



Original article

A Critical Stylistic Analysis of Themes Representing Local Iraqi and American Communities in Selected Novels

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ABSTRACT

The present study traces, qualitatively, how themes representing Iraqi and American local societies are reproduced. Jeffries' (2010) ten textual conceptual functions (or tools) is adopted to analyse twenty-four extracts selected from Antoon's *The Corpse Washer* (2010) and Morrison's *Tar Baby* (1981). Antoon has criticised the Iraqi regime (1968-2003) and the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, regarding them as the main reasons for the suffering of Iraqi locals, while Morrison has condemned the white hegemony, regarding it among the reasons for raping and enslaving the local societies, and her African American is one of them. The study finds that Jeffries' functions have been used similarly in the two novels, even though there are instances of difference, and reports the percentages. The use of unmarked (direct and active) language, the main characters' ambitions for change, the rejection of these changes by other members of their local society, the focus on using material processes, the use of existential propositions, and the extensive use of slavery and raping vocabularies are examples of textual and conceptual tools for such a conclusion.

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Keywords: American local society, Critical stylistics, Iraqi local society, Sinan Antoon's *The Corpse Washer*, Toni Morrison's *Tar Baby*

تحليل اسلوبي نقدي لتمثيل الثيمات في روايات عراقية وأمريكية مختارة

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المُستخلص

تتعقب الدراسة الحالية تمثيل الثيمات المحلية في المجتمعات المحلية العراقية والأمريكية (المتمثلة بالأشخاص العاديين) من خلال دراسة الوظائف المفاهيمية العشر النصية (أو الأدوات) التي اقترحتها جيفريز (2010) في نموذجها الأسلوبي النقدي. اعتماداً على المنهج النوعي، تم اختيار أربع وعشرين مقطعاً من روايتي "وحدها شجرة الرمان" لـ للروائي العراقي سنان أنطون و "طفل القطران" للروائية الأمريكية توني موريسون لتكون عينة الدراسة. قام أنطون بانتقاد النظام العراقي (1968-2003) والغزو الأمريكي للعراق في عام 2003، واعتبرهما السبب الرئيسي لمعاناة المجتمع المحلي العراقي وموضوعات الفقر وتدهور التعليم وانعدام الأمن. ومن ناحية أخرى، أدانت موريسون الهيمنة البيضاء، معتبرة إياها من بين أسباب اغتصاب المجتمعات المحلية واستعبادها، وشخصيتها الأمريكية الأفريقية واحدة من تلك المجتمعات. وتجد الدراسة أن وظائف جيفريز تم استخدامها بشكل مشابه في الروائيتين، على الرغم من وجود بعض الفروقات، وتعرض الدراسة للنسب المئوية لذلك. ومن الناحية الأيديولوجية، تم إعادة إنتاج كلا المجتمعين ليكونا جريحين فردياً وجماعياً. ومن أهم النتائج على توظيف إعادة الإنتاج هذا هو استخدام اللغة غير الموسومة (المباشرة والنشطة)، وطموحات الشخصيات الرئيسية في التغيير، ورفض هؤلاء التغييرات من قبل أعضاء آخرين في مجتمعهم المحلي، والتركيز على استخدام العمليات المادية، واستخدام المقولات الوجودية، والاستخدام المكثف لمفردات العبيد والاعتصام.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المجتمع الأمريكي المحلي، التحليل الاسلوبي النقدي، المجتمع العراقي المحلي، رواية "وحدها شجرة الرمان" لـ سنان أنطون، رواية " طفل القطران" لـ توني موريسون

Introduction

Recent approaches to studying the communicative function of language have shifted away from addressing various anthropological and sociological issues, including gender and identity (Vine, 2023; Taiwo, 2026). Critical discourse analysts, including van Dijk, Wodak, and Fairclough, have focused on these issues to expose the ideologies and agenda-based programs. The three scholars believe that the primary concern of such unmasked ideologies should be ordinary people, not the 'elite' (who are mainly concerned with manufacturing public consent, as Herman & Chomsky (2008) suggest). Such a dramatic shift from fabricated data to authentic, from the elite to the ordinary, is reproduced in literary works, with novels being the most representative domain. Many outstanding works have been written that, from 2000 to 2022, earned the Nobel Prize in Literature 16 times for novels, stories, or autobiographies. Here, it is not to neglect the role of poetry or dramatic works, but still, the 'sustainable' influence of novels or stories is beyond debate. Therefore, it is possible here to state that local societies, where ordinary people are born, live and die, need to be examined. Of course, Iraqi and American writers are not exempt from this orientation, as their works tend to reflect the lives of their local societies.

