

The Changing Content in the Short Stories of Zakariyya Tamir¹

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1. Introduction

The development of the literary products of Zakariyya Tamir is framed within modernism. The writer does not move from one literary school to another. Rather, he remains within the same narrative trend he started since his first story at the late fifties. The development of the content of his stories, however, is achieved through withdrawing from universal concerns, which dominated the stories of the late fifties and sixties, to focus on the worries of the Arab and Syrian man in particular².

Zakariyya Tamir's first story collection: *The Neighing of the White Horse*, came out in 1960, while his second story collection: *Spring in the Ashes*, came out in 1963. In 1970, after a seven-year interval, he presented his readers with a new collection entitled: *The Thunder*, which testifies to a remarkable development in his

¹ Zakariyya Tamir, a self-educated Syrian writer in his late seventies, was born and raised in Al-Bahsa neighborhood in Damascus. At an early age, he worked for a blacksmith. Then he moved to work in journalism and TV. He became literary active in the mid 1960s. Some of his literary work began to appear first on the pages of literary magazines like Damascus , Al-Thaqafah and Al-'Adab of Beirut. His first story was published in 1956.

(See: Omar Al-Daqaq, *The Arts of Contemporary Literature*. The Orient House: Halab 1971, p.196; Faruq Abd-Al-Qader. "Reading In Zakariyya Tamir's Stories", *Al-Hilal*. July 1971, p.58; Mohammad Al-Maghut. *Al-Adab*. April-May, 1978, p.33; Imtinan Samadi. *Zakariyya Tamir and the Short Story*. Amman: The Arabic Institution for Studies, 1995. Pp.23-35; M. Manzalaoui, *Arabic Writing Today*. Cairo: 1968, p.269; H. al Khateeb. "A modern Syrian Short Story" *JAL*. vol 3, p.96).

² This change in content had been paralleled with a change in the artistic form and the structure of the text. Review my article:" Form/ Content Match: A Study on Tamir's Collection "The Neighing of the White Horse" *Al-Majma*. 3(2010), pp. 71-94.

literary work. In 1973, he collected lots of his stories, which were already published in various magazines since the early days of his literary career. To these collected stories, Zakariyya added those other stories, which were not published until that time and presented them to the readers under the name: *Damascus of the Fires*. His fifth collection entitled: *Tigers on the Tenth Day*, was published in 1978. These five collections are the subject matter of this study³.

In his stories, zakariyya portrayed the feelings of alienation, boredom and suffocation. His stories also depicted hunger, backwardness, duress and the various types of murder.

In addition, however, he enveloped his stories in a poetic formulation which contradicts the direct tragic content. He “deals with tragedy in a non-tragic sense, using a poeticity that depicts poetic feelings which run contrary to the tragedy... He tends to drown any dim tragic voice with an over-flowing poetry”⁴.

Transcending poetry to dreams, we find the heroes of his stories dreaming about a clean world, women, love and green pastures allied with the blue skies, creating a new and happy life giving man bread and joy, without polluting his heart with hatred. In his various story collections one can find those stories whose heroes are children. Children with their innocence represent hope in a world overwhelmed by aggression and hostility. In this regard, Tamir says: “I have to grant children a

³ After a long interval, he resumed writing and published: *Noah's Summons*, 1994; *We Shall Laugh*, 1998; *The Sour Grapes*, 2000; *Breaking Knees*, 2002; and *The Hedgehog*, 2005.

⁴ Sabri Hafid. “Zakariyya Tamir The Poet of Horror and Beauty”, *Al-Tali'a*. Jnuary, 1973, p.172.

small piece of land to stand on”⁵. Thus evil, beauty and hope seem to live side by side in a reconciliatory manner.

This “duality” does not indicate contradiction. Rather, it is an attempt to bring contradictory things together. There is a balance between fertility and sterility, kenosis and plerosis⁶. The stories revolve around the following poles: first, the tendency to commit suicide and withdraw from a life which is burdened with bitterness and evil. The second pole, hope and dreams for physical and spiritual fulfillment as a type of compensatory imagination, as means to digest reality and reconcile with it. Subsequently this collective outlook allows us to view the single story, each story collection and all of Zakariyya Tamir’s world as one organic unit with no contradiction.

