

**The Albanian Autobiology**

(Models of the autobiographical prose in the contemporary Albanian literature)

**Literature**

**Keywords:** autobiographical prose, narrative autobiographical genres, autobiographical project, discursive autobiography, automaieutic autobiography, hypertextual autobiography, semi-autobiography, autodiedography, memoiristics etc.

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The Albanian contemporary autobiographic prose represents an important bulk in Albanian prose in general, especially when it is requested to analyze its models. The autobiographic prose, here, without summarizing it in simply one specific modus, lays from one genre to another, in order to be seen as a variation of life and narration. From here we reap practices and notions with which we operate during the analysis of some autobiographical models, with strong emphasis on autobiographic prose such as Big projection (I. Kadare), the discursive autobiographical prose (I. Kadare), the automaieutic autobiographical prose (P. Marko), autoideography (A. Demaçi), semiautobiography (R.Dibra), hypertextual autobiography (B. Shehu), and memoiristics (Z. Pllumi). Poetika is described upon concepts and theories discussed by various European and Anglo-American school theorists, whereas models are illustrated and analyzed with concepts that are already talked about in poetics, continuously acknowledging the text's anatomy, writing authenticity and author's identity in relation to the narrator and the character.

How does one conclude the search for different models of writing, which is the only thing that can never be fully finished, since no one was able to write the last throes of their lives. Chateaubriand reminds that only *memories beyond the grave* would be complete. However, this study and the findings on its object need further be elaborated.

In fact, it was not coincidental that one of the subheadings was written without a definite article, but instead was left simply as *models*, bearing in mind that it would be unmanageable to summarize all models of the other representatives. Anyhow, some things will always remain left out, whether just as a result of the specificity of the study or the focus of interpretation in coherence with poetics.

The viewpoint was built on two periods of styles of the autobiographic Albanian prose. The first period being literature, more specifically the post World War Two autobiographic prose, which continued as figured literature up until the 90s' of last century, and the second period being after the 90s' and onwards.

The first period was characterized with a model of autobiographic prose, in which fact and fiction were almost inseparable. This was best illustrated with models and autobiographic prose of Ismail Kadare and Petro Marko, following the earlier steps of the autobiographic prose, which was built upon ideologies such as the autobiographic prose that was created in Kosova.

The second period was characterized with documentary power, strong evidence, and at the same time techniques of narration unseen before in Albanian literature. In this period, the autobiographic prose was predominant as a result of dictatorship and was tested only in the new century as literature and literary culture.

Furthermore, the study stemmed from the presence of two types of autobiographical authors - which are noticed in almost every model of the contemporary Albanian prose – derived: *the subjective autobiographical author* and *the objective autobiographical author*. The first one plays with narrative grammar from a third person through a suppressive character, through which not only does the author claim objectivity, he also pretends to maintain a distance with personal writing to a neutral point where *the illusion of loyalty* is factored.

The second one is always standard, identification, which factors *autobiographical writing without mediation*, and that the author can not resist *the tyranny of subjectivity*. A case noticable also in *typology and models*, which proved that the researchers of the autobiographical prose classified it depending on the amount of

involvement during the moment of writing, who concluded that there are several models such as: *historical autobiographies*, autobiographies focused on history, which means, over the statement of “I” and autobiography of discourse, autobiography focused on discourse, which means, over the presentation of “I”.

In general, the autobiographical prose in Albanian literature starting from romanticism and onwards, was bound to be classified by poetics based on *modal ranking*, narrative form, where *first-person (auto)biography* and *third-person (auto)biography* are mentioned. However, these models are present in earlier phases of Albanian literature, as seen in romantic as well as modern literature, which are part of the broadest models of writing.

The contemporary Albanian literature constitutes these models of autobiographical prose: *the cyclic autobiographical prose*, *the discursive autobiographical prose*, *the automaieutic autobiography prose*, *semioautobiography*, *autobiographical prose as a play of intertextuality*, *autoideography and memories as autobiography*. In this whole sphere, in their prose, more than a few authors created a system of writing - a big autobiographical project.

