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## **STRATEGIC EMPATHIZING IN *SERENADE FOR NADIA* BY ZÜLFÜ LIVANELI**

**Abstract.** This article is part of an extensive theoretical research I am conducting on narrative empathy in Zülfü Livaneli's novel *Serenade for Nadia*, a novel whose topics approach issues facing society today. Putting forward the hypothesis that the novel comprises narrative strategies that aim at manifesting the reader's empathy, I will analyze some aspects of the novel through the lens of the concept of strategic empathy, as defined by the theorist Suzanne Keen. This article will cover two potential strategies identified, namely strategic idealization, and the representation of a tragic love story, as tools for eliciting the reader's empathic response.

**Keywords:** strategic empathizing, narrative empathy, strategic idealization, tragic love story

### **1. Introduction**

According to Livaneli, before the publication in 2011 of the novel *Serenade for Nadia* people in Turkey and beyond were surprised to learn the tragic story of the sinking of the Struma in 1942<sup>2</sup>. This is one of the

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<sup>2</sup> The main historical thread of the novel *Serenade for Nadia* is the tragedy of the ship Struma, which left the Romanian port of Constanta and travelled to Palestine with almost 800 Romanian Jewish refugees on board. The ship was torpedoed and sunk in the waters of the Black Sea after a ten-week quarantine in Istanbul after the British authorities refused to allow it to continue its journey to Palestine, which was then under British mandate. After the sinking there was only one survivor (Ofer 1990; Stoian 1995; İşçi 2020).

reasons he decided to write this novel, which has been so well received by readers. To some extent because of the interest that Livaneli's novel received, becoming an intensely debated topic, in 2015, four years after the novel's publication, the first official commemoration ceremony for the victims of the Struma was held in Turkey, which has continued to be held annually ever since. Although it is impossible to change the fate of events that have already taken place, commemoration ceremonies are organized for the purpose of remembrance, so that similar tragedies do not happen again. In Livaneli's view, people must not only know history, but also confront it<sup>3</sup> to learn from it and its mistakes. He points out the difference between forgetting and forgiving. While forgiveness can often be a beneficial consequence of the passage of time, forgetting should never occur. At the same time, it identifies literature as an effective obstacle to forgetting. Appealing to the reader's empathy, *Serenade for Nadia* brings to the fore the importance of remembrance, but also of forgiveness, of self and others, as ways to achieve peace of mind and peace among people.

In short, the novel tells the story of German-born American professor Maximilian Wagner, who returns after sixty years to Istanbul, the place where his wife Nadia, a Romanian-Jewish woman, lost her life, along with nearly 800 others, in the sinking of the Struma. The professor befriends Maya Duran, an employee at the University of Istanbul, who is also struggling with family, identity, and social adjustment issues. Their friendship plays a beneficial role in the spiritual healing of both characters.

For a better understanding of how the plot is presented to the reader, it is helpful to look at the narrative perspective of the novel. The story is told from the point of view of the narrator-character Maya Duran. Her "voice" does not narrate omnisciently, but she slowly and gradually deciphers the mysteries surrounding the enigmatic professor. The reader is privy only to the details that Maya comes to find out during research efforts undertaken on her own or with the help of her son whose only passion seems to be surfing the internet. The reader's attention is thus engaged by the increasing suspense and tension until the second part of the novel, when a frame story with a distinct title is

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.salom.com.tr/haber/121366/tarihi-sadece-ogrenmek-degil-yuzlesmek-ge-rekiyor>. Accessed: 10.03.2024.

inserted – “The Story of Maximilian and Nadia” – and reveals all the truth about the events that had taken place decades ago. Maya, the intradiegetic narrator, recounts the tragic episode in the professor’s life sixty years ago, before and after the outbreak of the Second World War, after he has fully opened up to her, an act that can be credited with therapeutic value.

Correlating Livaneli’s statements with the way in which the themes of the novel *Serenade for Nadia* are approached, I hypothesize that the author’s narrative strategy includes, among other things, the intention to arouse the reader’s empathy. It has been demonstrated in recent decades that empathy is a particularly important factor in social life, in cementing harmonious inter-human connections and in resolving or avoiding conflicts, therefore Livaneli creates in his novel a wide space for the manifestation of this emotion, either by direct appeal or by evocation through specific techniques.

