



A SHORT OVERVIEW OF THE ALBANIAN NOVEL

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Abstract:

This study, entitled "A brief overview of the Albanian novel", aims to investigate the history of the development of the novel genre in Albanian literature. It is a short historic view of this genre, where the most essential points of formation of which are touched, from the first novel to the contemporary. Trying to give a glimpse of the story of the Albanian novel, besides beginning the cultivation of this genre in our literature, we have also talked about the novel written during our national and post-Renaissance period, about the novel written after the end of the Second World War, the Albanian novel, written and published in Kosovo, as well as the novel written in Albania after the collapse of the dictatorial communist system. So we tried to include almost all literary and historical periods, so that our brief panorama is more clear and comprehensive. In a word, we tried to make a genre history that is great for studying our literature, especially the Albanian novel.

Keywords: Albanian novel, brief overview, genre history, comprehensive overview

1. Introduction

The formalist researcher, Mikhail Bahtin considers the novel as the only genre always being in the process of developing, and never as a completed one."ⁱⁱ According to this point of view, however, we can say that even our novel is a literary structure that is taking shape differently every day. So it is continuously being developed, looking for the most perfect literary forms.

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ⁱⁱ*Novel Issues*, (essay of Mihail Bahtin-it, *Epi and Novel*), Rilindja, selected and written preface by Hysni Hoxha, Rilindja, 1980, f. 19

1.1 The first Albanian Novel

The Albanian novel does not have any long or ancient history, as it happens to be with the novels developed in Western European countries or in Russia. While the first world novel and European literature dates back to the twentieth century, such as "Don Quixote of Mança", Albanians had to wait two centuries for their first novel, such as "White of Temal", written by Pashko Vasa. According to this, it is worth quoting the researcher Bajram Krasniqi, who states that *"while the peoples were making their cultural life, Albanians in the 19th and early 20th centuries had to prove their national existence with different tools and types of artistic creativity."*ⁱⁱⁱ

It is also thought that the first Albanian novel might have been written several years before that of Pashko Vasa. The author is thought to have been a contemporary of the same, but belonging to another plebscite of Albanian romantic authors, such as the Arbëresh poets of the nineteenth century. We are referring to F. A. Santori. Many researchers and thinkers attribute to him, the writing of the first Albanian novel. But there is a general acceptable opinion to most researchers that the first novel is "White of the Temal". The novel of Santori is allegedly written in an Albanian of Arbëresh, in an arbërishte, which is hardly understandable to today's Albanian reader. For today's reading and republishing, we need a new and update of this novel. Whereas, Pashko Vasas's novel was first written in French and then translated into Albanian. The novel of Sami Frashëri "Love of Talat with Fitnete" is also written in the same way. This novel which is written by one of the most important thinkers not only of Albanian romance, was written first in Turkish and then translated into Albanian. So, these are three novels with which, dates to be the time of conception of writing the biggest genre of prose in Albanian literature.

1.2 Albanian Romantic and Post-romantic Novel

The three above-mentioned novels are the spirit of Romanticism literature, which in Albanian culture entered the middle of the XIX century. Even the novels above mentioned, as a theme and idea, have this spirit, as they aim to give an idealistic portrayal of man and time. Such a portrayal was one of the main axioms of Romanticism literature, even in its overwhelming plan. Though, both in Albanian and in the world literature, the romantic novel was not the dominant genre of time or literary period. The dominant form was poetry, while the dominant genre of that time was the poem.

After the Romanticism period, the first forms of the novel appeared in Albanian literature with classical and sentimental elements. However, two completely different forms of writing appeared in our letters almost at the same time. Among novels with classical elements and with a nationalistic theme and spirit, we can mention those of Ndoc Nikaj. Among the main novels of this author are: "Besiegers Shkoder (1905)", "Engagement in cradle or taken Ulcinj", "Beauty (1918)", "Flowers in sack (1920)" etc. Ndoc Nikaj novels have a romantic continuity in the portrayal of idyllic love and loving

ⁱⁱⁱBajram Krasniqi, *Literature and historical conscience*, Rilindja, Prishtinë, 1984, pg. 8.

characters, while lenses are closer to the novel and classical poetics. For Professor Sabri Hamiti *"in the twentieth century, all the genders and literary forms developed, attesting to the enrichment of literature, from pure fictional forms to mixed-reference fictional forms, as the tendency of literary developments in the world."*^{iv}

