



Some Distinctions of The Modernism and Postmodernism in Tommaso Landolf's Prose

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ABSTRACT

The Italian author of the 900's, Tommaso Landolf, is a unique feature of the contemporary prose, very known in the Italian literature and unfortunately not so well known in the Albanian letters even after the integration of the Albanian society into the world. This article aims an interpretation of the presence of the features of the modernism, avangard and the postmodernism in his work. This will be dealt between the analyzing of the author's poetic features, the index and the strategies of the treatment to the literary subject from him. We think that a phenomenological point of view combined with the hermeneutic one would be efficient to this interpretation. Tommaso Landolf (1908-1979), writer and translator graduated or Literature at the University of Florence, is author of a rich prose, not only for the considerable number of the works he left behind but especially for the very rare values of his art; 'Dialogues of big systems' ('37), 'The lunar stone' ('39), 'The sword' ('42), 'The unhappy prince' ('43), 'Autumn confession' ('47), 'Shadow' ('54) and other works until he passed away, are testimony of the art that impresses with the presence of many literary directions but also to the structuralist and the poststructuralist theory (from Sosyr up to Barthes and Derrida) and also to the presence of the philosophy. From this point of view his art is defined as an experimental art that spontaneus as well as purposeful. But which are some summarized features of the modernism and the postmodernism in Landolf's work? Firstly: Landolf's art could be understood only as a denial of the traditional art realistic-naturalistic. The beginning of some of the works in a classical manner is only a literary fraud of the author's to bring afterwards the surprise as his preferable literary technique. Secondly: Landolf tried to build a reality where the illusive and reality, man and animal, the impossible and the possible, reality and myth, the killer and the humanitarian to not exclude each other but to stay together. Thirdly: Landolf tried to give man to collective anxiety between two World Wars, a mingled inner human world, a world where love and family have no future, a world where the chaos dominates, where the beginning and the end meet, a world where the truths are underestimated, where there is alarm, suspensions and shock for the values ones determined as evil. Part of this reality, the characters, are usually lonely beings (just like Landolf himself), always in protection of the ego, some neither man nor animals (without any kind psecification), part of the killing passions, delirant, between the possible and the impossible, sceptical and confused about the future. Fourth: the persistent work with the language, the researchable efforts upon him to go to the very beginning, the aroused dilemmas (like for example the narrative work 'Parole in agitazione') for the insufficiency of the human acknowledge about its expressive abilities, the abilities of the words (language) to reflect the reality as a truth or illusion, talk about T.Landolf's tendency, for the melting of the boundaries among different human fields (art, linguistic science, philosophy), feature found even in the poststructuralist theories.

KEYWORDS : modernism, avangard, postmodernism, text, inter-textual

The modern literature is in the focus of contemporary studies and this work aims to clarify some features of this literature in the work of a single author. This article aims an interpretation of the presence of the features of modernism, avangard and postmodernism in his work. This is going to take place through the analyzing of the author's poetic features, of the repertoire and the strategies of the modeling of the literary subject from him. We think that through a phenomenological point of view alternated with the hermeneutic one would be efficient for this interpretation.

As it is known the modern has existed as a tendency through the times, but the era of modernity, the modernism as a literary direction, starts with the appearance of Symbolism (1890) in France, to come then at the avangard, post-structuralism that continues in time up to the postmodernism direction and the theory of the Hypertext. (1909-1930)

There is no doubt that Landolf's work belongs to the era of modernity. This is understood even by the simplest reader, because what is prominent in his prose is the quality of a different art, very original (we have in mind here not only the form and the content, but also the difference that his work have among each-other). We will try to materialize the features of the above directions of Landolf's work in his very short prose with which we think his art reaches the climax. Landolf is defined as a 'dark' writer, autobiographic, surrealist, but however we think that what is the most obvious is seen in his tendency to break off the materiality, the description of reality, even specific prose where he presents his tendencies toward the post-structural ideas that point him out as a writer scientist.

