

Political Metamorphoses and European Identity of Albanians Through Crossing the Borders



Contemporary Literature

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Abstract

The moral transgression and the legal code, that seems to be mixed up in order to keep the rules of society, remind us that the crime has not always been with us but it is institutionalized. Artistic work of Ismail Kadare is an accusation addressed to the governing totalitarian utopia and the society's primitivism that he obviously considers as a heavy load of his creativity. The society is heavily controlled from the “communist party” and is led by one of the harshest Balkan dictators named “Enver Hoxha and his heavy state machine”.

In Ismail Kadare's work the state is grabbed by political and psycho-pathological metamorphosis such as: the blood corruption of the feudal face of the state, the ghoulish terror against common people, the clash of classes, and the hunt of intellectuals. The borrowing of identity, the change of thought of the “political elite”, hierarchy amongst the privileged, spying of the police and the corruption of justice, faking the truth and the wild political incest that springs from absolutism of a dictatorship ruling authority. These are paradoxes and psycho-pathological absurdities trauma of paranoia and pain that stem from a single term- political utopia.

‘You mortals, don't dirt your bodies with disgusting meal.’

Ovid, Metamorphosis, XV, 70-490.

Ismail Kadare confronting Political Utopia.

Introduction

The object of this research is political metamorphoses and European identity of the Albanians.

The aim of this study is to identify political metamorphoses through the poetic works of Albanian writers, Ismail Kadare. The author creates political metamorphoses by means of a parabolic and allegoric metaphor with endless meanings which has a certain esthetic function. Political metamorphoses emerge from a utopist, absurd reality of political paradoxes in a totalitarian system. In this extreme reality the Albanians have managed to survive in their continuous search for their European identity. Metamorphoses are realized as a theme of utopist and human absurdum whose source is a degrading form of political power. Just like in Mackbethian scenes the crime for power is the object of political metamorphoses that have made their magic force weaker and weaker in a trivial reality. The dictator is in the center of political metamorphoses and his opponents as well as innocent people fall into his trap. The reality of metamorphoses is idealizing, which is a result of psycho-pathological trauma (shock) under dictatorship and a delirium that has gripped the society under the ideology of totalitarianism.

In this work, metamorphoses have been viewed as a model of an extreme vision and to discover them we have used a structuring, comparing and describing method. Being utopist by nature they

usually appear as the essence of human phenomenon but in Albanian reality they appear (are presented) as the core of totalitarian, political power. In this reality the Albanian intellectual and common people are of no use, isolated by a barbed-wire fence, interned and under the threat of gradual death of everyday. The truth and the right have been alienated. The same holds for the identity of man and his human nature. The human nature is turned into a beast. Everything is given sterilized and artificial. Political metamorphoses are given as narrative figures of phantasmagoric where man clashes with the political power like in the myth of Sufis, an everlasting and terrifying battle. The characters appear with hidden identity, with doubled names in search of freedom of thought. Kadare appears in this way a writer of the right, an advocate of free thought but also sophisticated. The author has given Albanians in mediums looking for radio waves and links with free Europe in search of their mother continent (i.e. origin).

The illusion of thought becomes the language of political metamorphoses that come from a chaotic reality and tragic drama of human being. The language of metamorphoses is mystic at times, dark, where there is no distinction between the real and the non-real and a surreal language dominates all over. In the chaotic reality of metamorphoses the characters move in terror between life and death. The desire to come to contact with Europe derived from the common origin of Albania with the old continent to which it belonged but from which the communist system of the East separated. This desire consists in the attempts of hundreds of young people who dreamt to take refuge and embrace the native Europe that they had lost for decades. Kadare through political metamorphoses describes how Albanians seek their European identity. This search is presented as a Golgotian journey of Albanians to a modern integration and civilization.

They find in Europe the free soul and the break of chains of totalitarianism, an act which they fulfilled only after the '90-s. Today Albanians hope to become members of the honorable European family because in it lies the truth, democracy, and freedom. Kadare appears as the descendant of the assertion of the idea that the real identity of Albanians is European.

Ismail Kadare is the novelist who writes and creates the philosophy of the political thought on the genesis of Albanians across the border of political utopia towards the European Identity of Albanians. It is this universal "vision (Rella.F, 1984)" of Kadare that gives him the merit to be called the novelist of democracy. His work presents like a poetic projection artifacts that are to be studied on the following topic: - Who are the Albanians in reality and what is our connection with Europe?!

There is always an 'Altro-s' in all things. "The courage to hope (Obama.B, 2008)" that danger and death can be prevented for the sake of public and personal good is a cause worth living.