2. The world of the city

The city has an important status in modern Arabic literature in general and in poetry in particular. The reason for this is the move the Arab society made from an agrarian to an urban society, with the beginning of the renaissance. This development was accompanied with the suffering stemming from the new experience.

This Arab literary man opposed the city on the basis of its lack of appreciation of moral values. The city leads the way to moral suffocation among people. The symptoms of this suffocation have become obvious through the mechanical contact

⁵ Review: Adeb ‘izzat. *Contemporary Arabic Literature*. Damascus: 1979, p.304.

⁶ The idea and the concept are borrowed from a study about the organic unity of the Jahilite poem by: A. Hamori. *On The Art of Medieval Arabic Literature*. Princeton: 1974, Chapter I.

among people and giving up individual's basic rights⁷. Arab literary men's rejection of the world of the city ranges from absolute rejection to refusing some of its negative values. Arab authors were given the opportunity to view the attitudes of their European counterparts regarding the emptiness of the city, its destruction and inability to make people happy. These samples of the Europeans among other means, have been presented to the widely-read and well-educated Arab literary men, who have represented them in their literature experience. This is where influence by literary impact come from T. S. Eliot, who portrayed more than any other European literary man, drought and bareness in his poem "The Waste Land", was among the most prominent poets to leave the strong impact on contemporary Arabic literature.

In the literature of Zakariyya Tamir, particularly stories written in the 1960s, one can find a bleak portrayal of the city atmosphere: "The city had been an old prostitute, with a pale and tired face which does not know what a smile is: (*Neighing*- "Smile": p.51); "Oh my city, one day I was born on your pavements, and I will remain till death tied to it" (*Neighing*- "A Man from Damascus": p. 75). The city appears as a symbolic tantamount to the loss of innocence and innateness:

"He is as kind and innocent as a child who was born away from the city" (*Neighing*- "The Nigger Man": p.17); "I will kill you. That old sword, and it has a victim each night. I said it is like my own city" (*Neighing*- "neighing": p.41). Man in the city is sad and lives in despair. He is lost among the noise: " I have fed my flesh, memories and old dreams to black crows, which soared over me during day time whose sun is cold and sad, its hours are all buried under the pouring ashes which gush from the wound of a despaired man who is crucified in the midst of the big city's noise" (*Neighing*- "Smile": p. 44)

⁷ Manaaf Mansoor. *Man and the World of the City in Modern Arabic Poetry*. Beirut: 1978, p.16.

Bit by bit, the reasons become clearer, they are hunger, depression and boredom:

“I may have found while roaming my city which I have always dreamt about the possibility of its existence... a city of a new but strange type... A city which had hanged hunger, depression and boredom” (*Neighing*-“A Man from Damascus” P.66) ; “ I wish I were a set of wild knives planted in the heart of a city which gives her children nothing except hunger, loss and depression. I am the unknown enemy of the city” (*Neighing*- “The Song”: P.12).

Then comes the pessimistic outlook to drown all the scenes of the city. Buildings are scattered and rife with the scum of the most degenerate people (*Neighing*- “The Song”: P.9), The tar is dim (*Neighing* –“The nigger”: P.26), Street lamps are yellow and pale and hanging of the black pillars (*Neighing* –“The Cellar”: P. 30). None of these descriptions exists in the external reality. Rather, the internal prejudice of the narrator has crept into them and coated them with a gloomy cover. Juxtaposed to these scenes are the factory and the machine, which represent the world of the city- causing anger and hatred:

“And the factory will bury you in its wild bellies... fatigue, fatigue, fatigue... Will you ever forget the smell of the burning flesh of the worker, which the melting combusted iron fell on it” (*Neighing* –“neighing”; P. 38-39). Then he bursts shouting in the face of this imported mechanical civilization:

“You, machines, are criminal creatures imported from distant countries, harboring miseries for us. I order your destruction in the name of man, who wishes to live peacefully, purely and healthily” (*Neighing*-“The Song”: p.14)

His scream was not against the machine in the literal sense of the word as understood by Husam Al-Khateeb: “When he wrote these words there were only few small factories in Damascus and its vicinities.”⁸.

