domus Aurea's ornaments represented "physical reality, combining the human, animal, vegetable, and object kingdoms into a unique hybrid ensemble". They included an animal with a human head, and "the arms and legs of a person might be transformed into snakes, satyrs, and mythological creatures" (Toikkanen and Markku 19-20). It is a "form of ancient Roman

ornamentation, sixteenth- century paintings depicting demons and skeletons, caricature and comic plays" (Osterfeld Li 14).

The structure of the grotesque mode is open with different possibilities. "There is no beauty without ugliness, no comedy without tragedy, no black without white" (Edward and Granuluid 3). Opening up a space of possibilities, where humans "merge with animals and disgust mixes with laughter, the grotesque does not inhabit a stable or predetermined ground" (Edward and Graulund 3). Its main aim is to "pierce the veil of familiarity, to stab us up from the drowse of the accustomed, to make us aware of the perilous paradoxicality of life. The grotesque evokes dormant emotions particularly the negative ones of fear, disgust, revulsion, and guilt. But it is close to the comic, and in it laughter and horror meet" (Robert Penn Warren 246).

The paradox lies in the grotesque representation of ignored, isolated or drawn out-of-context truth and bringing it to reader's focus. Binary oppositions or contradictory ideas are the basis of grotesque structure; the grotesque evokes laughter and terror, 'attracts' and 'repels', 'invites pleasure' and 'disgust'. The grotesque is regarded as 'terrifying', 'bleak', and 'an expression of a fundamental alienation of the world'. The unfamiliar world depicted by the grotesque mode strongly affected and arouses terror and insecurity in the audience; "we are so strongly affected and terrified because it is our world which ceases to be reliable, and we feel that we would be unable to live in this changed world" (Kayser 184-185).

Throughout the use of the grotesque, the human body is misrepresented, disfigured and ravaged. Winston argues that "the threat to the body is part of the omnipresent threat of death in grotesque black humor". Death dominates, "but it occurs in a ridiculous manner and is never dignified" ("Humour noir and Black Humor" 283).

So as to keep up the balance between the comic and the terrifying, which is indispensable to grotesque black humour, the writer should consistently change the reader's perspective. The reader should never be permitted to identify firmly or for a really long time with any character. This can be achieved by helping the spectator to remember the work's artifice. This is accomplished via stylization, verbal play, and plain reference to the group of spectators.

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Both George Walker's *Beyond Mozambique* and Neil LaBute's *Bash* make use of the grotesque to a great extent. *Bash: Latterday Plays* (1999) is a series of three one-act plays that include *A Gaggle of Saints*, *Medea Redux*, and *Iphigenia in Orem*. The themes of both plays revolve around alienation, brutal ruthlessness, and violence.

Albert Camus depicts the idea of absurdity as alienation: "in a universe suddenly divested of illusions and lights, man feels an alien, a stranger"(6). One theme that features the grotesque mode is alienation. A woman, in *Medea Redux*, is alienated from various directions, and is cast away from her culture. She is estranged in light of her sentimental decisions. Moreover, she loses her family to hide the name of her child's dad. When she tells her teacher that she is pregnant, he makes her vow not to "tell anybody who the father was" (87). This gives the stimulus to another degree of her alienation. After uncovering her pregnancy to her family, she is "pulled out of school and [sent] to [her] aunt's house," where she starts literally to live in exile.

Another situation that epitomizes the estrangement visited upon the woman concerns how she was deserted by her beloved. She narrates how she discovered that her teacher, the dad of her unborn baby, had abandoned her:

This was by a fluke [...] I was at the [school's] general office during the summer [...] and the lady there, the secretary, said, "oh, I heard about your arts and sciences teacher at gardener," my school, "we're sure sorry to lose him, aren't we?" - I didn't hear much else, really, just that she said, "well, I suppose they need good teachers in Phoenix as much as they do anywhere."
(88)

The teacher leaves the woman simply subsequent to getting her to consent to keep their child. By and by, the woman is estranged, which adds another degree of her alienation, and "enters into womanhood [and] motherhood already an alien and a fragmented being - not on the path of joy and fulfillment, but on that of grief" (Lutterbie 29).