The beginnings of the prose ask for a little attention from the reader. Landolf gets direct into the climax event. Firstly, it seems as if you have to deal with that kind of subtle prose for a film screenplay. In some of the short stories there is even evident fragmentary, fracture and plot. The beginnings of the short stories are similar to very usual moments of life. So the beginnings of the stories are clear, simple to

follow, somehow very understandable. For example:

"My wife, what else shall I say? In a while you will get down in the cold grave and together with you will be locked every love of mine, every goodness, every hope, everything pure, noble, believable and also every terrestrial good, every joy and to cut it short everything could make the life of a lonely man beautiful..."

"Mikeli is a painter and he also gambles...."

"It was now for two hours that the thief hidden in the cellar heard that step measuring in a very unmerciful way wide and long the rooms upstairs, by shaking the old sleepers, making them creek, by tearing off small pieces of lime; but didn't these people ever sleep?"

"Usually as soon as she wakes up my wife goes to the bathroom to brush her teeth, then she comes back still sleepily..."

"After falling asleep, father le Koedik around 1749 in a dense forest was taken away by a stormy wind which send him in icy kingdoms..."

"Writing from Venice and whoever writes from Venice, surely has a lot of things to say.,etc, etc, but even though these beginnings introduce a kind of naïve state, very soon symbolic words are seen or strange metaphors. These simple beginnings are merely an artistic deceit of Landolf. Very soon the subjects (if we can call them like this, because they are very far from the classical form of the subject) get blurry, dark, deep in allusions, the situations are accompanied by words which are nothing more but unframed "signs", evasive in explanation. The author-narrator clear from the beginning of the prose starts to hide among the unclearness, the story gets dark and the reader is required not only to have attention but also collaboration, in order to get to the truth which only fades way.

Landolf's art and more concretely the prose which we are referring to acknowledges that the literature remains the same till the end,

an artistic lie: In the short story "Labrenat", the character who speaks in the first person, exchanges the clarity and the security of the narration in the first pages with the uncertainty. After the beginning he gets mixed up in suspicious feelings for the truthfulness of what has happened and in the end the truth never reveals itself. From the clearness, fluency, concrete, the truth looks like an object that gets into a whirl and fades away up to that point that our point of view (as a reader) does not perceive it anymore.

"-Come on doctor, how come you don't know! How did that deadly accident happen; the one that sent me to the grave, from which I luckily escaped?"

-Deadly? Grave?-repeated in astonishment. - I'm sorry but I don't understand well your words..."

"...after what we have said Maria Zhuzepa survived a certain time feeling dizzy and sad and then passed away as in the story. And the responsibility about this dreadful death belongs to the others and to none and farewell! Upon her grave that is only a mass of dirt and that I found with the help of the graveyard guard, no merciful hand had placed any cross or written a name. I got organized in order to have those done, it took so long for the carpenter, I went away by leaving the grave unattended. Later somebody put a simple cross that can still be seen..."

The text of the story "The true story of Maria Xhuzepa" seems absurd, because the main character in the beginning is presented as a narrator who has read the written story about Maria Xhuzepa, and then appears as a narrator who is at the same time the author and then steps back by appearing himself as a man who has known Maria Xhuzepa in the same life, as a real person who is already dead, by appearing himself as the author himself who is narrating. So we are dealing with the same person as a narrator and as a character. This story and other ones, remind you the work "Six walks in the woods of the narration" of U. Eco and his scientific clarification of the reports model reader-empiric reader, model author-empiric author. The stories in words are complex, as well as in the work "Silvi" of Zherar de Nerval, which techniques Eco also clarifies. So, as in Eco's work or that of Po's even Landolf's stories seek a model reader who reads and interacts at the same time with the text in a considerable manner. He understands the strategy and interprets. He understands the author's aim in order to confuse the reader. For a reader like this the aim is clear. It even makes an impression to him the sentence itself which is built on purpose as irregular.

... I got organized in order to have those done, it took so long for the carpenter, I went away by leaving the grave unattended.

Normally the three parts, which are accompanied by a comma, are each an echo and should be alone as three individual sentences. So putting them in a single sentence is wrong from the syntax.

