

# **The Miraculous Event As A Criticism Of Ideology**

## **Reading in the novel of Ajab Baghdad by Ward Badr Al-Salem**

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### **Abstract**

*This brief study aims to read the miraculous event in the novel The Wonders of Baghdad - an analytical reading - after which a critical means exposes and exposes the ideological discourse behind the authority, regardless of the form of this authority. This method takes advantage of the miraculous nature of the fact that it knocks through the doors and penetrates into unfamiliar and illogical worlds, so that it appears as a mask that the writer conceals behind him to reveal what cannot reveal a reality except to flee to the imagination, either in fear of a censor, or an intensification and deepening of criticism, to Besides, it gives an aesthetic touch to the narrative texts. The study is based on two requirements: the first is theoretical, in which we stand on the most important stations of the definition of the miraculous concept, especially the Todorovic station, and the second: my application, through which we seek to trace the miraculous texts in the novel, and then prove that the miraculous is an effective critical means of ideological work.*

**Key words:** *Miraculous, Ideology, Ajab Baghdad , waridbader.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The novel, in one of its pictures, is a revolution against reality, targeting morals and values that have been corrupted, drawing attention to flaws and defects, freeing thought from alienation and blinding, and deconstructing established customs and traditions. Between her jaws lies the social, religious, political and ideological, before her all taboos are broken, her uncovered and hidden land is exposed, as she removes, with her linguistic and non-linguistic masks, all the ideological masks with which a power, party or sect persuades, then dismantles the dominant discourse and discredits the fixed, and demolishes Through a narrative visual through my tongue.

The criticism of ideology stems from the fact that, according to Habermas, it is a "systematic distortion of communication through a hidden exercise of power"<sup>1</sup>, as ideology presents itself as the best and perhaps the only explanation for existence, it is right and other wrong, it is the whole truth and others are false, rationalize the irrational, It legitimizes the illicit, disappearing the minds of its adherents with its emotional tone and emotional style. Consequently, it is a distortion of facts and a reversal of reality, as Marx put it. Hence, "the interest that stimulates criticism is the interest of emancipation, which is the building of the future of unlimited and unrestricted communication, after it is rid of the yoke of distortions of violence and oppression"<sup>2</sup>.

The miraculous one of the most important and enjoyable means that the narrative invokes in the criticism of ideological discourse. It is true that miraculousness may be a means by which ideology invokes to impose its hegemony or to achieve any of its goals, taking advantage of what it is. Religiously or emotionally. It is also true that miraculousness may be used as a tool to criticize the ideology of power, as in the wonders of Baghdad, where adhering to life in its miraculous image exposes the authority and those who follow its ilk, including militias and extremist organizations.

### **- Concept of Miraculous**

The term miraculous has been subject to several approaches, historical (Georges Castex and Walter Scott), semantic (Jean Molyneux and Louis Vax) and structuralism (Todoroff and Jean Blameen Noel), as well as the psychological approach (Pierre Mabel) and anthropological (Gilbert Duran)<sup>3</sup>. In spite of the many approaches and terminology circulating in the orbit of the miraculous, such as fantasy, fantastical<sup>4</sup>, or paranormal, and despite the differences between them, all of them share an indication of the unusual, the wondrous, and the extraordinary. If we disregard the ongoing controversy - and sometimes sterile - in literary and critical circles, whether Arab or Western, then the miraculous one in summarizing its definitions is everything that transcends reality and the possible to the unreal and the impossible that raises in the recipient's soul, amazement and surprise<sup>5</sup>. Perhaps what

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted by Daniel L. Huang. Ricoeur's critique of ideology for the sake of theology (hermeneutics of paranoia), Journal of al-Asturab, Islamic Center for Strategic Studies, Beirut, Issue 6, 2017, 56.

<sup>2</sup>.Ibid,58.

<sup>3</sup>See: The Poetry of the Fantastic Novel: Shuaib Halifi, Arab Science House Publishers, Beirut, 1st Edition, 2009. 29-30.

