



Historiographic Fiction or a Documentary Genre?

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Abstract

In many novels of the 20th century, has been noticed a desire to rely on history in the form of meta-narratives, but at the same time to move away from history with the help of irony. This is mainly the nature of postmodernist works, which operate under the motto anything goes, everything is allowed. But in one of Kadare's works "Mornings in Rostand Coffee" can be noticed an attempt to build at the same time historiographical metafiction and a documentary novel about events that have left a mark on his memory. On one hand there are fragments of memories, reflections, findings, descriptions in the form of a macro text that connect the author's feelings, before and after the fall of communism in Albania. Different issues of the Albanian reality are thematised, where history and fiction are connected with each other. On the other hand, this work is also on the borders of a documentary novel, because the importance is on the true composition of the event and not the composition of the work, for being strongly connected from one chapter to the next. Our work is focused on trying to find connections between a historiographic fiction, documentary genre, autobiographic memory or how from one type it can be catapulted to another type easily. This is the technique of modernists and postmodernists who do not define the work in a single literary type. Through research, diffraction and analysis of the details of history and fiction, we intend to show that Kadare's work stands very well in an experimental novel, but also in a cycle of essays which connect the fate of the writer, his emotional feelings.

Keywords: historiographic fiction, documentary genre, autobiographic memories, metafiction, Ismail Kadare

1. Introduction

The title of the work "Breakfast at Rostand Café" by the well-known writer Ismail Kadare comes from the essay with the same title that opens the book. This title brings to the centre a concrete object, which is a coffee bar. In the Albanian and Balkan culture, the café is the place to spend free time, to share time and thoughts, and consequently, even when you are alone, it is also the place of meditations, various reflections on the phenomena of the day. But our work moves to the middle of Europe, to Paris, to the café where the author writes and the café becomes a 'character' to bring the author's fiction with autobiographical elements. Kadare's prose with autobiographical elements comes in the form of a documentary prose, a type that is very popular in Russian literature with authors such as: Valentin Kataev, Lidia Ginzburg, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Svetlana Aleksievich, etc., but is rarer in Albanian literature. The attempts of this prose in Albanian literature include: Lumo Skendo with "The Last Hour", At Zef Pllumi with "Live to tell", Agim Vinca with "The diary of the pandemic", etc.

In the 19th century history and literature had a tight connection, because the source of work was reality. In the 20th century came the separation due to the different focus that literature had in all its branches. Postmodernism literature,

which appeared later was ahistorical, but there still exists a tendency to connect them together in a way to involve historical text in literary work. In this way disciplines borders get erased. This postmodernism literature characteristic, not only creates cultural borders paradoxes, but even paradoxes in literary genres. In such texts it is difficult to distinguish the author-narrator boundary from the narrator-character. The detailed narrative of the first person articulates the attitudes of the author-character, but the way of handling the event, the narrative discourse accompanied by intertextualities of other poetic texts, the order of real events with subjective feelings poses an important question: What's the relationship between truth and fiction in a prose of a documentary nature? Is this work a historiographic metafiction?

Therefore, to answer this question we will use the textological analysis, the semiotic structural and functional approach to see how the signs of fiction and truth work with each other in Kadare's prose. This paper is important to those who want to know more about the biography of Kadare's life and the fiction of different dramas that have been in Albanian literature, Albanian culture and personal drama too. Also, this paper is important for those who want a work that can be used as a historiographic fiction or a documentary too.

2. Analyses/ Main Result

Kadare is a writer with a wide range of creativity before the 90s, who continued to write even after that period. That was the year which marked an important turning point in his life because at that time he required a political accommodation in France. Later he continued to write and became a mental and spiritual leader for the Albanians.

The work "Breakfast at Rostand Cafe" reveals Kadare in many changes he might have had as a person, as a writer and both the events and the people who have left a mark in his creativity. Experiences, social-political changes in Albania are narrated by narrators of different perspectives as: subjective narrator, objective narrator, witness narrator and omniscient narrator. But, the Kadare's European and Albanian lyrical subject is distinguished in all episodes, which create a macro text and all are related with the evocation of Kadare in person. The presence of real history adds more dilemma to determinate the literature genre, what a strong influence history has in a literary work? Can it become a documentary work?

