

## Original Research Article

## The Analysis of Grotesque Body in Dābbat al-Arḍ Figures of Fālnama Based on Bakhtin's Approach\*

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### Abstract

**Problem statement:** Grotesque is one of the presentations used in art to manifest different figures compared to the usual ones. It tries to depict fear and humor together by creating monstrous content by distorting the truth and disfiguring it. According to metaphysical thinking, the ideal body is a healthy organization, while the grotesque style challenges, disturbs, and sometimes reconstructs the rules of such a physical structure. The grotesque body is one of the main concepts proposed by Mikhail Bakhtin; he believes it is an unfinished body that is constantly in the act of turning and becoming; It is a concept arising from the carnival and grotesque realism; A novel and renewed event that takes place in association with these two concepts. In the illustrated horoscopes (Fālnama/ Fālnameh), there is an image with the theme of the 'Dābbat al-Arḍ' (Beast of Earth). This painting has special visual features that match the characteristics of the grotesque and can be analyzed based on Bakhtin's opinions in this regard.

**Research objective:** The present research, by applying the characteristics of the grotesque in the image of Dābbat al-Arḍ in Fālnama books, analyzes the characteristics proposed by Bakhtin with regards to the carnival and the grotesque body in the figure of Dābbat al-Arḍ.

**Research method:** It is a qualitative study attempting to match grotesque's characteristics to the image of Dābbat al-Arḍ. In the next step, based on the mentioned theory, the figure of Dābbat al-Arḍ was analyzed based on Bakhtin's views on the grotesque body. Data was collected from the library and documentary resources.

**Conclusion:** The research findings have shown that a number of grotesque features such as terrifying, hilarious, exaggerated, unusual and nonuniformity aspects all are detectable in the image of Dābbat al-Arḍ. Moreover, the characteristics such as incompleteness, sense of death, mask (distortion), contradiction and duality, entanglement, and amputation, which were proposed by Bakhtin in relation to the carnival and the grotesque body, can similarly be observed in the figures of Dābbat al-Arḍ.

**Keywords:** *Mikhail Bakhtin, Grotesque body, Dābbat al-Arḍ, Carnival, Fālnama.*

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## Introduction & Problem Statement

Grotesques are mostly known as strange, distorted, and deformed figures, especially in the human face and body, which are hilarious and terrifying. The structuralisms thinkers such as 'Wolfgang Kaiser' and 'Mikhail Bakhtin', by studying grotesque forms, have classified its characteristics from different points of view, as they considered this art style as a means for describing a strange world in which there is no power to direct it (Fanaei & Vahed Dehkordi, 2021, 77). Generally, the characteristics of grotesque can be summarized in inconsistency, excess, exaggeration, abnormality, comical and terrible elements; it can be said that Bakhtin is more optimistic about the grotesque forms compared to Kaiser, as by connecting the idea of carnival and the body of the grotesque, proposes other distinctive characteristics for the grotesque form compared to what has been mentioned. Bakhtin says, "It is not promising the carnival can change the world, but it might change the inner relationship of human with the world" (Knowles, 2012, 38). In Persian miniatures, there are illustrated figures in grotesque form, partly due to the artist's unawareness of the subject and somehow due to the two-sided concept hidden in it. Among the illustrated books of Fal-Nameh, which are written documents used for declaring the fortunes and misfortunes events, there is a very popular one during the Safavid era, which includes an image of Dābbat al-Ard, that represents grotesque characteristics. Dābbat al-Ard has been defined as an earthly unknown creature and an apocalyptic sign which comes out of the earth to separate the unbelievers from the believers on doomsday. However, according to Sunni beliefs, it is an unusual huge creature, which has a tail and feathers. In miniature paintings, human figures are usually manifested in such a perfect manner that seems a body is assigned for an infinite soul; while in 'Dābbat al-Ard' paintings, there is a body different from other typical human ones, with the carnival and defective features, which can be transformed into another physical form. Dābbat al-Ard, due to

having special and distinct visual features, is possible to be analyzed with Bakhtin's figurative interpretation of the carnival and the grotesque body. This research study aims to address the following questions:

What are the grotesque characteristics of Dābbat al-Ard painting?

And how it can be analyzed based on Bakhtin's grotesque?

So, following the definition and characterization of grotesque, the related Bakhtin's principles have been proposed, and then the correspondence between the grotesque figure, the carnival, and the grotesque body has been evaluated in Dābbat al-Ard.