Similarly, Kadare created two models in his prose: the novelistic autobiographical project, which can be found in many writings, with emphasis on three representatives, such as: *Chronicle in stone*, *A question of lunacy*, *Twilight of the eastern gods*, and the model of *discursive autobiography* with signs of autometatextuality in two essayistic work, such as: *Invitation to the studio* and *Mornings in de Rostand café (Motives from Paris)*.

The autobiographical Project, as a phenomenon of the contemporary Albanian literature, lies in Albanian mnemonic as well. Likewise, missionary Father Zef Pllumi, turned his mission to testify in one big autobiographical project, which moves in two directions: *literature* and *history* in order for the autobiography and memories to take primacy.

On the other hand, *discursive autobiographies* are textual styles in which authors express life experiences for creative purposes. Discursive autobiographies are a ‘place’ of meta-diegetic analepsis which unfold personal experiences of the creative process, where communication is displayed in a form of meta-communication, the discourse in a form of meta-discourse, and above all, the text as *auto-metatext*. In such cases, the authors, when talking about their work and creative process, create a more or less essayistic sort of autobiographical prose, not only as a meta-text, but with a status of an auto-metatext as well. A text, which even in the deepest critical interpreting approach, the ongoing empiric practice keeps the autobiographical genre alive.

This model of prose is written by the end of literary creating, especially when the *author* becomes *authority* in literature. A similar essay was successfully put in good use in both Kadare’s *discursive autobiographies: Invitation to the studio* and *Mornings in de Rostand café (Motives from Paris)*, where literature *speaks* of literature.

*Invitation to the studio* and *Mornings in de Rostand café* were ascertained to be discursive autobiographical models, whereas as *modus* – auto-metadiegetic autobiography, a sort of auto-metatext synced in fragments, synopsis, different textual strategies. The flow of the text goes from the process of writing within the text, *from the text to the work*, an issue which has been discussed time and again by structuralist poetics with leading French theorists like Barthes, Genette and even Compagnon.

Furthermore, Petro Marko’s *Clouds and stones –Interview with myself* is the only model of the contemporary Albanian autobiography where the text structure is created through the personal *maieutic* technique. Petro Marko’s autobiographical prose, *Clouds and stones –Interview with myself*, is an auto-maieutic model, which stands as a shadow of life, except for the fact that it differs in form and the technique of story-

telling. Since the aforementioned piece has two titles, the first one captures the genre and the latter marks the figure. Therefore, this resulted in the creation of the auto-maieutic autobiographical prose model, where the interview, the autodialog is the founder, form, *modus* and structure, whereas facts should constantly be sought in answers, which have, in general, an auto-diegetic narrative character.

The status of the author is dual: as an *interviewer* and simultaneously as an *interviewee*. The latter is asked questions by the interviewer. This leads towards entering to a *sui generis* maieutic, where it can be concluded that the whole piece possesses an *autodialog* status.

As far as the structuring goes, questions and answers maintain the logic of the narration of events as well as surroundings. In an attempt to typify the form even more, the interviewer plays the role of *the connector of autobiographies*, he recalls the main situations, provokes it by opening doors to autobiographemes, which make the autodialog a typical autobiographical narration.

The questions are a way to balance *the autodiegetic narration* and at the same time maintain the coherence between biographemes and autobiographemes.

In general, ideological political structures are predominant. National ideological structures melt into international ideological structures, making the *function author* stronger, who writes with and about the thesis.

In Petro Marko's prose, even though the genre in hand is related with personal empiricism, the autobiography remains within the scheme of *sociologos*.

Ridvan Dibra, with his autobiographical prose *In search of the lost kid* with three formal definitions creates a reading opportunity as *singular writing* (novel) and as *pluralized writing* (a prose structured in stories), this serving as a double coding that opens towards reading variations.