The homicide of the child is the most sensational event in the play that stresses the woman's complete alienation. In *Medea Redux*, the woman is estranged, may be banished, by her darling, which creates a violent desire to avenge. The woman responds to these emotions in a savage way, by executing her kid. It demonstrates a lot about the woman's perspective after being abandoned.

While she never turns out and really concedes that her homicide of Billie is both planned and a reaction to the teacher's relinquishment of her, it is clear towards the end of the play that she takes some enjoyment from the aftermath of the episodes:

and I worry about what's gonna happen, i mean to me and all [...] but I'll tell you. tell you what gets me through today, the next hour...it's him, my teacher, i can almost see 'em, you know, i can, down there in phoenix, probably wandering around on some playground at school, a Saturday, and he's just stumbling there by himself near the monkey bars, can't be consoled [...] all these tears running down, yelling up at the sky, these torrents of tears and screaming, the top of his lungs, calling up into the universe, "why?! why?!" over and over, but you know what? in my fantasy, there's never an answer, uh-uh, there never is... (93-94).

The killing of her kid, obviously, is the reason that causes the estrangement of the woman from her own society. Pearson argues that ladies who slaughter their own kids lose the capacity to socially identify with their gender; "they tend not to be considered women, exactly [...] they are not mothers in a culturally understood and celebrated way" (74). She has exceeded "the limits of what humans can bear to look at, to suffer, or to accept as human"(Radulescu 107). By murdering her own child, the woman makes a social and existential move away from the usual indicators of being a woman, a mother, or even a human being. While the instance of a mother slaughtering her kids is not new, it holds an especially terrifying and shameful spot in the culture.

Towards the end of the play, as quoted earlier, the woman takes an incredible revenge by ending the reason behind her old beloved's very life. Not only is his child dead, but he and his new wife cannot give birth to a baby as well. In spite of the way that she has slaughtered her own kid, and openly puts herself into a definitive condition of alienation, the woman appears content with her deeds and decisions. LaBute subverts one of the life's most basic existential anxieties, via having a mother execute her kid, yet then experience a feeling of fulfillment.

Likewise, Walker's *Beyond Mozambique* is about alienated characters. Outcast from an unavoidable past, these characters are fugitives who live detached and frightened in a threatening wilderness, which permits neither withdrawal nor progression. It seems impossible either to integrate into the jungle's chaos, or to go back to their deserted countries. Camus gives further information about the

estranged man stating that "his exile is without remedy since he is deprived of the memory of a lost home or the hope of a promised land" (6). Walker's characters have the same position. The worldwide absurdity which characterizes their state, expresses itself through their consolidated estrangement and disconnection inside a disorganized and unreasonable universe.

The opening scene of *Beyond Mozambique* recommends promptly the existence of alternate extremes, as there are an outdoor table and a surgical table standing side by side. What is more unequivocally felt, however, is the feeling of seclusion. The "old poorly maintained colonial house" is "surrounded by jungle." Rambling around it are "old tires; machine parts, magazines and newspapers". What may be more significant is the "battered telephone pole" which stands against the house, its "wires hanging to the ground". As correspondence with the world past the wilderness is futile, the dwellers here must get by within the limits of their own condition; yet as the stage proposes it is a world in chaos. Technology has been destroyed and the overcoming soul of imperialism is shrinking from disregard.

Beyond Mozambique is firmly developed having just six characters and six scenes and all through it the plague of the wrapping wilderness is strengthened; muddled mumblings, penetrating shouts and musical drums intersperse the discussions on the porch. Dr. Enrico Rocco and his wife Olga inhabit the colonial house. Rocco is an Italian specialist who is wanted by justice who has a stint history in the Nazi laboratories. Similarly, Olga's flight is from the real world and she takes shelter in being "classically deluded". She believes herself to be Olga from Chekhov's *Three Sisters*, murmuring Polovtsian Dances and fantasizing about a sister named Masha. Rocco and Olga are supported in their errands by Tomas, a Greek. As Rocco's research helper, he burglarizes the nearby graves for corpses with which Rocco can test. He has domestic obligations towards Olga. The officer is an ex-Mountie sent by his bosses to substantiate him. Degenerate, ridiculous with fever and viciously insane, the Corporal, notwithstanding, is more agent of disorder than of uniformity. Similarly, Liduc, the priest, has been banished to the wilderness with the expectation that he "will never be known about again;" a gay and an addict, the church thought that he is an embarrassment and dismissed him. Rita, the last dweller, flees from a past which incorporates porn films and a physically abusive boyfriend, lives in cinematic reverie:

RITA: Sometimes I just pour myself a stiff gin and lean against that big tree outside my tent and just let that sun sink slowly down into the ground while I shake the ice cubes around in the glass. And when I do that I get so deeply into Rita Hayworth I could just about die. (107)

Rita, infatuated by cinematic fantasy, dreams of the picture which will legitimize her job. She mocks herself by depicting her role as playing "a stupid slut who always wanted to be an actress" (106).

