

“Looking for postmodern elements in Albanian literature before the 90s.”

University “Aleksandër Xhuvani”

St. Rinia

Esmeralda Hidri

+355 67 28 75 021

esmeraldahdr@gmail.com

Abstract

Just a few years ago, while the professional critic still had much work to do in finding modern elements in literature before the `90s, the chances to look for postmodernist traces in Albanian literature were almost close to zero.

In the spirit of new interpretations of the socialist realism literature, this work takes the initiative to explore and interpretate the elements of postmodern literature precisely in communist era. Although the preconditions for the postmodern features did not exist in Albanian territory (failure to develop a postindustrial society as the only state that questions the past certainties, along with the hostility to modernity), the postmodernizm appeared in the years of dictatorship, as a natural reaction. We will try to explain to whom this reaction was addressed to, and the how could different conditions bring very similiar developments in cultural and literary terms.

Modernism was tore apart aggressively during consolidation of socialist realism, which saw new modernist trends as part of regressive bourgeois society on a intellectually terms. Considering the fact that modernism was not able to be completed, to perform the complete cycle and finally to consume itself, we will try to prove what essentially was born at that time, as opposed to socialist realism drought, there may be more of a modern renaissance, but as it happened in Russian literature and in the other countries, a new art, *the postmodernism*.

Looking for postmodern elements in Albanian literature before the 90s.

1. Is there a postmodern element in the Albanian letters before the 90's?

Creating a structure around a question, apart from testifying beginner uncertainties around this topic; uncertainties which are justifiable, and with which starts the creation of the core idea of this work, will also serve simultaneously as a question-axis, which will be given a response by this work.

The research of the postmodern elements in the literature of a nation, which has almost never been in a coherent line of development with the rest of the world, and which has been under very difficult historical conditions (according to present opinions) it's a new venture that has subdued for a very long time the studies of Albanian letters.

Immediately after the 90's the different studies on literature preserved the same ideological axis in the interpretation of the literary works of various authors; they preserved the axis of authentication, independent from the military pressure of a lengthy totalitarian domination, which had not only tried to negate any modernist expression in Albanian letters, but it had also negated and denigrated any kind of disposition demonstrated in previous times, and in reality, they had also survived to a similar violence, being from time to time hidden under the elusive attire of approval and from time to time through the illusion of absolute lack of reference in the native land, or even in the audacious forms of the rare and marvelous proofs of Kasem Trebeshina and other authors.

In a country under the totalitarian regime there could not be any hope for finding and appropriate ground for the blossoming of natural cultural developments and so on. Modernism, observed only on the surface, seemed to have needed special conditions of the human society to be shaped

as a social, political, economical and cultural formation. A necessary precondition, *the capitalism*, also known as the industrial society, is defined as the only factor which made possible the questioning of previous certainties, this owing to the unknown occurrences like the process of mechanization, information and degeneration of the original.¹

The investigation toward postmodernism in the written works after the years of the totalitarian regime was accompanied also with analysis of this nature for Albanian authors of previous years, but which had the fate to be created in a state of freedom, away from their homeland. Among these authors I will mention the Kosovo researcher Agim Vinca, who while investigating the inter-textual aspect of the old Albanian literature of De Rada, Naimi, Çajupi and Noli, he has noticed that the majority of Kadare's literary works can be studied under this aspect, in relation with other literary, linguistic, and cultural texts, codes and contexts.²

To say it in a more concrete manner, the idea which we are trying to clarify is that, independently from the absence of general conditions that were generated in the majority of the world in a movement that changed greatly the direction of many fields of human interest, hence, independently of the lack of possibility to fulfill the primer obvious condition, beginning from the sole denomination, thus in the objection to modernization, in the inability that this last one could have a possible natural development in Albania, postmodernism was crystallized here, in the Albania of communist regime, as a natural opposing reaction.

