

THE NARRATIVE PROSE OF KIM MEHMETI**Literature**

Keywords: Specific narrative forms; The search for different forms of reality; The imagined reality; Weirdfiction; Theme of myth, rites, rituals; Essayistic discourse in narration.

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The theme title refers to the idea of analysing the prose of Kim Mehmeti in the thematic and narrative structure. Kim Mehmeti is a well-known novelist, narrator, essayist, translator and publicist, whilst the literary genre in which he excels in a specific way is narrative prose. He is one of the most important authors of all modern Albanian literature, the path of whose creativity, with its own identifying significances, refers to Albanian literature in Northern Macedonia. Kim Mehmeti's narrative prose, with its first work "Bolero", has awakened the curiosity of the Albanian reader, scholars, critical reviewers, and ordinary readers, presenting a world of weird reality in the labyrinths of to which are intertwined characteristics of reality and myth, belief and superstition, of traditional life and of that of oriental backgrounds. The reader also approaches a narrative structure in which narrative techniques and forms can be noticed, which are a novelty in the tradition of Albanian narrative prose. By focusing on the narrative prose of this author, the transformations in the field of narrative structures and narratives, in our analysis we will consider the collection of stories "Bolero" (1991) and "Moonflower" (1997), where these transformations are significantly noticed and revealed. In the stories of this author we will consider the descriptive and narrative forms, through which the reality of the current daily life and the reality of imaginary forms coming from narrators and characters that belong to a living reality within vital truths or superstitious forms of life are revealed.

The Albanian literature of authors, who were born or also lived and created within the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia, has its own signifiers that identify its idiosyncrasies in respect of the selection of topics and forms of writing, a meaningful configuration that makes up and reinitiates, and at the same time, composes the full portrait of Albanian literature, in particular of contemporary Albanian literature. Emphasis here is put on contemporary literature, as Albanian literature of North-Macedonian authors established its strong literature shelter only in the '70s of the 20th century which continues to exist today.

This component of Albanian literature has become well known in that it attracted the attention of literary criticism as well as of readers. The well-known writers belonging to this part of Albanian literature include: Luan Starova, Resul Shabani, Murat Isaku, Abdylaziz Islami, Adem Gajtani, Agim Vinca, Eqrem Basha, Nehat Sopaj, Kim Mehmeti and others. It may be claimed that the last mentioned author, namely Kim Mehmeti, whom this paper is about, represents one of the most special authors of Albanian literature in general, and of Albanian literature in North Macedonia in specific.

Kim Mehmeti is a well-known novelist, narrator, essayist, translator and publicist, whilst the literary genre in which he excels in a specific way is narrative prose. As a narrator, he started writing and publishing his writings during the period 1980-1990, and has continued to do so even today. His most distinguished narrative prose include: "*The dust that germinates*", "*The sobbing*", "*Bolero*", "*The Death of the enchantress*", and "*The Moonflower*".

With his very first books, characterised as narrative prose, Kim Mehmeti has caught the eye of the critics and readers for his fictional works, respectively for the strange realities, which are the themes of his stories. His sensible observations of the truths of realities and of imaginary realities, as part of his narration, have made Kim Mehmeti known for openly turning his back on formal realism and for using writing styles that fall within magical realism, a reality to which he will stay true from his first to his last work.

Several reviews, essays and other types of analyses have been written about the narrative prose of Kim Mehmeti. His literary works have been the subject matter of critical analyses aiming at interpreting and revealing the secrets of the realities of the themes and of the narrative forms. In this regard, one has to point out the thoughts of the Kosova literary criticism on the narrative prose of Kim Mehmeti provided by authors that belong to different generations, including: Ali Aliu, Ramadan Musliu, Kujtim Rrahmani, Fazli Gajraku.

The title of this paper “The narrative prose of *Kim Mehmeti*” refers to the idea of distinguishing some of the key idiosyncrasies of this author’s stories in respect of themes and of narrative forms that are interrelated with features of reality and myth, of faith and superstition, of life that reveals the truths of an oriental reality and environment and the truths of an occidental reality and environment, as a different culture and behaviour.

Kim Mehmeti, aiming at revealing these realities through creative fiction, searches for narrative forms and techniques, through which he presents himself and becomes known as an author, who offers his own model of narration, and who investigates and searches for his originality, and who disagrees with conventional forms of narration.

A careful analysis of Kim Mehmeti’s narrative prose reveals the distinguishing features of the way the author gets closer to or further away from the truths of the realities through the forms of writing chosen by him. In this regard, in the collection of stories “*Bolero*” (1991) and “*Moonflower*” (1997) the research forms and the tendency towards realities and narrative forms, which enrich the stories, are noticeable.