## Research Background

Given the grotesque figure, the works of four thinkers are remarkable: 1. The Grotesque in Art and Literature by Wolfgang Kayser (1963), 2. Rabelais and His World by Mikhail M. Bakhtin (1984), 'On the Grotesque: Strategies of Contradiction in Art and Literature' by Geoffrey Galt Harpham (2007). 'Salome and Judas in the Cave of sex: The Grotesque: Origins, Iconography, Techniques' by Ewa Kuryluk (1987), The aesthetic theories of Bakhtin were initially applied by Debora J. Haynes (1955). She criticized visual arts in her book entitled "Bakhtin and the Visual Arts", according to Bakhtin's ideas. There are some other publications on grotesque in literary works as well. Eftekhari-Yekta and Nasri (2015) in an article entitled "Grotesque's body depiction in the paintings of Mohammad Siyah Qalam based on Mikhail Bakhtin's thought" discussed the emergence of grotesque in art, and addressed the grotesque figure in the imaginary creatures of Mohammad Siah Qalam based on the Bakhtin's opinion. In another article entitled "Analysis of the Ancient Relationship of the Evil Pattern with the Grotesque Concept in the Paintings of Al Bolhan by Abu Mashar Balkhi", Fanaei and Vahed Dehkordi (2021) studied the features of grotesque in the paintings of 'Al Bulhan' by addressing the evil creatures according to the Kaiser's opinion on the grotesque figure. Regarding the studies done on

Bakhtin's grotesque, the issue that Bakhtin has dealt with the humor feature in grotesque more than fear has not been addressed. For instance, in the article, "A Study of the Characteristics of the "Grotesque Body" in Four Contemporary Iranian Painters " the authors studied the consistency and wholeness of the body and addressed the de-familiarization feature in the selected artworks; they analyzed the artworks relying on Bakhtin's theories, more from the horror aspect (Emami & Kamrani, 2018). The present study, by targeting the concept of grotesque and its characteristics, has analyzed them in Dābbat al-Arḍ figure in Falnama (s) based on Bakhtin's approach.

## Research Method

This research is a qualitative study based on a descriptive-analytical method, as deals with the recognition of grotesque characteristics from Bakhtin's view and the presence of them in Dābbat al-Arḍ paintings. To study the reason and the way of using the grotesque features in the figure of Dābbat al-Arḍ, Bakhtin's opinion, as the basic theory, has been adopted to address the method of analyzing the structure and content of this figure in the target paintings. To collect research data, library resources

and Taking notes have been adopted. The statistical population has been selected from the pictures (four figures) of Dābbat al-Arḍ in Falnama books, as studied samples (Fig. 1).

## Dābbat al-Arḍ / Dābbat al-Arz

In terms of meaning, the word "Dābbat" refers to a creature that can be applied to both human and non-human beings (Qurashi, 1998, 29). Dābbat al-Arḍ or the 'Beast of the Earth' is an unknown creature that came out of the earth and separates the non-believers from the believers on doomsday. It is supposed to be a sign of the end of time or resurrection, and it is believed that it may come out from one of the territories of 'Najaf', 'Medina', 'Mecca', somewhere between 'Safa' and 'Marwah', as will head to 'Yemen' and 'Syria' after leaving the earth. The story of Dābbat al-Arḍ is mentioned in the Quran (verse 82 of Surah An-Namal). Some of the Shia Ulema have adopted Dābbat al-Arḍ to Imam Ali (AS) or Imam Mahdi (AS), and another group has associated it with the event of the resurrection, which in Shia is known as Raj'a or hashr khass (specific resurrection). On the other hand, some Sunnis have presented it as an unusual huge creature,

Painting No. 1



Dābbat al-Arḍ, Fāl-nāmeh

Dresd. Eb. 445

The book museum of Dresder

Painting No. 2



Dābbat al-Arḍ, Fāl-nāmeh

H. 1703, f.22b

Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul

Painting No. 3



Dābbat al-Arḍ, Fāl-nāmeh

1570s. TSM H1702, f.1b

Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul

Painting No. 4



Dābbat al-Arḍ, Fāl-nāmeh

1570s. TSM H.1702, f.47b

Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul

Fig. 1. Introduction of studied samples; Source: Authors Archive.

with a tail and feathers. Allameh Tabatabai believes that Dābbat al-Arḍ is a living being (human or non-human), but he considers this story one of the secrets of the Quran (Tabatabaei, 2011, 356).

