



*Symphony of the Dead: A Traditional Novel or Nouveau Roman? **

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Symphony of the Dead, the renowned novel of Abbas Ma'roufi, was written in 1989. In this novel, composed of five movements, the author describes skillfully a traditional Iranian family whose symphony begins with the suicide of Aydat, one of the heroines of the novel, and ends in the death of the father of the family, Jaber Orxani. On the other hand, Orhan kills his older brother Joseph bringing about the madness of his younger brother, Aydin, followed by their mother's death. Aydin, whose wife Sumelina dies from a vague reason at the end of the story, is killed by the antagonist Orhan with the encouragement of Ayaz, the family counselor. Afterwards, Orhan gets lost on a winter day and rushes into a palace.

This novel contains both traditional and modern structures as the events at times advance in a logical, understandable and regular order, and at other times develop in an illogical, irregular and incomprehensible manner. The reader is sometimes aware of all the adventures of the novel and sometimes is left hanging, unable to find the way. Therefore, this study aims at illustrating how the writer mixes the traditional and modern approaching new modes of writing, already developed in the Europe.

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Striving to account for the complexity of life and human beings especially through a great crisis such as war, he tries to express his ideas in a novel way and to give his work a new novelistic form, like the *New Roman*.

In fact, despite the hidden romanticism and the symbolic colors, the author breaks the dramatic time of the story while the reader pursues the adventures by the stream of consciousness of the characters. As a result, critics sometimes consider it a *New Roman*.

It is noteworthy that the intrigue of *Symphony* is analogous to a puzzle whose reader finds his pieces while advancing through the storyline. In effect, these labyrinthine intrigues lead the reader to the heart of the novel where the beginning is *in media res* (= in the middle of the action, in the middle of a conversation), which is quite common. This means that the interlocutor takes again the expression of the principle narrator and that the conversation seems to have already started. Ma'rroufi by this technique prolongs the reader in a precise action, about which he knows nothing but already having begun, discovers later as a witness. This makes the reader a sort of intruder who has no information but abruptly assists a scene to which he is quite alien. This is why we are wandering at the beginning of the book since we do not know Orhan, nor the other characters. The adventures told by Orhan seem foreign to the reader and he asks himself many questions. It's not just the plot that the reader finds complex and convoluted but also a duality throughout the story. He faces a double face of the characters and a double narrator, leading him to get lost in an obscure universe.

This article is going to be oriented in three directions: first, a traditional novel and secondly the peculiarities of a modern novel for which the plot, the space and the narrator will be finally analyzed. Some other peculiarities that locate the novel between the two will also be explored. The primary goal is to depict that it is a new novel and not a *New Roman*, then to show how the author uses new techniques to bring these two literary genres. For this, the narratology of Gerard Genette, especially the time and status of the narrator seem appropriate to probe. In this novel, the narrator, whether intradiegetic or extradiegetic, is present and directs the events. The chronological sequence and the coherence of the text are logical. One of the varieties of the traditional novel is the romantic novel, characterized by a break with the separation of styles in the classical period, an exaltation of feelings and a quest for the picturesque.

Symphony of the Dead, is a new novel, between these two genres in which the author makes a picture neither black, nor clear for the reader. Due to different romantic themes like nature, love, death and also the importance of colors, we can see the characteristics of the traditional novel. But there is also the current of consciousness where we see the collage of images with a mixture of reality and fiction. We explained the

repetition of the scenes, narrated each time from the point of view of a character. In addition, the author tries to break the linear time and the traditional chronology and bring the reader into a surreal time. As for the space, it is not reassuring and the reader is sometimes lost. The plot is unstable, inconsistent and equivocal. All these bring the romance of Ma'roufi closer to the New Roman.

Regarding the reader, he sometimes finds his way freely and effortlessly with no obstacle and is even able to easily penetrate the soul and thought of the characters, occasionally getting lost in a vague and labyrinthine atmosphere. The complicated narrator of the novel sometimes leads the reader to the world of the dead and sometimes to the world of the mad. It mixes these two worlds so that the reader is left swinging back and forth. The reader travels at different times: the present, the past and the future, a time that can be called surreal. What really happened? Where is the reality? These are the questions of all readers of *Symphony of the Dead*. By these processes, Ma'roufi, a twentieth century author, presents a new technique of the Romanesque art in Iran.

Keywords— Ma'roufi, death, time, space, narrator, intrigue, Nouveau Roman.