Hence we will begin by explaining toward whom this necessary contradiction was directed and what manner it was used for the bringing of conditions could upon similar developments especially in the literary aspect. What happened to Albania of Post Second World War was not an isolated matter. The phenomenon of communism, which was relatively spread on geographical ground, brought as a political consequence the formation of many countries that pretended the construction of socialism. Whereas Russia had already started this violent experience in previous times, countries such as Cuba, Chile, Poland, Bulgaria and China would initiate the journey toward this utopia almost simultaneously with Albania. Even though the longevity of these totalitarian systems was diverse, it was observed that inside those, independently of the years, there were found inclinations toward original conceptions, which

¹ Liotarin & Eagleton, T.

² Vinca, A. (2002). "*Letërsia shqipe dhe teoria postmoderne*", *Panteoni i ideve letrare*, **Camaj-Pipa**, Shkodër, p.238

were totally detached from the ideological position which was insistently requested by the power of the party. In the majority of the new and diverse appearances there wasn't registered a single modernist feature, although modernism had served in its beginnings as a means for manifesting contradiction and opposition. The inability to return to modern features was testified by the Russian art of the 70's, during the times when the aesthetics of *pop art* was being reconceived, along with the notions of conceptualism, surrealism, by creating in this way an original system of artistic language and reasoning, which marks the full separation from modernism.³ This separation might have happened because differently from the events which occurred in our country, in Russia modernism reached its full expression, even though it existed in a proletarian country. The futuristic formations which blossomed in the beginnings of the 20's⁴ had a full support from the people who were projecting a proletarian future, because they identified themselves with the communist regime, by aggressively disputing with the diverse tendencies which were considered to be "reactionary" and "bourgeois".⁵ Meanwhile the political climate in Russia after the *NEP* wasn't as aggressive as it turned to be in places where the communism was established at a later period of time.⁶ However it was especially endorsed to this complete form that it had developed, the modernism in Russia would consume itself, without having the possibility to generate another rebirth.

Whereas in Albania, the socialist reality in the years of its imposed consolidation would eventually break the new modernist inclinations, that were seen by this regime as a part of an intellectual and regressive bourgeois society. What will be created in a later period of time, as a response to the withering of the socialist realism, could not have been a rebirth of modernism any more, but as it happened especially in the Russian literature, and in the literature of many other communist countries, it would be the creation of a new *post* modern art. The modernist movement in our country did not have the possibility to complete itself and to complete its full cycle so as it could consume itself at the end of this cycle, and this inability was attributed to the violent brake in the name of a new literature that was disseminated as the art of the general

³ Tufa , A. (2004) "Një vështrim mbi zhvillimet moderniste e avanguardiste të shekullit XX", *Fenomeni i avanguardës në letërsinë shqiptare*, **Arbëria**, Tiranë, p. 242.

⁴ Futuristic Magazine Lef, The right front, created with the initiative of Majakovskit, who was born in 1923

⁵ Mirskij, D. P. (1995) "*Storia della letteratura russa*", **Garzanti Editore**, ps.457

⁶ NEP, the new political economy established in Russia in 1921 which consisted in the abandonment of the rough war communism and the establishment of a new liberal point of view regarding the economy of a country. This is something which was associated with the spirit of liberty and tolerance toward the literature of that time.

population. This can also be considered as a king of 'fate' had by Albanian letters, which witnessed the true brilliance of modernist features in the writings of Koliqi, Poradeci and Kuteli. In this constrained interruption, the display of diverse features from those required can be easily mistaken with the return of modern features in the Albanian letters of those years. For this reason we will make an investigation especially insisting on these works which have brought modern occurrences in the Albanian letters of those years, but by searching this time only the primer occurrences of a postmodern beginning.

2. Post-structuralism, the relation with postmodernism and the manner how to help with the confirmation of the postmodern presence during the communist dictatorship in Albania.

a. The political beginnings of post-structuralism, Anarchism and the other forms of its expression in the Albanian letters before the 90's.