Dābbat al-Arḍ is described in Quran secretly as follows: It is a moving creature that God will make appear from the earth at the beginning of the resurrection event; this creature talks to the people saying that people do not believe in God's signs. A group of people supposes it is an unusual living and moving creature of non-human species, as they believe that this living being exactly represents an animal (Sadeghi Tehrani, 1419 A.H., 1998, 384). In some hadiths, it is described strangely by pointing to different characteristics (Abu al-Fotuh Razi, 1987, 73). Another group, relying on some narrated traditions considers it to be an unusual and extraordinary human being, that moves and is nimble, who will appear in the time of Apocalypse and specifically separates Muslims from hypocrites and signifies them (Makarem Shirazi, 1992, 552).

### Grotesque Figure

According to the 'Encyclopedia of Art' by Pakbaz, "Grotesque basically refers to the way of decorating the walls and ceilings of the cellars (grotto) which were discovered in the ruins of ancient Rome (in these decorations, imaginary figures of human beings, animal figures, images of flowers and plants are entangled in a symmetrical design). This term was common in the 16th century AD and was used to address the distorted and exaggerated figures, with scary or ridiculous shapes, which were mostly used in the art of sculpture (Pakbaz, 2002, 446).

Grotesque is a qualification that is generally used for whatever one defines as strange, fancy, ugly, bizarre, awkward, or even disgusting; so it is often used to describe the unusual and mysterious shapes which represent distorted forms such as modern masks. The use of grotesque and its visual forms was limited only to antique paintings or modern paintings in this style for ages, which started to be applied in literature and other areas such as sculpture

and architecture during the 16th century. However, this term existed long before it become popular. It has also been observed in the performance of the religious ceremonies of early western societies in different eras, in mythical hybrid creatures such as giants and mythical idols, in carnival ceremonies and other celebrations of the Christian community, in the middle centuries, in burlesque rituals and the events on holidays during the Renaissance period; generally, grotesque concept mostly comes from the public activities (Makarik, 2005, 245). However, grotesque in the early 18th century found the general meaning as a qualification pointing to a ridiculous, distorted, unnatural thing, and as a noun was defined as 'rigmarole' and 'distortion of nature' (Thomson, 2018, 17).

### Grotesque Features

Grotesque has always been a common figure, as its semantic characteristics can be observed relatively in all cultures. Although the origin of the grotesque goes back to Rome, its essence existed independently in various countries; this issue was related to social conditions and tensions, and sometimes it was associated with the artist's mentality. The grotesque features can be summarized as follows:

#### - Inconsistency

One of the main characteristics of the grotesque which has been preserved over time is the feature of inconsistency, which is defined by conflict and aggression and the mixture of dissimilar things or the combination of incongruous parts. These inconsistencies manifest in an artwork as irregularity, and its manifestation leads to kind of speculation in the mind of creative artists and their psychological nature (ibid., 24-25).

#### - Terrifying & comical

Grotesque is a kind of style composed of opposite feelings, thereby, it induces two opposite feelings of laughter and fear in the audience together. The mixture of two features of terrifying and comical that causes ambiguity and duality in the audience, and triggers the diverse and inseparable life aspects, is



also derived from this combination. Kaiser believes that the grotesque is somehow the manifestation of the anxious and alienated world, in other words, it looks at the familiar world from a view that makes it quite bizarre, as this peculiarity makes it look comical and scary, or even both together (ibid., 30). Grotesque, while is comical is terrifying as well; the objects that used to be familiar to the viewers now started to manifest multi-layered meaning due to the grotesque concept, and this emerging form expresses contradictory emotions such as happiness and terror in the figures (Kundera, 2013, 254).

#### - Exaggeration & exorbitance

The significant reason for using extreme forms and features in grotesque is to emphasize and multiply the effect of a phenomenon. This effect is more obvious in fantasy, although it refers to the real world and is constantly accompanied by some kind of extra feeling (Fanaei & Vahed Dehkordi, 2021, 82).

#### - Irregularity

This characteristic is always a secondary factor in grotesque. Inducing the opposite reactions at the same time such as pleasure and abhorrence, happiness and fear, attraction and repulsion, are arising from extreme abnormality. The pleasure of innovation converts into fear if it passes through a certain limit. The character of irregularity makes grotesque go beyond conventional manner, which put the critics and fans of conventional beauty in a challenging situation, as the response of individuals in facing this irregularity varies from person to person (Kamrani, 2001, 114-135).

