

¹Towards a modern and postmodern form of contemporary Albanian drama

Gëzim Puka

Head of Culture and Editing Office of Shkodra University,
Address: Sheshi “2 Prilli”, Shkodër, Albania.
E-mail: gpuka2003@yahoo.com

Abstract

Our approach will be interested in dramatic texts. The article tends to treat the evolution process of this literary genre in Albanian literature, through the method of observation of some literary texts, periodicals and archives. This is considered a process in crisis because of the historical change. It does not do “a diagnosis of the era” and refuses to avoid the esthetics issues. The analysis will be focused on the difficulties that are formed within the dramatic form of some representative authors of this genre. Our starting points are some contemporary Albanian drama texts, which remained outside the imposed method of socialist realism. In course of the historic development, the dramatic genre, as a form or rational and controlled instrument, has had different types of changes.

The basic phenomenon that distinguishes the modern era of dramatic creativity is the epic element of drama, through which all absolutism moments are relatives. Modern and postmodern Albanian drama is opened towards past and future. In the dramas of the authors Kasëm Trebeshina, Serafin Fanko, Stefan Çapaliku, Ferdinand Hysi, Albri Brahusa, the characters evoke the past that has led them to this point, deny the present and live in lamentation and hope. Modern drama could abrogate some values, reverse some norms and plant agitation within itself. Drama has broken, passed and deformed norms set by Aristotelian poetics or other classical doctrine.

Modern and postmodern works have thematic, stylistic and narrative elements in their composition, which should change regarding to their peculiar way of organization to other classic or modern works.

Keywords: *Dramatic text, Epic elements, Modern, Postmodern, Literary process.*

1. About the features of some modern forms of contemporary Albanian drama

The word dramaturgy is a broad term with many meanings. Dictionaries of literary terms in most of the cases include in the term dramaturgy, theatrical text, writing, poetry and staging. All these parts are connected to the process of presentation. Our approach is interested in the dramatic text. In the context of literary studies, the term dramaturgy has continued to be used to define the art of dramatic creation or composition, as given in drama texts. We would separate dramaturgical analysis from this term, which is the critical practice, which consists in describing and assessing the effects of this art and the use of dramaturgical theory and which gives us the necessary tools for this practice.

According to Aristotle the dramatic form is an instrument that allows to present human actions. "Tragedy, therefore, is the imitation of an important and perfect action which has a certain dimension, provided by a sweet speech and adapted to each part besides the action manifested by persons who act and do not recite and who clear their passions by mercy and fear."

Drama also is a form of showing serious events. "Aesthetically standing between tragedy and comedy, it represents a balance which can enjoy the qualities of the two major genres but that is not dominated by any of them."

Throughout its historical development dramatic genre, as a form or a rational and controlled instrument, has undergone some changes. Since the time of Aristotle, theorists have criticized the interference of epic elements in the domain of dramatic poetry. Nowadays, those who oppose this type of impact should realize that modern dramaturgy can no longer resist the presence of the epic element, even for the reason that the author has his purpose and the reader's expectations. According to traditional poetics in dramatic genre the determined form of drama is realized through the mixture of a well-chosen subject and that is suitable to this dramatic form. In "Poetics" Aristotle writes that the poet does not create a tragedy as if it were an epic composition. He calls epic composition that which contains a lot of action and mentions the case if only a playwright received as the object of the play the whole "Iliad". The traditional conception based on the inseparable couple, *form and content*, skips the historical category. According to the Hegelian concept, true works of art are only those in which form and content appear similar. This similarity is of dialectical nature and should be understood as an absolute ratio where adaptation is mutual. To put it differently, the content can be nothing else but the return of form into content and form can be nothing else but the return of content into form. The dialectic of form and content appears as a dialectic through the formal and content proclamation. So, the possibility that the content proclamation contradicts the formal proclamation is presented. In fact when form and content correspond, the thematic content moves within the space of formal proclamation as something problematic within something non problematic. The contradiction appears when the formal proclamation, when fixed and non-problematic, becomes problematic by its content. It is this inner contradiction that makes a literary form historically problematic. We will try to explain in this study this contradiction by analyzing the form of some dramatic texts of five prominent contemporary authors. Drama as a form in modern times was often

unstable. Modern drama has been able to abrogate certain values, to reverse some norms and to embed perturbation within itself. It has broken, passed or transformed the norms set by the Aristotelian Poetics or by other classical doctrines.