I have two comments to make on Al-Khateeb’s statement: First, That industry has prospered tremendously in Syria (in Halab and Damascus in particular) in the aftermath of the Second World War, which pushed huge drove of villagers to move and live in cities, leading to a great increase in the number of city dwellers⁹. Therefore I believe that Khateeb’s remark is inaccurate. Second, the machine represents the imported civilization and urban life in its comprehensive sense. The protagonist revolted against the machine because it had adversely affected the innate “tranquil, pure and good life” and thus changed the human being, whom he calls upon to regain his lost humanity: “One day, this factory will be destroyed in the name of man” (*Neighing*-“The Song”: P.16); “You will be fired from this factory... this is about the only punishment they have and you will get back your lost humanity”(*Neighing* –“The nigger”: p.24)

How had the city changed man in Tamir’s stories? He has become lonely and lost among creeping creatures: “I am nothing but a lost creature in the crowdedness of an old big city” (*Neighing* –“neighing”: p.35); “Lonely like the infected dog of the markets” (*Neighing* –“neighing” :p. 36), He even alienated from those he was always known. The portrayal of alienation reaches a point in which the writer depicts a mother who shows no signs of recognition to her children and siblings seem unable to recognize each other (*Neighing* –“Smile”, pp45-46). His father,

⁸ Husam Al-Khateeb. *Means of foreign influences on modern Syrian story*. Cairo: 1973, p.96; Review as well: Mohyi Al-Deen Mohammad. “The white horse and the time of bitterness”, *Al-Adab*. November, 1960, pp. 25-26.

⁹ Review: Gabriel Baer, *The Arabs of the Middle East*. Tel-Aviv: The United Kipputz, Pp. 204-237.

mother and sister all witness against Sulaiman Al-Halabi (*Spring in Ashes*- "The Crime": 29-31). Such sights become more surrealistic and strange when Omar Al-Sa'di denies his own hand: "His hand which was moving alone drew his attention. He inspected it thoughtfully and smiled, and he was pervaded by a feeling that this hand is strange to him" (*Spring*-"River": p.69). Even the hero of the story "Hunger", in *The Thunder* Collection, looks for Ahmad, who was none but himself.

City for Tamir is a synonym for a corrupt reality. He sees nothing in it except routine, self-denial, absurdity and killing boredom. He owns nothing in it apart from his demeaned body, which tortures him by his pressing and instinctive needs: food and sex. The question still is: Does his rebellion mean that there is an alternative in the form of a utopian city or another lost city? The writer says: "throughout my journey, I may have found the city which I have always dreamt of the possibility of its existence, a city of a new and peculiar type, a city which had hanged hunger, depression and boredom, which has no history and whose days pass by anonymously" (*Neighing*-"A Man from Damascus": P66).

Yet, the invoked city is the daughter of the visions and dreams: "I will turn the city into a big village, surrounded at all sides by green fields which stretch endlessly. This village will have a huge area... all people will meet in it every evening... thousands of men and women will participate in a song which will talk about land, man and love" (*Neighing*- "The Song": p14). Nature in its land, greenery, sun, blue sky and sog, is a basic ingredient of this invoked and alternative world (See: *The Cellar*: p.34).

Tamir's solution to change the world in order to save one's self develops from naïve and romantic solutions to an invitation to resurrection and renewal. In the story *Spring in the Ashes*(p.83), the city burns completely and spring comes from the ashes, the sun shines anew and a new and happy life full of birds, red roses and

children is created. This same idea reoccurs in *The Thunder*. Resurrection begins with the shining on the debris.