### Mikhail Bakhtin

The Russian philosopher, Mikhail Bakhtin who lived in the 20th century (1895-1975) was a powerful thinker in criticizing contemporary literary works, and a major theorist of the grotesque. To understand his viewpoint, it is required to be familiar with the scope of his theory in relation to the grotesque, the concept of carnival, and the grotesque body (Adams & Yates, 2015, 41).

Bakhtin's view about the grotesque in the middle centuries was arising from the material system of imaginary created by the comic culture of the public, which was best found in the literary works of writers such as 'Rabelais', 'Cervantes' and 'Shakespeare'. The carnival world during the Middle Ages, where the grotesque imagination reached its highest point, was merely permitted by the church authorities of the city in a city space that was governing on holidays. Bakhtin reinterpreted the whole social history of the grotesque and considered the carnival culture of the Middle Ages a current in contrast to the prescribed and boring world of institutional authority that included even the authorized celebrations. He believed that following the Renaissance the government increasingly restricted the permission for carnivals. In the next centuries, the grotesque remained in literary traditions without having any connection with public culture (Makarik, 2005, 250). He described that the spirit of grotesque represents the possibility of a world with completely different relations, as the current world abruptly and fully becomes alien to us; because it provides the desired world similar to the golden age, as the truth of carnival or the pleasure it gives will manifest in it (Adams & Yates, 2015, 44).

#### • Carnival

Bakhtin's carnival is the manifestation of the carnival essence in cultural creations such as paintings and literary works. Bakhtin's main idea in carnival comedy and 'grotesque realism' was to portray the human body. The manner in which the human body with its all features and functions as a visual expression is related to the world of grotesque realism (Eftekhari-Yekta & Nasri, 2015, 23).

In other words, a carnival is a place where the public class completely indulges in extreme manifestations of physical activity. Bakhtin believes that in this way the border between human and his world is removed. By blurring the distinction between mind and body of one person with another, and between human and Nature, the carnival initiated a deep struggle against the ideal of traditional bourgeois, predictability,

stability, and individual dependency (Gholam-Hosseinzadeh & Gholampour, 2008, 149-148). According to Bakhtin, 'carnival develops a new style of interpersonal communication' (Bakhtin, 1984, 164); it turns familiar relationships into strange ones, and according to him, it is a mediator for otherness (Holquist, 2015, 145-145).

#### • Grotesque body

The highest beauty of the grotesque can be found in a figure that manifests the transformation of the sequential and contradictory concepts of birth and death and portrays the ending and becoming of a cycle. Symbolism in grotesque clearly denies the possibility of perfection and ending. For instance, carnival images in most cases represent a playful combination of animal, plant, and human forms or the process of metamorphosis from one to another, as the usual and common boundaries are boldly overcome. The configuration of images that are related to the grotesque body takes various forms in ritual ceremonies, language, and folk art-cultural works (Gholam-Hosseinzadeh & Gholampour, 2008, 149). The Bakhtin's opinion on grotesque body is a figure that continuously is becoming and turning, in a never ended and never completed process, which is created and generate another body. Moreover, the body absorbs a world which in turn is absorbed by another world (Holquist, 2015, 145). The grotesque body is the manifestation of an uncompleted and ever-changing world, which has a double nature, in which death and life are two opposite concepts, which at a time devours, absorbs, perceives, generates and dies. These are all manifestations of a physical body, which is not closed in itself, but has openings to the world; some parts of it such as eyes, ears, nose, mouth, are repeated and some are removed, and so it manifests an opened unfinished ugly monster contrary to the order of common classical aesthetics. The artistic logic of the grotesque image rejects any kind of closed and impenetrable surface, as it mostly focuses on the openings of the body (Bakhtin, 1984, 317).