<sup>4</sup>The term fantastique / fantastic is frequently used in Arab critical circles as opposed to or equivalent to the term miraculous in denoting any literary work that contradicts the ordinary or combines two worlds, one of which is realistic and the other fictional, due to the absence of anything corresponding to the term Fantastic in Arabic dictionaries. See: The Dictionary of Contemporary Literary Terms: Dr. Saad Alloush, Arab Science House Publishers, Beirut, 1st Edition, 2009, 146. Also see: The Wonderful in Literature from the Perspective of Narrative Poetry: Hussein Allam, Arab Science Publishers, 1st Edition, 2009, 11. Shuaib Halifi made a brief comparison between the Fantastic and the Wonderwork and concluded that the Fantastic - despite the differences between it and the miraculous one - but they are close and that they have contiguous links. Seen: The Poetry of the Fantastic Novel: 63.

<sup>5</sup>. This brief definition is almost a pole around which most definitions, whether linguistic or idiomatic, revolve around, but this does not mean that all definitions are completely identical, as there are differences between them, but they are usually slight.

justifies the controversy is that the concept - according to Hussein Allam - is always lethargic, as he says: "If we try to find a single, prohibitive definition for it, the matter will be formed on us, because Todorov himself - who is the pioneer in establishing the concept through his famous book (Introduction to Miraculous literature) remains reluctant to categorically naturalize it"<sup>6</sup>.

Todorov defined the miraculous - according to the formulation of the translator of his book - as "the hesitation that a being feels, knowing nothing but natural laws, while facing an apparently supernatural event"<sup>7</sup>. This means that the miraculousness of the event is subject to the reader's sense of indecision, that is, if you describe a creative work as miraculous, the reader is governed by the extent of his hesitation towards the events of the work, and this may mean that a novel may be miraculous for this reader and not miraculous for another reader, and perhaps this is what made Todorov's definition narrow and confined to some kind A special type of works and a special kind of readers as well, and this is due to the specificity of Todorov's intention to make the miraculous an independent race with special limits and frameworks, "in line with assumptions that are not without a match with preconceived ideas, and a subjectivity that wants to be placed"<sup>8</sup>. And to liberate from this narrow proposition, we will use the miraculous and mean by it everything that contradicts reality, familiar or logic, whether it is an event, a personality, a place, or anything else. To distinguish it, we say that the miraculous is what is intertwined with reality, imagination, logic and non-logic. If a novel takes place on a realistic line and then breaks this reality into unfamiliar or extraordinary worlds that are not subject to reason or logic, then this narrator is of a miraculous character, i.e. when The novel is not a pure fiction, but a reality mixed with fiction. Close to this concept, the term magical realism also falls after it, a technique in narration and its subject <sup>9</sup>.

There is something that leads us to the following question: What drives the writer to address reality with non-reality, or in other words, to enter miraculous worlds? One of the most important reasons for the writer to enter these worlds is to draw an unfamiliar fictional reality in contrast to the often terrifying and distorted visual reality. "Unreality comes from the fact that controversial human events have lost their familiar meaning" <sup>10</sup>. Consequently, the miraculous allows the writer to create new spaces and visions, free from the constraints of logic, to help him reshape reality in a surprisingly creative way, either as an increase in the dark and irrational embodiment of the lived reality, or in the hope of establishing a new reality different from the lived reality. This means that "the miraculous became a means and a goal, represented by all literary forms from theater to story to novel, even

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<sup>6</sup>The miraculous in literature from the perspective of narrative poetry: 11.

<sup>7</sup>. Introduction to Wonderland Literature: Tervatan Todorov, translated by Siddiq Boualem, presented by: Muhammad Barada, Dar Al-Kalam, Rabat, 1st Edition, 1993. 18.

<sup>8</sup>. Ibid: 20

<sup>9</sup>See: Miraculous Travel Literature, Ibn Fadlan's Journey as a Model: The Fifth Allawi, Master Thesis, Faculty of Languages and Literature, University of Mentouri, Algeria, 2005, 67.

<sup>10</sup>The miraculous in literature from the perspective of the poetic narration: 54.

cinema, painting and sculpture" <sup>11</sup>. From an artistic or aesthetic point of view, the creator intends miraculous topics to break the monotony and imitation and increase the suspense and excitement, and on the instrumental side, the miraculous seems to be an effective tool behind which the creator hides while undressing or exposing something prohibited. The miraculous, then, is a pleasure for the reader and a means and mask for the creator, and the latter is the focus of our attention in this study.

