



THEMATIC IN THE POETRY COMPOSITIONS OF YOUNG KOSOVAR FEMALE POETS AT THE END OF XX CENTURY

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Abstract:

In this article our primary objective is to identify thematic of poetry works published by young female poets of Kosovo in the years 1990-1999. The process of writing and publishing of poetry pieces by young female poets in this period marks an important moment in the history of the Albanian literature specifically for the thematic utilized in the poems. Gender issues, concerns about the unequal position vis-a-vis man in the society, other concerns from everyday life in Kosovo, fragments from specific periods of national history, global issues of socio-cultural background etc., are among the main poetry composition thematic of female poets that started their poetic career in the last decade of XX century. Apart from thematic novelties, poetic works of young female poets are highly organized in the poetic design. Lyrical elements are noticed mainly in the poems with personal and contemporary thematic characterized by metonymical and melancholic discourse, very often with revolt oriented tonality and with the absence of joy. On the other hand, the dramatic discourse, the one that deals with pain and lamentation is enshrined within the thematic that deals with the fate of the Albanian nation throughout centuries. In terms of stylistic organization and contribution, the most admired and used figures by female poets of this period are metaphor, allegory, epithet, allusion, whereas in the poems with national thematic we notice the presence of the figure of hyperbole.

Keywords: authors, lyrical poetry, thematic, figure, discourse.

1. Introduction

Throughout the centuries the Albanian woman was active in the social life and part of relevant historical events alongside the man. In the Albanian historical and cultural heritage we have the presence of a dozen names of woman that left traces in long-term efforts to preserve and enhance national identity, language and tradition.

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Since the ancient times, the Albanian history reckons contribution of many women of Albanian origin in various spheres of life. Such is the case with the Queen of the Illyrian tribe of Ardian's, Teuta, or Etleva, the Dardanian princess. In medieval times Donika Kastrioti, the wife of Albanian hero Skanderbeg, was the woman that exemplified sacrifice and devotion for the cause of freedom for Albanians, whereas with the same attributes is adhered Nora from the tribe of Kelmendi's during the Ottoman rules. Between the two world wars we could witness revival of Albanian patriotic sentiments where Shota Galica was a pivotal representative of women fighters for freedom along men,ⁱⁱ with Xheve Lladrovci along with other women fighters going to historic glory in the last war in Kosovo, and concluding the list of women contribution in fight and patriotic devotion for the freedom of Albanians.

On the other hand, in literature we could witness late women literary contributions and this also due to the fact that literature in Albania and Kosovo followed diverse paths in the last century and faced systemic challenges due to known socio-political circumstances. Viewed in an historical overview, the Albanian woman as a literature contributor is known only starting from the period of National Renaissance with two figures that used to procreate literature outside of proper Albanian territories, Elena Gjika (aka Dora D'Istria) at the Albanian colony in Bucharest, and Kristina Xhentile, an Arberesh woman living in Italy. It is only in 1940ⁱⁱⁱ when we attest prose publication in the Albanian literature, written by Musine Kokolari, a vigorous author that very soon was to be challenged by political developments in Albania following World War II, being imprisoned and interned due to her diverse and liberal political thoughts.

2. Kosovar female poets

Until the beginning of the 90-ies, the history of the Albanian literature in Kosovo reckons only a few female poets, and consequently, literature critics in Kosovo agree that Edi Shukriu is among the first female authors in the Albanian poetry literature, a poet that artistically brings into life what is called the female poetry spirit^{iv}.

The first literary piece of Shukriu "Tonight my heart celebrates" (1972) belongs to the poetry genre. She was engaged with publications in other literature genres, however, she continued publishing poems as well, with a second publication called "The clime"^v being published almost twenty years following the first one. Female poets Flora Brovina and Fehmie Selimi are also among the female poets that published poems in the last decade of the XX century, however, in this article we will deal only with the poetry work published by female poets that started their career at the beginning of the 90-ies.

ⁱⁱ Ibrahim Rugova, *Aesthetical refusal*, Faik Konica, Prishtinë 2005, pg. 237

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibrahim Rugova, *Aesthetical refusal*, Faik Konica, Prishtinë 2005, pg. 239

^{iv} Nysret Krasniqi, "Literature of Kosovo 1953-2000", AIKD Prishtinë 2016, pg. 275

^v Taken from the biography of the poet published at <http://www.ashak.org/index.php?cid=1,25,371>

Donikë Gashi, Elvirë Durmishi, Fakete Rexha, Ganimete Lekaj, Ganimete Podvorica, Hajrie Maksutaj, Hida Halimi, Naime Beqiraj, Shqipe Malushi, Xheraldina Buçinca Vula are just some of the female poets that started a unique literary process through which a new literary phenomenon came into existence in the Kosovo Albanian literature. It was a new phenomenon because the figure of woman as a literature author appears very late in the history of Albanian literature published in Kosovo, despite the fact that 'woman' was strongly attached to various historical and social events in the past as mentioned above. The figure of the woman in literature was mainly recognized in the aesthetical function, whereas as a literature writer she appears very late in the history^{vi}.