The feeling of estrangement and the lack of harmony which pervades the play is represented on the theatre via grotesque symbolism. Frenzy and mutilation are the two themes which embody the alienation of man from both himself and his universe. Each character can be depicted as "unhinged": Corporal Lance due to his fever; Liduc due to his addiction, Tomas due to his experiments and Rocco, Olga and Rita due to their dreams. This detachment of brain from body, found in the grotesque, represents the central alienation of the individual. As man is isolated even from his own self, he is unwilling to communicate with others. Rocco's rejection of his comrades furthers his detachment. Feeble with his wife and unfit to cherish, Rocco destroys his humanity and increases his isolation by his impotence and inability of love "with such hell in [his] heart." Tomas, as well, is alienated and estranged. The locals who drum in the wilderness are not his comrades and his fierce killings of their older folks, show his disinterest to them. In contrast to the others, Tomas never talks nostalgically of the past or ideally of things to come. Brought up in anarchy, he acknowledges the present as the main reality.

It is believed that death, which is the "final divorce between body and spirit," is the absolute symbol of isolation. The human body is treated with disrespectfulness throughout the play. Winston writes in this respect: "The threat becomes stronger when a character is mutilated, but a comic element is added if the character is untroubled by his mishaps or if the mutilation is acted or narrated farcically" ("Humor Noir" 283).

Medea Redux makes use of another feature of the grotesque which is the criticism of society. One of the repetitive topics in LaBute's work is his quest for profound morality in a world that is inadequate with regard to ethics. One could contend that *Medea Redux*'s woman is a genuinely true manifestation of the corrupted postmodern culture. She has indulged in a sexual relationship that existed outside of social standards, been a solitary parent, effectively dismissed any

sort of familial help (she moved from relative to relative), and, obviously, murders her own son. These activities represent a danger to the persistence of the social norms.

In *Iphigenia in Orem*, the death of Emma exists not just as a genuinely complex story of a dad who murders his kid, however as an investigation of the way of life where it was permitted to occur. Now it is profitable to investigate the possibility that *Iphigenia in Orem* may be perused as a scrutiny of capitalism which exists in different places in the play. It is a symbol of all that is alluring in the American culture.

The way with which Young Man fundamentally identifies himself through his work is harmonious with the assurance that this is the manner by which guys in Western culture frequently develop their personalities. Carla McDonough asserts that regularly in a capitalist society, a man's "identity is literally composed of what he has earned and what he has bought with those earnings" (113). Young Man appears to embody this idea all through *Iphigenia in Orem* as in addition to the fact that he spends an extraordinary time portraying his career and his fortune, however what he has seen as a danger, and accordingly a risk to his very method for life, is the thing that causes the death of his daughter.

While Young Man receives a "message from the higher ups" which instigates him to kill his little girl, there is a reversal, the sarcasm that suggests that murdering the daughter was in vain. After one year of Emma's death, Young Man has another conversation with his companion from the main office who "informed" him that he would have been fired. Towards the end of the play, Young Man tells his audience that during the seminar supported by his organization, it turns out that Young Man's companion was just kidding:

my friend from Chicago flew in for it. Okay, so...after the morning session, just in passing as we were both in the restroom at one point, he said something to me, my friend, i guess trying to lighten things up a little, he mentioned work. [...] and then he said, "boy, I really had you going that Friday, didn't i?" i turned to him, standing there at the urinal, my fly still open and i turned to him and the whole picture was clear to me. right then, it was as clear as a look into the future... what he'd done, what we always used to do to each other, see, he'd heard the real truth about what was coming and just couldn't let it go without a little razzing and so he'd given me the call, let

me stew about it over the weekend...he was going to buzz me back Monday morning with the truth, but by then...yeah, he'd gotten me alright, he got me good, just like the old days. (29-30)