The term 'society' is defined differently in the literature; each definition is, of course, within the framework of the author. Anthropologists, as stated by Eriksen (2004, p. 5), have considered and evaluated societies into three categories: "pre-industrial, industrial, and post-industrial" from sociocultural, linguistic, economic, and archaeological perspectives. Sociolinguists, such as Albirni

(2016), have examined the language of societies based on variables including dialects, gender, identity, social interaction, social classes, ideologies, speech communities, and social networks within a specific geographical area (a local community) or a larger one (a national community). Paltridge (2021, p.15) sums up these, saying that “[t]he community must have its particular genres, its own set of specialised terminology and vocabulary and a high level of expertise in its particular area”. Discourse analysts also make significant contributions, particularly in reproducing the influence of constant cultural and social theories on people’s interactions. This is reported in the majority of critical discourse studies, whether based on dialectic, socio-cognitive, or historical foundations.

The present study examines two local communities, namely the Iraqi and the American. At first glance, they seem to be different. However, there are two reasons behind our choice of them. The first is their richness, especially when both are encountered, and, despite this, in many social movements and circumstances, Iraqi writers are among the influential intellectuals in the Arab World, which supports this. The other reason is the Iraqis’ ambition and willingness to live in the USA and Europe, looking for these places as their ‘Utopia’. Therefore, two critical novelists are selected as the data, namely Sinan Antoon and Toni Morrison, both of whom are primarily concerned with the political and social challenges in their respective societies. One research question will be examined here: how are the local communities of Iraq and the United States reproduced ideologically in the selected novels?

Iraqi and American Local Societies

Research in language and society is rich, to the extent that subclassifications of one language are available due to social variables, or as stated by Trudgill (2000, p.8), “because language as a social phenomenon is closely tied up with the social structure and value systems of society, different dialects and accents are evaluated in different ways”. Additionally, based on the concept of strong and weak linguistic relativity, research has demonstrated a two-dimensional relationship between language and society. These value systems have later been classified into upper, middle, and lower (see Ogunbameru, 2020). Paltridge (2021) also confirms that each of us is not living individually, but rather as an active participant in multiple communities, such as those related to our residence, education, age, religion, interests, and, nowadays, virtually, through social media. The most influential value system is one’s society. Moreover, the term ‘local society’ refers to a group(s) of people living and communicating together in a common location, characterised by similar social, educational, and economic relationships (see Alsamadii, 2010). Additionally, the set of shared social characteristics encompasses customs, traditions, lifestyle, social values, and religious practices that define one’s social structure. Al-Shahawi (2015, p.51) states that one’s local society also refers to a particular set of relations, such as kinship, friendship, and neighbourhood. Moreover, Qawl (2009, p.41) examines the ambiguous term ‘local society’ in sociology, primarily it is used to mean ‘community’, ‘country’, and ‘state’ in a broader sense, and to point out groups of people living in a specific geographical area, in a narrower sense, sharing specific norms, customs, lifestyles, etc. In the present study, the term ‘local society’ is used in the narrower sense, especially since the two novels under investigation feature characters with a specified territory or place; their people share the same social networks, social values, social interactions, and sense of belonging. Iraqi and Arab sociologists, as reported by Bassiouney (2020), believe that the local society in Iraq, for example, is not different

from others, even those in the US, since people share similar social ties, networks, principles, interactions, and values. Justifying this, and commenting on other Arab countries, Albirni (2016, p.123) states the following:

The Arab social and political systems with their historical roots, norms, structures, organizations, networks, expectations, power relationships, and systems of meaning provide the framework and boundaries within which Arabic speakers construct their identities and define themselves in relation to others.

Therefore, two senses of Iraqi local society can be concluded here. A macro-Iraqi local society is understood to include majority of Iraqis lived in the era found in Antoon's *The Corpse Washer* (1980-2003) since they were in crisis; three wars (see Ender, 2011), economic sanctions (see Rayburn et al., 2019), malnutrition, increase instances of death, decline of education, lack of jobs, poverty (Al-Nadawi, 2020), etc. A micro local society is understood to refer to a specific area, since Iraq can be classified into North (where Kurds live), South (to include Iraqi Shiites living in the southern cities like Basra, Wasit, and Maysan), West (to include Sunnis in the Western towns like Al-Anbar and Fallujah) and Baghdadi (to include the cities of Baghdad and surrounding ones like Hila) (see Soldier's Handbook to Iraq (2010). The American local society has different characteristics from the Iraqi one. Reasons for the decline in education and economic sanctions do not exist. However, it is still possible to classify it into two types, namely macro and micro, based on race characteristics (see Humphreys et al., 2002), gender, and colour (see de Brey et al., 2018). Therefore, a macro-one is seen clearly in the media, where both white and black people live together. Micro ones can be detected if ethnicity, motherland, and colour are taken into consideration; therefore, there are local societies of Mexicans, Muslims, Africans, the black (see Kumar, 2018), etc. In this respect, a review of the 2020 "US Census of Racial and Ethnic Composition of the Country" (see <http://census.gov>) can support this argument. As an example of such micro-local societies, Brown et al. (2020, p.215) mention the constant idea of slavery and its negative attitudes towards African Americans when officially American institutions consider the child black if one of their parents is black. Respectively, another perspective on American local society is provided by OpenStax College (2013, p. 232), which notes that these characteristics, along with wealth and power, are the majority rather than the minority. Therefore, the research question is to identify the themes reproduced by local people (Iraqis and Americans) in two selected novels through a critical stylistic analysis to determine how these ten textual-conceptual tools are used.