On the other hand, the fragmenting character of the prose, the switching from one moment to the other, tears away the line of the event and we can even say that we have to do with an event in its classical concept. This feature makes that the short story "The truth about Maria Xhuzepa" could be defined as a unity of pieces which could be analyzed as separate lines. The technique mentioned does nothing else but fragmentize the event on purpose, creates vacuums, does not allow the chronology and approves that in this story it is not aimed to disappear a reality but to model it according to the rules of modern art. In this way the short story looks like a diary where the events are not merely events but pieces of events and blurry experiences within it. Landolf's reality is only an allusive notion by becoming very different from a realistic treatment. It is clearly noticed that the text does not aim the subject. Landolf attracts the attention toward him in order to get dedicated to the mixed experiences and in general not high enough of the narrator character. Even the characters themselves are often bizarre, mixed up, defined among antagonisms (but not strong), with confusing feelings, misty, apathy and sometimes aggressive, unpredictable, beings, whose part is always hidden, dark and negative. It seems that for Landolf it is important or present the twosome of the being and the reality.

"Xhovana was somehow a strange girl even sophisticated but deep

down stupid. Nevertheless, no; how can it be spoken so easy about a person! It can be said that Xhovana had some crises or periods (but not regular, unpredictable) of dark wisdom that are never known whether they showed her core or were accidentally incidents"

Some short stories (like the one about Maria Xhuzepa) make concrete the non-understanding of the human activity. Maria Xhuzepa is the character where the in the most contradictory way are wrapped the feelings of the inner narrator, all-knowing like: tenderness, mocking, mercy, disgust, emotion, irony and almost hate. Many are Landolf's characters who belong to this mixed kind. Even the reader does not understand them clearly and even they cannot explain themselves till the end. Their mind time after time presents a real chaos of feelings.

The demonic genesis presented in the beginning of the story "The true story of Maria Xhuzepa" (Storia di Maria Giuseppa), is presented through the eye of the narrator that wears in a moment the attributes of the author (Landolf).

It exist an irrational plan, a systematic "tangle" in the prose; chaos of reality, chaos of experiences..that if we would refer to Tzvetan Todorov it has to do with the "fantastic raised upon a background of abnormality form a regulation where the absurd and the strange are the norm and the rule"

Just like in Nice, in Landolf we can find the idea that the endless of this world aroused also an endless of interpretations and exactly this according to Nice (Friedrich Nietzsche) issues huge perspectives for the recognition of the world.

In the "Sword" as it is commented, the hierarchy of the two realities is sensed. In the short story "The true story of Maria Xhuzepa" as well, the character very confused in feelings, introduces himself sometimes as an executioner and sometimes as Maria Xhuzepa's victim (...maybe her obvious defects darkened my judgment by not allowing me to see her true qualities, or my anger as usual betrayed me...) and as much as he tries to give details to the reader that much he complicates it, makes it blurry and sends him away from the truth.

"...we all know them (...)those gradual exalting feelings, when we feel like being exalted and therefore we would burst for sure and we can do nothing to get back to normal or specifically to a better judgment and it even goes further toward that direction with a similar joy (sinful), just for pleasure, in order to see how the end will be, for the thing to send a situation in its last consequences, or a human being in his/her nervous situation (something which even Mani talks about, if I do not get it wrong), for the pleasure of the new things, maybe to mock with the logic by showing that a decision could be taken even because of spite; surrendered after a limited coherence and completely inner from the surface justifies rigorously our actions, that are feed only with the inner self, to which ready for the challenge we add arguments and justifications and at the same time we feed our diabolic nature.

At this point the world, the things, man, are seen in an illusive point of view, among meanings that come up upon the daily event of the reader upon his choices. The illusive subtext is continually seen in the stories, a kind of hidden headquarter, present, inevitable, tense...a substance (if it would be correct to give this definition) dark of a same reality; a second reality. This detail leads toward the fact that many of Landolf's stories can be similar to a dream, his surreal dream.

In Landolf's stories there is found no conflict of the character with the mob, so very spoken about in positive directions. In Landolf, this conflict is postponed, because his characters are complex beings, beings which cannot be an example to follow. Landolf exchanges "the hero" from whom you can learn, with the beauty of reduced conscious. Many times they cannot pretend to be the true plot of the prose, while the confusion and the treatment within the irony are set on purpose, one of the author's post-modern techniques.