## 2. On Empathy

Agreeing on a definition for empathy is no simple matter, one of the reasons being that it is not an emotion which belongs on a list with anger, pity, joy, optimism, etc. and probably every emotion can be involved in empathic response (McIver Lopes 2011: 121). Most definitions refer to the ability to understand and experience the feelings of another. Martin L. Hoffman describes it as “an affective response more appropriate to another’s situation than one’s own” (Hoffman 2000: 4). One reason for the interest in this phenomenon in recent decades is that it has become clear that empathy is one of the main elements that help us understand other people and therefore helps us establish healthy relationships with those around us. Furthermore, the role of empathy is nuanced by Lou Agosta when he states that “the loss of empathy is equivalent to the loss of the individual’s being human” (Agosta 2010: xiv).

From a scientific perspective, neuroscientific research shows that the neural system plays an essential role in the ability of human beings to empathize with others, because some of the mirror neuron structures that are activated when we ourselves experience a particular situation,

positive or negative, are also activated when we observe another human being going through the same set of circumstances (Gallese 2015: 442). The empathic experience is not only limited to real-life people in our immediate relational environment but can also extend to people we do not know in person. Moreover, it can even be the result of experiencing art, such as watching a film or a play or reading a book. In this case, we do not encounter real human beings experiencing an emotion but characters in fictional universes mimicking reality. Functionally speaking, researchers found only minor differences between empathy for a natural person and empathy for a fictional character, because the key element in empathy is perception, not the actual existence of the stimulus (Cuff et al. 2014: 5).

### **3. Varieties of Strategic Empathy**

In her research upon the role of narrative empathy, theorist Suzanne Keen concentrates on the transactions between authors and readers. This is how she introduces the concept of strategic empathy which “points to the intentional, though not invariably efficacious, work of authors to sway the feelings of their readers in audiences closer and further from the authors of and subjects of representation” (Keen 2008: 478). Driven by the desire to bring about social change, to draw attention to certain issues or to make people aware of certain realities, the authors use a variety of representational techniques designed to stimulate the feelings of their readers.

The main goal of strategic empathy is to try to transcend differences, and to avoid readers’ biased attitudes towards characters who are not part of their ethnic, social, racial, national group, etc. Strategic empathy also relies on the representation of universal human experiences to access and stimulate feelings common to all human beings. The concept of strategic empathy indicates the intentional, though not invariably effective, activity of an author meant to influence the feelings of his or her readers in audiences more distant or closer to the subjects of representation (Keen 2008: 478). However, the narrative work cannot evoke empathy in all its readers, as they differ in their emotional states, some being more likely to respond empathetically, while others experience

little or no emotional fusion with the text. Therefore, there are a considerable number of variables on which the reader's empathic response depends. To address these variables, Suzanne Keen proposes a preliminary model of three varieties of strategic empathy: bounded strategic empathy which manifests itself within a particular group and derives from the reader's resemblance to the characters in terms of their backgrounds or experiences; ambassadorial strategic empathy is aimed at those readers for whom the events and features of the characters in the text are unfamiliar. The techniques of this variety of strategic empathy thus cultivate empathy for members of a group to which the reader does not belong, with specific goals such as appeals for justice, recognition, and support. Finally, the third category of strategic empathy proposed by Keen is broadcast strategic empathy, which appeals to each reader to empathize with members of a group to which he or she does not necessarily belong, focusing on experiences common to all people, such as feelings, hopes or vulnerabilities (Keen 2008). Strategic empathy, with all its three subcategories, is a variety of author's empathy and a function of his/her political aims, because as Keen argues, strategic empathizing is in the service of a "scrupulously visible political interest" (Keen 2010: 83).

#### **4. "Scrupulously visible political interests" in *Serenade for Nadia***

Zülfü Livaneli is a highly regarded figure on the Turkish cultural arts scene, as a musician with a career spanning almost half a century, as a writer and as a film director. His active involvement in social and political life has not gone unnoticed, and he has been awarded the title of UNESCO ambassador in recognition of his contribution to world peacekeeping.

His interest in solving the problems facing today's society is echoed also in Zülfü Livaneli's literary work. *Serenade for Nadia*, along with Livaneli's other novels in which social themes are addressed, demonstrates the author's intention to stir the emotions of the reader to achieve justice, be it symbolic, for victims past and present. In an interview from 2021 Livaneli states: "I create characters that don't live in a vacuum. My characters are influenced by the environment and by

political and social developments. We are all 'zoon politikon' in Aristotle's concept. I approach social problems through my protagonists' psychologies"<sup>4</sup>.