Meanwhile, as sentimentalist novels with a hue to realism, or rather to call it sentimental realism, it is worth mentioning "Like to be Boy" by Haki Stërmilli and "Why" by Sterjo Spase. Haki Stërmilli's novel was one of the most widely read works during the time of writing. His massive reading continued even later, even to this day. This is similar to the motif of his theme and the message that unfolds the novel. Here we see the endings of a girl in a patriarchal environment, such as the Albanian one of the first years of the twentieth century. Therefore, the Albanian woman as a single revolt for her position had the challenge of facing such a mentality. The main character, Dija, through her diary reveals the pain of such a feminine position. So we have a novel written in the form of a diary, which is a way of proceeding from the most common in the sentimental novel. As the message of this novel of Haki Stërmilli is emancipation of the Albanian woman, and the time when this story was written.

Sterjo Spase's "Why" novel is of a sentimental nature, like that of Stërmilli, but with a clear conceptual distinction in terms of discourse and ideas he expresses. This novel has a more philosophical discourse, unlike the one in Stërmilli, and draws more towards existentialist philosophy. This is also written in the form of a personal account of Gjon Zaveri, who is the main protagonist and identifying sign of the author's ideas intertwined in the novel.

The sentimental novel to us developed mainly in the 40s of the twentieth century, but it continued to be written even after these years. A typical example of this continuation is the novel Mustafa Greblesh's "Abyss of Love" and many other works of this nature.

Between the two periods, that of Ndoc Nikaj novel and the Albanian sentimentalist novel, we have not developed the novel form so much densely in our papers. The more we see the authors of the stories appear, as the literary genre. As a skeleton novel, unfinished, as his author himself stated, we can call the novel "Dr. Needle discovers the roots of Mamuras" by Faik Konica, one of the most important Albanian authors and thinkers not only of the twentieth century. In it, we have a critical and ironic discourse with the Albanian reality of the early twentieth century, where the author makes an alliance with the Albanian society in the full sense of the word. By the stylistic model and form, Konica's skeleton frame-roman can be described as the novel of realism, which is one of the most important works of Albanian realism.

1.3 Albanian Novel after Second World War

After the end of World War II, Albanian literature, specifically the Albanian novel, developed in two completely different directions. In the territory of today's Albania, the spirit of socialist realism took over, while in Kosovo and other Albanian territories the modernist novel began to be written. Socialist realism was a literary stream that

^{iv}Sabri Hamiti, *Literary work 10: Modern Literature*, Faik Konica, Prishtinë, 2002, pg. 558.

implemented the ideological and party doctrines of communist rulers who had come to power after the abolition of the war. The ideological indoctrination and partisanship were an integral part of this literary stream, which is called socialist realism, but that many scholars are challenged by the epithet of realism, since it does not make real and realistic presentation of reality but that it is presented in a distorted way. In a word, he introduced that "reality" that suited the party and communist power.

So here we are dealing with a totalitarian organization of public life, that is, with the "*totalitarian state with absolute power of the ruling class.*"^vSuch a system is also created by totalitarian mechanisms, where Hannah Arendt's philosopher said, "*totalitarian movements can, whenever and wherever they can create totalitarian states, only need measures that have an appetite for political organization and the oversight of every social segment.*"^{vi}

Among the novels we can mention in the literature of Socialist Realism are: The "Marsh" of Vedat Kokona, "The Liberators" of Dhimitër S. Shuteriqi, "They were not alone" by Sterjo Spase, "Before dawn" by Shefqet Musaraj, "Field on the mountain" by Petro Markos, "The Dead River" and "Juga White" by Jakov Xoxa, "A Fall with Storm" by Ali Abdihojha, "Again on the Feet" by Dhimitër Xhuvani, "Memo Commissar" by Dritëro Agolli, "Facing" of Teodor Laço and others. There is also a series of novels that are written on the basis of this writing doctrine, which was official during the communist regime of Enver Hoxha. Socialist realism in literature was not just a literary model, but a political-literary model and a guide to how to write literature.^{vii}

This doctrine was based on the literary-political theorists of the Soviet Union, where this doctrine began to function. Many Albanian novels of this nature had stylistic and thematic novels written in the largest communist state, the Soviet Union, and the thoughts expressed by Soviet literary theorists who belonged to this literary and cultural background.