My final note to seal this chapter is, that the world of the city and worldly worries is a phenomenon which characterized the stories of the 1960s. Yet, Tamir has moved further to present his Modernistic and Postmodernistic experience.

3. Sex

Sex and women are among those topics which occupy a special status in the narrative experience of Zakariyya Tamir throughout his story collections. However, the way the writer treats this topic relatively changes from one stage to another. In the first stage, for example, the writer related to sex as an expression of man's lust for life and physical fulfillment. In later stages, he views it as part of social reality. This parallels the move from the internal to the external. This does not necessarily mean that there have been uncontrolled functions for sex , distributed among other collections. Therefore, I will handle this topic not on the basis of stages and phases but on the basis of a synchronic method.

3.1 Sex as hunger for life and physical fulfillment

Sex here is a dream-like desire which is not achieved. The heroes are deprived of this physical fulfillment as they are deprived of the simplest of their other rights as human beings, like bread and freedom. Desire for pure love torments the heroes of the stories. When they find their loved one, she either runs away or taken from them, as hunger and death have taken away Omaima, in the story "The Harsh Blue Song", and as the girl in the story "Saheel" was taken away. "you used to have a girl... a city of revels and joy... She was taken away from you" (*Neighing-Saheel*: P. 38).

Although there are reasons which deprived them of those they love, they still have a strong desire and starvation for fulfillment: “ I need a woman who can sleep at night very close to me... the voice of her breath will intoxicate me... I will hungrily touch her tender flesh, trembling as if the edge of a knife is pressing against my throat... my face will drown in the spring of her black her” (*Neighing* – “The Song”: p 11). It is a far-fetched dreamy desire. He will meet the woman he wishes in the new town which he is looking for (*Neighing* – “A man from Damascus”: p. 67). He may marry her after becoming a king (“the Song”: P. 14). He may ever attain her in his imagination: “I have constantly imagined the semi blind-folded girl (...) while her naked body is wriggling beneath the heavy weight of my triumphant body, which is delighted in the birth of its monstrous revels” (*Neighing* – “The cellar”: p.30)¹⁰. Owing to the fact that the dream has been nothing but the fabric of imagination, the harsh reality steps in to destroy everything leaving him with no choices but the bodies of the prostitutes¹¹.

Tamir’s sexual hunger is sometimes tied to hunger in its physiological meaning. Bodily needs as a result of hunger for food and sexual fulfillment are inter-related. He views his lover “beautiful as bread” (*Neighing* “Saheel”: p. 42). He loves a girl “as strongly as he loves bread” (“A Man from Damascus”: P. 73). In the story “The Dry Loaf of Bread” of the collection *Damascus of Fires*, Laila gives in to Abbas for a loaf of bread. He even finally turns his back on her for the sake of bread: “he started stripping her of her clothes but she showed no signs of resistance. Rather she surrendered like a child who surrenders for her mother (...) Abbas felt confused and embarrassed and look towards the table where the loaf of bread is located. Touching the smooth flesh, he began to imagine the loaf of bread soaking

¹⁰Review also: “The tulip”: p. 105

¹¹ For more examples review: *Neighing* “A Man from Damascus” Pp 64-65; “The Dead River”, p. 101

water, with the smell of the fields that have been under heavy rains” (p.48). Finally, in his story, “The Treasure”, Ahmad dreams to make a woman out of gold (*Neighing* –“The Treasure”: P. 92). Thus the dimensions of the tragedy of the heroes of this stage are revealed. The two sides of the problem are represented in both sex and hunger.

3.2 Women and Sex as part of social reality

Material impoverishment and hunger lead women to sell their bodies. Laila in “The Dry Loaf of Bread” sells her body for bread as mentioned above. The tragedy of the hero of the story “Smile, Oh Her Face!” refers to his childhood memories of his mother, when she used to sell her body to men. His memories are arisen when he bumps into a child standing next to the wall waiting for his mother: “ I instantly remembered his mother... an innocent, beautiful yet poor woman, who is thrown on the bed of a strange man devouring her naked body while she is thinking of her child who is waiting for her and of the money which she will possess after a short while” (PP. 50-51). This is an intelligent indication that the tragedy of the hero is a social rather than a personal one.