US novelists Steven H.Gifis and Wright Mill have called it 'public use'- 'sociological imagination (Gifis.H.Steven, 2003)" which is the ability that enables seeing and estimating the origins of all utopist paradoxes of several human categories in their reciprocal rapport of the social cycle they belong to. In other words "The European Identity of Albanians" according to Kadare's

work, comes from the tragic nature of Albanians, that stems from the “biography and history” in the state of survival during dictatorship.

Macabre terror is usual as a sophisticated work statement. It is human massacre where torture and isolation are a historical paradigm of a totalitarian political system. It was a problem of the mental historic personal exile. The life is alienating, and the human personality is violating.

In the novels of Kadare: ‘The Beast (Kadare.I, 2005)’, ‘Long Winter’(Kadare.I, 1971).’, ‘The dusk of steep Gods (Kadare.I, 1981)’, ‘Broken April (Kadare.I, 1981)’, ‘The Daughter of Agamemnon (Kadare.I, 2003)’, the political utopia is a state criminal system where the human hunting is sophisticated and a physic and mental genocide. The hierarchy is absolute and appears as a constant economic and cultural expansion of a wild “Beast” related to the spread of communist ideology in Albania in the form of “Stalinism”. In dictatorship conditions the state does not function as a law of justice that ensures transparency, public and personal freedom but as a wrong practice of political ruling. Justice is negated or alienated. Truth and dignity are denied.

Freedom of speech is excluded as basic constitutional right and is harshly pressed by communist dictatorship. The state has no functional laws but only a strong hybrid rule. The rule of kinship, absolute obedience in thoughts and deeds towards an absurd and harsh authority such as the Dictator.

Kadare writes as follows: ‘The Tiran is transformed. We felt how we were daily dragged to the mechanism of a common guilt. We had to talk, to accuse, to dirt ourselves firstly and the others afterwards... And the two sided rope of guilt would continue tying everybody (’ Kadare.I, 2003).

Later on he states: “The first who came back (Lladoshnikov), was as always continuously smiling, Stalinist that had things under control in full accordance with the optimistic situation throughout the great Soviet Union. There was a solemnity of manifests, a kind of touch due to the meetings with... old heroines of Socialist Labor, a smiling party devotion and self-controlled official just like the beige color of his coat. When quoting ‘vot tak tavarishi (in Russian: so comrades)’, you would think he had the face of a model who had come from the orders of the Steering Committee of Soviet Writers Union”.

“Red terror” feeds fiction scenes where the dramas of a tragic-comedy stem from, where “the gatherings of millions” are howling and are scared at the same time as in Dante’s Hell, and where a suppressing world of traps, tricks and politics masks appears. The daily gestures end up in an antique tragedy; the common features of senses are transformed in cartoon sniffs, and the instincts are reaching a disgusting upper limit were a “Nation schizophrenia” stems from. Tragic heavens of the Balkans are covered with “the smog” of former Empires and create brownish spots through escape and the legends fly where the cold metaphor of Kadare’s “eagle” glitters. Kadare’s work is a book of hours, but also a mine of facts on the language of Dictatorship in Albania and civil disobedience towards it.

Political utopia in the poetic work of Kadare is introduced as a “Beast” that wanders like Shakespeare’s ghosts and demonizes people through violence and terror by warning a quick economic devastation. The storm of range dunes seems dead and threatens people with thirst. The country’s isolation from neighbors and the world with barbed wire fences, separated the Albanian society from Europe and the world. Whoever would dare, just like the youngsters who tried to listen and watch in secret the radio and television channels, would be accused as traitor of the fatherland and as a dangerous enemy and thus end up shot dead, in prison or sent to “mental hospitals being traumatized (Focault.M, 2006)”.

The negation of religious belief and prevail of a secular ideology that was spread through the force of weapons led to the lack of pluralistic thinking. Through 50 years of communist regime, the security stability and human personality was transformed and isolated in “Block” as an extreme contrast of politics with society. The socio-political system was based on a heavy military machine through the mottos “the whole nation, soldier” where you could find cloned soldiers destined to death (Kadare.I, 1980).

The society was manipulated with a particular purpose by “convincing” it through the ideology of language as if it was living in “paradise” but practically speaking in an artificial and criminal way (Elezi.I,Hysi.I, 2006)”.