1990-1999 is the period in which the biggest poetry work outputs were produced in the whole XX century (*known also as the century of modernity*^{vii}) in Kosovo. This decade enriches the literature history of Kosovo with new names of male/female poets, as well as repels forever the inferiority that the female authors had vis-à-vis male authors in writing of literature works, especially poetry.

3. Thematic

In a period of ten years a big number of poetry works got published, and national thematic with elements from everyday life in Kosovo dominated over themes with universal character. At the level of national thematic, young female poets dealt with the prevailing themes focusing on everyday life of women and their position in the society. On the other hand, cultural literature thematic gained inter-textual elements being influenced by big topics of the cultural heritage such as the case with the renowned Balkan ballad "*The Constantin and Doruntine*" or the legend "*The Saint/Rozafa bridge*". Aside from these, young female poets were attracted also from thematic that dealt with certain historical periods going back to the ancient Illyrian times. On the other hand, at the level of universal thematic, interpersonal relations man-woman, parent-child etc., were also present in major literary pieces written in this period.

Although she was at the very beginning of literary career, Xheraldina Buçinca Vula decided to deal with consecration of societal issues, especially with gender relations, positioning on the side of Kosovar women, in defence of their rights and expression of poetic rebellion towards masculine world being motivated from un-delineated impulses in protection of women^{viii}:

*"Somebody has left me poor for years
Of hunger that winds up the stomach
Left me poor in the streets overcrowded with cars
That take you where you want*

^{vi}Ibrahim Rugova, *Aesthetical refusal*, Faik Konica, Prishtinë 2005, pg. 237

^{vii}Sabri Hamiti, *Thematic*, ASHAK, Prishtinë, 2005, pg. 225

^{viii}Ismail Sylja, *Art of the sustainable value*, Bujku newspaper, Prishtinë, 14 December 1996

*Planted in me a cold feeling for the things
Recurred like a menses cycle
Along the things of a healthy woman
Somebody breaks the seeds to get lost
In the cell to be renewed full of light and face
Left me poor the way I was with the numbering
Emotion at the bottom of my womb that does not light.*^{ix}

Through poetry and her positioning in the society, Buçinca Vula invited Albanian women to change the literary model for women established by male authors as well as to embark on the tradition of creating literary models that are inspired by female feelings^x. Twenty years since this 'cause' was initiated by young female poets that were engaged in changing of the cultural attitudes, we have reached the point where there are significant changes in the life of women in the Kosovar society. A similar approach towards this phenomenon is promoted also by female poet Hida Halimi who expresses here rebellion reactions through verses^{xi}.

Naime Beqiraj in her poetic piece "Over Siparunt" (1990) covers cultural and historical thematic utilizing her passion to re-write present life situations through symbols taken from Greek mythology (*Sphinx figure*) and Albanian culture and history (*Eagle figure*). Through her characteristic style, Beqiraj cultivates poetry with literary thematic and with elements originating from the legends, such as the legend on the Saint-Rozafa bridge (*based on the name of the woman that was buried in the wall*).

*"I stay and peek towards Rozafa
The expedition is out of time even for thirst
The archaeologist scrubs eyes behind glasses
Sunset sets in its forehead."*^{xii}

Rozafa legend entails renowned mythological elements even for other nations in the Balkan Peninsula and beyond, such as sacrifice, communication between men and stones, thus this thematic can be categorized also as universal taking that it holds known elements from the cultural heritage in the Balkans. Universal thematic with elements from the mythology are found also in the poems of Shqipe Malushi published in the Anthology of female poets of Kosovo "Apple bite" (1996).

On the other hand, Fakete Rexha names her second poetic book "The return of the sister", just as the concluding poem of the book which is based on the literary thematic of the Balkans ballad "Constantin and Doruntine"

^{ix} Xheraldina Buçinca Vula: "A Street Cat", Sfinga, Prishtinë, 1999, pg.37

^x Habibe Maliqi, *On the mass and enthusiasm*, Bota e Re journal, Prishtinë, April 1996.

^{xi} Ismail Syla, *Art of the sustainable values*, Bujku newspaper, Prishtinë, 14 December 1996

^{xii} Naime Beqiraj, *Over Siparunt*, Rilindja newspaper, Prishtinë, 1990, pg.8

The figure of Doruntine comes in the literary world of Kosovo together with the name of female poet Rexha as a dear figure that symbolizes hard life, sacrifice and suffrage of the woman in Kosovo:

*"In all procreations
In all
Songs of poets, my road
Following seventy seven mountains Doruntine
My road çiftelia hanged in the stump
My road yellow eyebrow
My road sister."*^{xiii}

Thematic of the poetry piece *"A mountain that breathes"* (1990), mixed with the literary thematic, stirs critical thinking to consider the piece as a composition offered to the audience to see a world which we have seen but we didn't know much of it. On the other hand, opposing emotions, distant and close just like when the joy transcends into pain and when the untouchable can be touched, place the poem within the postmodernist cycle.