Methodology

This study, employing a qualitative method, examines the representation of local societies in literary works. Sinan Antoon's *The Corpse Washer* and Toni Morrison's *Tar Baby* are chosen to be representative of the Iraqi and American societies, respectively, where the stories, ideas and reactions of ordinary people, who are the main characters of the selected novels, are taken as representatives of their local societies.

Antoon wrote his novel, وحدها شجرة الرمان (Alone Pomegranate Tree), in Arabic in 2010, which was later translated into *The Corpse Washer* in 2013. It seems there is no connection between the two

titles, except for the conceptual metaphor of death. I narrate the novel. It blueprints the tragic situation of Iraqi local society from 1980 to 2010, especially the primary setting is Mghaysil (a place for washing and cleaning Muslim corpses) in the city of Al-Kadhumiya in Baghdad. That society had been characterised by public declarations of death for soldiers in the Iran-Iraq War, 1980-1988, Gulf War I in 1991, and of newborn infants due to malnutrition due to imposed sanctions from 1991-2003 (see Popal, 2000). Of course, the collapse of the economic, health, and educational aspects of life has direct, dramatic consequences for ordinary people, which in turn provide rich material for many TV series and literary works. Unfortunately, the situation following the US invasion in 2003 and the persistence of sectarian problems still have similar consequences; *Frankenstein in Baghdad* by Ahmed Saadawi is one of these new literary products. The conflict began when the main character, Jawad, a young man, refused to become a corpse washer like his family, seeking a better future as a sculptor and a more comfortable life. Unfortunately, like the majority of ordinary Iraqi people, his brother's and father's deaths forced him to be a corpse washer in the Mghaysil due to all these dramatic consequences mentioned above. Jawad himself mentions the narratives of other characters with whom he worked, including Hammoudy, Mahdi, Sabri, and some women.

... The Corpse Washer is the story of a wound that cries out, that tells and retells the Iraqi trauma that is not otherwise available. Iraqis are still victims of violence and witnesses of their country's destruction. Iraqis are still continuing to experience various forms of individual and collective traumas. While everyday life in Iraq is burdened with trauma and violence, Iraqis continue to resist and dream, trying to create art as ways of coping with despair and healing trauma and violence. Trauma not only destroys but also creates (Mahmoud, 2016, p. 54).

On the other hand, *Tar Baby* was written in 1981 by the African American novelist, Morrison, a Nobel Prize winner in literature. The events took place on the Caribbean Island of Isle de Chevaliers, located in the Caribbean Sea, during the 1950s-1960s, a period following the Civil Rights Movement, with a focus on the central theme of black people. Third person singular narrator is used in it; of course, the hidden identity of the narrator is ideologically used to share how discrimination, racism and lack of identity were dominating. The American society was, and still is, suffering from conflicts between race and culture through the lives of white people (represented by Valerian and his wife Margret, and the European Ryk) and black people (represented by Sydney and his wife Ondine, and Jade, who works as a fashion model in the French capital Paris, William Green, Yardman's family. Ahmadgoli and Alyasari (2021, p.225) sum up the importance of the novel as follows:

In *Tar Baby*, We have the fundamental ideological conflict between the white and the black which represents the ideological conflict between the Self/ Other or Western/ non-Western. As a result of this continuous conflict, we have the inner ideological conflict which takes place within the protagonists, Jadine, and Son, themselves.

The procedure is to focus on the main themes revealed by the selected extracts, using Jeffries' textual-conceptual tools to reproduce them. Twelve extracts of high reference to the lives of local people. Also, these extracts are mainly selected because they are more expressive than others, in which the main characters talk about and describe the lives and values of their local communities. Jeffries (2010) presents a comprehensive toolkit of textual conceptual tools, aiming to "conceptualise the topics they are addressing" and "to reveal implicit ideology in all types of texts" (p. 16). These tools

are used to reveal the text's ideological effect. According to Jeffries (2010, p.6), 'textual' refers to the features of the text that are represented by 'the lexis and grammar', and 'conceptual' to the roles these features have in constructing "the world of the text". These tools are naming and describing, representing actions/events/states, implying and assuming, prioritising, hypothesising, negating, presenting others' speech and thoughts, representing time, space, and society, equating and contrasting, exemplifying and enumerating" (see Jeffries, 2010, 2022). Like CDA, critical stylistic studies, as inferred by Olaluwoye (2015), focus on the reproduction (or representation) of implicit ideology rather than explicit ideology, also known as 'naturalisation'. This is because the implicit one is directly or indirectly related to the intended meaning of a character in a novel or contemporary poetry, as seen in Jeffries (2022). In fact, recognising where and how natural ideologies are manipulated requires significant attention, since some ideologies may be regarded as more naturalised than others. Therefore, a naturalised ideology in local societies is expected, but it is portrayed through different macro or micro themes. It is important to note that themes are what the researcher is behind; therefore, each theme is supported by examples from the selected extracts, followed by tables presenting the actual numbers of Jeffries' tools. This is to show that these tools are used similarly or differently in reproducing local people and local communities.