This issue has another face to it as well. A society with oppressive customs and traditions abuses women. When A’isha, the university student in the story “the Lambs” takes off her “long dress”, The religious leader of the neighborhood advises men to murder her- after he gave up on her parents’ cooperation with him- out of fear of the deviation of men and women taking her as a role model. Her brother is killed while defending her. Fatema, the girl who “all the trees dream about” in the story “the death of the black hair” *Damascus of fires* is also killed, because her husband incited her brother against her as a revenge for not hearing from her the words of love which he had hoped for. All this happens at the sight of the people of the Sa’di neighborhood. In the “face of the Moon”-*Damascus*, Sameeha’s husband divorces her because he desired for a woman who “would sigh

and whose flesh would tremble when sniffing the smell of a man". Being the real cause for her complex, only when the patriarchal authority, symbolized by the lemon tree, falls, does she feel liberated of her sexual complex.

Another rebellion is found in the story "The Snow of the End of the Night"- *Spring In The Ashes*, when the lass escapes her father's house to live with her poor husband without her father's will and when the father signals to his son to kill her. Then the son himself changes and rebels like Sameeha: "My years are wasted... I need a different world without a father" (P. 14). In his sleep, he sees himself getting rid of the snake- which symbolizes the father- "When he returns home he will see the snake thrown in the yard cold dead, and look triumphantly at his depressed father" (P. 19). Regarding the story of the "Eastern Wedding"- *The Thunder*, he depicts in a caricature style the societal customs of marriage and its rituals: "Haifa's father sighed and said: What do you want me to do? She is my only daughter; I have to care for her future. Well, I charge thirty liras for each kilo". Salah's father welcomed the new price. Haifa was sent hastily to the market, where she was put on a large scale. She weighed fifty kilos and Salah's father paid the price, while ululations were becoming louder and louder" (p. 62). In this caricature picture, the woman is nothing but a body sold like lambs. Summed up, the picture is an embodiment and enlargement of the picture of the woman in the bigger society, "The woman which society reduced her life to a body and her existence to a tool for sex and delivering babies"¹².

3.3 Existential Sex

In late stage stories, sex has a different function. It plays the role of existential salvation. This is best represented in the story "Napalm, Napalm" (The Thunder),

¹² Latifa Al-Zayyat. "Images of women in Arabic stories", *Al-Itihad*. the 10th of August 1984, p.6.

a story of a certain time and place. It talks about one of the days of the defeat of 1967 war. Depression and total confusion pervade the two heroes of the story. Ahmad and Laila walk into the streets “like two scared cats” because the war , which has left burned masses of flesh with no signs of human life in the hospitals, has saddened them. Then Ahmad invites her to his room to make love and there “He sees her naked and then the sun of June dwindles (...) the mouths of two hungry people meet eager for joy. At that very moment, the land has burned the clothes of mourning and its children sang for the green grass, and the enemies committed suicide and their bombs turned into red roses” (P. 40).

The heroes of the story find their salvation in love. Sexual desire becomes an existential salvation. Nakedness here may mean the clarity of the fact that the shame of June can never be gotten rid of unless it appears. But gain the man with the long beard, the owner of the building, interferes to destroy the moment of hope and happiness. The idea of the death of love has crowded Tamir’s stories; this love which been performed routinely and mechanically as it appears in “ Al-Ra’d”-*The Thunder*: Pp 32-33, in the “Dry Loaf”-*Damascus*, and “The Oriental Wedding”. It is similar to the scene of the typist in the poem of Eliot albeit the difference in experience and vision¹³.

3.4 Sexual Deviation

Sexual deviation is an indication of the loss of innocence. First, we should provide some examples: in the story “ A man from Damascus”-*Neighing*: PP 75-76, a ten year-old girl who sells lottery tickets passes by, when the hero of the story bargains with her over her body. In the same story (P.74) an old man chases a boy in an attempt to talk him into making love to him. In “The Pirates”- *The Spring in the*

¹³ See: “The Fire Sermon”, in: T. S. Eliot. *The Waste land- Selected Poems*. London: Faber and Faber, 1922. p.200.