The absurdity and paradoxes were a feature of the state transformation, the political hierarchy carried the “propaganda” and would censor its political opponents by excluding the public dialogue and compromise with the “declassified”. Court sessions were formal, illegal and arbitrary. The public opponent was ravage and advocacy did not exist. The court decisions were extremely absurd, such as hanging and shooting. The court was shaped like a hermetic “pyramidal tower” where the sunlight would never reach. There was secretly kept all the punishment documentation of the “Tower”:-acts, secret agreements, correspondence with foreign consuls, accords with Albanian government, with the first republic, with the second republic, with the kingdom, accords with the governors and commanders of invading troops of Turks, Serbs and Austrians. The articles were in different languages, but most of them were in Albanian. The huge lock whose key was hanging as a talisman at the neck political lion would remind you of the Vatican gates and “Justinians laws (Shuflaj.M, 2009)” in search of Europe.

For the society the information channels were locked gates, where everything was “top secret”. The whole Albanian society lived an euphoria of “the dictator-Zeus (Kadare.I, 2002)” and a funny craze (Kadare.I, 2009)” under the breath and whisper of fear, living in an island in the heart of Europe. According to Kadare, it is the “ ‘monstrous state machine’ that creates very complicated problems mainly economical ones (Kadare.I, 1981)”, bringing to our attention the legend of eagle, that fed on its own wounds, just like the oldest human profession facing the bullet. For the Albanian, according to the canonic laws it is called the “tax of blood” that stems from the law of the earth. During communist times, the political dictatorship started its ruling in the form of agricultural law with the form of “nationalization”, “expropriation”, and “confiscation (Meçani.D,

2006)”. In the accounts table, with a surprising accuracy there made comparisons of the taxes of blood during the last four years, compared to the incomes from maize, cattle, lands sale, mines and pawn brooking percentage and the corresponding results were crazy. Together with the distortion of everything, even the foundation stones of the moral life of Kanun like “faith”, “blood feud” “friend”, “Honor”, were being distorting to despite being the highest sublime values of Albanians. With the passing of years these values were transformed just like the Tyranny, slowly changing into an inhuman machinery that superficially appeared as a “capitalist profitable undertaking”. The ethics values are in crises.

To the totalitarian state, the human society, especially the person was seen as “a consumption good” with whom you could trade with just like in the times of distant slavery. According to the Stalinist concept, the value and the price of every Albanians’ life was no more than “5 astra (law price, Kadare.I, 1977)”. The state would not govern but rule with an iron fist.

It is only the “plains” which are the Albanian highlands occupying “half of the kingdom” that out of state “etatist” control. According to the Constandines saga, “faith is the fundamental stone” for the Albanians in a constitutional shape. The Kanun is a Right for Albanians compared to which, the laws Hamurabi and so forth look like “children’s toys”. The state is total, the Kanun is total. They stay like two basic blocks facing one another carrying and shaking the economic and moral pillars each time that one distances from the other.

This is the reason that the totalitarian state did not only dare to recognize and study Kanun but considered it as illegal, the result of a barbarian and primitive time. It is the gatherings of elder men, of “Franciscans, nuns (Kadare.I, 1991)” and ‘sworn virgins’ who know the value of blood that goes straightforward. This blood cannot be forgiven for the Tyranny that compared himself to God. The Kanun is the self-governing constitution of the people in the conditions of normal state lack (Ymamoto.K, 2010).

On purpose and without any remorse, the state of “the communist party” for 50 years was leading the society under the cause of “a social state” around “a torture ghetto” where the violent laws of terror and fear would hide the socio-political chaos through the punishment of Article 101 and 55. The experiments with the common people could not be even compared to the other, from the length and dark side. Dictatorship is “a mined field (Lumi.E, 2008)”, which needs us to study the walls and boundaries that separate us from the Balkans and Europe.

The prisons were filled with political opponents mixed with ordinary spies and criminals. Tortures were inhuman horrors for which even today in the moment we are speaking apology is not considered. The human soul would not find peace but only psychological tension and disturbance from the “red light” of the political hunt that warned an “electrical shock”. The “green light” was seen nowhere. The novelist Kadare testifies that the “blood of Albanians is like goods”. Where could you find a cleaner “bank of blood (Kadare.I, 1996) like this?”. There are hundreds and thousands of innocent lives that have fallen under the suppressions of the heavy machinery of the “state” monster. Hundreds and thousands of people are eliminated or disappeared just because

of “a word”, because of “foreign music” for “a faith”, “a decadent book”, a “different painting”, for “an extravagant behavior”, for a free way of escape towards distant places, for a revival from the lethargic sleep of death.

Kadare states: This is the real face of things! - ... The elder would groan and suspire! – Eh... Dream world!... The rise of the dead. Allah, what a terror is here ... Chaos: the earth and the heaven are mixed in one... These are life projects with feminine genesis. With male genesis too... erotic dreams... Economic crisis, money devalue, property rent, banks, bankruptcy, complots. State coup d'etat suppressed from the very beginning. State intrigues. The delirium... the Ottoman dreams... people's dreams... religious dreams... power dreams. This is not the resurrection of a dead person but of a whole nation.