At this point in the play, LaBute makes his intended social criticism – that western culture has moved away from any kind of spirituality, and grasped the quest for material achievement instead. Young Man's religion is set up at an earlier time in the play as he frankly confesses his creed: "I'm, you know, 'mormon?'"(16). By what method can somebody who professes to be a member of a foundation that upholds traditionalist profound morality, carries out a deed that is considered degradedly unethical in any social circle? This question penetrates the play, and is at the core of the criticism offered by *Iphigenia in Orem*. Young Man is a clear indication of the case summoned by LaBute - he has neglected his spirituality for material achievement, and in doing as such has not just sentenced himself to an immense measure of blame and self-hatred, yet his little girl is dead. What is ironical is that, later on, after he goes to bed with his wife, Young Man gets a telephone call from the police telling him that Emma's death was normal and unplanned. He goes without punishment.

In *Beyond Mozambique*, Johnson sees in the fate of Tomas, Rocco's assistant, a fight between the races and a dismissal of imperialistic haughtiness. Walker himself would seem to support this view: "*Beyond Mozambique* expresses what I think those jungle movies were really all about - the ugliness, the imperialist quality, the desperation of the characters in a theatrical setting" (Robert Wallace 218). Figuratively, the predicament of the western characters can simply be regarded as a judgment on their rotten culture. Spoken to in these five characters are the establishments of medicine, religion, art, law and sex. All of these foundations, in any case, stay motionless before the encompassing chaos and is eventually introduced as unreasonable. Without doubt, none of these courses seem fit for demonstrating the reformation for which the characters are looking: the sadistic medicine of Rocco; violent law of Corporal Lance; escapist religion of Liduc; delusory art of Olga and the degrading sex of Rita. Tomas's savagery and sexual animosity are as appalling and as frantic as the colonialism and persecution maintained by the whites. Enlivened by Rocco and Olga (who themselves typify the outrageous cruel merciless power of western culture on the one hand and an

expressive love of the refined and wonderful on the other) he is at home in the wilderness.

The summoning of the world introduced by Walker as our own world is additionally made by the deeds of his characters; despite being freak, they are still genuine models. Nazi maniacs, child offenders, and medication addicts are all part and parcel of the human history. The characters' social disorder nevertheless mirrors the general chaotic society forming them. Most terrifying, however, are the insane experiments of Rocco. When he was a Nazi doctor, he used to do experiments on people who are alive. This tremendous deed reflected in Rocco's crazy tasks in the wilderness proves to be the most frightful connection between the fictional anarchy of Walker and late western history. Thomson sees that it is "precisely the conviction that the grotesque world, however strange, is yet our world, real and immediate which makes the grotesque so powerful"(23). In the language of the theatre, the "real and immediate" is provoked via a reasonable set which maintains a strategic avoidance of stylization. Since the grotesque is fundamental to the style of Walker, a realistic presentation seems indispensable. Thomson properly asserts that in the world of fiction, "with no pretensions to a connection with reality, the grotesque is almost out of the question"(23).

The two plays *Medea Redux* and *Iphigenia in Orem* express how the world is out of balance, the two protagonists stand absolved of all responsibility of killing their children. The young Man in *Iphigenia in Orem* speaks of his child's death to 'fill menacing silence' as he addresses unseen figure in the hotel (Bigsby 26). The young man believes that there is no reason for self-accusation as he is a married man who decided to live happily with his wife without any feeling of guilt over his daughter's death. Even the unseen listener to whom he tells the story is a "mirror image of the man who speaks, plainly a lonely traveler killing his loneliness, sensitive about the nature of his job" (Bigsby 28). For him the investigation is unbearable; he does not accept that the police officer rebukes him for staying in the other room and not checking his child. He "describes the presence of 'this almost unbearable thing' which unfolded in front of him and his wife, that not being the death of his child but the intimidating atmosphere of the investigation" (Bigsby 28). The young man and his wife accept their daughter's death without any guilt; they make love on the same night of her death and consider it 'an expression of God's will'. He sacrificed his child for his career, the only redemption for him is to

tell his story to the hidden listener(himself) who is drunk and will 'care little' and 'remember less'.