### **-The miraculous event and ideological criticism**

According to Shuaib Halifi, any novel has two options. Either it is a veil that falsifies emotions and facts, which is possible and possible through the consecration of prevailing choices by devoting to the crude romantic soul. <sup>12</sup>and the intertwining of the semantic-ideological component with the plastic elements and their cross-fertilization with fertilization."<sup>13</sup>The Wonders of Baghdad - and all the novels of Rad Badr Al-Salem - I chose the second option, destroying the veil of the familiar into the unknown, and it included many miraculous events.

The decapitated stature is a miraculous event that apparently leans on a religious idea that is resurrection after death. The novelist picked it up and then employed it as a scandalous and critical means of the ideological structure behind the extremist organizations and those who sponsor them or follow in their footsteps, whether it is a local, regional or even global authority. Perhaps what added to the miraculousness of this event and the miraculous events that followed was that the idea of resurrection came in a purely miraculous way. Not only was the matter merely a dead resurrection, which is undoubtedly a wondrous thing, but it is more miraculous that the messenger comes in a miraculous way as well. This action kills two birds with one stone, exposes the brutality of repression on one side and clings to life at the same time on the other hand. The brutality is that the man returns without his head, the finger without the rest of his body, and the ashes without anything else, and then in these events, life clings to despite the suddenness of death. This makes the two paths an effective tool in criticizing and exposing the ideological discourse. The brother describes his beheaded brother by saying: (This is my brother .. He is older than me .. Al Qaeda kidnapped him for a week .. He could not speak as you see .. His head was cut .. my brother slaughtered by Al-Zarqawi himself , and his followers threw him into the river .. Except that God will He is bigger than Al-Zarqawi .. so my brother came back after he swam in the river and left his head with Al-Zarqawi's group ...! ... he challenged Al-Zarqawi's group and did not die. He loves life, so why does he die ?!) <sup>14</sup>. Then the narrator completes the drawing of the stature in a more miraculous way, portraying the scene by saying: (The stature moves naturally. It stretches. Her legs are twisting. Her right hand goes into the pocket of the pants. She clenches her fingers. She puts her hand behind her back ... She dared and

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<sup>11</sup>. The wonder in literature from the perspective of narrative poetry: 54.

<sup>12</sup>The Poetry of the Fantastic Novel: 7

<sup>13</sup>. Ibid

<sup>14</sup>The Wonders of Baghdad: Ward Badr Al-Salem, The Arab Science House Publishers, Beirut, 1st Edition, 2012, 53-54

came down from the stature that is breathing. She depicted her from directions. Different .. I don't doubt for a moment that it is the scent of a real man .. I can almost hear his breath! A small belly raised by inhales and exhalations .. nothing is missing but the head) <sup>15</sup>.

The narrator, through an accurate description of the stature - its form, movements, breath, and even its smell - tries to delude the recipient of the realism of the event, besides that the narration is of a synchronous pattern in which the event appears to be in sync with the narration, which also raises the index of illusion of the recipient and generates in himself surprise And confusion <sup>16</sup>as well as hesitation in interpreting the event, and this hesitation is the mainstay of the miraculous architecture, according to Todorov <sup>17</sup>. On the other hand, he increases - the narrator - the horror of the war and its brutality by mixing the real and the imaginary and eliminating the gap between them, to crystallize from these brutalities a position that rejects and criticizes the ideology of the extremist organization whose actions revealed the darkness of its intellectual system concealed by the religious and the sacred. Stature is a good example of Roger Caio's reference to Fantastic as "the impossible to come to suddenly" <sup>18</sup>.

The same scene is used by the narrator to criticize local and regional ideologies belonging to a certain sect. By recording the reactions of those who came to witness the miraculous stature, the narrator exposes sects and states that dominate the minds of their followers by playing the sacred as well as extremist organizations. The narrator says: "The correspondent of a local Shiite channel was shouting .. Oh God, bless Muhammad and the family of Muhammad .. This is the blessing of the pure family of the house .. God bless Muhammad and the family of Muhammad .. so he mixed questions together and silenced the reporters who know this type of chanting everywhere from the capital) <sup>19</sup>. Then he adds: (An Iranian channel correspondent came late while hearing of the miracle, so he started growing up and praying for the Messenger in his familiar foreign tone as soon as he saw graceful stature moving her legs, so he pounded short verses that mention the fearful divine punishment and call for repentance and the fight against global arrogance) <sup>20</sup> These reactions attributed to a certain sect are employed by the narrator to reveal the extent of the effectiveness of ideological work by the local and regional authorities, as these authorities neglect the minds of their people by relying on religious references that they fabricate and give them the status of sanctification. To serve its political purposes of domination and subjugation, the authority, regardless of its form, "invests customs, rituals and celebrations to

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<sup>15</sup>Novel: 54-55.