Different theoreticians have addressed the history's problem in a literary text for the report art-literary and where are the borders of each- other. In 1970 a historian writes:

Novelists and playwrights, natural scientists and social scientist, poets, prophets, pundits, and philosophers of many persuasions have manifested an intense hostility to historical thought. Many of our contemporaries are extraordinarily reluctant to acknowledge the reality of past time and prior events, and stubbornly resistant to all arguments for the possibility or utility of historical knowledge. (Fischer, 1970, p. 207)

Only a few years later, Hayden White writes:

One of the distinctive characteristics of contemporary literature is its underlying conviction that the historical consciousness must be obliterated if the writer is to examine with proper seriousness those strata of human experience which is modern art's peculiar purpose to disclose. (White, 1978, p. 31). But his examples are telling: Joyce, Pound, Eliot, Mann, who are modernists, not postmodernists.

Generally, modernism authors left history, as they saw it as their nightmare, or utilized history to ironic it. Kadare is an author with modernism features, but "Breakfast at Rostand café" is written and published in a time when postmodernism dominates in literature or was to the end. How does history get incorporate in this work?

The special feature of the work "Breakfast at Rostand Café" mainly lies in the structure of the work. It has multiple nodes, with textual and contextual references. There are various references from visual art, world painting such as the Nightmare chapter (1781 Nightmare Painting by Henry Fuseli), the Doll chapter (Digital painting by Kare Huang); from world literature: chapter Macbeth (the work of Macbeth by W. Shakespeare) also from Albanian and world history, personalities who become the central figures in the narrative such as the chapter An April with Fredi (Albanian poet Frederik Rreshpja), the chapter Baroni Groult (Baron Groult, an intellectual an elderly Frenchman who in his old age developed a great love for the Albanian people), the chapter The Little Ladies of Albanian Literature (women writers Elvira Dones, Orneta Vorpsi, Luljeta Lleshanaku, etc.), while the last chapter Mozaikal is a possible connection with any art visual, musical and literary that presents the image of a possible mosaic of his memories.

The structure of the novel is interesting:

Firstly, the works start with 'Morning in Rostand Caffé' which is an acknowledgment of the author dedicated to Paris and especially the Rostand cafe. In this chapter, the author recounts his first moments in Paris, the reception he received and his evaluations of this city and this cafe, which was the source for many of Kadare's works. Paris is animated and takes the form of an important character for the author's life, both before and after the fall of the communist

regime in Albania. This chapter is an ontological and epistemological recognition of historical "fact".

The second chapter is 'Coffeehouse Days', is dedicated to his first banned novella, *Coffeehouse Days*, and in this chapter the author recounts the efforts the work had to go through during communism to get close to publication, but also his memories while he was student.

Chapter 'An April for Fred' is dedicated to the poet Frederik Rreshpja that was persecuted by communism, and the chapter has intertexts from his poems, such as: *The white horse got old, got tired a long time ago/ and fell down in the rainy field*. This chapter creates a parallelism between the fate of the Albanian poet with the Russian poets Esenini and Majakovski and a kind of Kadarean evaluation of the poets who were born in the wrong time.

The chapter 'Baroni Groult' was written in 2004 and is dedicated to Baron Groult, an elderly French intellectual who in his old age starts to experience a great love for the Albanian people. But in the valuation he gives to the French intellectual, who founded an important foundation, there is an auto irony addressed to himself and to anyone who disregards the Albanian identity. Someone has advised him that, in order to understand the enigmatic nation of Albanians, he should read the work of a certain I. Kadare. Historical reality and ironic fiction seem to be dominant in this chapter and place the work in the murky waters between fiction and history.