I took the risk, this calculated risk for family that this whole episode would play out in our favor, give me that little edge at word and may be things'd be okay.... all i'm saying is, it was fate that took her, just the whimsy of a lingering red light or a prolonged chat with one of our neighbors in the produce aisle or if i hadn't heard her cry out in the first place....it probably would've happened anyway, and it did happen, and so you go on... like I said before, you just go on. (28)

Similarly, the strange universe of *Beyond Mozambique* is one that is inconsistent with itself. However, Walker offers no options to this cluttered chaos. Winston, discussing black humour, expresses that "it does not assume a set of norms, either implicit or explicit against which one may contrast the absurd or grotesque world. This is certainly true of Walker's play" ("The Ethics of Contemporary Black Humor" 278). The inhabitable and threatening surrounding wilderness and the cities from which the characters have escaped are the only worlds which exist independently from the segregated dwelling portrayed in the play. These three universes, however, are clearly inseparably connected. The expanding drumming all through the play features the wilderness' nearness and recommends a danger of invasion. In the same way, the crazy activities of the characters are immediately uncovered to be simple continuations of past barbarities and manners. The new life set up by the characters in the wilderness is slightly changed from their past lives.

In *Beyond Mozambique*, the chaos which envelopes the characters does not enable the threat of evil to be seen as remote; evil powers are introduced instead as part of the place, characteristic feature of the universe, which can never be removed. Moreover, the music which ends the play is not blissful at all. With the sound of detonating drums, there is a "sudden violence and activity from the bushes, getting closer and louder" (135). At this moment, chaos has completely released itself. The people of this land are in a world "divested of illusions." "It sounds like anarchy," as the corporal says (100).The universe of *Beyond Mozambique* will last as chaotic, manic and inconceivable.

Grotesque writers walk the fine line between the serious and the comic. A *Gaggle of Saints* is mainly about the murder of gay man by John and his friends.

During a walk around Central Park, John, Sue and their companions meet a gay couple, an incident with which John becomes exceedingly uncomfortable. After the party they encounter them again. When the couple separates, John and his companions follow one of them into an open restroom.

John says: as we're moving down the landing into the restroom, i glance at tim [one of his friends]...'s got that look, recognize that look anywhere, and he's starting to smile [...] before going in i told the guys to hold off, wait out here for me 'til they got my signal...and that's the plan, wait for me to flush him out. (61-62)

In the restroom, John professes to be keen on a sexual act, however as the man grabs John, he whistles, and his companions come in. The man is stunned, and before he can react, John and his companions attack him physically, murdering him. When they get ready to go out of the restroom, John takes ring off the gay's finger.

What may distract the readers' attention away from the violent and brutal deeds is the action of the criminals after committing their crimes. Without a moment's regret over the act of violence what they have committed, after the crime, John and his companions come back to the hotel to have breakfast with the ladies.

SUE: i was eating my French toast, just eating along and i notice this glint in my water glass, a spark of light, John'd slipped a ring into it! a beautiful gold thing...i loved him so much at that moment.

JOHN: "happy anniversary," i said...

SUE. it was a little big, but fit pretty well, had this wonderful leaf pattern, all the way around...

JOHN: looked nice on her. i liked it...(66)

In the grotesque, death is portrayed as trivial. A disrespectful way to deal with death serves to limit its wonderful power. In Winston's words, "death dominates but it occurs in a ridiculous manner and is never dignified" ("Humor Noir" 283). The characters' reactions to the savagery discussed in the play portray another feature of the grotesque which is the portrayal of death as worthless. In *A Gaggle of Saints*, one tends to think that the victim, for John, exists just as a figure. As a gay man living in the city, he exists completely outside of John's circle of cognition. This is where he is different from Young Man and Woman, who had a

significant relationship with their victims. While the characters in the other two segments of *Bash* were killing their youngsters, John was murdering what was to him nothing worth mentioning, a being that was not really alive in any case. If so, one can say that John's absence of regret is reasonable - how might he slaughter something in despite never being alive in the first place?

