

The aim of this thesis is to analyse selected short stories by Joyce Carol Oates from the perspective of intersecting gender and the grotesque, and to determine the significance of gender and gender roles or stereotypes in the grotesque present in the aforementioned texts. This thesis focuses especially on the theme of gendered violence, as it is an important element in all analysed stories: “Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?”, “Heat,” “Haunted,” “The Premonition,” and “Extenuating Circumstances.” The first part of this thesis is theoretical and is concerned with the summary and comparison of selected major theories of the grotesque and gender, emphasising especially the motifs and themes that are found in the short stories (bodily grotesque, violence, gender performativity, and the forms of gender or sexuality that transgress the binary and heteronormative framework).

The second chapter addresses the term “grotesque,” which is defined according to its etymology, and follows the historical changes of its meaning. It also describes the importance of the grotesque in visual arts, based especially on Frances S. Connelly’s research, and focuses mainly on the possible parallels between the visual and the literary grotesque, which is the last topic of the second chapter. The grotesque is defined here according to Mikhail Bakhtin and Wolfgang Kayser, whose perspectives are mutually compared and contrasted. The second chapter concludes with the critique of these theories from a feminist position, represented by Mary Russo, who focuses mainly on the critical review of the Bakhtinian grotesque body, the carnivalesque, and his understanding of femininity as inherently grotesque.

The third chapter attempts to answer the question of whether there is a specifically American grotesque, using the conclusions of Harold Bloom and James Schewill who list certain historical and cultural specifics as bases for the American grotesque as an independent literary phenomenon. The third chapter also includes a typology of grotesque characters coined by Maria Haar, which is then applied further in the practical part of the thesis.

The fourth chapter defines the term “gender” based on the concept of gender performativity; its foundation is seen in the scholarship of Simone de Beauvoir, but the main source of the understanding of gender in this thesis is the critical work of Judith Butler, together with that of Michel Foucault and Monique Wittig. The processes of gendering the body and identity of an individual are presented as normative and fully dependent on the binary and heteronormative framework which is enforced by society. The society also punishes an individual for not adhering to this normative framework. These very transgressing and non-normative bodies and identities are studied in relation to the grotesque because they have been traditionally considered inherently grotesque.

In the fifth chapter the presented theory is applied to the aforementioned five short stories. They are analysed from the perspectives of the gendered grotesque and gendered violence, which appear to a different extent and in different forms in all five stories. The stories are also compared to each other.

The conclusion emphasises the importance of the gendered grotesque and gendered violence in the analysed short stories and states that the grotesque in these short stories is indisputably intertwined with the question of gender, and that the grotesque effect would not be achieved without gendered elements such as gender roles, stereotypes, gendered violence, and also the grotesque body which is necessarily dependent on the perception of the category of gender. It also states that even though the grotesque in the analysed short stories is rooted in the heteronormative gender binarism, the majority of the protagonists (perpetrators of violence) in different ways transgress this norm, and that is why they are perceived as grotesque by the mainstream reader.

*Key words:* grotesque, gender, bodily grotesque, Joyce Carol Oates, gendered violence, gender roles, grotesque body