The chapter "Little ladies of Albanian literature" talks about the importance of Albanian women in literature and social life. Figures such as Elvira Dones, Ornela Vorpsi, Ani Wilms, Luljeta Lleshanaku, Besa Myftiu, Lindita Arapi, Ledia Dushi, Jonila Godole are mentioned here. Here he does a socio-psychological analysis of the factors that influenced the strong personality of the non-surrender of the Albanian women, mentioning not only women-authors, but also their characters and various intertexts of the poetry and prose of these poetesses. Kadare talks about the phenomenon of the veil in Albanian culture, about the Kanun and its relationship with communism. Expressing with anxiety the question: was the Albanian work defeated or not by the Ottoman territory? – Kadare embodies the opposite, her non-surrender. And this is especially found in the many pages of Albanian literature (Ukaj, 2014, p.34)

The chapter 'Nightmare' consisting of nine mini-chapters, is dedicated to the strange thesis according to which Albanians are descended from Arabs. The text is rich with historical details and various passages of history, with an ironic language get highlighted the efforts of foreigners to tarnish Albania. In this chapter, the author makes different transitions between Tirana and Pristina and their persecution by different invaders.

The chapter 'Macbeth' is dedicated to his experiences of Shakespeare's work, which he admired and read in many different languages, comparing the translations. The chapter is rich with inter-texts from the work "Macbeth" and it is a cold analysis of the author for the translations of this tragedy.

The chapter 'Doll' is dedicated to the writer's mother and their complicated relationship. There are autobiographical data about his personal life and the life of the city of Gjirokastra.

The chapter 'Mozaikal' includes random notes written in the Rostand Cafe and treats various topics in the form of reflections, meditations, essays and short stories about various Albanian and world events.

The author practices the technique of collage, montage and *ars combinatorio*, so much that if the places of the chapters were changed, the reader would be constantly engaged in making a different order from the authorial one and it would seem as if the book would never end. This technique used in cinematographic art serves as food for literature and all chapters are a synthesis of the author's life, but also different thoughts about Albanian and world life phenomena. He interweaves fragments of poetic discourse with narrative discourse, but also intertextuality from different works such as Shakespeare's work: *Wake Duncan with thy knocking! I would thou couldst!* (Kadare, 2014, p.208). Interspersed in the text in several different languages that emphasizes the Shakespearean universality in modern and postmodern times, but also serving this verse as a call to oneself to wake up from the nightmares of the experiences.

Kadare in the narrative takes the position of narrator-character and everything comes from his perspective. Despite the fact that they are different events, his presence as a character allows us to see the work as a fragmentary work, where the reader creates various sequences. The author has created a ranking and the reader needs to make another according to his aesthetic, temporal or sensory tastes. Those look like stories in chaos to literally fix lived moments or thoughts, authorial connections with different personalities and events. The author evokes the moments of his arrival in Paris, his comings and goings from Tirana and with a modern style, his autobiography, focusing on the culminating moments of his life, comes fragmentary as it seems to reinforce the expression of Cesare Pavese: "Non si ricordano i giorni, si ricordano gli attimi" (Pavese, 1952)

From the stylistic, ideological and aesthetic linguistic signs of the author implicated in the work, we can refer to the image of the real author of the work. The real and ideal reader is clear about the imaginary, the fiction in the narrative, but seeks to identify the autobiographical element throughout the novel. The narrative brings the authorial truth, written in the first person, and becomes interesting because the objectivity of the event is intertwined with its emotional, sensory

subjectivity. He brings the moments of the past sometimes with an objectivity as if he were evoking someone else's distant past, sometimes with the sensitivity of a character who has lived many times and spaces at once.

He brings sequences from his subjective reality and the reader is put in the position to approach the distant reality of yesterday and the reality of the near past, two Paris affected in the period of Albanian communism and post-communism. This connection is created not only by the presence of the narrator-character, but also by the presence of the same routine in the "Rostand" cafe in Paris.