The characters do not seem to repent their crimes. They just want to finish their work by making the readers understand the reasons behind their deeds. The woman in *Medea Redux* confesses to her unseen listener that what really matters is when her lover left town without telling her; she felt that the cosmos was laughing down at me' (78). But for killing her own son, she confesses that

things get worked through...or work themselves through. we probably don't have all that much to do with it. we like to think we do, though, right? you wanna know what I feel, i think we're just spinning around right here, completely out a whack and no way of ever getting it right again, i mean, back on track or whatever.... just can't do it. see, we been doing things wrong for so long now that it all starts to feel okay after a while, you know, like this is how it oughta be.(78)

Likewise, in *Iphigenia in Orem* the young man who tells his audiences about the death of his daughter whom he believed to be an 'unfortunate child'. The death of his child deserves to be told

once, one time because it deserves to be told, and then never again, fair enough? well, doesn't really matter what you think, I mean, I care, I do, I want you to listen to this, hear me out, but it's not really important how you feel about it all in the end.....it's happened. (13)

The Young Man, being drunk, forgets the death of his young daughter the next morning. He just decides to "put pain behind him to live happily with his wife" (Bigsby 27).

In *Beyond Mozambique*, the death of Olga at the end of the play is very indigenous. Drawing "two tears and a huge obscene smile" on the face of dead Olga with a lipstick, Rocco controls her vocal cords and the play's final discourse is given by her. Walker's treatment of Olga's body is related to the degradation of the body which Winston hails as a feature of grotesque: " People become animals or objects, or share their traits or are likened to them. Bodily parts are exaggerated or distorted" ("Humor Noir" 282). Hence, the grotesque objectifies the human body

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to a helpless doll, decreases man to a defenseless pawn and preventing man from sharing power in the universe where he lives.

The final words of Olga, as manipulated by Rocco, are the same closing speech in Chekhov's *Three Sisters*:

OLGA: . . . We shall live! The music is so gay, so joyful, and it seems as though a little more and we shall know what we are living for, why we are suffering . . . oh. If only we could know. If only we could know. (135)

Beyond Mozambique can be viewed as "grotesqueness on a grand scale". Thomson finds in the grotesque the "co-presence of the laughable and something which is incompatible with the laughable" (Thomson 3). Mathew Winston notes that it "is obsessed with the human body, with the ways in which it can be distorted, separated into its component parts, mutilated and abused" ("Humour noir and Black Humor" 282). Lee Byron Jennings observes the inclusion of the grotesque of a "figure imagined in terms of human form but devoid of real humanity" and adds that this grotesque figure "always displays a combination of fearsome and ludicrous qualities" (Jennings 9-10). For Thomson the "unresolved nature of the grotesque conflict" - i.e., the tension inherent in such a combination is the "distinguishing feature of the grotesque" (Thomson 21). In Winston's words, the reader must be kept "uneasily suspended between the two responses" ("Humour noir and Black Humor" 284). It is this suspension which makes in the audience similar disarray, and subsequently a similar estrangement, which the characters are encountering. The abhorrence of *Beyond Mozambique*, its mutilations, assaults and death infuse into the work of art the fundamental state of mind of dread and fear. However, this startling quality is persistently undermined by the characters' absence of interest as well as the work's comic nature. It is this comic alleviation of the play's awful occasions which makes Walker a producer of the black humour tradition, which "combines to produce some of the best examples of the grotesque" (Thomson 16).

When Olga tranquilly tells Tomas: "change your bandage, Tomas. You're bleeding on the croissants" (122), the contiguity of the picture of Tomas' ugly wound next to the courteous style of tea and croissants expands the feeling of ambiguity. Likewise, the first response of Corporal Lance to his lost arm is surprising: "Then it's gone. They really took it off. Failed again. (looks up) Sorry Sarge"(133) .The baffling remark "Entertain us" which is stuck to his sleeve adds

to the funny mood and hinders the reader from the sympathy which will occur otherwise.

There are certain characteristic features of the grotesque that have been used by one of the writers and excluded by the other. Such features are the characters' sense of anxiety and the clash of social order. On one hand, Labute has created in the reader a sense of anxiety. What frequently creates the best feeling of anxiety is that in some way or another, the two characters "got away with it," which conflicts with Western spectators' longing for equity, justice, and fulfillment. She has shifted "from the human to the non-human, to the monstrous or the divine" (Lutterbie 31).

The sense of anxiety is the reason behind the murder of the daughter in *Iphigenia in Orem*. This anxiety appears is Emma's death. As mentioned before, Young Man murders Emma after receiving a telephone call from his companion. However, before getting the call, it was obscure who would have been fired.