So, the narrators and characters in the realities of the author’s stories first are introduced as believing in superstition as a result of an oriental life style, that is, a point of view according to which life is intertwined with fear and salvation through supernatural forces simultaneously, with the latter being embedded in the characters soul (read stories in *Bolero*). Next, the narrators and characters are detached from this thematic reality and a strong connection is established with the idea of essayistic narration and with an existential reality of life in time and in a national space and reality, wherein symbols and metaphors become an aim per se of the story.

In the initial stages of the narrative creation (referring here to the collection of stories *Bolero*), the author focuses on narrating about superstitious styles of life strongly lived and experienced by the character. The character, who simultaneously serves as the narrator, is constantly confused and scared due to seeing and hearing the magic power of the enchantress

Fatka. The enchantress envisions the good or the bad that is sent to us in life and this is revealed by the narrator itself, who says:

“From the early days of my childhood, I remember the enchantress Fatka. I was raised in her lap. That strange old woman loved me just too much...” (Mehmeti, Bolero, 1991, p. 5)

Following the above, the narrator not only has knowledge and lives near the realities of the enchantress, but he also has strong feelings for her and stays with her until the end, as it is her who can read his mind and determine his fate. The narrative prose on Fatka or Fakta’s narration is conveyed from story to story and her connection and rapport with the narrator changes constantly. Sometimes, the narrator is close to her, at other times the narrator will hear stories about her; sometimes, the narrator will learn and understand her noble spiritual power, at other times he will have doubts about her intentions.

“When some travelers assert that Fatka’s house is now full of mice, which nibble on each other, I only smile, as I know that the mice are sent by Fatka and that through them she makes fun of people”. (Mehmeti, Bolero, 1991, p. 62)

In this narrative reality, Fatka is presented to the reader as a being that lives with death and immortality, with her healing power and her destructive power simultaneously. Sometimes she is confronted by the powers of nature that she tries to defeat, at other times she feels defeated.

“Many times at late night hours when the moon would show in the blue sky full of stars, Fatkais seen mixing liquids from which she would make different medicines...”(Mehmeti, Bolero, 1991, p. 62)

According to the critic KujtimRrahmani, this game of realities, whereby the real is confronted by the unreal “finds its thematic entity in the tendency to assimilate myth, oriental-occidental ritual and folklore with the tradition of the real-magic prose-deus” (Rrahmani, 1998, p. 96). As proving evidence for this serve the realities lived and experienced sometimes as facts of life resulting from environments of oriental culture, such as: *Medina or Meka*; or characters of such environments, such as: Ymreja, Adumiand others; orfacts, evidence and characters that are identified as part of national culture, such as: *Adelina, Emali, Jetëmira, Nora*,and others.

This stance on the reality derived from the superstitious culture that is intertwined with the magic and the magical changes in the collection of stories “*Moonflower*” (1997). In this collection of stories, a reality is presented which is extended and deepened into symbolic forms of expression, fully conscious of the abandonment of a reality focussed on the figurative and associative meaning and on the theme of myth and rites and rituals that are derived from and conserved in the early forms of life.

“Fear you must throw away from yourselves right now, not because I stand by you, but because it is part of the invisible landscape of that road...” (Mehmeti, Moonflower, 1997, p. 27)

In the book *Moonflower*, the narrator reveals itself and whilst narrating the reality talks to and addresses the reader too. Thus, the narrator's stance is that of the author, who communicates sometimes through the feelings of the narrator, at other times through those of an author, who is considerate of the reader and talks to the reader with the awareness of an author who stands in front of its own reader. In such circumstances, the author in the collection of stories *Moonflower* makes visible the entire history of his narrations and of the connections with the characters and the plots of these narrations.

It is not sufficient to say that I was astounded by the echo of the dear voice. It is not sufficient to say that the voice shook the axis upon which were fixed my deep beliefs that the communication with Fatusha has ended for good, unless I counted the whispers, which for years I addressed to her shadow that accompanied me wherever I was. "Fatusha, are you still suffering from thirst?" –I asked not knowing who I was talking to. And at that moment I felt like the wind changed direction, that someone was standing next to me and was leering at me. Yes, yes, Fatusha from twenty years ago taken by the wind was hanging upon me, not as a shadow, but as a beauty, loving and distant. (Mehmeti, Moonflower, 1997, pp. 106-107)

As can be noticed, in the stories in *Moonflower*, the author reveals his entire creative concept as a writer (novelist) through a form of open discussion, without any hesitation, about the history of his narrations. Thus, the author creates the opportunity to be followed not only through his style of narration, to be accompanied by and to live with all our feelings within the narration, but also through his direct literary-essayistic point of view provided by him via his specific narrative position.

In sum, it is worth emphasising that whilst in the collection of stories *Bolero* (1991), the narration takes place in the universe of the magic world and of superstitious realities, in the book *Moonflower* (1997) the essayistic discourse, as well as the symbolic and ironic forms of narration are strengthened. So, the stories in the book *Moonflower* in some way are antipodal to those in the book *Bolero*, in respect of the origin of the reality and of the game with fiction, as well as in respect of the form of the narrative discourse.

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