#### Fālnāmeḥ

Human interest in predicting the future has led to the preparation of illustrated fortune-telling books known as Fālnama. During the Safavid era, these books were produced with the support and orders of the king's court, which was distinct from other similar books for some reasons. In this type of illustrated books, the art of miniature painting is used for the purpose of prediction and fortune-telling, which is a distinct and unique way of presenting miniature art, which has always been used to illustrate literary books, especially the book of Shahnameh throughout the history (Akhavani & Mahmoudi, 2017, 20). Only four distinct and ancient copies of such outstanding works that were used by courtiers and common people have remained. These manuscripts are very significant due to presenting interesting and brilliant images of prophets, heroes, demons, and villains, and introducing the Zodiacal Signs (Al-Buruj). These remarkable illustrated forecasting and predictions, and the related texts to these images not only clarify the lesser-known aspect of the Safavid artistic achievements, but also indicate the common interest of kings, sultans, and ministers in illustrative predicting issues at the end of the first Islamic millennium.

The four available copies of Fālnama related to the Safavid era are as below:

Shah Tahmasbi Fālnama, 2. Fālnama in Topkapi Sarayi (Palace) Museum, 3. Fālnama in German Dresden Museum, 4. Turkish Fālnama of Sultan Ahmed I (Ottoman Turkish) (Assar Kashani, 2014, 76).

#### Grotesque in Dābbat al-Arḍ Figure

The figure of Dābbat al-Arḍ due to having characteristics such as disharmony in body parts, exaggeration in size and form, and abnormality due to having mismatched parts, could be comical and terrifying at the same time. In the composition of the body parts of Dābbat al-Arḍ, the distorted and deformed truth has led to the creation of a

monstrous personality, as crossing the normal boundaries, induces fear and humor feeling together. The grotesque features of these images have been described separately (Table 1).

### Analyzing the Grotesque in Dābbat al-Arḍ Figure based on Bakhtin's Approach

One of the contents of the carnival, which is represented by a completely unconventional concept in this artistic style, is the subject of death. The specific concept of death in this conceptualization is not compatible with the divine interpretations of departure from the living realm to the world of the dead. In this view, death is an integral part of the public life cycle, which itself is a part of the life cycle of Nature. Therefore, death is by no means a tragic event, as it can be celebrated cheerfully (Ramezanzadeh, 2012, 68). According to what has been said earlier about Dābbat al-Arḍ, this creature will come out of the earth at the end of the world,

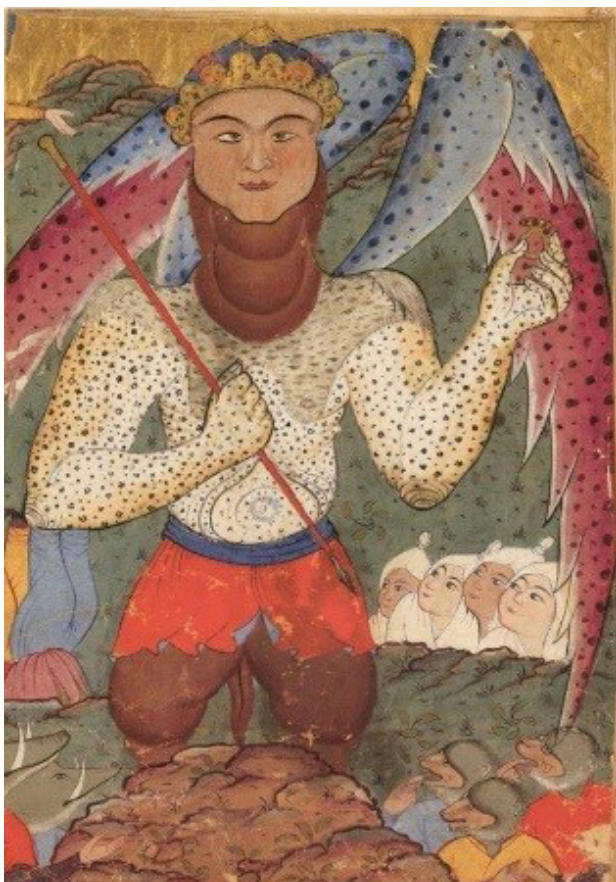


Fig. 2. Dābbat al-Arḍ, Falnama-ye Tahmasabi (Dresden version). Source: Poorakbar, 2017, 104.

as its closeness to death by using visual signs such as shrouded or deformed human beings is clear (Fig. 2).

On the other hand, the rise of Dābbat al-Arḍ from the earth is according to another part of Bakhtin's theories on carnival. In his opinion, "there are forms of carnival features in art literature and everyday life. In fact, the idea of earthly life is a concept that is the focus of the carnival matter. The mission of the carnival is to destroy and terminate the hegemony of any kind of ideology that tries to dictate the final word about the world and dogmatically impose a certain meaning on the world and human life" (Ansari, 2005, 124).