The scholar, Peter Szondi, in his book "The theory of modern drama" analyzes some dramatic texts starting from the forms of drama. It can be said that his position is the opposite of considering modern plays as "open works". What he shows is that this "disclosure" that is formed within the literary genre is a tiresome process and has a tendency to achieve a work of its kind, no less completed from that work from which it takes the movement. Hegel has established the modern theory of kinds, transforming them as Szondi says "*from systematic categories into historical categories.*"

Our paper attempts to approach the process of evolution of this literary genre in Albanian literature, a process which is in crisis by a historical change. This study is not interested in this historical change. It refuses to get out of the aesthetics in order to move to "a diagnosis of age." The analysis will focus on the difficulties that are formed inside the dramatic form of several authors who have been taken as representatives. Our departure points are several contemporary Albanian drama texts which remained outside the imposed method of socialist realism.

Drama written according to this method (with some exceptions), as well as the previous drama, is absolute and does not know anything else outside itself. It is absolute in time because it is a pure presence which does not refer to a "before or after." It is absolute as an interpersonal report and does not imply anything beyond what is expressed through the dialogue. In the end it is absolute as an event because this drama is not based on anything else but only on the dramatic tension and not on other psychological conditions or in connection with the real outside world.

The basic phenomenon that distinguishes the modern era of dramatic creativity is the epic of the drama through which all moments of absolutism are relativized. The modern and postmodern Albanian drama opens towards the past and the future. In the dramas of Kasem Trebeshina, Serafin Fanko, Stefan Capaliku, Ferdinand Hysi, Albri Brahusa, the characters evoke the past that has led them to this point, deny the present and live in lamentation and hope. The interpersonal report in the characters is void. They speak without understanding and listening to each other. Thus, dialogues are transformed into monologues, making it lose the absolutism of the event or occurrence.

The epic relativism of modern drama depends on the disruption of the synthesis between subject and object which is typical in drama. Both terms come into controversy. One of the characters becomes a projection of the authorial ego or strategy, while the others become objects of this strategy. In this way the dramatic report is replaced by an epic one so the narrator appears slowly in the dramatic text. In many dramatic texts of these authors, we will find the epic element (the epic ego) which is known as the formal component only in epic genre. The formal justification for its insertion in different forms in these texts has as a cover the deepest reason, that of being thematic. When epic ego is not hidden anymore and appears for what it is, then, its function will not be thematic anymore but formal. The controversy between the epic content and the traditional dramatic form breaks the old form and tends to go towards a new form which will use formal motivations that are met in the creativity of these authors. It is enough to recall the mure myth, the History character, the video camera and the television in the texts of Franko, Brahusa, Capaliku, which by removing the thematic character are transformed into formal component elements in the literary meaning of the word. By analyzing these solving attempts it is required to save the interpersonal report, the crisis of which risks the dialogue itself. Instead of these authors it is an attempt to escape, inhibit and maintain the dramatic genre.

Sometimes the dialogue turns into conversation, which becomes the true centre of the drama. This usually occurs in Trebeshina's works as drama-conversation, where the action is abandoned but the moment of the tension is saved.

Some texts shrink the short period of the previous event in the already given disaster, for example in the text "Go West" (one act play) of Albri Brahusa. It also limits the characters in a narrow space, as it is mental hospital in the text of Ferdinand Hysi "Three minds in auction". What unites the dramas of the authors Kasem Trebeshina, Serafin Fanko, Stefan Capaliku, Ferdinand Hysi, Albri Brahusa is that the drama crisis is revealed with the introduction of an epic theme in a form that was still dramatic. These authors strain a lot to provide more opportunities to save the contemporary Albanian drama. By form we understood the composing institutional components of genre. Often the topics selected as elements of content, apparently did not fit the dramatic form, even though they were inserted by formal connections.

2. Modern and postmodern elements in some dramatic texts

The Albanian modern and postmodern drama opens towards the past and the future. The characters evoke the past that has led them to this point, deny the present and live in lamentation and hope. In the creativity of these authors it was noticed the experimental character of their art which has a destructive tendency towards traditional art. These dramatic texts seem to protest about what they see as ordinary and conservative. They break down traditional laws of drama, break rules and violate several principles of the prior art in search of a new perspective. In this way, some of their texts join the modern avant-garde art, while in other cases they function as postmodern hypertexts.