In another interview, Livaneli sums up one of the "scrupulously visible political interests" of his literary career:

Bu adaletsiz dünyada göçler kolay son bulmayacağı için, Avrupa ülkelerinin giderek ırkçı demokrasilere dönüşme olasılığı çok yüksek. Ben buna democ-racism adını veriyorum yani ırkçı demokrasi Rönesans'tan, insan hakları bildirgesinden ve onca demokrasi denemesinden sonra tekrar ırkçılığa, savaşa, şiddete dönük politikalar ağırlık kazanıyor. Buna nasıl karşı konulabilir? Elimizde ne var? Elbette edebiyat<sup>5,6</sup>

By making the reader feel what the characters feel when faced with the vicissitudes of fate and history, the author attempts to mine and infiltrate the reader's emotional universe and to inoculate his own conceptions of the sensitive subjects dealt with. This constitutes the use of authorial strategic empathy as defined by Suzanne Keen and which has the potential to work successfully with the reader.

The social problems that Livaneli addressed through the psychologies of the characters in *Serenade for Nadia* are therefore reflected in the themes of the novel. The writer brings back to life an almost forgotten page of recent history, exploring the catastrophic consequences of political oppression on individual and collective destinies, and the struggle for freedom and moral values in a harsh socio-political reality. We can state that *Serenade for Nadia* is an invitation to empathy, because the author emphasizes in the book the universality of human experience and the

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<sup>4</sup> <https://pen.org/the-pen-ten-zulfu-livaneli/>. Accessed 12.03.2024.

<sup>5</sup> "Since migrations will not end easily in this unfair world, there is a high probability that European countries will gradually turn into racist democracies. I call this 'democracism', or racist democracy. After the Renaissance, after the Declaration of Human Rights and after so many attempts at democracy, policies orientated towards racism, war and violence are gaining weight again. How can this be countered? What do we have? Literature, of course." (our translation)

<sup>6</sup> <https://gazeteoksijen.com/yazarlar/zulfu-livaneli/democ-racism-karsisinda-edebiyat-194787>. Accessed 10.03.2024.

importance of realizing that there are more aspects that make people similar than those that make them different.

### 5. Strategic Idealization in *Serenade for Nadia*

Patrick Colm Hogan argues that a good work is that which succeeds in generating an intense emotional response from the reader, and that realistic depictions produce such responses is a common misconception. Rather, Hogan suggests, there is a possibility that, in some situations, a markedly realistic representation may diminish the reader's empathic response (Hogan 2011: 25). This is why some authors deviate from representational accuracy, preferring to build up the characters to whom they wish to elicit empathic response in the pattern of traits (physical and character) almost generally accepted as ideal. Strategic idealization can indeed be a powerful tool in the hands of a politically engaged writer, as it can facilitate the elicitation of the reader's emotions, as well as reinforce the reader's devotion to the fictional characters. Such idealization can be achieved by stimulating components of emotional experience, manifesting itself by emphasizing positive traits of the characters that make them desirable in the eyes of the reader, such as noble character or physical beauty. But when it comes to the idea of idealization, a pertinent question would be, of course, "ideal for whom?". Referring to the novel I place under the lens of narrative empathy I hypothesize that, considering the pattern of translations of Livaneli's novels published before *Serenade for Nadia*, the author knew that a large number of his readers would be from the Western world, so he adapts his narrative strategy accordingly: he builds up one of the main characters by giving him physical and intellectual qualities that he considers many Western readers, but also readers who embrace Western values, would appreciate through familiarity. In this appeal to familiarity, we identify the path to bounded strategic empathy, as Suzanne Keen describes the concept.

Livaneli employs the strategy of idealization in *Serenade for Nadia* by constructing a flawless, almost mythologized image of the character Maximilian Wagner to initially attract the reader's sympathy and attachment as feelings that pave the way to empathy.