So, as we said above, socio-realism was the least realization^{viii}. This is what academic Rexhep Qosja says. In line with his opinion, is the opinion of the Albanian literary professor and scholar, Sabri Hamiti, who said that "*Albanian literature did not recognize and did not experience the realistic writing experience*"^{ix}.

The socio-realist novel in Albanian letters continued to be written until 1990, when the communist regime collapsed. So, we are dealing with one of the longest literary periods known to Albanian literature and we think it should be treated as a phenomenon in itself, without which it was a negative phenomenon. However, even within this period of socialist realism, there were novelists, who have made stylistic overtones and have surpassed this pattern of writing, among them, worth mentioning are Ismail Kadare and Dritore Agolli.

^vAllan Todd, *the European dictatorships: Hitler, Stalin, Mussolini*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge-UK, 2002, f. 12.

^{vi}Hannah Arendt, *The origin of totalitarianism*, translated by Miftar Gjani, (Dija), Prishtina, 2002 f. 262.

^{vii}Adil Olluri, "The Face of Tyranny: narration about the dictatorship in modern Albanian novel", Albanian Institute, Prishtinë, f. 37 .

^{viii}Rexhep Qosja, "New Albanian motion, Albanian Institute,, Prishtina, f. 23.

^{ix}Sabri Hamiti, "Albanizma", Academy of Arts and Science of Kosova, Prishtina, 2009, pg. 13.

Ismail Kadare continues to be the most well-known and most read Albanian writer, not only from the Albanian reader, but across the globe. His work is translated into over 40 different world languages and remains one of the most popular authors of today's world literature. Among his most important novels are: "General of Dead Army", "Castle", "Broken April",

"Chronicle on Stone", "Dream Palace" etc. He is one of the rare authors of that time who successfully escaped the strict rules of socialist realism. According to scholars, this author has used a kind of binary rhetoric^x, where on one hand he used the signs of socio-realistic poetry, but in the plurality of the signs of his texts, we have crucial choices from this poetics. We see these signs especially in the novels "General of the Dead Army", "Broken April", "Castles" etc. The first novel mentioned in this case tells us how the human idea can be undone in an unusual time, such as war. There it is expressed how a conqueror can suffer in the conqueror's land. The Italian general is looking for bones of soldiers killed during World War II. In this quest, he reveals a picture of the visitor's to Albanians. This novel can also be appreciated from the angle of the foreigners, the other, to Albania and the Albanians. "Broken April" is one of the most read and most valued novels not only from the Albanian reader. It deals with the theme of vengeance, as one of the major topics of contemporary Albanian literature. We have a psychological description of the main character, Gjorg, where he picks up his psychological changes to the act of blood feud. Meanwhile, the novel "The Castle", although the narrative reference is sent to us during the battles of the Albanian leadership during the Middle Ages, Gjergj Kastriot-Scanderbeg, as opposed to the Ottoman invaders, as the essential thematic point is the closure and hardness of Albania to the world over time of the communist regime of Enver Hoxha.

Unlike the two above-mentioned novels, in the "Castles" we see more clearly the signs of Socio-realistic literature. While a novel that puts the thumb of critique, revolt and ironic Enver Hoxha's totalitarian regime is the "Palace of Dreams", which was first published as a novel in 1996. In this prose work through an allegorical and symbolic discourse an Enverism regime was attacked, aimed at controlling not only the actions but also the opinions of people living in Albania.

2. Albanian Novel in Kosovo

Meanwhile, the second direction that the Albanian literature and novel was acquired was the modernist, which developed mainly in Kosovo during the 60s and 70s of the last century. As the first work in prose^{xi} a collection of stories "Towards New Days (1953)" can be considered, while as the first novel, written in this language and published in Kosovo, is considered "Blood Serpents (1958)" by Adem Demaçi. Kosovar Albanian novices were liberated from dogma and doctrinal literary socio-realism. They wrote prose with elements of modernist literature, to follow with novels with avant-

^xGëzim Aliu: "Novels by Ismail Kadare 1963-1990 (text rhetoric and narration)" Albanian, Institute, Prishtina, 2016, f. 39.