Paris itself becomes a character described in detail with its limbs: streets, alleys, architectural symbols, publishing houses, various cafes, people who welcomed him like Julien Gracq, Colette D., Pierre Sipriot, Eric Faye and above all the hearth his artistic cafe "Rostand". Even the latter, as much as it can be perceived as the place where the author writes in its tranquility, in this work he writes about it. It becomes the most important object for the writer, because from his artistic territory, it returns to the place where gratitude is expressed as if it were a holy place, because as the writer himself says, "*The idea to write something about Rostand coffee came to me so naturally, so that I did not remember the time or the circumstances. It was a feeling between regret and gratitude, similar to that of the companion of life, who, being by your side in everything, has not had, or it seems to you that she has never had, the proper attention.*" (Kadare, 2014, p. 26)

For Paris, the narrative takes on poetic, decorative colors because the author wanders between great love for it and longing for the first casts in this city. The real concrete environment has several functions. On the one hand, it is the concrete real environment that welcomed the writer in two different political contexts: during communism and after it. On the other hand, the city is the literary environment that fosters the creation process. This environment causes, motivates sensations and is personified as characters that interact with the writer, so he calls them: the first Paris, the second Paris and even the sixth Paris.

When he wanders in Paris, he stays true to reality, when he ponders between the two countries, he weaves the shape of Albanian dreams and legends. He even reactivates some of them in the narrative to create rapport with himself. The Albanian ballad of the return of the dead brother for the promise he had made to his sister is re-functionalized with similarity to the fate of the writer himself, his return to his past life as a promise beyond the grave. In this way, the reality of life, the truth is intertwined with the magical, it seems like a recognition of oneself in different times and spaces.

What the postmodernist writing of both history and literature has taught us is that both history and fiction are discourses, that both constitute systems of signification by which we make sense of the past. (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 89) In this way, in Kadare's work the history is mixed in in two forms: historical context helps the narration of the different episodes and when all the historical knowledge is the referent of the work. Thus, the history comes as "genuine historically" (Jameson, 1984). In the first chapter the episodes come as a nostalgia of the past, as a gratefulness to the country which welcomed the writer, France; as gratefulness to literature which had inspired the writer, like Shakespeare or Albanian writer; as gratefulness to all the poets who had a tragic end in the communism system; as gratefulness to all the women, included her mum.

In this way, the history of the past does not become as a photography mode, or with an absolute truthfully way, but through nostalgia, or according to Gottschalk the process of critically examining and analyzing the records and survival of the past is *historical method*. The imaginative reconstruction of that process is called *historiography*. (Gottschalk, 1969, p. 48)

Imaginative reconstruction is a way of systematization of knowledge of the past in selectively and intellectually, which shows that we have to do with an extraordinary writer in selection of the historical events. It is historiography's explanatory and narrative of past events that we consider historical facts. (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 92). The process of selection, the construction of the historical events and the non- documentary of narrated events creates historiographic metafiction. According to Hutcheon, historiographic metafiction refutes the natural or common- sense methods of distinguishing between historical fact and fiction. (p. 93)

According to theorist Theun Van Dijk, a distinction must be made between two types of storytelling: *the natural storyteller and the artificial storyteller*, a distinction that certainly needs the distinction between natural and artificial language. *Natural narrators are those narrators that occur in our normal, everyday conversations, in which we tell each other our personal experiences. Artificial narrators are like artificial languages, they have a 'constructive' nature and occur in particular contexts of fictional discourse.* (Van Dijk, 1975, p. 285) We have natural narrators when we tell a series of events that actually happened, which the speaker believes really happened. The artificial narrator would be represented by the narrative fiction, which, as we have said, only pretends to tell the truth, or undertakes to tell the truth within the framework of a universe of fictional discourse.