“The astern year (Kadare.I, 1985)” in 1913 when Europe decided the boundaries of the Balkans, changed the antique peninsula into a “power barrel” that explodes in every World War start. Kadare states: ‘A young lady, laid in a surgery bed. Round her the surgeons are wearing masks over their faces and keeping scalpels and scissors in their hands. Below this it was written: “Albania on the talks’ table of Great Powers in London”.

After the World War II, the communist ideology provoked “10 qualities of the person with a communist moral are forged”. “The red uniforms (the sworn soldiers of the regime) just like in a “cancer ward” would fill up the train towards a death journey. Albanian and the Balkans “alike (Kadare.I, Simiç.P, 2005)” suffer the anguish and the fear of a hot and bloody battle arena, where the ethnicities and nation languages are fighting wildly.

The Dictator Hoxha would cement the whole Albania with bunkers and barbed wires. His tyranny could not be compared to anyone else. The dictator has the syndrome of attack on the phantom enemy in Albania and of a “clinic shock” to himself. The neighboring boundaries are dangerous and impassable pyramids.

In this situation of terrible terror, how could react, once being proud of their origins “standing on two straight legs like the wood”, and today a handful of scalps as “Pyramid” construction stones (Kadare.I, 1996). Eqerem Çabej and Rexhep Qosja, two well-known scholars of the Albanian history of language and literature place the Albanians “Between the West and East” (Çabej.E, 2002).

As it seems Ismail Kadare is the only one that presents and supports the idea “of European identity of Albanians (Kadare.I, 2006)”. Is this a miscount or a fantasy of this great genius of Albanian paper work? I believe this could not be accepted and supported so easily as a thesis, but indeed it is difficult! It is Austria that asks me the same question about the European identity of Albanians. A student asked me: ‘Why don’t you Albanians openly show your identity, because they mistake you with the Slavonic people?’ My answer was simple: “Thousands of years ago and many centuries after, as long as the sun will light this land, the Albanians have lived and will live in the Balkans together with the ancient neighboring Greeks and the Slavs, with the ancient Romans and the Europeans!”. The effort of survival from the Empires of the time is tragic and

historical-epic for Albanians and at the same time a Dream of becoming a member of European family.

According to Kadare, “it has its own meeting place too: despite having its roots in the ground, the wood wouldn’t be safe the moment it was grown above the ground level. It could either be hit by a lightning, cut by an axe or fall down itself (Kadare.I, 2003)”.

For “the style of his language (Sadiku.I, 2000)”, Ismail Kadare, always differs from the tragedy of “Hamlet”. The writer cold-bloodily breaks the state laws with the purpose of protecting the Right that belongs to the whole people. The relations of Kadare with the Dictator are complex. Their origin is from the same town and this was enough not to touch him, despite the fact that Kadare and his work did not escape the censorship and punishment of the dictatorial system.

‘Invitation to the studio’, ‘Spiritus’, ‘Chronicle in the stone’, ‘Cases of Insanity’, ‘The mistaken supper’ are an offer novels that the writer makes to his reader seeking the source of the so-called “universal confusion (Buçpapaj.S, 1998)”. The man is facing the Devil. He hates it with the strength of his soul but is scared from the terror it was spreading. Writing at the times of dictator was just like translating the risk of the heart of dictatorship, its wild “animal” nature, and its brainwashing that aimed to manipulate the truth. The violence was collective and individual, the punishment was from the state. Behind the façade that appeared to be calm and happy, was boiling the hunt of witches and a kind of brotherhood killing that reminded the civil war in the times of the cold war.

In his works, Kadare appears to be the novelist of the Right. His prose represents a special creative practice. The artistic work of Kadare is called the art of Democracy because it is created by an independent authority, who is concerned by the public security, the personal rights and freedoms, the nature of the totalitarian state, his rapport with the tradition, order and courts... The novelist writes with the language of an artistic lawyer that could be discovered according to the nature of “common law (Smith & Hogan, 1983)”.

The connections of the writer with the Dictator and the dictatorship are complex. There are two opposing powers that have many conflicts and crisis. Several novels are attacked and censored from their circulation, and it was only after 1990s that they could be published. Kadare assaults “the state-beast” in his mind that rules over the faked, deformation, mistake, rotten, abuse, life danger, intervention to the dream in order to destroy the identity of Albanians in seek of Europe (Smith & Hogan, 1983).