The figure of Dābbat al-Arḍ is a composite form, which depicts a human-animal hybrid with parts of the bird's body, which look like to have a mask on its face (Fig. 3). A mask that sometimes encourages happiness and laughter, and sometimes fear and terror which is founded on the inner relationship between reality and imagination, as it can be considered a characteristic feature of ritual and performance. In this regard, Bakhtin says: "In the carnival, people symbolically change their identity by changing their clothes and wearing masks." They don't consider an individual and distinct identity for themselves. They go beyond the boundary of their individual common form and join the collective body of the public, as sometimes go beyond it and join other objects and the other world" (Bakhtin, 1984, 111)

Bakhtin believes that the presence of monsters in the carnival is an essential item and says that "the monsters are a necessary and inseparable part of the carnival images, as they are also strongly related to the grotesque body" (Dentith, 2005, 235). Dābbat al-Arḍ has a gigantic character due to its dimensions and size compared to other carnival elements and represents a half-human character, in accordance with the grotesque body, with no similarity to other human figures in other usual paintings. In this regard, there is a rare painting of Dābbat al-Arḍ which represents a different gender (female) in comparison





Fig. 3. Dābbat al-Arḍ , Fahnama, Possible location: Iran.  
Source: Farhad & Bagci, 2009, 187.



Fig. 4. Dābbat al-Arḍ , Fahnama, possible location: Iran.  
Source: Farhad & Bagci, 2009, 189.

with other counterpart pictures. In general, all or most of the physiological parts and organs of Dābbat al-Arḍ are identical to the characteristics of the grotesque body. In traditional folklore, the natural phenomena such as mountains, rivers, and rocks are related to the monster's body or their body parts, as these giant bodies are not separated from the world or Nature (*ibid.*, 235).

The physiological characteristics of Dābbat al-Arḍ include spotted hands and trunk, rough and coarse legs with hooves, head with horns, wrinkled neck, wide mouth with sharp teeth and protruding jaw, flat and wide nose or beak-shaped, and eyes protruding from sockets; it has hair, wings, and tails; animal horns; arms, large and unusual muscles which all represent grotesque features (Figs. 2-5).

Exaggeration is one of the main characteristics of grotesque; however, there is a kind of exaggeration in some parts of Dābbat al-Arḍ figure, which is slightly different from those in grotesque. For example, the nose and horn (Fig. 3), tail (Figs. 2, 3 & 5), and legs (Figs. 4 & 5) are exaggerated as they are seen separately from other body parts. Bakhtin says: that exaggeration in each of the body parts creates an image of amputation, which means excessive exaggeration of an element, and Bakhtin describes it as follows: "If the grotesque organs grow to gigantic dimensions, they exceed the boundaries of the body and turns into a grotesque independent organ." like what is seen in hunchback with huge humps, giant noses, abnormally long and circled legs, big ears, thick and knotted beard, full of rises and downs (Dentith, 2005, 235).

The figure of Dābbat al-Arḍ with inconsistent and unbalanced parts represents a kind of "incompleteness". A mask-like head with a wrinkled, wide, and unbalanced neck, a human upper body, bird wings, and animal legs, all as the parts of a body express 'becoming' and 'turning', as if each of them can be the generator of other bodies (Fig. 5). A huge body whose multi-pieces represent the independent identity of each part, as they can be a part of another body.