In some occasions the author's attention is not the character but the assigned object which is described as an object with its dark side and hidden deep down in itself. In the story "The Sword", for example "the sword" is the detail that takes the most important place. It is described in details and through contradictions. Gorgeous - thin - shiny

...great object for admiration...and at last...bloody. For Landolf the sword remains the object – symbol that helps to discover the diabolic nature of the male character, which is presented as unknown even to him. The objects remain symbolic world that appear to Landolf and the ideal reader to be revealed just like the world of words. The symbolic language of hidden meanings becomes according to Bart the symbolic structure that the literary text has. It is a plural language, meaning a language of code which is built in a certain way that the born speech from it has multiple meanings.

The building of the code defines the feature of connotation which discovers the polysemic opportunity of the literary text. So Landolf's text sometimes becomes so difficult to understand and sometimes so distant in definition that no matter how hard you try you can never define it.

We think that this is hidden behind the simple language in its appearance, supposedly naïve, in the beginnings of the stories almost defining just like Kafka's language, but that is nothing else but a smart maneuver of the set off.

-The truth hidden as a purpose of fragmentizing, the confusing of the reader on purpose, the destruction of the reader's "expectation", make that many endings of the stories sound with no sense at all. So, for example, in the story "The fly", its first part deals with an unimportant tiny insect, almost disgusting; a fly. In the second part the narrator's attention is set to the meeting that the character who is not identified by name has with his fiancée. Her nodding answers in every action of him make him frustrating that much that he makes a far allusion, with no motivating connection, through his slippery on his floor and that of the unprotected and not powerful fly to get out of the fatal destination. The endings of the stories "Milan does not exist", "The suitcase", "A woman's breast", "The kiss" make no sense and so do other stories.

Characteristic of Landolf's story is not only the destruction of the expected but also the multiple front-texts. According to Gerard Genette, the front-text is the total of messages that precede, accompany, or follow a text. In these prose the front-texts can be defined as marginal notes – interfering of the empiric author, at the same time of the narrator's, for the continuity of the vent or for the sudden break of the vent. We can even say that with the quality of the front-text we can take many moments where the narrator turns to the reader as if he/she was present.

"...Do you have the idea now what an evening means in a place like this?(...)In case we do not have any idea about this I hope to give you a close idea with my very own story telling. I will add, in order that later I might have the opportunity to continue with the story faster, that the night I am talking about was a stormy night

"oh reader, how little interest have those who are found in the core of the earth, in comparison to what is found in the depth!..."

"...Not that much as you will get to know...and exactly what was needed because the upcoming events gave the solution to my story a character strangely prophetic..." It seems like the author here does not allow the reader "to wait", but this technique breaks the monotony by later being followed with the poly-semantic confession.

The end of the story usually is a break of the logic of the continuity of the event defined as a sudden break. This makes it that sometimes the ends look like game of words that contradict each other.

...And it is not enough; she made the biggest mistake of getting stuck after me. But it is obvious that these little episodes of our life have no importance; at last what was I supposed to do with her and what would she do to me? It is known that everything ends badly; and everything got destroyed as a "weak wall" of her breast. It seems like we are going to enjoy ourselves with suspicious joys, indirect and even transitional.

...They both got married and are now a happy couple. "Happy", we say this because it is the tradition: in fact at this point something dark, shameful and unknown starts.

Exactly when the reader understands that the end of the story has come and the logic of the statement in the last sentence fore says a happy ending, the next sentence over turns this. Landolf's aim to make the reader get the message wrong is clear.

Something is for sure; he never gets the idea of wondering around dead stations. He doesn't feel the need for this; his life itself is a dead station where no train stops. Or in the story "Two dead watching", where the character was watching her dead wife meditates through words "... even I, unintentionally, haven't understood your most wonderful melancholies..." and the reader expects the continuity of the logic of feeling sorry about death, but immediately comes the sentence that over turns everything: To cut it short, don't I have the right to wish in a retrospective manner...what a hell of a phrase! I mean, to feel sorry that you didn't die in time, meaning when it seemed that you did? But lucky he whose wife dies the day of the weeding....