Maximilian Wagner, an American professor in his eighties, is introduced to the reader in the first pages of the novel, being directly characterized by Maya, the narrator character, when the two meet at Istanbul Atatürk Airport in a cold day of February 2001. From the very beginning, Maximilian is portrayed by emphasizing features that are in keeping with classical Western standards of male beauty: at the same time, the reader learns that Professor Wagner is an elegant and gallant man, impressing Maya with his chivalrous, but somewhat considered obsolete in modern times, gesture of removing his hat in front of her. The author manipulates the reader's perception not necessarily by presenting Professor Wagner's features as such, for each individual shapes his or her own standards of beauty, which may or may not coincide with those predetermined at one point or another in society's evolution, but rather by highlighting Maya's subjective assessments: "çok ama çok yakışıklı, kendisine çok yakışan çizgileri, harika bir görünüşü vardı"<sup>78</sup> (Livaneli 2011: 21).

After a flattering presentation of the octogenarian professor's physical portrait, the following pages of the novel reveal his intellectual calibre. The prestigious University of Istanbul has him as its guest of honour and on this occasion the professor delivers a speech acclaimed by the audience. The topics he addresses in his speech, or rather the angle from which he approaches these topics, also provides evidence of his system of thought and beliefs and his values scale. Moreover, we find the ideas presented in his speech in the articles and essays published by Livaneli over time. Through the professor's speech at University of Istanbul, we notice that Livaneli emphasizes what Keens calls "common vulnerabilities and hopes through universalizing representations" (Keen 2015: 71-72), appealing to broadcast strategic empathy. The speech, in which he addresses the recurring theme in the novel of people's equality, highlights Professor Wagner's cosmopolitan personality, only for the reader to later find out, from the unfolding of the plot, what it was that led to the acquisition of such a personality. Among the topics of his speech, we can identify the conflict between East and West, prejudice

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<sup>7</sup> The English version does not provide translation for this paragraph.

<sup>8</sup> "very, very handsome", "his wrinkles that looked so great on him", "he looked great". (our translation)



as a source of this conflict, the importance of human rights and the invitation to tolerance. The professor quotes Dostoevsky, saying that man can only mature through suffering. He identifies Istanbul as the place of his own coming of age, hinting that it was there that he had experienced suffering, but he does not go into further detail on this chapter, as he adds that he has come to discuss the future, not the past. Although the world of the past and the present are different, the professor believes that the problems are essentially the same. A key point in his speech at the university is his emphasis on the danger of preconceptions. They have great potential to shape deeply negative attitudes towards others and can influence our behavior towards them. According to Professor Wagner, the fact that all languages have terms that designate the Other – *barbar*, *gaijin*, *kâfir* –, designed to deepen differences and to perceive these differences as negative and dangerous, thus generating conflict, illustrates the idea that the problem of preconceptions is found in all cultures, and the solution proposed by the professor, formulated as a condition, is to eliminate these terms, with the aim of achieving the goal of assessing people precisely on the basis of the individual's quality as a human being, and not on the basis of prejudices related to his or her belonging to various social constructs. The fact that the ideas confirming his cosmopolitan attitude advocating a common and equal humanity are presented towards the beginning of the novel, before the reader learns the context of Maximilian's past tragedy, may facilitate the manifestation of broadcast strategic empathy, focusing on experiences common to all people, such as feelings, hopes or vulnerabilities: fortunately, not everyone gets to experience a devastating tragedy that provides a revelation of the meaning of humanity and a profound redefinition or nuancing of moral values. This case would facilitate the manifestation of bounded strategic empathy – *I understand you because it also happened to me*. The fact that in every culture there is the potential for opinions to be formed as a result of bias and prejudice means that while not every exponent of that culture may formulate such opinions about members outside his or her culture, he or she may still become the victim of the biases of others.

Most of Maximilian Wagner's characteristics are presented both directly and indirectly in "The Story of Maximilian and Nadia", set sixty years ago, before and during the Second World War, in Germany and

Turkey. Maximilian belonged to a family of intellectuals, had numerous cultural and artistic interests outside his professional life, loved to read, attended classical music concerts, and was part of a quartet, playing the violin.