In *A Gaggle of Saints*, John's source of anxiety, like other characters in the play, is the recognition that what was thought to be a well-trusted and well-believed is being shaken from various directions. This asserted threat is outlined in a solid manner by John's response to his experience with the gay couple in Central Park.

so we walk along, and two guys, middle-aged guys...come out of the dark, smiling, and i don't need a map to tell me what's been going on...i don't [...] coming out of the weeds, they were, off in the park alone, and these smiles, I don't know, i just don't know what to think about it. i mean we're going to this party, all dressed up, what should we care, right? One looks like my father, a little, it's dark but he had that look, right, that settled, satisfied sort of...anyway, off they head, arms linked together and nothing we say is ever going to change what they are .(57-8)

Seeing two middle aged gay men (he thinks that one of whom resembles his dad), which is an alarming occasion for John. He comes by two well dressed, white men, from the upper middle class - who in his domain of awareness resemble the social power entity. Notwithstanding, the image has been destroyed when it ends up evident that these two men don't involve a similar image as the other middle-aged white guys with whom John is commonplace. His depiction of them as "middle aged guys [in] 1.1, bean shirts," is really the picture of gay men sustained in a few moderate circles. If so, one can perceive how this may not go with the suggested respectful conduct and conviction that make up John's world view. The

test set forth by this supposed incoherency creates an incredible sense of anxiety, restlessness and loneliness in John - he has gone by the urban gay male, something he has presumably heard a lot about (just as likely been cautioned about). In any case, the way that they look "normal" is eventually disturbing to John.

When he says "I know the scriptures, know 'em pretty well, and this is wrong," John demonstrates that this episode is not just a personal feeling of disappointment; however, it clashes with his religious upbringing (62). In this manner, John is shocked by two explicit components of the appearance and activities of the gay couple. The way that there are obvious hints to recognize the pair as gay, is particularly disturbing since John says that one of them takes after his dad, and the way that their activities are conflicting with his religious convictions, convictions which penetrate the manner in which he sees the world.

After John and Tim hit the gay man, they prayed and poured "consecrated oil on their victim and offers up a blessing as if this were, indeed, a sanctified act" (Biggsby 22). The ritualistic end of beating the gay man implies how violence was in defense of their religious conventions and beliefs;

John: started giggling , like school boys, we're howling, tears running down, can't catch our breath we find it all so funny and that's how we leave him....(Beat) slip out, one by one, running back toward the plaza in the dark and whooping it up like Indians, war cries, and running with just a trace of moonlight dancing off the pond as we go... (64)

On the other hand, as indicated by Bruce Janoff, black humour frequently introduces two clashing social orders. He warns, however, that "in the world of black humour there is frequently great confusion as to which society is the norm and which is absurd and what characters fit where" (17) This perplexity between models can be found, on numerous levels, in *Beyond Mozambique*. Rocco and his wife's first entrance on-stage is skillfully domestic. Rocco rushes wearing a lab coat and "carrying his medical bag" to answer a whistle from the wilderness. Soon, we envision the heroism and commitment of a missionary doctor. A comparable response happens with Olga's appearance". Carrying linen and a basketful of silverware, plates, etc... ." Olga represented the faithful and devoted spouse. These suppositions, though immediately canceled are greatly different from to the ones shaped by the appearance of different characters.

The introduction of Liduc, provokes at once a man who is not at ease with his surroundings "Covered with mud up to his chest," we are informed that he is "a bit myopic," wild pig has chased him and has just "spent two entire days clinging to a vine" (101). His abnormality, however entertainingly introduced, is showed immediately to the spectators.

More terrible, however still instituted in a comic style, are the introduction of Tomas, Rita and Corporal Lance; each character enters with either a whole carcass or its dissected pieces. Tomas, returns from his grim tasks carrying a corpse behind him. Rocco quickly knows that it is Old Joseph's, whom he educated playing dominoes:

ROCCO: No. The knife was only for cutting open the corpse's sacks. To check for decomposition. You've murdered Old Joseph. Look at him lying there. I taught that old man how to play dominoes. Oh God he's missing a foot. Where's his foot? (Tomas shrugs) *Rocco points to his own foot.* Where's Old Joseph's foot?