The political metamorphosis in this way discovers a tragedy- parody of a Don Quixote with the person, that stem from the “capital (Marks.K, 1980)” and “the change of Albanian values (Nietzche.F, 2002)” with the language of persecution and selection.

The wind and breath of Europe, in the conditions of terror and isolation came to Albanians through this deep thinker named Ismail Kadare, as well as from “the soul (Huizinga.J, 1955)” and courage of Albanians to break the taboos. The boundaries and the political wall that separate Albanians

from the Balkans and Europe are the reason of fight that call for a solution in the moment of speaking.

Beyond the physical and moral borders Ismail Kadare confirms that he is endangered with his life and family because of his ideas. The town and the love of Kadare for the country and for the Albanians need no “advertisement (Kadare.I, 2001)”. He observes the history vertically, and the history leads him to the beginnings of the “Albanian nationalism (Clayer.N, 2012)”. The voice of Kadare is an echo-call from the depth of the soul in order to shake and emancipate the society and the state about the freedom and the human rights that are the constitution of the constitutions. The imagination and fantasy of this writer go beyond the boundaries of a creative abstract nature. The deep pleasure that the work of Kadare offers goes beyond the vanity and emptiness of human life as well as beyond the common deaths and trauma. The text is an appeal on ‘criminal Correspondence (Warner.M, 1990)’ of the state totalitarian character. The artistic work of Kadare is a “search of literary arguments” about the European identity of Albanians by breaking every political and conventional boundary.

The Albanians desire in search of European family is a thousands years saga, just like the tower house that would give one ram and one girl each year. The Albanians orientation towards Europe has its roots in the Greek-Roman antiquity and the Byzantium alike, as well as to the connections with Turkey and communism culture. The Albanians are cosmopolitan people with a liberal belief and proud of their nation.

It is the ideological boundaries and historical conflicts with the Empires and neighbors alike that have made Albanians appear like “Zulu tribes (Konica.F, 1993)”, sank in the chaos of their life. But a nation can never be enslaved without being firstly drowned or extinguished from its literature, art, science and culture.

It is Kadare and the work of other Albanian well-known novelists that remind us about the truth which is quite different with the Albanians, despite being tragic. As a nation we are grown up side by side to the “oldest nations of Europe (Encyclopaedia Britannica’ , 1768) and beyond every limit we deserve to break the physical and moral boundaries in order to certify the identity of who we are, where do we come from and where we want to go? The price that the Albanians should face is the battle with a rotten and faded system like socialism that stretches like “the shadow (Kadare.I, 2007)” of a beast’s long tail, in the fog and storm of the night.

It is an ancient desire just like the world itself that had wandered Albanians between the east and west without understanding and knowing that being a prince for the Balkans and Europe is as difficult as Hamlet and King Lear himself (Kadare.I, 2007). The 21st century obviously is in search of Europe not like a wish of an Albanian stubborn child but as a new road that opens the path of an old and “ancient psalm (Kadare.I, 2000)”.

The hidden strength of the Albanian spirit is saved in its marrow, hidden in a box of the “high mountains (Kadare.I, 2000)”, and wanders from Albania to Europe trespassing borders individually and collectively. It has turned into an unimaginable clew with the boundaries and

courage of every Albanian to trespass all the boundaries in search of Europe and contact with the family it belongs to. These paybacks of the Zeus to the ancient Europe, and the falling lightning have no more similarities to the human fire Prometheus.

After the '90 the Albanians' exodus towards Europe as West dream has been rather massive. The Albanian brain drain is drowned in the never ending stream of globalization. Kadare states that: "When the fire started to shine the cold logic was interrupted just like the sinking of Titanic'. Albanians in the work of Kadare are shown as being resistant versus the dictatorship. Having a western dream Albanians have crossed borders in order to join European citizenship.

Conclusion

The gates of Europe are heavy but real. This time the roads are paved and the Albanians hurrying to be known again like the Doruntine of Kadare (Kadare.I, 2000)". The literary memory of Kadare informs us that we should not make compromise with corruption and hysteric calls about the chosen nation. Political prostitution brings chaos and anarchy. The court and the law is sold or bought to the groups of interest or it stops acting in balance to the pan human values. It is the faith that reminds people of 'Urbis and Orbit'.

The Albanian citizens' emancipation is an emergent need connected to every kind of reform especially with the old mentality on the true prospective of Albanians to enter and honor the European family. Let us leave the boundaries in their "sacredness" and reach the speed that Europe travels itself in the 21st century towards free spaces, on behalf of European identity as citizens of a free and secure world.

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