Analysis and Discussion

The selected 24 extracts from the two novels have revealed six standard themes in each novel, all of which are related, and have reported the following results. The six themes of Antoon's *The Corpse Washer* are: the psychological struggle from war trauma (Theme 1), deterioration of education and art (Theme 2), tribal traditions (Theme 3), insecurity (Theme 4), poverty (Theme 5), and violence (Theme 6). On the other hand, the six themes common in Morrison's *Tar Baby* are: binary opposition (Theme 1), liberty from racial constraints (Theme 2), the psychological struggle of the traumatic history of the slavery system (Theme 3), racism (Theme 4), the clash of colours (Theme 5), and the socialisation effect (Theme 6). These themes present a comprehensive portrait of each local society and the challenges ordinary people encounter in their daily lives. Because of the dramatic, catastrophic consequences of Saddam Hussein's regime (1968-2003), themes of war, insecurity and violence are not only in the speech of Antoon's novel, but also in the daily dialogue of ordinary, illiterate people, in addition to the educated ones (Blaydes, 2018). Besides, Theme 1, the psychological struggle from war trauma is outstanding, a theme that many studies have covered; the majority have tried to report the unfortunate and dangerous lives of people, resulting in a deformed local society (see Bassiouney 2020; Masmoudi, 2015; Albirni, 2016). This local society has increasingly been humiliated by the 2003 invasion of US troops and its negative consequences. The main findings after examining 26 novels in War and Occupation in Iraqi Fiction are presented by Masmoudi (2015, p.218) as follows:

Through the examination of different war experiences, whether under the rule of Saddam's regime or in the context of the American occupation and the war on terror, recent Iraqi novels portray the Iraqi individual – whether a soldier at the front or a fugitive war deserter who abhors ideology and politics or a humiliated individual under the occupier who blows himself up in a gesture of despair

and revenge or a detention camp detainee – as a *homo sacer*, ‘he who can be killed and not sacrificed’ without his killing becoming a murder. In these modalities of experiencing war and occupation, these four figures are revealed in their bareness, abandoned by the law, exposed and targeted, having only their given natural life, their *zoe*.

The following extracts taken from Jawad’s and Reems’ speeches are examples of the psychological struggle for war trauma, “when he dreamed that she was dead and she talked with him” (Antoon, 2010, p.1).

- *Jawad: “I wonder whether she is asleep or dead” “I am afraid to touch her”.. “I am about to hug and kiss her, but she warns me”(p.1)*
- *Reem: “Don’t kiss me. Wash me first so we can be together and then”?... “Wash me so we can be together... “I missed you so much” (p.1)*
- *Jawad: “I woke up panting and sweating. I wiped my forehead and face. The same nightmare had been recurring for weeks, with minor changes” (p.2)*

In another chapter of the novel, Jawad, the young corpse washer, dreamed that death came to talk with him:

- *“An old man with long white hair and a long white beard wakes me up and says in a voice that seems to come from afar: Wake up, Jawad, and write down all the names!”(Ch.6, p.30).*

These examples show that direct speech, deictic I, mental processes (by using ‘wonder’ to reveal doubt), and warm, relational processes (using *is* and *am*) connect the carriers ‘she’ and ‘I’ with the attributes ‘asleep or dead’, ‘afraid’, and ‘about to hug her’. The second extract is an imperative sentence starting with the syntactic negation ‘don’t’, and the material action processes ‘wash’ and ‘kiss’. This extract also includes ‘can’, which expresses the character’s deontic meaning, enumerating as in ‘and’, the mental process ‘missed’, and the personal deixis ‘we’, ‘I,’ and ‘you’ to refer to the deictic field. By using direct speech, Jawad, the main character, described the man (the death) using naming and describing, as in the referent noun ‘An old man’. The line also includes the material action process *wakes up* and *write*, the verbalisation ‘says’, an information structure as in the adverb ‘afar’, and the mental process and modal verb *seems* to express a certainty meaning. The direct speech contains the existential presupposition, as in the names.

To exemplify Theme 2, the deterioration of education and art, Jawad criticised the situation in schools, particularly highlighting the departure of many teachers who had either resigned or left to work as drivers. This situation was mainly related to teachers of the arts:

- *“Our school didn’t have a special arts room, and the administration wasn’t keen on providing the necessary material for teachers. Thus, most arts teachers, if they bothered to show up at all, would often kill time by chatting with us or letting us do our homework for other classes. Meanwhile, they would read the newspaper or look out the window, asking us to keep it down when we became too noisy”(p 32).*

Antoon changes this quotation from passive to active sentences to make the reader more directly aware of the reasons for the deterioration of education and art. The quotation includes a compound sentence and two subordinate clauses. The compound sentence contains an existential presupposition ‘in Our school’, ‘the newspaper’, ‘the window’, and ‘the administration’, and negation in ‘didn’t’ and

'wasn't' to make a clear referent point to the deterioration of education. The quotation also includes naming and describing in the noun arts, the relational process wasn't connected to the carrier, 'the administration', with the attribute 'keen' to describe the fact situation. The information structure, as in the propositional phrase 'on providing the necessary material for teachers', shows the government's dereliction in improving education. The extract has naming and describing, as in arts teachers, the mental processes 'bothered', 'looked', and 'became', the material action processes 'killed' and 'read', and the relational process 'became'.