^{xi}Robert Elsie: "History of Albanian literature", Dukagjini, Pejë, 1996, pg. 304.

garde elements and postmodernism. This last model, with regard to historical developments in Albanian novel and novel, had its beginnings in Kosovo. It should be noted that Kosovo lived in a communist and dictatorial system, but in the field of art and literature there was more creative freedom because of the opening of the former Yugoslavia in relation to the Western world.

During these years in Kosovo, we have literary novelists who are among the most representative voices of contemporary Albanian literature, where it is worth mentioning Anton Pashku, Teki Dërvishi, Rexhep Qosja, Mehmet Kraja, Ymer Shkreli and others. Literature scholar Nysret Krasniqi emphasized the fact that Kosovo Albanian literature is part of the tradition and cultural-historical and national development.^{xii}

2.1 Albanian Novel of Post-Communist

World renowned Semiologist Yuri Lotman on his literary work *Culture and Explosion* emphasizes that cultural change occurs for two reasons: first, as an immediate development, secondly, as a result of various external influences.^{xiii} After 1990, when we see the collapse of the communist totalitarian system in Albania, they continue to write a group of experienced romance like Ismail Kadare, Zija Çela, Vath Koreshi, etc. Their creativity, that had begun before the collapse of communism, is enriched with new aesthetic features, emphasized bloody modernity, emphasized the tendency of linguistic and narrative experiment etc. At this time also appears Fatos Kongoli, who with his novels will be one of the most representative voices of the transition period in Albania. He was translated into several world languages and was acclaimed by world literary criticism. However, more productive, but most singular in terms of conceptuality and in the manner of building characters, Spanish scholar Jose Carlos Rodrigo Breto considers him as "Kadare's revealed successor to the international arena,"^{xiv} as far as the Albanian authors are concerned. In these years, after the collapse of communism, new authors and novelists, like Ridvan Dibra, Agron Tufa and Bashkim Shehu, appear to be among the most beloved and most appreciated of the Albanian literary reality. A very special author who wrote his works after the fall of communism was Kasem Trebeshina, considered one of the most important and loud writers in opposition to the communist regime in Albania. This author, as well as his life, as well as his work, has given signs of a public objection to the communist dictatorship. As the Albanian literature researcher, Agim Vinca, "*Kasem Trebeshina is one of the talented Albanian post-war writers who refused to put his talent at the service of pragmatic demands and of the immediate interests of the politics of the day.*"^{xv}

At the same time in Albanian literature children's literature was developed, especially the novel for children, where as one of the most important authors can be

^{xii}Nysret Krasniqi, *Literature of Kosova 1953-2000*, 99-AIKD, Prishtinë, 2016, pg. 9.

^{xiii}Jurij Lotman, *Culture and Explosion* translated by . Agron Tufa, Aleph, Tiranë, 2004, pg. 95.

^{xiv}Jose Carlos Rodrigo Breto: "Kadare's fortune in Spain: A brief history of its reception", *International Seminar XXXIV for Albanian language, literature and culture*, nr. 34/2, Prishtinë, pg. 48.

^{xv}Agim Vinca, *Albanian Literature Alternative*, third edition, Albanian Institute, Prishtinë, 2009, pg. 29.

mentioned Gaqo Bushaka, Bedri Dedja, Sulejman Krasniqi, Rifat Kukaj, Ymer Elshani, Gjergj Vlashi, Gani Xhafolli, Petro Marko, Viktor Canosinaj and others. Literature or novel for children is written for an audience and a special recipe or as the researcher of this literature says, Dr. Qibrije Demiri-Frangu, the goal of the child's creator is the children's audience or differently, said the baby acknowledger.^{xvi}

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, the basic foundation of the novel is the contemporary reality, the past of different times, mythology, etc. It is also mentioned that the diversity of characters' actions in the novel of the Congolus and in many modern Albanian novels has made it possible to make the human being who is figuratively presented to them, closer, more reliable and more human. It is worth pointing out that Albanian life in concrete socio-economic conditions and circumstances and many other social problems that have been found in these novels, its real and artistic reflection. Some of these novels, from the Middle Ages onwards, in the artistic literary genre of the Albanian novel, have found its loyal expression in numerous situations, partly or entirely sacrificing the greatest human and national values presented as really as artistic.

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^{xvi}Qibrije Demiri-Frangu, Children Literature (*genesis ,phenomene and authors*), Rozafa, Prishtinë, 2011, pg. 14.

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