We can notice that Maximilian Wagner is not only handsome, rich, sensitive, educated, cultured, talented, but also a true Law professional. He also becomes a loving and loyal husband even after his wife's tragic death. This exquisite set of qualities, while not impossible to find in a single real-life person, is nevertheless coupled with natural flaws, which Maximilian does not seem to have, or at least the novel does not show us any. Therefore, this is a clear case of idealization in the terms described by Hogan. Another way in which the character is idealized is that, despite his status as a victim of a destiny whose strings were controlled by unjust and criminal political systems, Maximilian Wagner faces suffering with dignity. Although Maximilian recalls shattering events, he achieves this without any hint of pathetic shrillness and mournfulness, approaches that would be completely at odds with his stature and state. Maximilian does not complain and does not hurl accusations, or point fingers. The emphasis on the complicity of some countries in his personal tragedy is discreetly placed – rather hinted at – and sometimes the events are presented in an objective, historiographical manner, which is not an indication of Maximilian's detachment, but the manifestation of his strong moral principles. The dignity he retained after the unfortunate experience and the strength he found to continue his life and professional activity are indications of the attitude that secured his, so to speak, altitude. All of Maximilian's assets, some acquired, some inherited, could have ensured him a prosperous future at the top of the Nazi establishment, – according to Livaneli, even the choice of the character's name is not accidental, as Wagner, a generic Germanic name, is an indication that the character is someone 'who can be said to be a good German'<sup>9</sup> – but to the many qualities he possesses, he is also endowed with strong sense of morality. His moral and spiritual configuration does not allow him to align himself with the false Nazi value system, which he not only does not embrace, but vehemently opposes. Moreover,

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.salom.com.tr/haber/121366/tarihi-sadece-ogrenmek-degil-yuzlesmek-ge-rekiyor>. Accessed 10.03.2024.

he commits the ultimate act of defiance by falling in love with and marrying an exponent of the ethnic group most hated by the Nazis: he falls in love with Nadia, a Jewish woman, and he is prepared to bravely face all the dangers that may come.

## 6. The Tragic Love Story

Although Livaneli confessed that he does not specifically call the novel *Serenade for Nadia* a romance novel because the word 'love' is nowadays extremely tainted<sup>10</sup>, he added to the novel the essential elements that provide the possibility of interpreting it as a romance novel. Although Maximilian and Nadia have different religions, their relationship is accepted by their families and communities, and they subsequently seal their love in a double religious ceremony – Catholic and Jewish. However, in the political context of Nazi Germany, the two live a forbidden love, and the chain of events dictated by the authorities at the time leads to the brutal separation of the young couple and, later, to Nadia's tragic death.

Hogan's research on literary universals suggests that placing touching love stories at the heart of politically motivated novels is a highly sensitive choice, especially if the narrative in question is designed to promote morality. These stories put two lovers against a social system that opposes their love, and usually invite readers to empathize and feel compassion for the lovers, to side with them rather than with the system that threatens to destroy their love (Hogan 2011). In *Serenade for Nadia*, Livaneli situates an inter-ethnic and inter-religious couple both against an extremist and racist political system and society, but also against governments and societies that are criminal in their ignorance in dealing with crisis situations, which in the end not only succeeded in destroying the romantic relationship but were also guilty for the tragic death of Nadia and the other victims on the Struma.

Maximilian and Nadia's story begins on the campus of the Munich Faculty of Law, where Maximilian was teaching, and his future wife was studying. He rescues her from harassment by a group of students

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/livaneliden-serenad-231466>. Accessed 10.03.2024.

contaminated by Nazi views spreading hatred of Jews. The fact that a German and Aryan professor defends a Jewish student is regarded with suspicion by the group of aggressors: "But you're an Aryan German. Why are you protecting a Jew?" (Livaneli 2020: 160). The visible contempt for Nadia is doubled by the contrariness generated by the teacher's attitude acting in opposition to the expectations and beliefs of the representatives of the new regime. Maximilian handles the situation with tact and diplomacy, citing objective reasons: "I'm stopping an injustice [to one of my students]<sup>11</sup>. Don't forget that this is a law school" (Livaneli 2020: 160). Although by "one of my students" Maximilian tries to prove his objective position free of personal implications and convictions, both towards the situation and towards Nadia, wishing to express that regardless of race, their quality as students places them on the same line and that he would have done the same towards anyone else, Maximilian conveys, in another key, the idea that he does not align himself with the values of the ruling regime; Nadia's ethnicity is irrelevant to him. Paradoxically, Maximilian's seemingly detached approach recognizes Nadia as an individual, as a human being with rights and freedoms, which runs counter to Nazi concepts. Maximilian's gesture can be interpreted both as a manifestation of civic spirit: "He'd done it because it was the right thing to do, and hoped it was something he would have done for anyone." (Livaneli 2020: 160). It was also the manifestation of his professional duty, that of stopping a violent action directed against one of his students.