The myth, as a thematic element in the dramas of our five authors, is not the original one but the transformed one. It is inserted as a meaning and is alienated from a thematic element into a formal element. Being a story the myth gives the dramatic works a narrative nature. At the same time, the authorial strategies tend to create the new myth which was presented by the dramatic texts (literary). These texts are nothing else but the resistance that the dramatic genre makes to the total alienation in the epic genre. In addition, the innovative ideas and postmodern trends as a way of predicting ideo-philosophical, aesthetic and artistic values of dramaturgy, are particularly manifested through perpetuating the myth and resignificance of existential trends through mythical time and spaces, always historical and actual in the common human context and of the causative connection to the national one.

The presence of symbols in the reader's knowledge in the plays we analyzed moved out from the general one. In this way, these symbols emerge as the resultant of some textual connections and they slide through the text like signs meeting several different signed ones. Thus, ironically, they are enriched by travelling from the state of base symbols towards those with a new meaning in the function of the irony coming from the authorial textual strategies. Let's remember the example of the introduction of the wolf symbol which is done by purpose to provoke a paradigmatic perception by the reader.

The contemporary playwrights come with some original solutions as far as the structures of their dramas are concerned. Generally the demonstration or the departure point of the dramas is somewhere off the stage. The theater of these authors has an Aristotelian foundation of mimesis, but often characterized by fragmentation and breakdown of logic. Within these texts and scenes that appear as assembled structures, the unity of characteristic action of traditional drama tends to be crushed and fragmented. Modern drama is not a chaotic fusion of fragments but a

controversy of heterogeneous elements. The theater of these authors does not accept the Aristotelian principle of causality. Once and again their plays begin with an unusual entrance and end without a conclusion. The development from a specific meaning to the general meaninglessness is present within these literary texts. It can be said that the dramatic process moves along the dual connection: meaningfulness-meaninglessness. In some cases we come across a significant structural intertextuality from the ancient and classic tragedy. There are dramas where the camera enables the flow of the event. The development of the action is related to the operation of the television camera. The real tension, which in traditional plays implicates the intersubjective report, is replaced by an external item.

Other texts represent a rudimental dramatic action. The fact that the moments of the action are combined without a proper connection and are scattered in the parts of the drama without attempting a real tension, shows that the formal structure of these dramatic texts is not based on the logic of cause and effect. The action is not a value in itself but it only gives the theme a minimal movement just to make possible the dialogue.

It is noticed that these authors approach the structure of the one-act drama frequently, where the tension does not come any more from the intersubjective event (occurrence) but it is the situation itself that should express everything and precede the oncoming catastrophe. The structures of these plays show that everything came from the time of myth or eternity. Their combination produces for the reader-spectator the new myth but with an ironic reverberation. The curtains that according to the norms of the epic theater is raised in the beginning of the show to confuse the theatrical understanding with that of the reader-spectator, falls in the end of the drama, but only to close ironically every debate between the old and new myths.

In the texts that are taken into analysis is difficult to find a single actantial structure. On the other hand, in some of the dramas of our contemporary authors the solution of the action is often abandoned and this happens only because it is intentionally required the introduction of a blocked situation. In traditional drama time flows through action like in everyday life. Time extension may become available as a difference of two separated moments put in a time fragment, so the time flow also seems that can only be explained as a difference between two parallel time flows of the event. Several texts of these authors do not provide time references in this way indicating zero degree of historicism and giving us an abstract time. Such modern plays, where the lack of signs and historical indicators is intentionally done, make you reason that in these texts not only history is not undervalued, in this case the past, but the present should be included within it. The authors of the contemporary drama often happen to be in front of a subject whose time extension seems to make the dramatic form inappropriate. In some drama texts it is noticed that some pieces of time which are left unmixed by the dramatic montage even though they were constrained to be merged in the course of time, seemed difficult to integrate into a timeless scene. The fact that two time rates do not cover each other here provokes an alienation effect in brechtian terms.

