

## ***Abstract***

This thesis examines the work of the contemporary exilic Iraqi author Ḥasan Blāsim within the framework of magical realism. At the same time it argues for a more formalistic and wider definition of magical realism, which also includes fiction without any supernatural elements. Magical realistic components found in the short story collection *Majnūn sāḥat al-ḥurrīya* (The Madman of Freedom Square) underline the most important themes in the stories. These are related to the catastrophes that afflicted Iraq and its people in the course of last thirty years. With its emphasis on the documentation of modern Iraqi history dominated by war and exile Blāsim's work belongs to the genre of documentary narrative. The goal of documentary narrative is to contribute to the collective memory of a nation. Despite Blāsim's focus on documenting, magical realism in his work cannot be considered as an attempt to create a parallel cultural world. The supernatural in his stories functions metaphorically and relates exclusively to the real world of war and violence, in which people under heavy circumstances turn into animals, cannibals, which is magical in itself.

In addition, Blāsim's work is on a subordinate level discussed from the perspective of postcolonial theory. Postcolonial theory has undergone a complicated development since its breakthrough in humanities and recently was criticized, for instance, by scholars in the field of Arabic literature. Blāsim's work proves that postcolonial literature does not have to remain restricted to the theme of the relationship between the West and the East and that literature loyal to a region is able to engage with universal and postmodern issues.

**Key words:** magical realism, Iraqi literature, exile, modern Arabic literature, postcolonial theory, Ḥasan Blāsim