Kujtim Rrahmani in his literary critique on the piece *"The return of the sister"* (1993) sees the figure of the paradox, in which the tragicomic feelings restrain, in the verses:

*"We laugh, and when
My body doesn't help
Your pain (Wardrobe)."*^{xiv}

He considers the poetic abstraction, considered as an ever more rare delicacy and style in the Albanian poetry in the last years (*due to the fact that it wasn't developed as a demand of aesthetic evocation and expression but more as a trend of the time*), as a sign of poetic philosophy of Fakete Rexha as a poet^{xv}.

Through poetic pieces such as *"A mountain that breathes"* and *"The return of the sister"* Rexha proves that her poetry work is written based on the concepts of postmodernist period.

Defining features of postmodernism are considered: paradox, parody and sarcastic elements used in the function of satirizing and bringing sarcasm in the tradition linked with other fields, also using unconventional figures such as anachronisms, palinode (*retracting parts/views of poems expressed in other poems*), and tautology (*by repeating phrases or words with similar meaning*)^{xvi}.

^{xiii}Fakete Rexha, *Mountain that breathes*, Rilindja, Prishtinë, 1990, pg.40

^{xiv}Kujtim Rrahmani, *Hidden motifs grammar*, Cultural Centre, Podujevë, 1998, pg. 205

^{xv}Kujtim Rrahmani, *Hidden motifs grammar*, Cultural Centre, Podujevë, 1998, pg. 205

^{xvi}Matei Calinescu, *Five faces of modernity*, Dituria, Tiranë, 2002, pg. 320-321

Further, poetizing of love and death belongs to the category of thematic with universal character, where love and death have always been two central literature themes at the universal level. Love is an unavoidable interpersonal relationship, whereas death is the unavoidable end of human life in all sorts of relationships. As such, love is transcended inspired by different individual motifs from one female poet to the other, therefore the audience in the very same thematic has benefited from the poems expressing pain, solitude, gloominess:

*"Often at evenings I open the door
To make place for steps
The eye inscribes the poem of pain
Bringing the colour of fire
There, thousand nights of waiting
To make a place for the stone in the heart
I measure my words with the waiting step
Opening the patience path."*^{xvii}

And on the other hand the erotic and passionate poetry:

*"She woke ashamed
From rifling thoughts page-to-page
(Its) ancient human nakedness
Is absorbed through the walls with windows
The evening when it became dark
Lust and sin like solitude."*^{xviii}

Simultaneously, during this decade the audience gets acquainted with the theme of death. Poem "Winter" ("The return of the sister") of Rexha contains death as a figure, like in the verses "Boh! Winter/black winter", displaying the winter setting and the tremor before death, which integrally hauls the weight of the horror from the end of life^{xix}.

The unspoken word is a new reality that establishes a new relationship between the poet and the verse. In general, Naime Beqiraj puts her poems in the function of expressing various emotional conditions through words, whereas in the poem "Autumn motif" she chooses silence as a new form to express the distress she feels:

*"In the unspoken word between the stones
In the cold white marble
White."*^{xx}

^{xvii}Naime Beqiraj, *Over Siparunt*, Rilindja, Prishtinë, 1990, pg. 31

^{xviii}Fakete Rexha, *Mountain that breathes*, Rilindja, Prishtinë, 1990, pg.20

^{xix}Rushit Ramabaja, *Nine twigs of a stem*, Bujku newspaper, Prishtinë, December 1993

^{xx}Naime Beqiraj, *Over Siparunt*, Rilindja, Prishtinë, 1990, pg. 35

Silence/absence of the word, is a form that wasn't much used by young female poets of this period, up until the publication of the abovementioned verses. Therefore, this new sign of poetic philosophy means a resignation or strain of thoughts of the poet that lead in approving of the 'language of the silence'.

Taking that young female poets started their poetic career when Kosovar Albanians were facing tough times, times when there was an expression of violence, negation of elementary rights to live, culture and everything that was Albanian by the Serbian regime, it was unavoidable not to have a reaction by the female poets towards these developments which in turn was reflected in thematic of their poems.

4. Conclusion

Lyrical poetry of young female poets of the 90-ies is characterized by a language rich in figures, expression through free verse and diverse thematic. Poets dealt with reality topics, inspired by social causes, gender inequality, and everyday life in Kosovo, interpersonal relations, crisis and dramatic sequences as a consequence of systemic oppression against the Albanian population by the Serbian regime in Kosovo. Further, female poets exploit antiquity and mythological thematic, but also deal with universal thematic. Due to the fact that works of Kosovar female poets were wide-ranging in terms of thematic they were translated in various international languages and admired by various international audiences.

Young female poets contrary to more senior female poets express themselves more freely on female causes and deal with taboo thematic, therefore they produce semiotic and stylistically valuable poems transmitting also thematic courage accomplished through poetic figures, with the usage of various figures such as metaphor, allegory, hyperbole etc., but also composing poems within the dramatic discourse of the national patriotic thematic on the fate of the nation.

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