An additional, and extremely strong, motivation for the professor's intervention was the romantic feelings he had for his student, a girl whom he had been "trying for months to establish a relationship with" (Livaneli 2020: 160).

The relationship between the two evolves quite rapidly within the narrative. To protect her from future similar incidents that might endanger her, Maximilian suggests he could give Nadia private lessons. Their interaction then gradually extends to the personal level, as the young woman begins to take part in Max's activities outside of his professional life. Nadia, who was part of a simple family of Romanian Jews living in Germany, gets to know and be part of the elite life of

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<sup>11</sup> Missing in the English translated version.

Maximilian, a wealthy young German man from a respected and influential family. The love story between Maximilian and Nadia evolves gradually as the two get to know each other organically by spending as much time together as possible. The scenario of their story is realistic, common, and often encountered in real life: the thrill of falling in love, the pre-date emotions, the natural vulnerability to the feeling of love, etc. The relationship builds naturally, starting from “smiles of gratitude” (Livaneli 2020: 161), to walks in the park, holding hands and the first romantic kiss when he proposed her. The conventionality of the beginning of their relationship and the absence of out-of-the-ordinary occurrences facilitates the reader’s identification with the characters, thus building the basis for empathy. The love between the young people at the beginning of their journey is not a passionate one, but develops into the companion type of love, based on mutual affection, attachment, and support. The construction of the narrative does not reveal the impetuous intensity of their feelings, but it rather highlights the solidity and stability of the relationship.

*Serenade for Nadia* can be interpreted as a romance novel, telling the story of a love that, through the prism of a tragedy, manifests itself as pain. The young couple’s direct interaction does not exceed twenty pages. Maximilian and Nadia’s story is more like Maximilian’s story in search of Nadia. After she is arrested by the Gestapo and taken off the train as the couple headed to Istanbul to get away from the Nazi danger, Nadia does not appear in the plot anymore except for a brief moment when she waves to Maximilian off the Struma ship. The whole tragedy is not seen from the perspective of the actual victim, which is Nadia, the one who dies, but from the perspective of the one who will have to struggle with the burden of the brutal loss and, subsequently, the burden of the permanent absence of the loved one. Livaneli does not show the reactions of Nadia and the other passengers on the Struma, nor during the quarantine in Istanbul, let alone in the moments before the explosion. In fact, their deaths come as a flash. The focus is on the bloody legacy that befalls the survivor: managing absence as a repercussion of death. The novel emphasizes the consequences of death not necessarily on those who bear its rigors directly, but on those left behind who are irreversibly branded with the hot iron of desolation.

## 7. Conclusion

In this essay I have tried to outline some strategies by which I consider Livaneli employs strategic empathy to engage readers emotionally. *Serenade for Nadia* reflects on the catastrophic consequences of political oppression, the struggle for freedom, and the importance of empathy and moral values in a harsh socio-political reality. Livaneli emphasizes the universality of human experiences and the similarities that bind people together, inviting readers to empathize with the characters' struggles.

Livaneli strategically idealizes the character of Maximilian Wagner in *Serenade for Nadia*, portraying him as a flawless, almost mythologized figure to elicit empathy from readers. Maximilian embodies both physical and intellectual traits that align with Western ideals, emphasizing his noble character and moral values. His portrayal serves to appeal to readers and facilitate a strong emotional connection, thereby reinforcing the reader's devotion to the fictional characters.

The novel presents a tragic love story between Maximilian and Nadia, depicting their forbidden inter-ethnic and inter-religious romance set against a backdrop of extremist and racist political systems. Livaneli's narrative emphasizes the repercussions of their love and the destructive impact of societal and political oppression, ultimately leading to the tragic death of Nadia and the other victims.

*Serenade for Nadia* can be interpreted as a romance novel, portraying a love story that ultimately results in profound pain and loss. The novel focuses on Maximilian's struggle to cope with Nadia's brutal fate and the enduring absence of his beloved. Livaneli's narrative highlights the profound impact of death not only on the direct victims but also on the survivors who are left to grapple with the profound sense of loss and desolation.

In summary, Zülfü Livaneli's *Serenade for Nadia* encapsulates his strategic approach to storytelling, emphasizing empathy through idealized characterization to engage readers emotionally and convey powerful messages about social and political issues. The novel's tragic love story serves as a poignant reflection of the destructive forces of prejudice and oppression, and has the potential to be an effective tool for readers to resonate on a deep emotional level with the characters.

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## DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

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