<sup>16</sup>See: The Poetry of the Fantastic Novel: 149.

<sup>17</sup>See: An Introduction to Wonderland Literature: 53.

<sup>18</sup>Quoted from Shoaib Halifi. The Poetics of the Fantastic Novel: 37.

<sup>19</sup> Novel: 45

<sup>20</sup>Novel: 55

ensure its continuation and renewal of its role in society" <sup>21</sup>. Then there is a critical sense in the text rejecting regional interference in Iraqi affairs, this is evident by shedding light on the channel's correspondent The Iranian, with his foreign tone that has become familiar, in addition to the correspondent of the local Shiite channel, both bear indications of masses that have been legalized in line with the objectives of the authority.

Through the same scene as well as other scenes, criticism of the American ideology that has inspired peoples with false claims such as achieving freedom, democracy and openness, and this was nothing but a pretext to create a one-dimensional person, as Herbert Marcuse puts it, this human - as George Tarabishi says based on Marcuse's vision - "He who dispenses freedom with the illusion of freedom" <sup>22</sup>. Return after death reveals the falsehood of this ideology and stands against it in a manner similar to resistance. There are those who refuse death, or rather return after death, rebelling against everyone who wants to destroy him however he wants. Either it is as it wants or it is killed. (At the same moment, the CNN correspondent was carrying out the live transmission of the stays of the man who lost his head with al-Zarqawi's sword, to witness the Americans; as he said; how the Iraqis cheat death and come out alive from the graves in a realistic way or leave their organs at their enemies and return) <sup>23</sup>.

A sentence for Americans to watch reveals to the American people the tragic Iraqi reality, which is berated by the illusion of democracy, where the false democracy has turned Iraqis into miraculous creatures. At a time when these creatures expose several ideologies that portray the Iraqi body that is cut into several parts, there are living bodies without living heads and fingers without bodies or heads and live ashes of people who were burned.

The living finger is another miraculous event in Baghdad. It is employed like a decapitated stature to criticize American ideology and its chicks. The narrator - more than the previous scene - deludes the recipient with the realism of the scene through the accuracy of photography and the selection of everything that confirms this realism. The finger cries, loves, walks, moves, trembles, writes, sleeps, snores. The young theatrical man says: (There was one finger left from my spoiled little brother! His middle finger was still alive! ... It was crushed by a car bomb in the popular market and it fused with the melted, but his middle finger remained of it, so we got to know him among the ashes. We found him standing between the body parts indicating Heaven ... we carried the orphan finger in a coffin the size of my brother and buried him with the usual burial ceremonies in the Najaf cemetery, except that

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<sup>21</sup>. Michel Foucault Knowledge and Power: Abdulaziz Al-Ayadi, University Foundation for Studies, Publishing and Distribution, Beirut, 1st Edition, 1994, 47.

<sup>22</sup>. The One-Dimensional Man: Herbert Macauze, Translated by: Georges Tarabishi, Dar Al-Adab, Beirut, 3rd Edition, 1988, 12.