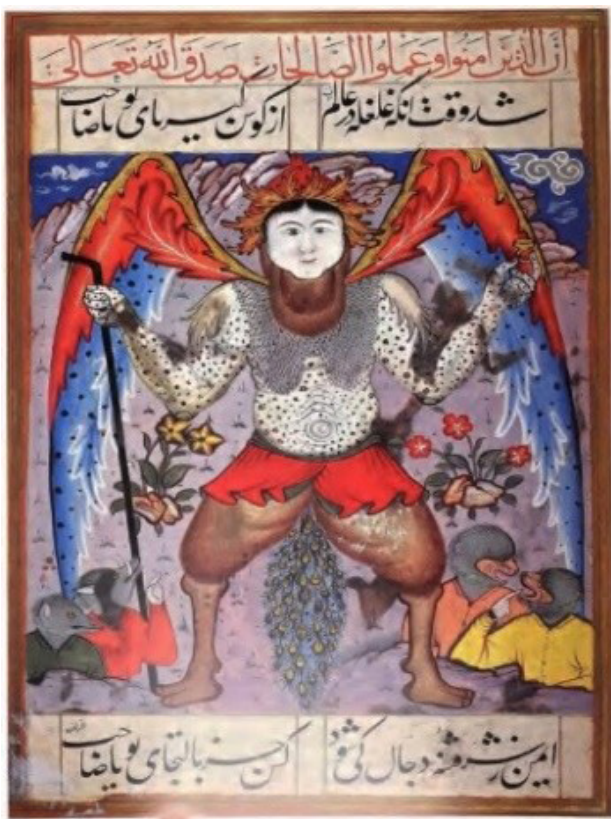


Fig. 5. Dābbat al-Ard, Falnama, Possible location: Iran.  
Source: Farhad & Bagci, 2009, 188.

According to Bakhtin, the grotesque body is an incomplete body that is constantly being constructed. It is created and in turn makes another body, as each of them can be separated and have an independent life. To reinterpret the body and its functions, and the unification of self and body, whether the individual body, or collective body, and its unification with the body of the universe- and also to emphasize the continuous connection of birth, death, rebirth, and society in its metaphorical form, he tries to provide a healing and releasing remedy for the aristocratic and predefined culture of that time. Grotesque, especially in Bakhtin's interpretations, values the physical body and material aspect of life, and tries to get reconnect and unite with these speechless dimensions of life, which function beyond power or wisdom (Adams & Yates, 2015, 234).

Bakhtin believes that just like a literary novel, the body can introduce an intertextual nature, and similarly, it might not be imagined outside the entangled network of a connection, which is known

as a living organ (Holquist, 2015, 145). A kind of "intercorporeality" in the figure of Dābbat al-Ard can be observed due to the presence of a combination of all kinds of creatures (such as animals, humans, and birds) (Figs. 2-4). In fact, the grotesque is focusing on the organs that protrude from the body, which are confronting the outside world, extend the body and connect it to other physical bodies and even the outside world (Dentith, 2005, 226), the bodies that die and reborn again. Denying the existential unity and the required wholeness for true essence. The grotesque body depicts characteristics of exaggeration, elimination, incompleteness, entanglement, disharmony, and openness altogether, as due to representing this dual nature, it represents horrific and comical features together.





In Table 1 (Column 4), the grotesque figure according to Bakhtin's view has been represented with features of contradiction and duality of the carnival, incompleteness, Inducing the sense of a mask (distortion), and decomposition, of amputated body parts in the paintings of Dābbat al-Ard.

The characteristics of inconsistency, abnormality, exaggeration, terrifying, and humor are features that can be observed in all study samples, as it matches Dābbat al-Ard figure with the grotesque body (Table 2, Column 3). On the other hand, the indicators such as contradiction and duality of carnival, incompleteness, mask (distortion), decomposition of body parts due to the combination of human parts with animal organs, and the sense of amputation, according to Bakhtin's view of the grotesque body all can be observed in four examples of Dābbat al-Ard figure (Table. 1, Column 4).

## Conclusion

Although based on the Iranian miniature painting, the human figure is depicted in an ideal body and can be observed in all related artistic schools with rather similar characteristics, but when it comes to painting an unfamiliar creature, the form, texture, and size represent a figure that is out of an ideal state and shows a different form. In Falnama books, the

Table 1. Grotesque Dābbat al-Arḍ paintings with Bakhtin's approach. Source: Authors.