The theme of tribal traditions is that ordinary people were humiliated if they considered changing their social status. The following extract, Jawad narrated his parents' debate about his job:

- *Jawad's father: "Your son would rather be a painter than do what I do," he told her as he climbed the stairs".*
- *Jawad's mother: "Is that true, Jawad?"*
- *Jawad: Yes, it is".*
- *Jawad's mother: "Why, son? Your father needs you to be by his side"*
- *Jawad: "What? Is it so shameful to work as a painter?"*

The direct speech in these extracts contains a subordinate clause introduced by the conjunction *what*, which represents his father's viewpoint. The use of the existential presupposition in 'Your son' instead of mentioning Jawad's name shows that his father intended to minimise the importance of the subject that he talks about. 'Would' is used to express a boulomaic meaning of Jawad's desire. The choice 'a painter' shows that Jawad was subjected to his father's power and forgot the idea of being an art teacher. The material action process 'do' refers to his father's action as a corpse washer. The use of the verbalisation process, 'told', and the material action process, 'claimed', shows his father's dissatisfaction with Jawad's choice because he left the discussion to Jawad's mother to talk with her son. The deictic projection appears via the personal deixis *I* and *he*. This extract also includes the existential presupposition of 'your father' and 'his side', as well as the mental process 'needs', which conveys a deontic meaning. The personal deixis 'You' and the information structure, as in the prepositional phrase 'by his side,' show the power ideology of tribal tradition, since his mother tried to persuade him to follow his father's line.

Insecurity is one of the overwhelming themes in Iraq, and a glance at its history provides numerous examples, particularly those examined in 26 novels by Masmoudi (2015). In Antoon's novel, the primary sources of insecurity in the Iraqi local society are Saddam's regime, with all its authorities, where a man was afraid of his wife, sons or neighbours. After the US invasion in 2003, bombing, kidnapping, and sectarian killing were common (Sabr & Jubair, 2025).

- *"We entered Iraq at dawn and it was a painful sight". "The border checkpoint with Jordan had only three soldiers and only one Iraqi official wearing slippers and stamping passports"... "He asked the official who decided who was allowed in and who was not, and he said the American officer decided. I just stamp"... "I told him that bribery had become endemic during the last years of the embargo and now was part of any transaction" (p. 79).*

This extract is narrated in a reflector mode and in direct speech and later in indirect speech. It includes simple and compound sentences. The simple sentence contains the personal deictic 'we' and 'it', which refers to Iraq. Also, the sentence contains the material action process entered, and the relative process was. The theme of insecurity appears in naming and describing through the noun 'sight', modified by the adjective 'painful'. The compound sentence includes the theme of insecurity, represented by the relational process 'had' and naming and describing in soldiers and 'official'. These are modified by the adjectives 'three', 'one Iraqi', 'border', and 'checkpoint', which are modified by 'the' to convey the function of existential presupposition. Moreover, the subordinate clause includes the personal deixis 'I,' which shows the deictic centre of Jawad's speech. The verbalisation process 'told' exhibits the verbiage of what Jawad said. The use of naming and describing in bribery, 'endemic the embargo', and 'transaction' supports the negative views and describes the corruption that is engulfing the Iraqi institutions. The use of the relational process 'become' and *was*, the temporal deixis 'now', and the information structure in the prepositional phrase 'during the last years of the embargo' emphasise that wars are the main cause of all corruption, as they increase poverty in the country.

These four themes are then supplemented by the last two themes, namely, poverty and violence. The most catastrophic situation of poverty Iraq and its local societies witnessed was during the embargo imposed after the Gulf War II (1991) (Popal, 2000), where local people sold everything for their living. People asked their children to leave school and find work to make a living. Thus, it is simply true to state that poverty leads people to violence. There are other macro forms of violence, especially after 2003, the majority of which are related to stealing and sectarian interests. The following extracts are examples of Themes 5 and 6, respectively.