The natural narrative in the work is when the narrator shows that the protagonist is one who narrates the

relationship with the communist government, relationship with Paris, relationship with relatives and friends and brings his experiences into contact with researchers, other foreign publishers, the presence not only of these elements, but also others testify to events that happened in reality, which the narrator presents to the reader in a calm narrative way to believe. On the other hand, the building threads of the event where the Albanian culture is combined in a foreign and local environment build the artificial narrative. We think that we know the artificial narrative because of the "paratext", that is to say all the information that surrounds the text, starting from the title to the internal historical indications of Albania and Paris. *Sometimes, even the author's name itself plays the role of a paratextual element.* (Eko, 2007, p. 153)

Thus, the artificial narrative is signaled by well-known historical elements, by the feelings of the writer that we take unverified from the discourses of the character, by real events that happened that are implicated in the narrative and this leads to the loss of the author in the narrative, maybe even his death.

The interweaving of the two types of storytelling is common in the work. This is made possible by the presence of many texts through time gaps, as if it were a film, their intertextuality, their quotation, direct language intertwined with metaphorical and allegorical language, not only but also the syntactic, grammatical and lexical game that is realized in naturally, like: Moving to different spaces: Tirana-Paris, complicates the narrative, to understand what happened. But, the reader understands that it is being talked about the event of the publication of Kadare for the first time in Paris, because it is the reader who connects all the linguistic themes such as: *Le Figaro, Le Monde, Reuters.*

The artificial narrative is also complemented by the presence of quotations, and in this case the reader's culture intervenes to understand the historical event as a whole, such as: *It was beautiful and scary. I was published there. And not only that. Within a few days I had become famous. The witches don't stop congratulating you: rejoice!*

*It's done.
Did you say something?
I heard the screech owl.
It's the phone, Helena said. (Kadare, 2014, p. 190)*

The presence of intertextuality, the quotations of other works (in this case Shakespeare's) is not characteristic of documentary works, but of postmodern prose. Their presence in Kadare's life story proves the author's narrative play between truth and fiction.

If we did not know that we have many well-known characters from Kadare's life and if the life was not known, perhaps the work would pass into the type of modernist and postmodernist prose that creates the truth in the novel with autobiographical data. The truth comes not only as a testimony of a historical reality, but as an individual's perception of reality. However, the triad of ethical aesthetic categories 'beautiful, good, true' are connected with each other in a natural way. There are facts, there is interpretation of facts and there is a language that does not belong to documentation, but to the fine art of literature eg: *Twelve years later. The first act: Albania, your desert. Thunder and lightning. Enter the three witches. Le Figaro. Le Monde. Reuters... Rejoice, X will become a prince tomorrow. I used to think X was myself. And the Prince of course. And all the others that followed. Everything was hazy and whispery dreamlike. It was 1970. The beginning of April. Great Easter. The incident was far away. Everything had happened in Paris. Not something, but everything.* (Kadare, 2014, p. 190)

The narrative scheme is complex, because the narrator switches from the second-person sentence, tomorrow you will become a prince, to the first-person narration X was myself. Therefore, he passes from the point of view to another, to the subjective point of view, momentary feeling, to distant events such as space.

Therefore, this relationship of artificial and natural storytelling, the non-definition of the literary type by the author paves the way for the reader to question the truth and not to overestimate the subjective and to stick with the idea that truth and fiction are hard to set clear boundaries.

Then, let's reinforce the idea that the autobiographical element is layered for several reasons: there are key moments left in the mind during his life; feelings experienced in different historical eras and in different spaces are reflected, such as: fear, uncertainty, mystery, ambiguity, etc.; personalities who have left a direct or indirect mark on the writer's life are presented. So the biographical, historical and the fiction creates a relationship such for the reader becomes interesting and difficult to find out the author- narrator and the author- character.