The general human culture, and not only the Albanian society of the second half of the 20th century, would be involved in a continuous period of crisis. The political philosophy, as important part of human reasoning and simultaneously its creator, would be the keeper and transmitter of these crises. In its beginning known as *political philosophy*, post-structuralism would have taken the semblances of a real formation due to the *endurance* that would serve as a promoter of many philosophic projects. Placed in a key position in a *moving place between what it was and what it would be*, according to Theodor W. Adorno, *this movement still existed because it had nit reached its full form.*

What happed after the fall of communism in the Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union caused the actual destruction of this supposed place of creation mentioned in the previous sentence, the destruction of what it was and what it would have been. The slogan: *Communism has died!* - testified the failure in realizing the political model of transformation that it proposed. However, it was at the same time clear that capitalism as a philosophical policy had not triumphed yet,

because until the moment when the world would keep putting under discussion the issue of what it *is*, *can* and *should be*, nothing would be finished yet.⁷

By using literature like the only means to rearticulate the tensions created upon a world that *is* and that *can be*, the father founders of post-structuralism use it as the object which will serve as a builder and disassemble of the *micro-politics*. Another moment in the post-structuralism reasoning, which will help especially in the final judgments given around the way how an unfavorable climate, like the one created by communism, generated the same postmodern consequence in many non-capitalist countries, would be the new reflection around *Anarchism*.

As we have emphasized, postmodernism and also post-structuralism will be presented as objector of avant-gardes, by watching it in a specific position of being part of a group that strongly pretend to represent the general interest of all people. This common contradictory origin appears to have a predecessor tradition, even though it is strictly of political nature, known under the dubious name of *Anarchism*, which with its categorical refusal toward the concentration of power, which according to them is always tended to be abused of, that appears to have served as an important parable for the postmodernist and post-structuralism thinking.

While interpreting the Marxist policy and by observing its trajectory across a century where it dominated the strategic thinking, post-structuralism, across the observation of these theoretical expansions that opened and closed, brought a new reflection regarding the anarchist alternative, with which they found many points in common. Through an historical reconstruction, they testified that Marxism itself along with all its western expression such as: *Leninism*, *the critical theories*, *Marxism structuralism*, *the Autonomy movements* in Italy, the literary works of *Cornelius Castoriadis*; hasn't done anything but a failed tentative one after the other to reformulated itself in a way to approximate itself, but without coinciding in a full form, with the anarchist horizon.⁸

The anarchism of post-structuralism is different from the classical form, especially in the opinion of Leotard and Foucault, who both agree to the refusal of the consideration of power as an

⁷ May, T. defines especially this period of time when there begin to be lineated the schemed of an alternative political philosophy, which would separate itself from the previous models, especially from Marxism and market liberalization. May, T. (1998). "*Anarchismo e Post-strutturalismo. Da Bakuin a Foucault*", **Elèuthera**, Milano, p.21

⁸ May, T. (1998). "*Anarchismo e Post-strutturalismo. Da Bakuin a Foucault*", **Elèuthera**, Milano, p.38

exclusively negative and repressive force. Their anarchism preserves the idea of the various local wars as entrenched and unable to be reduced, seen as a network and not as a closed area, a concentric and hierarchic sphere. In order to verify that this is anarchism and not avant-garde, the one who generated the presence of postmodernism in the Albanian letters before the 90's, we begin from the simple fact that for possessing avant-garde elements, there is the need to have a general society of this nature. Could the nature of Albanian society be of this origin in the beginning of the 60's meanwhile the governmental oppression conditioned even the literature thematic? If we began from the terminology the immediate answer given to this question is a strict *no*. However, is it real answer?

The modern features in the Albanian letters before the liberation were considered in the present time as bourgeois expressions which should not be appreciated. In this moment we have the general refusal of everything that remembered and brought again the past, which was considered unworthy. If we try to look more deeply in the core of the avant-garde phenomenon, we would understand that it was positioned in the Albanian society of that time under another label, under other semblances, but with the same basic contours.

According to concept of post-structuralism, if art derives through refusal, then it would raise through an absolute refusal of the avant-garde, because in its centre the avant-garde is represented from the idea that a group or a party can represent the general interest of the society. In the Albanian reality, the avant-garde would stand on parallel grounds with the so-called *socialist ideology*, which in its turn made propaganda on the explicit idea that the power should be concentrated in the hands of a dominating group of party members.