Ashes, PP 89-90, the pirate glances a girl who is barely nine years old, wearing a short dress. Realizing that the pirate is looking at her, she lifts up her dress. Out of her eyes does come a glance of “an old whore”. Among the most deviant and cruel of these scenes is what appeared in the story of the “The Flower”- *The Tigers*: PP. 30-31. The last scene represent the rotten contradiction to the love of the owner of the thick and weak hand which is buried in the soil. Seeing this scene “the thick and feeble hand trembled and the flower fell escaping to the darkness of the soil.” (P. 31). To sum up, these scenes present a surrealistic picture, which makes a powerful impact on the reader. “The reader finds himself standing against distorted reflection of reality similar to what might happen to us when we look into a curve mirror and find our faces to be ugly and disgusting. This distorted picture however has its roots in reality”¹⁴. These scenes say that man has absolutely lost his innocence as a result of being in a petty world full of bitterness. All that is unreasonable is likely to happen in light the unreasonableness of what happens around us.

4. Freedom

The idea of freedom completely dominates the stories of the second pole of Zakariyya Tamir, although its ramifications appear in his second collection¹⁵. The character of the policeman enters into these stories. The character of the policeman, together with those of the judges and investigators, is a tool of oppression which symbolizes the dominating political system to entrap, punish and humiliate the individual citizen. It wastes his dignity and humanity and kills him in a vicious way, tearing him into pieces (“The Crime”- *Spring*), or puncture his body with

¹⁴ See: Sasson Somekh. *The world of Yousif Idris*. Tel Aviv: A.P.House, 1976. p.10.

¹⁵ Review for example :“The Old Door”; “The River”; “The Crime”, in: *Spring in the Ashes*.

daggers (“The Servants of Allah”- *The Thunder*), or hang him in front of a huge crowd (“The Policeman and the horse”- *The Thunder*)

The individual citizen may often be arrested, judged and killed for no reason or merely for practicing his simplest rights as a human being- Sighing- The hero of “The Egel” is killed and prevented from sighing, “leaving the sun rise every morning”. The hero of “The Jail”-*The Thunder* is taken to jail from his comfortable house after the latter was attacked because he believed that the “The tomb is not a good place for humans”. In the story “One of those nights” -*The Tigers*, Abu Hasan is taken to jail, where his manhood and dignity are humiliated and his moustaches are shaved for an alleged robbery which he has never carried out. In the story “The Servants of Allah”-*The Thunder*, Abdu-Allah practices his right in putting on shoes like other people. Yet, he is taken to a spacious yard, where he is stabbed with very sharp daggers.

Sometimes, arrest and punishment are the result of rebellion. In the story “The Policeman and the Horse”, the horse, which represents the human being who lives under abject poverty and total lack of justice, rebels because he is not allowed to pass through the wide streets and kills the policeman who prevents him from achieving his desire. The horse is led to a central square, where he is hanged. In the story “The Song of the Trees”-*The Tigers*, Suheil tears apart the advertisements of the authority which tried to silence the hunger of the poor. He is led to investigation. His investigators have intended to rape him.

Political inquiries and the hand of the authority reaches even the dead to make sure that life under this regime is death itself. The grave of Mohammad Al-Mahmoodi is dug as if the body is cooperating with them in registering the names of those who criticize the system “The summary of what has happened ...” *The Tigers*.

In the story "The Accused", The grave of Omar Al-Khayyam is dug. He is accused of cooperating with sadness, which is "a spy of the spies of the fifth column", and that his poetry on wine incites for importing foreign goods. Some stories are over-surrealistic. In the story "The Flower"-*The Tigers*, the hero hides from those chasing him in the body of his beloved one. The chasers penetrate the body, take the hero out and cut his fingers.