The majority of Landolf's short stories have fatal endings. This fatality is inevitable to the reader. It comes like a destiny, unexplained, incomprehensible, unjustifiable, until the end from the logic of the character and the reader as well. The fatality comes naturally, as you might say it slips easily, soft, approaches without hesitating, little by little as a being which is going along the way which has passed many times self-confident. Its unyielding aim is similar to the song of the mermaids in the "Odyssey" (Homer). In the short prose "The kiss", the fatality approaches to Notary D, in the form of a dark shade, darker than the night itself. It stands on the lips with a kiss. This kiss, symbol of death, gets near him every night, by systematically fading away his strengths and the will to live. The notary's decision to sleep with the lights on is nothing else but a useless approach to avoid destiny, to lie himself.

...In fact at that moment he was sleeping (well or badly) and when he woke up suddenly thought he had had a dream, however when he fell asleep again (...) another powerful kiss sealed his lips. "Sealed", it is a tradition to say that, but that kiss was like a storm...

The word "sealed" reminds the reader inevitably the myth of death so spread out in the populations throughout the world. It kisses man and this fatal blessing is at the same time his final destiny. In the Balkan's myth, death usually gets the image of an uncombed old woman, worn in black who sneaks "like a quiet dog" (in the Albanian myth) and grabs away the powers of the human being. The closed lips, he put them on the forehead/ the day broke and she passed way"

On the verge of what we said above, the atmosphere that better fits the fatality and the human pains is that of the old house. It is now known Landolf's affection to the motivation of The big house, biographical detail of his life. But we need to say that Landolf, in his short prose, treats the detail of the old house always as an object of mystery that embraces the character-narrator in unexplained and scary feelings by imposing these feelings to the reader as well. The old house is described with endless curves, full of humidity, scary insects, gloom, darkness, high ceilings...it destroys you with the unknown and the unexpected. The beings who try to live in there even temporarily are found in the middle of the unexplained anxiety which overlaps the anxiety of the Kafka's characters.

"...the zoologist call it a lizard of walls, a kind of crocodile in miniature which is found on old walls and winding on them, by entering in the rooms anytime, where as everywhere he looks for and catches different insects especially butterflies..."

"...there was a default that every time the wind blew in a deaf way wherever: no one from the house had defined where you could find this default..."

"...we both live alone, in an old and big house (and this like the type of protagonist in whom everyone is free to find the author, inevitable and stable in his writings)"

The prose does not have a true subject. The theme of family and childhood, so widely treated in the realist direction, is seen differently from Landolf. He avoids the subject of family. But even when he touches this motive, what is seen is the model of a falling family, a family with no future, where the couple is usually with no heir. A con-

ception like this reminds you of the Russian writer Bulgakov, with his sterile female characters, witches who cannot bear children.

Couples are united partners by ridiculous coincidence, from momentary attraction, or are part of naïve relationships that move on idleness and because of this idleness they share together the apathy of life. They experience discontent about each-other, humiliate each-other, play with the personality of each-other, deceive each-other and annoy the presence and reaction of each-other. They are double spirited. They are abandoned individuals. They feel like this even in the presence of each-other. Their staying together in the reader's logic seems absurd. Landolf's short stories are composed of alarm, worry, shock, doubt and agony. Just like Nice, Landolf is skeptic. He neither says "no", nor "yes", but gets protected with the irony.

So in the short story "Labrenat", a coincidence is enough to the character to understand what a shocking relation he has; (I wasn't recognizing my beloved friend, I mean I insisted seeing in her face a mask of guilt and lie; she did the same....We gloomily looked at each other as future opponents who each one of us would have wanted to discover the dark side of the other and every quiet moment had been lost, every frankness had been denied to us..."

Even the motive of childhood (treated from the realist direction and all the positive directions) is avoided by Landolf. But even when it is mentioned somewhere, accidentally, it is a period full of defects, sickness, emotional and mental deficits, phobias....it is seen as a fatal beginning of what is called human life, beginning phase of what fore says the fatality.

"...he, a kind of lazy person, psychopath, or at the same time in both, confesses his life..."