- *"Umm Hammoudy had asked my father to take her son on as an assistant, and he agreed. He had left school after tenth grade to help her out and was exempt from military service because of the limp in his right leg which he got when he was hit by a speeding car while riding his bike on one of Kazimiyya's streets" (p.22).*
- *"One morning, we woke up and found this sack right at our doorstep." "They had a note with it saying: If you want the rest you must pay twenty thousand U.S. Dollars." "Call this number" (p.137).*

The six themes in Morrison's *Tar Baby*, and also in other novelists, as in *Racism in America: A Reader*, edited by Annette Gordon-Reed (2020), are directly related to the constant struggle of local communities, where slavery, racism, discrimination, lack of identity, and gender abuse are evident (see also Rose, 2017). For example, Foy (2020, p.xiii), presenting a reference handbook of racism in America focusing mainly on reasons, challenges, and profiles, states that:

... racism goes far beyond the interactions between individuals. It plays a substantial role in and through institutions like the government, the education system, the health care system, and the banking industry via formal rules (e.g., laws that limit access to members of a certain racial group) and informal norms (e.g., a bank's unwritten but patterned practice of denying loans to minorities

This concept of racism is evident in the following extracts in Morrison's *Tar Baby*:

- *“The woman appeared simply at a time when she had a major decision to make: of the three raucous men, the one she most wanted to marry and who was desperate to marry her was exciting and smart and fun and sexy?”(p.61).*
- *“You rape me and they’ll feed you to the alligators. Count on it, nigger. You good as dead right now ”(p.137).*
- *“Ondine had been watching the exchanges with too bright eyes, chagrined by Margaret’s defense of her interests. Having caused all the trouble, now she was pretending that Ondine was the source of the dispute”(p.230).*
- *“I may be a cook, Mr. Street, but I’m a person too” ... “I’ll tell it. She wants to meddle in my kitchen, fooling around with pies” ... “And my help gets fired!”(p.230).*
- *“Whatever. My face wasn’t in every magazine in Paris. Yours was. Prettiest thing I ever saw. Made those white girls disappear. Just disappear right off the page”(p.54)*
- *“I can’t let you hurt me again. You stay in that medieval slave basket if you want to. You will stay there by yourself. Don’t ask me to do it with you. I won’t”(p.300).*
- *“There is nothing any of us can do about the past but make our own lives better, that’s all I’ve been trying to help you do. That is the only revenge, for us to get over. Way over. But no, you want to talk about white babies; you don’t know how to forget the past and do better”(p.300).*
- *“Yardman, however, was accommodating. Not only did he run errands for them in the town, he swept, mowed, trimmed, clipped, transplanted, moved stones, hauled twigs and leaves, sprayed and staked as well as washed windows, reset tiles, resurfaced the drive, fixed locks, caught rats—all manner of odd jobs” (p.55).*
- *“White? She was startled out of fury” ... “White? She was startled out of fury” ... “I’m not. you know I’m not white!”(Ch.4,p.138)*

In the first extract, the narrator uses two subordinate clauses with the conjunction words 'when' and 'who'. The first includes the existential presupposition and the naming and describing to modify the noun 'the woman'; the material action process 'appeared', the third personal deixis, 'she', and the relational process 'had'. The verb 'appeared' also functions as a modal verb to express a perception meaning. In the second subordinate clause, the narrator uses naming and describing in the referent noun 'men' modified by 'the' and 'three raucous'. Also, the narrator used enumerating twice by the conjunction *and* to list more than one adjective. These textual-conceptual tools exhibit that Morrison shows the ideology of segregation between the black and white races through these three lines when Jadine is confused about making any decision that might connect her with the white society. She felt that her black society would reject her if she married a white man because black people have never forgotten the slavery system, even after the Civil Rights Movement ended all segregation and discrimination against them. In the fourth extract, the narrator reports Ondine's speech by using direct speech. Ondine used the personal deixis 'she' to refer to Margret to show deictic projection and the social deixis 'Mr.' to refer to Valerian. Ondine also repeated the first-person deixis three times to express that she was at the deictic centre of her speech. In the first line, she used the modal auxiliary 'may' to convey epistemic meaning, expressing her knowledge; then she equated the two ideas by using parallel structures that the cook was also human via the referent nouns 'cook' and 'person'. The structure of the sentence also involves the relational process 'am' to connect the carrier 'I' with the attribute 'person'. The second line includes the modal auxiliary will that conveys epistemic meaning to express her certainty. The use of the verbalisation process 'tell', and the personal deixis it refers to what Margaret did in the kitchen. In the third sentence, she used the mental process 'wants' and an information structure by 'in my kitchen'. In the last extract of *Tar Baby*, Jadine repeated the first-person deixis 'I' and negated it in 'I'm not' to insist on her viewpoint that she is not white. She addressed Son by the personal pronoun 'you'. She defended herself by using a factive presupposition through the mental process 'know' with an implied certainty meaning to insist on the fact that he said the opposite thing. Also, the verb conveys an epistemic meaning to emphasise her viewpoint. Moreover, she emphasised that Son's speech was not true by using negation, and the relational process 'am' not with the adjective 'white' in 'am not white'. These tools illustrate an important ideology about how socialisation shapes different cultures, which increases conflict between generations of the same race, since Jadine and Son look for each other differently.