Thus, the heroes of these stories rebel against all that is related to authority: The state institution and those related to it: policemen, investigators, judges, patriarchal authority, bearded people, the neighborhood Sheikh (clergy), preachers, customs, traditions... It is an open invitation to destroy the enemies from within as embodied in the story "The Enemies"-*The Tigers*. It is made out of twenty six sections, each section is "a bomb which crashes all Arab Science of words. A bomb which leaves no stone erect in the building of Arab ideology (...) Zakariyya destroys the ideology of morals, religion, wisdom, rule, proverbs and consensuses, policemen, military, language... airplanes...masculinity of men and femininity of women"¹⁶.

¹⁶ George Tarabishi. "Zakariyya Tamir and the enemies", *Al-'Adab*. May/ June, 1973. p. 55.

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تلخيص:

تتطور مضامين قصص زكريا تامر في التراجع عن "الهموم العالمية" التي غلبت على قصص الخمسينات والستينات، إلى الالتفات إلى أزمة الإنسان العربي المعاصر.

تتركز قصص القطب الأول من إنتاج تامر، في تصوير مشاعر الغربة والسأم والجوع والتخلف في مدينة تظهر في أدبه معادلاً موضوعياً لفقدان البراءة، لا يملك فيها الفرد سوى جسده الذي تعدّبه احتياجاته الملحة، وبالتالي ليس له فيها من ملاذ سوى الأحلام الرومانسية الساذجة، التي لا تفتأ أن تتحوّل إلى رغبة عنيفة: شروق شمس جديدة على أنقاض.

وبالتوازي، تتطوّر ثيمة الجنس في أدب تامر، من تعبير عن شهوة الإنسان للحياة والتحقّق الجسدي، إلى تجسيد لأزمة المرأة في مجتمع متخلف، ثمّ إلى توظيفه كتعبير عن قلق وجودي، كما يلعب الشذوذ الجنسي فيه، على نحو سيربالي، كمؤشّر على فقدان البراءة.

أما موضوعة أزمة الحرّية في العالم العربي، فهي اللابتموتيف الذي يميّز الطور المتأخر من إنتاج تامر، ولا يسع شخصيات تامر فيه سوى التمرد. ويظلّ تامر عبر مجموعاته الجديدة المتأخرة يضرب على منوال هذه الثيمات التي تتميز بعنصر الإدهاش، وإن كان قد خلّصها تماماً وجردّها حتى العظم من حكايتها، ومن كلّ ما أوحى به الحداثة الأولى من وهم القصة.

تقزير:

السيפורت الموقدمت سل شنوت الحميشيم وهشيم اצל زكريا تامر متارت ات التليشوت، הבדידות وרגشي התסכול בחברה האורבנית בסוריה، המתנכרת לאדם הבودד והגלמוד בעיר נטולת רגשות، וזאת בהשפעת הספרות האוונגרדית של המערב.

אולם, תכנים אלו משתנים בשלב המאוחר של כתיבתו הסיפורית של תאמר. הוא נוטש את הדאגות הפנימיות והמטאפיסיות ומתמקד בהסתכלות אל העולם החיצוני, אל החברה, והחיים העלובים בצל המשטרים הדרקוניים. תכנים אלו, לרוב, מוצאים את ביטויים בדרכי מבע אלגוריים ומרומזים.

במקביל לתהליכי התפתחות אלו, מתפקד המין והתאוה המינית בסיפוריו של תאמר, באורח שונה מקובץ אחד למשנהו. הוא מסמל בכתיבתו המוקדמת את המימוש העצמי של הפרוטאגוניסט. לעומת זאת, בשלב המאוחר יותר הוא מסמל את הפלונטר האכזסטאנטלי בו שרויים הדמויות של הסיפורים, כאשר הסטיות המיניות מסמלות אף הן את העדר התמימות.

הסיפורת החדשה אצל תאמר בעשר השנים האחרונות עדיין מסתובבת סביב אותם תכנים, אך היא נוטשת לגמרי את אשליית העלילה.