Every story for the most part is regarding the same age and time, except for the *post scripted* narrations, where the author appears grown and mature. However, the title doesn't only orient the reader towards the object of writing, it also brings about the intertextual echo, specifically Proust's autobiographical prose.

In Dibra's prose we have a system of writing which functions through autobiographical stories. Regardless, we don't have a poetic principle that illustrates the system as much as we do a search for time, the lost game, since the title is more *limiting* (to age and time), than it is *determinative*.

After all, even within an autobiographical model, divergence is emphasized, especially bearing in mind the *effect of reading*. This outcome is in the course of Derrida's findings, where *the law of gender* can function only when conjoined with one another, in a sense of *form* and *modus* (Lejeune), in the sense of *the intertextual echo* (Jefferson), in order for it to be a completely authentic autobiographical prose.

The author begins with reminiscences from the reading to enforce the cultural code, and at the same time prepare the reader for the autobiographical product with signs of maturity. The autobiographical author despite coming across as objective, similar to the first part of the introduction paragraph, in the second part emits hints of a subjective autobiographical author. In an attempt to stick closer to *the referential agreement*, he doesn't write from a child's point of view, but rather an adult's. By doing so the author creates a distance in time and makes the accuracy of memory relative.

Especially, when talking about essential selected autobiographeme, the author portrays the kid through self-demonstrating writing of the adult narrator. Often enough, the actions of the minor even turn into habit for the adult.

These atypical actions are what make autobiography with literary hints so typical, that poetic sometimes like to call *semioautobiography*.

Each one of Dibra's autobiographical story strives for honesty in *storytelling*, as well as objectivity and credibility in *writing*. *Homo narrans-i* is self-conscious of the fact that he does not remember it all, so the narrative switches to *autofiction*, where the details fulfilling the forms are deconstructed.

On the other hand, the novel of Bashkim Shehu, *The game, collapsing of the sky*, after two autobiographical works, where (auto)referentiality is explicit, similar to *The autumn from a nightmare*, *Confession split the empty grave*, and where each one has a categorical sign assigned by the author as an *autobiographical novel*, or even with a dose of connotation *autobiographical dream*, life takes the status of intertext.

If with both of his first novels he created an autobiographical model that doesn't have as much to do with a search of identity as it does with *a solution of the enigma*, much like polycystic novels, where the intertext is lost amongst the dynamic of the fable, because as Todrov would say, this type of novel has two histories: *the history of the crime* and *the history of inquiry*. The first line is built as a reference, the second as an autoreference where double narrative codes are embodied.

In *The game, collapsing of the sky* ideologem takes the status of intertextuality. In addition, references are not only from personal life, but also from other texts of this nature, quite like the memories of Father Zef Pllumi.

In Bashkim Shehu's *The game, collapsing of the sky*, besides the narrator-author, the character takes the role of the narrator as well and not only! He also represents the *co-author*, a shift from auto-diegetic narration to that of hetero-diegetic narration.

Adem Demaçi wrote his autobiographic prose *The quantic love of Filan*, to quote his own words, *in the third age*, to summarize the empiricism of life in a personal piece with hints of national ideality and political harshness. Demaçi brings about the typical model of autoideography with a narration variety in structure, as well as in composition.

The author puts the sintagme *Peach's e-mails* as a subtitle to his autobiographical work, with the categorical sign *novel*. The very title of the composition suggests an 'epic' autobiography in *third person*. Thus, from the very beginning, three markings that lead to fictional writing are evident.

For the sake of *objectivity*, his real name was not mentioned in any occasion. Even when demonstrating through direct speech, he sticks to his 'nickname', which stems from the folk discourse, a sign of oral narration.