Hence, if post-structuralism constructs its own philosophy, by refusing the idea of freedom through an avant-garde, we concretize our idea that it would still be an anarchism with outside traditions, that made possible the demonstration of postmodern and objector elements in the Albanian letters of those years that refused especially this illusive freedom. It is understandable that the anarchism in Albania could not have the appearance of multiple wars or of the many tentative of power annihilation in the point of origin (ex. the alternatives against the leaders of the country), because it was concentrated in the hands of a small group of individuals, who were not able to create a sane and well organized anarchism between them. Under the calls of the so-

called agitation and propaganda, they had the tendency to become isolated, before their ideas could crystallize as refusals and to be known as such from the rest of the society.

If anarchism does not accept the concept of power, because in doing so this could bring a tendency of abuse, then anarchists like Trebeshina, even though a few in numbers will continue to do manifestations against them. According to Deleuz: *'knowledge is always a consequence, and as such it comes afterwards'*. Therefore the *'Minute'* of Kasem Trebeshina, written in 1953⁹, demonstrated that this ill-fated knowledge was accomplished because the process of centralization had already finished. Hence the consequences that came afterwards came only as the continuance of a totalitarian government that has now completed the vision of what it wanted to create and what it wanted to preserve for a long period of time.

At a time when the world was declaring the death of Marxism, Albania decided to continue its experimentation with the construction of a socialist society.¹⁰ Whereas the structuralism suggested the idea of studying the Marxist parable as the strategically thinking of the last 100 years, in order to discover conclusions about future lessons, and the people who lived inside this experimental reality, even though they represented just the minority and in a hidden way, would have eventually realized their lack of freedom.

In Albania which was under a dictatorship, this minority of individuals was important for the fact that they arrived to analyze this phenomenon from the inside, by transmitting it in literary works that give a panorama of it, partially in a brave way like in an open game and partially in a hidden way under the semblances of the illusive allegory. It became clear that through this silent way of creating an opposing anarchism during that period in Albania, but also in other countries, there was another powerful force that was created although it lacked of the political power. We are discussing about the many intellectuals, creative or not, who demonstrated their clear refusal by becoming means of knowledge transition for people who searched it. Even though this element still did not change anything their opposition helped in the construction of an expected resident basis, which was greatly feared by the party in power.

⁹ Kasem Trebeshina in *Minute* manifested its courage against those practices that tried to put in equal terms the social governing with the dominating ideology in literature, hence he refuses the socialist realism by considering it as an entrance in the deserted cultural and spiritual life of the Albanians. Time proved up in every detail his prophecy which is testified by his monumental expression: "At the end of this historical process you will be obligated to kill one-another and the population will be covered in blood."

¹⁰ In the moment when in Russia won the Socialist Revolution of October, it is said that the great Einstein wrote to Lenin: Congratulation on your experimentation on humans. I wish you further success, Einstein.

This is taken into consideration by Foucault when he divides the potency of power in powers that affirm life and power that negates it. By joining the side of Deleuze he affirms that knowledge is always the result of a complexity of powers which class with one another. Hence it were the intellectual anarchist, especially in literature, who contributed in the creation of this knowledge, by testifying that inside this phenomena, the so-called working class, once an avant-garde in the revolutionary movement , now it has become the dominating class who had centralized the power around themselves.

This war, which lacked of everyday journals, had to go on, even though in a silent mood, in order to continue being built in a post-structuralism manner of the Albanian society of that time. Hence at this point we can present in a natural way our question; in what way did the affirmation forces of life continue a war against forces who negated it, during a moment when these last one were the representatives of a violent government, part of a power that had directed this war toward everyone who was against it? Can we accept that it is possible to fight against an idea that now had become a state, and if yes, in what manner?

b. The power in position of the resistance of the Albanian conception

Although it seems impossible, or even inhuman, to find a reactive resistance that works under these conditions the affirmed power could be violent, there can always be found a way. There exists only one thing, which can survive to the oppression of violence, not taking into consideration the severity of this violence, and this thing is: *Conception!*

It will be especially through the conception of the oppressed forces, but that had the possibility to acquire knowledge, that their war went on, regardless of the many obstacles that they encountered.