In the short story "Labrenat", the phobia of the childhood about insects, is a fore say to the reader and the detail of the butterfly which flies around and finds the end around the light, through the analogy it is perceived by the reader as the human's destiny, whose days roll on nicely up to the moment when everything falls down, he does not find points to refer to that can have a decent meaning. Now there is only confusion that the loss of trust in the existence of the truth and values brings.

It is known that the postmodern artists deny the opportunity of the recognition of the reality by man. The texts of Landolf's stories are characterized by multiple meaning and at the same time the ability to skip the final answers. His attempts with the language are features of his work with the context which we find in the western art starting from the '60's. They remind you of Derrida to whom the truth exists only in the form of the untrue. Nowhere else clearer than in his prose can you find the graceful game of meanings within the text. This game is perceived as a process where the reader discovers the opportunity of the conception of the dimension of the meaning. If we refer back to Derrida (called The text man), who fully gets out of the frame of classical philosophy, in a contextual situation where the idea loses its clarity, you need to through yourself in the not programmed whirl of the elements of the text, because the text loses the beginning and the end. Many of the parts of Landolf's stories can be perceived only as a confusion of the original text (we have in mind here, the fore set meanings in a hidden deal, as already known now), which in an elegant analyses of the textual connections would not be able to get through this analyses to the end. It is exactly here that the originality of his work with the language is found which in certain passages has a philosophical content and becomes even harder to understand through the contradictions that Landolf conveys.

The situation brings into our memory the post-structuralism theory of deconstruction, which has to do with the vision of the inner opponent saying of the text, in the discovery of the meaningful remaining,

not only for the naïve reader but also for the author himself, meaningful remaining which we have inherited from the discursive practices of the past, practiced in language, in the form of the mental stereotypes, which are transformed by the contemporary author through clichés.

And in this case as many meanings we give we became conscious of the fragile aspect of each interpretation. Landolf's texts remind you inevitably Derrida's saying according to which the truth exists only in the form of the untrue.

"... being fair or not, it is perceived as absurd...let's pass from this shameful and indecent fantasy to reality..."

Everything in Landolf's prose is chaotic and the slippery of the individual is perceived many times as a hopeless direct fall. We think that darkness, demotion, the unusual within the characters and the dream are techniques that do not simply seek the reader's concentration but also seek to massively affect in him. Landolf insists to affect the reader.

The first aspect of the post modernism sensitivity is called the experiencing of the world as chaos where the criteria about values are missing, where there are some crises of trust. Landolf, who experienced the Second World War, also introduced in the short stories a chaotic world, part of which are the apathy characters, indifferent and many times in the arms of the self-suggestion, with unexpected and strange desires, unhappy with the life, mixed up, confused, empty beings, with no aspirates, no achievements, no projects, beings with nightmares and doubts. The words "anxiety" and "nightmare" are often repeated. They are perceived as passwords through which is entered in an absurd hopeless world where people are lonely beings.

(In the story "The thief", the thief who is waiting for the big house to calm down from the noises, discovers that the conversations among people are nothing else but conversations that the abandoned old man from the people of the house has with himself by changing the voices).

It is known now the division from the scholars of Landolf's creativity in two phases; fantastic and autobiographic but the definition is relative because Landolf on purpose mixes them with each other. We think that the biography in Landolf's work is just a deceitful, cheating and playful maneuver to treat the literary subject, which always is found deepened in the irony (his famous post-modernist irony). From this aspect we would see that the motive of "the game", "the gambling", or "writer", is just a beginning, or a known area, a wonderful literary cunning which the author uses to catch the reader in reminiscences weaved through irony. The autobiographical nature of some of his prose, make the ideal reader understand that the autobiography is nothing else but a deceitful initiative, a perfect artistic cheating, "a feeding" of art from itself, an avanguard feature of Landolf's art to his scholars.

The deep notes of the life tragedy, the absurd of the human selection, the demotion man chooses unwillingly for himself but also the pleasure of the gambling law that said by Landolf puts on the value of an aphorism: man does not play to win, but to feel the joy of losing are the feelings that the reader perceives in the prose with the subject "gambling".

In conclusion: We think that each of the arguments mentioned above compose a testimony of the modern features, avanguard and post-modernist of the difficult art but wonderful of Tommaso Landolf, a literature ended now with the authors death, but never locked toward interpretations.

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