<sup>23</sup>. Novel: 196.

he returned in the morning to us crying ... My brother's finger returned crying on the long day of separation ... He returned as the living return to their homes."<sup>24</sup>

The fantasy of the finger reveals the hidden from the oppressive rhetoric of the authority, regardless of whether it is local or non-local, or even militias or extremist organizations, where the dead return alive with excessive miraculousness, they return to life to portray the suddenness of Iraqi death on the one hand, and then on the other hand to cling to life and utter death . The living finger and the living stature is a revolution against death and power (After my brother's finger, we understood that it is possible that innocents will not die by treacherous and crude methods) <sup>25</sup>. There is also a revolution in consciousness (our perception) that the crisis has borne fruit, as hope is often born from the womb of pain. Slavoj Zizek referred to something similar to this in the phrase: (crisis as a treatment of shock), which means that the crisis awakens society from its dreams and deep sleep to a moment of awareness of what is going on. Houla and woven against it from ideological schemes <sup>26</sup>. "Crises cause instability and disruption to people, distancing them from their stability and consent, and forcing them to question the foundations of their lives" <sup>27</sup>

The living finger is a critical compass that the narrator directs whenever he wants. Through the CNN correspondent, the monetary compass is directed to the American authority as the first person responsible for the suddenness of the Iraqi reality after 2003. The narrator / the hero says: (The CNN reporter put the finger in the palm of his hand to test this remarkable organism. More than a movement he made like a trapped sword that wants to be released, so he stands in the face of the American reporter nervous, so the brother explained with the shot hanging on his chest that his brother would not return while he was being placed on This American hand does not want to stay in it. The reporter laughed for a long time, red-faced, saying: Even cut organs do not want Americans to stay here (he laughed), and he was raising the angry finger to the camera, writhing clearly, until he settled in his owner's hand and calmed down, Hi; American he sputtered on you) <sup>28</sup>. There is an intense criticism overflowing with the novel, which takes advantage of miraculous scenes to expose the American ideology and reveal to the public what this ideology dotted with the illusion of democracy, for the miraculous in one of its forms is an exposé <sup>29</sup>, an expulsion of the familiar "instantaneous" reality, and its replacement by an imaginary unfamiliar world <sup>30</sup>. This imaginary world is used to expose and reject Western ideological claims that were produced by geopolitical conditions after the Gulf War, such as

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<sup>24</sup> Novel: 78 – 79

<sup>25</sup> Novel:

<sup>26</sup> Seen: Tragic at the beginning, comic at the end: Slavoj Zizek, translation: Ghada Al-Imam, Revision: Muhammad Median, Al Mahrousa Center, Cairo, 1st Edition, 2015, 26

<sup>27</sup> Seen: Tragic at the beginning, comic at the end: 27

<sup>28</sup> Novel: 196

<sup>29</sup>. See: The Poetry of the Fantastic Novel: 48.

<sup>30</sup> Fantasia in the novel The Rest Mephisto by Burhan Shawi: Nora and Raya Ezz El-Din, Taslim Magazine, Volume: 5, Issues: 9 and 10, 2019, 552.



(the right to intervene politically and militarily in the affairs of others), or such as (the right to intervene in the name of defending vital interests), or such as (fighting terrorism wherever it was).<sup>31</sup>.

The will of emancipation exposes the occupation and slavery that the American discourse did not declare, but rather wanted it to remain hidden, until material death exposed it and the nakedness of the discourse's idealism. The living finger is a position that rejects the American occupation and revolts against it, and if this is the case with one finger, then what does a normal person have with all his members! . Moreover, the finger is the mainstay of a vision that rejects everything after the year 2003, and perhaps it is a vision that rejects change in the first place as long as change is a focal point to which every devastation, destruction, ignorance and chaos has been drawn to. This vision is evidenced by the appearance on which the finger was found (we found him erect between body parts, pointing to the sky ... and spread his middle finger erect in a way that provokes others) <sup>32</sup>. In the form and referring to the sky - without a second point - a vision that rejects even the heavenly discourse, which the novel often makes as an ideology to justify power of all kinds and forms. This vision and its likes are part of a narrative vision that touches the real issues that are silent and surprising, with a nightmarish vision embedded with irony and fascinating "<sup>33</sup>.

The bottle with its living ash constitutes another miraculous and critical event, in addition to the previous scenes rejecting the authority's speech after it, an ideological discourse that shows the contradiction of what is in it. The accuracy and craftsmanship of the photography is enjoyed by live ash, and in a way that deludes the recipient of the realism of the scene. Ash moves, gets angry, rejoices, grieves, fidgets, sleeps, gets hungry, paints. The narrator / hero says: "The young man encouraged me to photograph the silent bottle. From my place the zoom pulled it out for me and put it in front of my eyes. There is ashes covering half of it and it was closed with a black plastic stopper.