A nuanced reading of the six themes of American local society presented in Morrison's novel reveals two key points. The first point is her emphasis on the discriminating nature of her long life as an African American; a situation may be relatively similar to other minorities (like Mexicans or Muslims), but based on different themes and reasons. The use of 'white girl', 'nigger', 'medieval slave', 'rape', 'white babies', 'my face', and 'I am a person too' are examples of these themes. The use of an invisible narrator also denies the existence of the other. These extracts also confirm not only the clash of colours, but also the clash of cultures, since adjectives like 'white' and 'black' are real examples. The second point is Morrison's belief that literary works continue to influence the ideological opposition of 'WE vs. THEM'. Besides, these six themes are presented in this novel as messages in various forms and designs to readdress the national texture. The following table presents the reported instances of these six themes of each novel, accompanied by their representation by

Jeffries' ten textual conceptual functions. The present study is not intended to be contrastive, as themes differ across the novels; however, it is possible to note that these functions are used differently to convey those themes. One of the reasons behind such differences is the use of the narrator *I* in Antoon's *The Corpse Washer* and an invisible narrator in Morrison's *Tar Baby*.

Table 1: The use of textual conceptual functions in representing themes

No	Textual Conceptual Tools		Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 3	Theme 4	Theme 5	Theme 6	Total
1	State/Action / Event	<i>The Corpse Washer</i>	41	27	8	48	27	41	192
		<i>Tar Baby</i>	25	18	43	29	26	33	174
2	Naming and Describing	<i>The Corpse Washer</i>	9	10	5	28	12	26	88
		<i>Tar Baby</i>	24	16	18	8	24	23	113
3	Deixis	<i>The Corpse Washer</i>	31	17	5	13	9	23	98
		<i>Tar Baby</i>	1	14	6	15	15	14	66
4	Implying and Assuming	<i>The Corpse Washer</i>	9	10	6	18	9	13	65
		<i>Tar Baby</i>	17	6	8	13	2	18	63
5	Prioritizing	<i>The Corpse Washer</i>	8	9	3	16	10	9	55
		<i>Tar Baby</i>	5	2	5	11	4	5	32
6	Presenting Others' Speech and Thought	<i>The Corpse Washer</i>	12	5	7	8	5	12	49
		<i>Tar Baby</i>	15	4	9	4	11	2	45
7	Hypothesizing	<i>The Corpse Washer</i>	14	4	2	5	2	3	30
		<i>Tar Baby</i>	6	7	4	6	4	6	33
8	Negating	<i>The Corpse Washer</i>	5	6	0	9	6	0	26
		<i>Tar Baby</i>	4	5	4	5	10	4	32
9	Exemplifying and Enumerating	<i>The Corpse Washer</i>	3	0	1	1	1	0	6
		<i>Tar Baby</i>	0	0	5	3	1	3	12

10	Equating and Contrasting	<i>The Corpse Washer</i>	3	0	0	1	0	1	5
		<i>Tar Baby</i>	3	1	3	7	4	1	19
Total		<i>The Corpse Washer</i>	13	88	35	147	81	12	614
		<i>Tar Baby</i>	5	73	105	101	101	10	589

This table also shows that there is an ideological similarity between the two novelists; Morrison has maintained a relatively equal number of instances for each theme, with the only notable difference being Theme 2, namely, liberty from racial constraints. On the other hand, different numbers of occurrences of the six themes are reported in Antoon's novel, which can justify the instability of life in Iraqi local society. It is a society built on insecurity and poverty for many generations, and the three or four wars Iraq witnessed under the dictatorship of Saddam are among the reasons for this instability. Additionally, the theme of tribal traditions has not been reported as influential, especially in times of crisis, when local people are preoccupied with their daily life needs. Moreover, as mentioned by Halyut and Abed (2022a), it is possible to confirm the overgeneralisation of poverty as a dominating reason for Iraqi and American local people's suffering in their local society, as well as ignorance and injustice. Halyut and Abed (2022b) elaborate here, stating that in Iraq, it is possible to see instances of gender-bias when local people prevent their daughters from education, while giving this privilege to their sons to do so; of course, this is not related to any governmental or constitutional regularities, but to individual and tribal decisions. The following table presents a detailed account of the frequencies and percentages of the subcategories of Jeffries's ten textual conceptual functions. The percentages related to *The Corpse Washer* are calculated by dividing the frequency by the total number of occurrences, which is 614, while *Tar Baby* has 589 occurrences.

Table 2: Subcategories of Textual Conceptual Functions

NO	Textual Conceptual Functions	Subcategories				
			<i>The Corpse Washer</i>		Tar Baby	
			Freq	%	Freq	%
1	State/Action/Event	Material action process	91	14.98	80	13.67
		Mental process	49	7.98	52	8.82
		Relation process	29	4.78	22	3.76
		Verbalization process	23	3.76	20	3.39
2	Naming and Describing	The choice of the noun	51	8.30	31	5.26
		Noun modification	36	5.86	35	5.94