(Tomas nods. Undoes his coat. The foot is strung around his neck.)

TOMAS: Good luck.

ROCCO: What's wrong with you? (Yanks it off.) Have you no respect for human life? (Throws the foot into the bushes) I'm very sad

After few minutes, nonetheless, the foot is seen, now folded over the blade of Corporal Lance's sickle. Olga comes to the stage with the Corporal, Rita, and Father Ricci's slaughtered head. When Rita discovers the head outside her tent in a shopping sack, she "fingers her hair back," with her hands and arms covered in blood:

OLAGA: Not so much activity please you'll stir up the mosquitoes.

RITA: Goddamnit. Have you seen the Corporal? I can't find him anywhere

OLGA: No. What's that you're covered with? Rita Blood

OLAGA: From where?

RITA: His head.

OLGA: Whose head?

RITA: The priest Father Ricci. Someone took an axe to him. I found his head outside my tent. It's in this bag. And I don't know what I'm supposed to do with it Someone I mean I can't carry it around in this bag forever. It's stupid.

OLAGA: This joke is in poor taste, Shirley

RITA: The name's Rita. Not Shirley. Rita. And it's no joke. Look. (She drops the head from the bag.)

OLGA: Yes. That's Father Ricci all right I recognize the disapproving look. (92)

Olga's unresponsiveness and lack of concern before these grim occasions give a false representation of her first practically rural appearance. Undisturbed by the head by her feet, she says to Rita, "My dreams are much worse. Much worse. When I see blood in one of my dreams it's like comic relief" (92). Hidden beneath the outer layer of this lady's current tranquility is a severe extent of barbarous imagination.

The first appearance of Rocco is, likewise, a contrast investigation. He focuses totally on the dead not the living. His search for a medication for cancer, in like manner, is incited not by benevolence yet rather by an individual aspiration. He shows a fierce twistedness towards Tomas. "The secret is to apply pressure to his head. At the point where the blood stain is the brightest," he advises Olga when she complains that Tomas is sleeping" (104).

To sum up, some characteristic features of the grotesque must be noted for a literary work to fall under the category of grotesque. Grotesque plays' plot relies upon shocking the readers. Grotesque characters are deformed emotionally not physically. Both the play's characters and the social orders do not allow either a salvation from the chaos or a possibility for recovery. No hope of reform can be held out, as the future is not better than the past. Death is the only reality. The grotesque which carries in its structure a strained clash of ambiguities and incompatibles, strikingly suggests the idea of a universe that will offer no priority to any conviction or organization. Grotesque writers walk the fine line between the serious and the comic. Brutality and violence misuse the grotesque's frightening nature by inducing laughter. Creating a tyrant character with absolute power can be a source of comic pleasure to the audience.

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الخروج عن المؤلف: استخدام "الجروتيسك" في مسرحية جورج واكر "ما وراء موزبيق" ونيل لابوت "السحق"

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المستخلص:

تعج الحياة الحديثة بالفوضى وانهيار القيم والمبادئ؛ لذا يعيش إنسان القرن الحالي ممزقاً بلا هوية، تسيطر عليه مشاعر اللامبالاة من الأحداث اليومية الجسيمة، كالقتل والفوضى. تتناول تلك الدراسة استخدام "الجروتيسك" كأحد آليات فن الكوميديا السوداء في المسرح، حيث تتناسب مع تصوير الواقع المرير لعالمنا المعاصر، بالإشارة إلى مسرحية جورج واكر "ما وراء موزبيق" ، ونيل لابوت "السحق" إذ تصور كل مسرحية الواقع المرير للمجتمع بالمقارنة بين النصين المسرحيين لإظهار أوجه التشابه والاختلاف في استخدام تقنية "الجروتيسك" في المسرح. ينقسم البحث إلى جزأين رئيسيين إذ يبدأ بإطار نظري عن مفهوم "الجروتيسك" كأحد الأنماط التي يستخدمها كتاب مسرح الكوميديا السوداء. أما الجزء الثاني من البحث، فيتناول تطبيق تقنية الجروتيسك في المسرحيات المختارة والمقارنة بين استخدام كلا من جورج واكر ونيل لابوت لتلك التقنية.

الكلمات المفتاحية:

الجروتيسك؛ الكوميديا السوداء جورج واكر؛ نيل لابوت