During the time when Deleuze analyses the historical works of Foucault he writes a postulate that brings conception as his own object. He says that: “*The conception thinks his own history (the past) but with the intention of liberating it from what it thinks (the present), and by making possible for it to think differently (about the future).*”¹¹”

¹¹ Deleuze, G. “*Përthyerjet apo brëndësia e mendimit*” Foucault, p.120

This idealistic elaboration, where the past comes not only to be immortalized in the events that it bears, but with the purpose of freeing itself from the present, which imprisons it, and like the only manner for projecting in a hidden way a different future, we see it in a part, but not in a small number, of the different works in prose during those years.

Considered as 'keeper of memories' Ismail Kadare will use in many times the past as a basis, by doing what Eco called 'revitalization of traditions', sometimes from the exploitation of the Homeric myths and even more frequently from the exploitation of the traditional Albanian folklore. During his analysis of the presence of intertextuality in the Albanian letters Agim Vinca emphasis that many of Kadare's works can be studied in the intertextual aspect.¹²

He takes as an example the novel "Ura mbi harqe", especially because it begins as the Missal of Buzuku: "*Unë, murgu gjon, biri i Gjorg Ukcams, tue u kujtuom se në gluhën tonë ende s`ka gja të shkruom për urën e Ujanës së Keqe...*" These features, the revision of the tradition, the presence of the citation and the special figure of the rhapsody, are evidenced by studies with postmodern characteristics, by giving to this work such a definition. However, if the past that is brought in this work comes as a further one and the thread that ties it to the present, almost impossible, uses the yesterday as not very far in order to talk about the present of the time written in his work. A novel which has been frequently interpreted by different scholars, "*Kronikë në gur*", that has been an object especially in the discovery of the modern element and its classification as modernist,¹³ and this is what helps us more is this direction, as a manifesto of objection through conception. This novel gives a testimony as a powerful attempt; a way to liberate oneself from the slaving present, through a rethinking, naïve in the first view, round the past that brought again names of other figures in other views that brought the present, which less great and more meaningful. The image of a Monster-Gjirokastër which slowly crawls the mountain, to rest there, unmovable, is works in other forms in coming works, sometimes as a fairy palace and other times as the Trojan horse, remains the same ground that bore and kept strange individuals. This is a very special way to project the present, which does not make us proud, in the film of the past. Only in this way it can be given freedom to the thought, to react

¹² Vinca, A. (2002). "*Panteoni i ideve letrare*", "**Camaj-Pipa**", Shkodër, p.238

¹³Mark Marku in the introduction of his novel "*Çështje të marrëzisë*" from I. Kadare, after he has seen this last one as a comeback in the original position, a bright comeback to a bright future of "*Kronikë në gur*", sees this point of the passage from the modernist fase to postmodernism. Marku, M. (2005) "*Sokaku i të marrëve*", *Çështje të marrëzisë*, **Onufri**, p.xv

and to go away from a future that sounds the same as the slaving present. This is also noticed by the scholar Sabri Hamiti while he analyses the novel “The official of the palace of dreams” (*Nënpunësi i pallatit të ëndrrave*), that, according to him, testifies the manner how the writers have saved themselves and the literature through the figures, metaphors and the passing of time.¹⁴

Another feature which attracts our attention in the works of Kadare is precisely his typology. Although it was a novel, the author decided to title it “*Kronikë në gur*”, in order to choose in this way another genre. By defining his novel as a chronicle, he has personalized his special way of narrating in the pieces of the novel that come under the shape of *intertexts*, sometimes as a *testimony of characters* and sometimes as pieces of the chronicle, which are written telegraphically. This continuous presence of intertexts that melt in the narration of the child’s character brings in the text a realistic and unrealistic view of the world. Magic, which was disliked and even negated by the socialist realism, is justified by the eye of a child’s perception as such, where the elderly are the past that talks to the present where this last one is about to be fulfilled, and the war is about the continuity of invasions, the changing of powers and of the violence derived from the outside and sustained by our castles.