The space of the contemporary theater is a place for numerous experiments. These types of spaces often have in common the lack of detail. A feature of these texts is the symbolic space that dematerializes and stylizes the space in a subjective world and for this reason this space is deprived of every specific in favor of the synthesis of the scenic arts and of the global atmosphere of unreality. The expressionist space is shaped in parabolic places such as the prison, street, asylum, public houses and shows the deep crisis affecting the ideological and aesthetic awareness.

If there was lack of detail in the presentation of the structure of the scene either in the text or in

staging, there must be a reason. Of course, the content of a dramatic part is never shown in an empty space but is always shown to a specific background and usually it is also displayed the placement of the items in regard to what happens within the world history. So, there functions an effective background for the action in dramas but the "confusion", where the characters find themselves, is also reflected. The lack of peace and order in the social world is analogous to chaos and destruction in the natural world. All these physical spaces of the contemporary theater have in common a small or closed space which definitely creates tension. In this kind of contemporary theater space is often the desire to mix the two extremes, the material space within which the characters evolve and the place of these characters in motion. Our contemporary playwrights expand the idea of a mimetic space which is not the image of a real place in the world that surrounds us but it is a simulator dealing with literary invention. To put it differently, what is produced on stage is not an imitation of reality but it is an image of a world image, it is a fabricated image of the world according to some codes and social processes.

The scenic space and duration are nothing but a piece of the dramatic space and duration. In the dramas of these authors everything takes place along the "ellipses" (gaps or things that happen off stage, but told on stage) which are part of the dramatic composition. All this affects the way the characters look. Praising the scenic space / time report, their existence does not seem to have continuity. In some texts of Brahusa and Trebeshina, the narrow place of the dream formally opposes different places and changes in the social order which appeared throughout the characters' discourse.

To "save" the contemporary drama from its crisis our authors account for the dialogue as a typical feature of the dramatic genre. The threat of the dramatic form comes from the alienation of the intersubjective report. *Dramatis personae* spend their time talking about their past. The interpersonal report in the characters is emptied. They speak without understanding and listening to each other. On the other hand, dialogues transformed into monologues make it possible to lose the absolutism of the event or occurrence. These solutions were an attempt to save the interpersonal report, the crisis of which had put in risk the dialogue itself. To preserve the dramatic genre the dialogue sometimes turned into conversation, which became the true center of the drama.

The textual space always grabs attention in the plays of these authors. There operates the frequent repetition of certain bits of text and in this way the reader-spectator becomes sensitive towards a flow of words or sentences.

In the dramatic texts of these authors the character appears as a textual space, the cross point or more precisely a projection point of the paradigm in syntagma. The character is like a poetic place. According to the traditional critical thinking related to the dramatic Albanian drama it happens that the dramatic character is predominated by overvalue and the strength to invent his own discourse. There is quite the opposite indeed the discourses are those that forge the character.

In this way we would point out the irony of these dramatic texts as an opportunity to be distanced.

Another thing that unites some of the texts of these authors is the fact that through this composition they admit that they live in a world where all the words are spoken so every single letter in the postmodern culture is just a quotation. These dramatic texts do not go in the direction of the traditional Albanian drama as "reflection of reality" but they prefer to create a new reality or even multiple realities that are often not at all interdependent from each other. Whether modern or postmodern dramas, they make a heterogeneous messy mixture of different elements.

The history of the Albanian modern drama has not a final act yet, the curtain has not fallen yet. So the words which are used to temporarily close this discourse should not be taken as a conclusion. The time hasn't come to put an end yet, neither to establish new norms. The moment has come to understand what has been done and to try to make a theoretical formulation. Our job as researchers was the new registration forms for the only reason that art history is not defined by ideas but by their realization into forms. The playwrights we mentioned have brought a new form in the Albanian drama. In remaking a new style possible it should have been resolved not only the crisis of the dramatic form but also that of the tradition.

By reading these published and unpublished texts was observed how difficult and complicated it was to pass from reading to writing. Our study seeks to give a future to these works through interpretation, especially to the unpublished ones.

Finally, the formula of Heiner Müller "a play is what I call a play" deserves a comment. Anyone can observe that for decades the directors, who put dramas on stage, often prefer non-dramatic texts. At the same time, the determinant "drama author" has lost the prestige to authors whose works are destined to be put on stage. The latter find it as nobler the name "theater writers." This two-time art tends to be a one-time art, an art of the scene, so the line between drama and non-drama has never been more vague than today.

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