The prose *The quantic love of Filan* is a reflection of life on paper, from autoideography to autobiography. As proven before, autobiography is a realistic mimetic writing. However, when the life of the subject is structured in the text through ideologemes, then autobiography converts into *autoideography*. Therefore, autoideography is a writing, a narration that displays ideas, namely the main ideas of the author.

*Autoideography* always stays in opposition of autobiography, but there are cases of over-emphasis, similar to what we see in Adem Demaçi's autobiographical prose. In such cases, the literary discourse melts into historical and sociopolitic discourse, in order to add significance to comments and information.

Altogether, the autobiographical prose of Demaçi, as much as he tries personal narration, *ideoliterature* is more dominant over *bioliterature*, onwards, the author is presented as more of an ideolog with signs of identity and pretence of leadership in society, than he is as literary.

Meanwhile, in the planes of memoiristics, we discussed the work of Father Zef Pllumi. Generally, his memoiristic piece was considered a *nonfictional novel*, a mosaic of types of discourses, narrations and metanarrations. His piece is a *lively narration*, a harmony between evidence and literature written by the end of his life, when the relevance of memories, and told history is more credible, more acceptable and more prompt.

Consequently, his evidence appears by the end of dictatorship. In this way, he attempts to summarize *the end of history* (Fukuyama), but not by embracing *new historicism* as a whole, as in this case, his own history is not all that selective. This appears in every section of his work, like it has in *Unwritten history*, *Live just to tell your stories*, and somewhat in *The childhood saga*.

In *Unwritten history*, history is presented as a sort of autofiction. Fictional elements are displayed in a *form of historical speculation* for the sake of literature, since references here are numerous (Hutcheon).

*Live just to tell your stories* is the most authentic phrase, which surfaces his authorial experience. It is even the most typical phrase presented in the category of the autobiographical genre, because the phrase in hand targets *life* (live) and *writing* (tell your stories).

*Live just to tell your stories* is the strongest sintagme to mark the role of evidence on life events, a mark of a difficult discourse that opens the permanent dialogue with the reader. Moreover, the title alone provides signs of French literary school, which uses idiomatic phraseology as language.

The structuring of the book of life as a *trilogy* implies the evidential writing in the system. In writing there is an interaction of topics and ideas, different forms and discourses which represent a doctrine, a school, which was and still remains a symbol of literature and a prey of dictatorship.

As a style, *modus* belonged to the French school, which chooses *the idiomatic discourse* and figures of the environmental as well as realistic life.

*Live just to tell your stories* is a collision of forms and discourses. As much as it is an autobiography, it is also *altergraphy* and *sociography*, a type of expanded autobiography- *a monumental confession*.

*The childhood saga* is last handwritten work of Father Zef Pllumi, published as a posthumous piece. In contrast to two of his monumental autobiographical books: *Unwritten history* and *Live just to tell your stories*, *The childhood saga* summarizes the childhood period, a period which is not included in any of the aforementioned books.

His first two books are stuck in between remembrance and autobiography, whereas *The childhood saga* is a typical autobiography written for the sole reason of becoming a book of life.

Father Zef has chosen the best form, the narrative queen to narrate life, his childhood. What is more, signs of auto-diegetic narration are given in the very title, so in case that is not enough, father Zef defines even further the genre through the subtitle *autobiographical story*.

The genre determinant *autobiographical story* further enforces the well-known thesis that autobiography is *sui generis* fiction, one big autofiction, on which there are arguments, especially when it is seen with a status of intertext (Grillet, Barthes, Jefferson).

Thus, since the very beginning, father Zef has summarized all plans of the text for a strict autobiographical form, much like *The childhood saga*.

His *Saga* is the best proof that autobiography is, in essence, fictional work, and that it is structured in special stories, as real narrations, on which double fiction is built.

Finally, these models of the autobiographical prose in the contemporary Albanian literature lead us to a big world of literature, where the life of a person turns into a writing of mission and passion, of culture and subculture, of evidence and history of life in general.

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