Thus, it is neither a proof of everything correct, nor an all-emotional experience. It remains between the facts and the subjective truth of the author. *Kadare always writes passionately, like an extraordinary reader of literature. His genius ability to connect political, cultural, literary events and phenomena, with literary nuances, with atmosphere and humour, leaves everyone breathless. He writes about the tyrannical Albanian politics, and suddenly realises that this is where Dante's "Hell" takes place. He interjects a character from the life of sports, Luan Krasniqi, and through the letter he sends*

to the writer, he understands the necessity of the existence of Kadare's work: "Fate knocked me down in Hamburg, in 2005. I wish that fate treats you differently, for the benefit of our whole nation". And in fact, this work of Kadare is for the benefit of our nation and culture. (Ukaj, 2014)

Turning back to the history is a phenomenon very frequented after the members of the 19690s generation who have been the creators of postmodernism, is a technique of novelist as Fowles, Wolf, Grass, Banville, Rushdie. This prove the universality of Kadare's work, as many novels of this writers. Our recent (and even remote) past is something we share and the abundance of historical fiction and non- fiction being written and read today is perhaps a sign of a desire for what Doctorow once called reading as "an act of community". (Trenner, 1983, p. 59) It is a form of communication the present to the past and vice versa.

Two theoreticians, who analyzed the past events through the narration of literary work, were Derrida and Foucault. The first saw historiography as teleological, as an event of the past has an end and an origin. So everything in a work must be seen as a chain. Every events in different chapter to Kadare's work has a linear historical temporality. On the other hand, Foucault irregularities in the events and in discourse of the historical fragments operate in independently from the other elements of the narrative. Discontinuities, gaps, ruptures, development creates a history in fiction.

In this way, history is inserted in Kadare's work to reflect the experiences of Albanian Society in the certain events of the communist system, also the personal experiences of the writer before and after 1990. Historiographic metafiction's emphasis on its enunciative situation- text, producer, receiver, historical, and social context – reinstalls a kind (very problematic) communal project. (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 115).

In the end we underline that in the postmodern novels exist a connection, an interactivity of historiography and fiction with the help of the objective events, selected events, subjectivity perspectives, the question of references and intertextual nature of the past and the desire of the author to write about history. Even the documents are selected as a function of the perspective of the author. Therefore there cannot be a difference between a historiographic metafiction and a documentary prose. So the documentary novel does not "aspire to tell the truth" (Foley, 1986, p. 26) as much as the truth is selected on the perspective of the author and the historical events are constructed by his perspective.

3. Conclusion

The topic is personal, a narrative about oneself and with oneself, so is the discourse, while objectivity in autobiographical discourse is utopia. The work comes as a synthesis of the author's memories, thoughts, de facto events, with linguistic elements of the narrative, and it is not known where the truth ends and fiction begins. Addressing the data about the writer does not serve as a factual value of the history of the past, it can even serve as a documenting value of his truth, his feelings, because as U. Eco says "it is not necessary to apply the categories of true and false apply to that content". (Eco, 2007, p. 152)

In this work, Kadare has inverted the language of literary texts, fictional seriousness and has experimented with the type so that it is impossible to determine if it is an irony towards different moments of the past, if it is a historiographic fiction, a documentary text or even a more autobiographical data that testifies to a freedom in writing but also a change from Kadare's previous texts as Sontag says *Science and technology have a duty to advance, while art has a duty to change*. (Sontag, 2007, p. 295)

This is precisely where the main value of Kadare's work lies, in its difference from other types created by him. In the difference that each reader finds parts of different techniques of literary and non-literary texts, of different discourses, but also of different inter-texts. This could also be an attempt by Kadare to prove that he stands very well even under the cloak of postmodernism. Using an objective language, the writer presents his subjectivism and can serve as an education for the semantic reader for moral values, for the appreciation of beauty in art and in life, but also as an invitation for the semiotic reader to identify the different incorporations can be found in the work. This is not an exhaustive work, but it is a work that proves that Kadare's work cannot stand under a single roof and it is a challenge for different readers to find other innovations that this work has in contrast to the previous works of his, or the postmodern elements that can be found.

The question propound in the title of the paper cannot have a definite answer, because the documentary prose is in the border of factual and fictive discourse. Although the work of Kadare stands as a historiographic fiction too, because the past existed, but the historical knowledge of it is semiotically transmitted in the perspective of the writer. All the information is reconstructed independently and the reader cannot know if "the facts" are transmitted objectively or they are in the interpretation with narrativization.

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