These evidenced features, which are frequently seen in many cases as elements of the modern, beginning maybe from the wish of the author to testify the dissidence, that is treated for a long time as related with it; intertextuality, the entrenchment of styles, the allusive figures of speech, the magic that brings together the realistic and unrealistic features together, the creation of a time that speaks to another time, all these together, I think that were the original display of the postmodernist features in some of our literary works during the dictatorial time.

They served not only as literary novelties but also as a kind of resistance with a tender appearance. By using breakage, in discourse and even in the thematic, through means that only literature can offer, this and other works written by different authors testified the big pace made by the resistance through the conception, resistance that passed from the creator to the reader, under the semblances of written acts, not as a call for the spilling of blood, but as a wish for a deeper change. Not by negating but by demonstrating the problems, hidden maybe by the figures

¹⁴Hamiti, S. “Avangarda dhe përshtatja”, *Fenomeni i avangardës në letërsinë shqiptare*, p.19

of speech, and by having the courage to send the shades to the world of the shadows, regardless of the danger, this is the only way to secure a place among honest people.¹⁵

Even though limited in their expressions, these authors represented a force of resistance- POST, in all the meanings and possibilities that this term bares. They not only knew to differentiate the past from the present in which were living, but could separate the present from what actually they desired.¹⁶

In this manner in many cases they succeeded to ne represented though two forms and views, that actually did not negate each other, but actually they projected the other one where it could exist, especially in their works.

References

Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (1996) “*Che cos`e la filozofia?*”, **Einaudi**, Torino, p.105

Deleuze, G. (1997) *Differenza e ripetizione*, **Raffaello Cortina Editore**, Milano

Deleuze, G. (1999) *Divenire molteplice. Nietzsche, Foucault ed altri intercessori*, **ombre corte edizioni**, Verona

Hamiti, S. (2004) “Avangarda dhe përshtatja”, *Fenomeni i avanguardës në letërsinë shqiptare*, Tiranë

Liotarin. (1996) *Gjendja postmoderne: Raport mbi dijen*, **Dukagjini**, Pejë

Eagleton, T. (1988) *Introduzione alla teoria letteraria*, **Editori Riuniti**, marzo 1988

May, T. *Anarchismo e post-strutturalismo. Da Bakuin a Foucault*, elèuthera, Milano 1998

Derrida J. (1995) *Memorie per Paul de Man. Saggio sull` autobiografia*, **Jaca Book**, Milano

Agnes Heler and Terenc Feher. (1992) *La condizione politica postmoderna*, **Maretti**, Genova

Marku, M. (2005) “Sokaku i të marrëve”, *Çështje të marrëzisë*, **Onufri**

¹⁵ Gilles Deleuz writes: “History does not pass through negation an negation of negation, but through the definition of problems and the affirmation of differences, however by not being cruel and dispiteous. Only the shadows of history live through negation, whereas the rightful enter with all the power of a different country, and of an affirmed change, by sending the shadow into the world of shadows only if they do it as a sign of positivity as affirmation without any precise interest.” Deleuze, G. (1997) *Differenza e ripetizione*, **Raffaello Cortina Editore**, Milano, Ied, p. 344

¹⁶ A concept that comes in the common work of Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (1996) “*Che cos`e la filozofia?*”, **Einaudi**, Torino, p.105 where it is written: *By stating the difference amonge the actual and the present, by seeing in the premier something that exists only in the present eventhough by being divided by it. The novelty, the interesting part is the actual. The present on the other hand is what we are and especially what we are not anymore.*

- May, T. (1998). *“Anarchismo e Post-strutturalismo. Da Bakuin a Foucault”*, **Elèuthera**, Milano
- Mirskij, D. P. (1995) *“Storia della letteratura russa”*, **Garzanti Editore**, ps.457
- Vinca, A. (2002). *“Letërsia shqipe dhe teoria postmoderne”*, *Panteoni i ideve letrare*, **Camaj-Pipa**, Shkodër
- Vinca, A. (2002). *“Panteoni i ideve letrare”*, **“Camaj-Pipa”**, Shkodër
- Tufa , A. (2004) *“Një vështrim mbi zhvillimet moderniste e avanguardiste të shekullit XX”*, *Fenomeni i avanguardës në letërsinë shqiptare*, **Arbëria**, Tiranë