



A study of grotesque manifestations in the Symphony of the Dead

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Grotesque is a literary-artistic genre, is the result of a fusion of two opposing currents of thought, and expresses their indissolubility. Grotesque manifests itself in a paradoxical way by evoking emotions such as laughter, fear, hatred, confusion, apprehension, and ridicule and causes a confused and ambiguous response from the audience. Grotesque can follow various goals and intentions due to its extensive range of functions including criticizing the prevailing conditions in society and depicting politically forbidden subjects. However, what is of great significance is its effect on its audience and the developed special feeling in the audience. The mentioned feeling is usually accompanied by fear, hatred, disgust, and bitter laughter, which is the main goal of the grotesque that aims at reaching the third meaning that is created in the artist's conscious or subconscious mind and is reflected in their work and affects the audience.

Human beings live in a world where the aspects of horror, fear, and laughter are inseparable. An acquainted world that becomes strange and unaccustomed in case of its deep and meticulous examination. The meaning of life in the mentioned world is an agonizing tragedy covered with a comedic appearance. The grotesque artist depicts a world that has lost its typical order and takes revenge on the wounds and sufferings that deeply afflict its existence.

Research on the concept of grotesque covers an extensive range in the art works and literary texts of the West and has attracted many theorists and artists. Kaiser and Bakhtin as two great theorists in this field have two distinct approaches. From Kaiser's point of view, the grotesque is a frightening or ridiculous representation of an alien world, and its apparent laughter is a mask for the inner and hidden anxiety of the creator of grotesque works. He focuses more on the evil, dreadful, and negative aspects. In Bakhtin's perspective, unlike Kaiser's viewpoint, grotesque has a positive connotation and along with

the carnival is portrayed as a new world free from distinctions arising from hierarchy and full of joy and love-affairs. Laughter is the main and most significant element in the mentioned world. Iranian art and literature - both classical and modern – comprise many examples, in which features of grotesque are prominent although they are not acknowledged as the grotesque genre because research on this subject is very limited and is restricted to recent years in Iran. The present study aimed at examining grotesque in one of the contemporary Iranian novels, namely the *Symphony of the Dead*, which is written with the technique of the fluid flow of the mind. The mentioned technique deals more with the inner workings and mentalities of the characters and, just like a symphony, consists of four movements, each of which is narrated from a different point of view.

The *Symphony of the Dead* as a novel written in a modern style with an artistic design depicts the painful and disgusting situation of the characters, horror and oppression, elements of superstition, ignorance and cultural poverty in society, and the fall of humanity and its plunge into the abyss of annihilation.

All the elements in this novel, the opening of the book with a verse from the Holy Quran, the mentions of the story of Abel and Cain, the beginning of the story with the image of snow, coldness, smoke, and blackness, the presence of elements such as the fusion of reality and fantasy, and the description of smoky and foggy spaces lead the mind to the concept of grotesque.

Much research has been conducted on various aspects regarding Maroufi's mental and intellectual approaches and works. However, to the best of the current researchers' knowledge, no research has examined the grotesque genre in the novel of the *Symphony of the Dead*. In the present study, the authors have addressed the grotesque elements in this novel using a descriptive-analytical approach and library resources, library-analytical method and have concluded that the *Symphony of the Dead* novel has employed elements such as negative, dark, and black aspects, the description of terrifying spaces, strangulation, material poverty, the depiction of the miserable and tragic situation of human beings, superstition, loneliness and isolation of intellectuals, the emphasis on the contradiction and conflict in the thoughts of characters, unconventional terror, summoning evil dimensions, and the fusion of human-animal elements. The *Symphony of the Dead* have employed the mentioned concepts that evoke the sense of the fall of humanity and induce conflicting emotions from the darker aspects of human existence to critically illustrate the weaknesses, shortcomings, pain, and discrimination that underlie corruption and malevolence. These features and characteristics bring the grotesque function in this famous novel closer to Kaiser's perspective.

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