		Nominalization	1	0.16	-	0	
3	Deixis	Personal deixis	97	15.79	102	17.31	
		Temporal deixis	1	0.16	3	0.50	
		Social deixis	0	0	4	0.64	
		Spatial deixis	0	0	4	0.64	
4	Prioritizing	Subordination	32	5.12	17	2.88	
		Information structure	17	2.76	14	2.37	
		Transformation	6	0.97	1	0.16	
5	Implying and Assuming	Existential prospection	60	9.77	57	9.97	
		Logical presupposition	5	0.81	6	1.01	
6	Presenting Others' Speech and Thought	Direct speech	31	5.04	39	6.62	
		Free indirect speech	9	1.46	5	0.84	
		Indirect speech	5	0.81	-	0	
		Narrative report thought	3	0.48	-	0	
		Direct thought	1	0.16	1	0.16	
7	Hypothesizing	Category A narrative	Modal auxiliary	8	1.30	-	0
			Modal verb	12	1.95	-	0
		Category B narrative	Modal auxiliary	9	1.46	20	3.39
			Modal verbs	1	0.16	10	1.69
			Modal adverb	-	0	3	0.50
		8	Negating	Syntactic negation	17	2.76	21
Lexical item	6			0.97	9	1.52	
Negative pronoun	2			0.32	2	0.33	
Morphological process	1			0.16	-	0	
9	Exemplifying and Enumerating	Enumerating	6	0.97	12	2.03	
10		Parallel structure	3	0.48	10	1.69	

Equating and Contrasting	Metaphorical equivalence	2	0.32	4	0.64
	Negating opposition	-	0	4	0.64
	Replacive opposition	-	0	1	0.16
Total		614		589	

The two tables above report several important findings. 192 (31.2%) instances of State/Action/Event are found in *The Corpse Washer*, compared with 174 (29.54%) for *Tar Baby*. This indicates that such higher percentages are used to express the ideational function in Halliday's functional grammar, i.e., transitivity. Besides, 90 (14.98%) and 80 (13.67%) instances of material process were the highest in this transitivity system, indicating that the characters in the selected extracts were active in their local and worker roles. On the contrary, the fewest processes and their percentages were reported in verbalisation, indicating that listeners were more ideologically inclined than speakers; a point Morrison conveys through the use of the invisible narrator. The numbers and percentages of Hypothesising have also confirmed this point: category A narrative instances were reported for *The Corpse Washer*, with none for *Tar Baby* due to the use of narrator *I*. Another important finding is the greater use of existential propositions over logical presuppositions in both novels. Based on Jeffries' argument, the former indicates that the characters are very aware of their situations and have no time to rely on their interactions based on previous presuppositions. That is, the characters in both novels are negatively portrayed, as they have no clear chance to change their lives; the exception is the black girl in Morrison, who aspires to be a member of a higher social class, like the white one. This finding is considerably supported by the use of personal deixis in both novels, in contrast to the absence of instances of social and spatial deixis. The researchers believe that this indicates that those characters are imprisoned in their names, with no room for extra space or social titles. This has ideological significance in Antoon's novel, where Jawad's family and friends refuse to let him change his career and become a painter or sculptor. This finding is also confirmed by Equating and Contrasting, which show no instances in *The Corpse Washer*, compared with eight in *Tar Baby*. As for the language in both novels, the use of active voice, as represented by the transformation in Prioritising, is much more evident than the passive voice. Additionally, the use of subordinate and negative structures is also reported. Compared to the use of indirect speech in Presenting Others' Speeches and Thoughts, the number of direct speech instances in both novels is significantly higher; this is ideologically used to suggest that unmarked language is more influential in reproducing the ordinary people. Finally, the two tables show that those ordinary people and their local societies are simple (and unmarked) in their ideas, ambitions, and willingness to change. Therefore, one or two studies are available to examine the ideological conflicts among characters of both novels; for Morrison's novel, Ahmadgoli and Alyasari (2021) confirm that Son's and Jadine's ideological war for resisting or following the ideology of the white, respectively, ends in the following way:

But the writer, here, thinks that Jadine, at last, wins the battle because she stayed just as loyal and faithful to her white ideology and culture, but Son's returning to look for Jadine means that he

surrendered to the white ideology and culture. Therefore, at last, white ideology and culture success the clash against the black ideology and culture. Morrison, in this novel, endeavours to display the profound influence of Western ideology and culture on young black people (p. 232).

Conclusions

The present study traces how the themes of local communities are represented in selected novels. This ideological reproduction of local societies in Iraq and the United States (represented by ordinary people) is through the ten textual conceptual tools proposed by Jeffries (2010). Antoon's *The Corpse Washer* and Morrison's *Tar Baby* have presented their societies as socially and economically wounded, more than politically; even the Iraqi regime (1968-2003) is the main reason for the suffering of Iraqis. However, such a political stance has not been reported in Morrison's novel since their suffering is related to racism, identity and hegemony. A difference can be observed between Antoon and Morrison, with the former focusing on society's collective identity. In contrast, Morrison has focused on both individual and collective racial identity. The former is reported when some Black African Americans regard their black friends and relatives as socially lower than them for different reasons. The latter is evident in the hegemonic nature of white power over black people. The reported six themes identified in the novels can be relatively regarded as similar even the numbers of occurrences are different; the use of unmarked (direct and active) language, the main characters' ambitions for change, the rejection of these changes by other members of their local society, the focus on using material processes, the use of existential propositions, and the extensive use of vocabularies to state that the representatives of these local societies were being raped and slaved by the majority are examples of such similarity.

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