No.	Figure	Grotesque Features	Grotesque Features According to Bakhtin's approach
1		Disharmony between wings, hands, and a stick; abnormality in body shape and texture; inconsistency in the size of the neck, upper body, and legs; exaggeration in size; terrifying appearance because of the gigantic size and being comical due to having different textures and form.	The contrast and duality of the carnival due to the presence of wings and hands; A combination of animal elements such as tail and wings, Incompleteness in the form and texture of the neck, Inducing the sense of a mask (distortion) in the combination of wings and tail with hands and feet, Entangling different and contradictory shapes and textures, Decomposition of amputated body parts due to exaggeration of the different sizes and shapes of the neck.
2		Disharmony between wings, hands, stick, horns, and tail, abnormality in facial parts, body shape, and texture; inconsistency in form, size of wings and legs; exaggeration of size; terrifying due to the presence of horns and tail; comical because of the different and uncoordinated texture and form.	The contrast and duality available in the carnival due to the presence of wings, hands, and horns; A combination of human body with animal features such as tails, wings, and horns, Inducing the sense of a mask (distortion) in the form of eyes, exaggerated nose and horns with the specific shape of the hair. Disharmony between wings and tail with hands and feet, A mixture of different and contradictory forms and textures, Decomposition of amputated body parts due to exaggeration of the strange shape of the tail, and the size and shape of the legs.
3		Disharmony between wings, hands, and stick; abnormality in the feminine face with the masculine body; inconsistency in covering, size of wings, upper body, and legs; exaggeration of size; Being terrifying due to gigantic size and looks comical due to body texture and inconsistent form.	The contrast and duality of the carnival due to the presence of wings, hands, and a different crown on the head, A combination of human body with animal features such as wings, Incompleteness in the form and texture of the legs, Inducing the sense of a mask (distortion) due to the form of facial parts and a crown on the head in a combination of wings and tail with hands and the leg, Mixing of different and contradictory forms and textures, Amputated body parts due to the exaggeration of the different sizes and textures of the legs.
4		Disharmony between wings, hands, and staff, abnormality in the shape of the legs, hands, texture of the upper body and legs; inconsistency in the shape of the head and neck in connection with the leg; exaggeration in the body size; being terrifying due to the gigantic size and looks comical appearance due to the inconsistent body texture and standing position.	The contrast and duality of the carnival due to the presence of wings, hands, and horns, The combination of human body with animal elements such as horns and wings; A kind of incompleteness in the form and texture of the neck, Inducing the sense of a mask (distortion) due to the combination of wings and tail with hands and feet, and a crown in combination with the head, face, and neck to emerge a new form Mixing different and contradictory forms and textures, The amputation due to exaggeration in the area of the neck and having different shapes of legs.

way of portraying unknown creatures is different from other usual human figures.

The figure of Dābbat al-Arḍ in Fālnama books is also adaptable to the grotesque body due to having characteristics such as abnormality, inconsistency, exaggeration, and exorbitance by inducing a sense of horror and humor as it illustrates a different and mysterious subject. The inconsistency between the body parts due to having limbs, wings, hands, and sticks, the presence of abnormality in the body shape

and texture, inconsistency in the size of the head and neck, upper body and legs, exaggeration in the sizes of body parts and in the whole body compared to the available painting space, being terrifying because of its unfamiliar and gigantic size, and representing a comical appearance because of its different and incoherent texture and form, place Dābbat al-Arḍ figure in grotesque form. In grotesque realism, the connection of the grotesque with the material and physical world is concentrated, which not only

doesn't disturb the norms and natural order of the world but also represents its own rules and order.

On the other hand, characteristics such as incompleteness, sense of death, mask, amputation, confusion, disturbance, contradiction, and duality of carnival proposed by Bakhtin in relation to the grotesque body, can also be perceived in Dābbat al-Ard figure. Among the features that make Dābbat al-Ard a figure compatible with Bakhtin's grotesque are:

The coincidence of perceiving death and Dābbat al-Ard, 2. the contradiction and duality of its carnival characteristic due to the presence of wings and hands, and unusual crowns on the head, 3. the combination of human parts with animal organs such as wings, tails and hooves, 4. incompleteness in the form and texture of the head and legs, 5. induction the sense of mask as the result of the combination of the crown with head, wing, and tail with hand and feet, 6. Mixing dissimilar and contradictory forms and textures, 7. Decomposition of amputated body parts due to the exaggeration of the size and 8. inconsistency between different textures of the body parts.

The significant point about the example figures of Dābbat al-Ard, which consist of humor elements, is the grotesque representation of an imaginary discourse to define the body and its functions. Therefore, according to Bakhtin's grotesque, the figure of Dābbat al-Ard is a kind of insanity that leads to laughter in response to the horror arising from the sense of unfamiliarity.

Bakhtin considers the grotesque as the representative of recreating the world in another body with a new structure. Therefore, the grotesque body is an inconsistent body that disrupts the audience's expectations of proportions. Among its other characteristics, the strange and gigantic dimensions, mixing texture, and multiplication of various parts and organs can also be mentioned.

In general, the world presented by Bakhtin has no similarity to the existing world, as it represents a resurrection view of an emerging world which,

despite having contradiction, portrays a more optimistic view of mythological and grotesque figures compared to other theories that have been proposed in this regard.

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