- This is what I have left of my daughter .. the man shriek with heartburn.

The young man continued in support of his fifties:

- They brought ashes without knowing who burned it, why or how!

The young man continued:

I was suffering from a nervous spasm at the time, whose source I do not know when my brother insisted on writing something. His finger mixed with my finger and wrote that there was ashes in Adhamiya that had not died yet

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<sup>31</sup>. Modernity and Postmodernity: Dr. Abdel Wahab Al-Messiri, d. Fathy Al-Triki, House of Fiction, Damascus, 2003, 231.

<sup>32</sup>. Novel: 78.

<sup>33</sup>. The Poetry of the Fantastic Novel: 8



Hurry up before burying him ... and repeat the matter more than once)<sup>34</sup>

The choice of Al-Adhamiya as a theater for this miraculous scene has an indication of the sectarian repression, as it is often selected from the fictional places that are overburdened with significance. Adhamiya is one of many terms such as Al-Kadhimiya, Sadr City, and Fallujah, which carried ideological loads that greatly served the instigators of sectarian violence through narratives specially made to feed these conflicts that split peoples and divide them along sectarian lines, and this greatly contributed to the expansion of the influence of states and authorities that live on sectarian clashes. Sectarian awareness is an ideological awareness that consecrates the interests of a class, which is a dominant habit and dispels the interests of other classes, subject and exploited ”<sup>35</sup>.

The living ash, like its predecessors, constituted a critical slap to the sectarian ideological discourse, by adhering to life and rejecting death, where the ashes, which are ashes that have not yet died, remained alive to expose death. (He did not die yet, so hurry up before burying him)<sup>36</sup>. The last phrase reveals the strings of the ideological game that always seeks to obliterate facts to prevent its spreading, authority - that is, authority - only shows what it wants it to appear, and other things, it always conceals its plans, agendas and goals in order to appear before its people a pure bottle. In front of her.

One of the most important functions of ideology is the function of concealment and concealment. In order for the ideological authority to guarantee its permanence, it must have curtains and veils. Removing these veils is tantamount to breaking the wall of the first blockade of authoritarian and ideological discourse. In the miracles of Baghdad - as is clear and clear - the authority tries to appear as the ideal, patriot, and the Savior, and disavows anything without that, hiding death and it is the one who cares for it. Here comes the miraculous - to embody the paradox and contradiction<sup>37</sup> - that revives death or rather keeps it alive, sometimes in the form of a decapitated stature, at other times in the form of a living finger, and at other times in the form of live ashes crushed like coffee. In the wonders of Baghdad, the dead are not dead yet, they are alive to expose the authority (Do not hesitate to expose them, we succeeded, the poor, the needy. We exposed them)<sup>38</sup>. The miraculous tears many very black curtains and strips their grayness, breaking into the familiar with the ordinary<sup>39</sup> through "supernatural images that bypass the human mind and shock him, because they are based on the supernatural who sees the eye"<sup>40</sup>, which is what Todorff calls the exaggerated miraculous<sup>41</sup>.

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<sup>34</sup> Novel: 121

<sup>35</sup>. Religious awareness and class awareness: Dr. Faisal Darraj, from the book Political Islam, Intellectual Foundations and Scientific Objectives, supervised by Mahmoud Amin Al-Alam, Book Eight, The New Culture House, Cairo, 1989. 84.

<sup>36</sup>, Novel: 121.

<sup>37</sup>See: The Poetry of the Fantastic Novel: 27.

<sup>38</sup> Novel : 216.

<sup>39</sup>. See: The Poetry of the Fantastic Novel: 38

<sup>40</sup>.Ibid: 64.

### Conclusion

From the foregoing, it seemed to us that peace in the wonders of Baghdad employed the miraculous one afterwards as a critical tool for the ideology of extremist organizations at first, and then fragmented the criticism to reach the Iraqi sectarian and American occupying authorities. The miracle was not a mask that entrenched his narrator's back, as much as it was a method or method for embodying repression in its harshest forms and forms, and then exposing the legitimate discourse of this oppression. The criticism was a statement, not an allusion, and miraculousness gave it a creative flair that indicated the novel's precision and professionalism in treatment.

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<sup>41</sup>. See: Introduction to Wonderland Literature: 77.

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