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## **Carnivalism in Iranian folk tales**

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### **Abstract**

Mikhail Bakhtin considered popular literature to be the most suitable field for the emergence of carnival thinking. The distinctive feature of this thought is the disruption of the dominant discourse on traditional literature through the transformation of language and values in literary works. This article tries to analyze Iranian folk tales from this point of view. For this purpose, seven collections of Iranian folk tales have been analyzed in a descriptive-analytical way. The prominent features of carnival literature, such as freely raising issues related to the material life of human life Like eating, drinking, birth, marriage, and finally death as a natural process of life - and not a tragic and catastrophic thing - are important elements of carnival and grotesque thinking, which are discussed in this essay. The result of this research shows how different personality types are in conflict with each other in the stories, and with the transformation of superior and inferior levels, the discourse of dominance collapses. In these narrations, by breaking the norms of power in the society, the possibility of multi-voices is provided in the stories, which is one of the distinct characteristics of carnival literature. Also, the use of free language, without moral restrictions, which includes unusual words, profanity, and unusual words, helps to create a humorous atmosphere of the carnival.

**Keywords:** *Carnival, grotesque, folk tales, humor.*

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***Extended Abstract***

**1- Introduction**

Folktales are the narrators of the thoughts and worldviews of ordinary people in the streets and markets. People who are neither highly literate nor benefited from the idealistic teachings of classical literature. They recounted all their experiences and what they saw in their surroundings in their narratives, stories and songs.

They didn't think about exalting the speech, nor did they pay attention to eloquence and beautiful speech. They turned life with its real and tangible aspects into stories, songs and motels.

For this reason, one of the best fields where carnival ideas can appear is folk tales.

In the criticism of Carnival, special attention has been paid to popular culture and literature. Paying attention to the body and the material aspects of human life such as eating, drinking, giving birth, etc., as well as the tendency to humor and laughter and the use of vulgar words, are themes that are emphasized by the criticism of Carnival.

**Research Question(s)**

- How has the idea of carnival appeared in Iranian folk tales?

**2. Literature Review**

Carnivalism is an approach in literary criticism that was presented by the Russian critic Mikhail Bakhtin. In his methodology, he had a special view on popular culture and literature. According to Bakhtin's theory, the official and ruling culture of society has always tended to suppress and reject laughter and funny literary genres in popular culture. This dominant thinking reached its peak in the Middle Ages with religious and church prejudices and dominated culture, art, and literature until the Renaissance. The result of this approach was monotony and one-sidedness in all cultural and artistic fields.

“Authoritative speech does not allow other types of speech to be close and interfere. This word does not enter the realm of participation

and rejects dialogue. The official culture, which considers itself to be the only acceptable and valid model, aims to expel other cultural categories from the scene of social life with invalid and harmful labels.” (Pourazar, 2016: 6)

Popular culture's response to this monotonous and domineering culture is to launch carnivals and folk festivals. At the same time, jokes and laughter with the presence of funny characters such as clowns and dwarfs with imitative and mocking behaviors replace the dogma and dryness of the official culture. Carnivals, with their anti-official nature, provide the possibility of the presence of different classes of people under the same conditions. In this ceremony, people's social class, education, insight and attitude are revealed and it provides the possibility of dialogue, multi-voicedness and being seen and heard by different sections of the society.

This culture of carnival humor gradually found its way into the literature and language of the common people. Its effect can be seen in funny verbal combinations, curses, vulgar insults.

### **Grotesque**

Grotesque is derived from the Italian grotto meaning cave. "Grotesque means a kind of decoration and decoration with emblems and jewels, statues, foliage, stone and sand... This term is used to describe paintings that depict a mixture of humans, animals, and plants. The job was done." (Kaden, 1380: 181).

In this style of paintings, plant, human and animal species are intertwined and as if they are in the process of being transformed and born from each other. In this style of paintings, plant, human and animal species are intertwined and as if they are in the process of being transformed and born from each other. The expansion of the meaning of this word as a literary term look place in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. A humorous look and language on the phenomena of existence is one of the distinctive characteristics of grotesque.

In Grotesque's view, the human body is in constant connection with the world. This connection takes place through the pores of the human body. Therefore, the mouth, genitals, lactating organs, nose, and abdomen are taken into consideration. Grotesque considers the understanding of existence to be dependent on the material existence of

man. Grotesque's body is prominent with all its angles. Grotesque is considered one of the unconscious manifestations of the human psyche; It is an attempt to get rid of the constraints of the limited and contradictory world. A world that depicts life and death together in front of human eyes and presents sorrow and happiness to man one after the other.

### **3. Methodology**

Our research method is descriptive and analytical. For this purpose, Bakhtin's views on carnivalism as well as researches related to this topic were collected and analyzed with the library method.

### **4. Results**

Carnivalism, as a philosophical attitude that has been of interest for a long time and has deep roots among the common people, has been manifested in folk literature. Folk tales are one of the ancient types of oral literature, and their narrators and audience are ordinary people with little benefit of literacy. Therefore, they can tell the way of thinking, life and world view of the people. In this article, we tried to analyze the components of carnivalism and grotesque, which are related to each other, in folk tales.

1. Confrontation and confrontation with power centers can be seen as one of the most important features of carnival literature in stories. This characteristic originates from the multi-voiced thought and the possibility of different opinions and ideas appearing face to face in this way. In the stories, common people, business people, scrofulous people, bald people, and even people with incomplete constitution stand in front of the ruler, minister, judge, etc., and destroy the domineering discourse of the ruler.

2. Attention and great emphasis on eating is a prominent feature of Grotesque, which is often expressed in stories. The theme of many stories is based on the vital principle of eating. The successive mention of the names of various foods and the tricks of the characters to get more food can be seen in most of the stories.

3. Inversion is an important principle in grotesque. In stories, we see this inversion in the sexual disobedience of female characters. Cheating on the husband is a principle contrary to the conventional moral

principles, but in the stories, it is mostly mixed with the humor and stupidity of the husband and takes on a grotesque form.

4. The use of words related to the parts of the human body and profanity is a very common method in stories, which has the origin of Kanavali. The language of the stories is often far from the usual moral decorum and is mixed with humor and sarcasm.

5. Death in stories often does not have a tragic and catastrophic form; Rather, it is presented as a part of life. Life and death are mixed with dancing and stomping, humor and laughter, and it takes on a completely grotesque form.

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