

Albanian Literary Circle In Italy

by Leka Ndoja

Abstract

Italy's Literary Circle with its creation after the political emigration wave (1945-1990), in the context of Italian - Arbëresh Colony, as a paradigm of the Albanian Literary System during national Revival, was involved in an aggregate of literary and cultural activities. The Literary Circle of Albanian Diaspora in Italy, marked in production, volume, and norm and determined by university institutions of Palermo - Rome - Naples - Bari. Those universities rendered possible the appropriate climate to set up a national literary sub-system model with all systemic components: production, publications and system-creative magazines as Shêjzat [The Pleiades] (august 1957 - 1978), Koha e Jonë [Our Time] (1962-1992); systemic-center authors as: Father Georg Fishta O.F.M.-Ernest Koliqi and Martin Camaj. But, Ernest Koliqi was as the director of the Albanian Studies Institute at Rome University, the master-key of an increasing in the volume of the intercultural activities, as regards the institutional critique, various national celebrations of emigrants, and international symposiums such as the 20th anniversary of the death of Father George Fishta O.F.M.; or the celebrations on the 500th anniversary of the death of Scanderbeg, in Palermo and Rome (1968). But the main merit of Koliqi was to restore a new Albanian Literary Center in the West and the foundation in Rome of Shêjzat literary magazine. The Albanian Rome Literary Circle was the counterpart of the National Center of Tirana and sometimes even an antagonist. Various outstanding achievements in the visual arts were celebrated by the painter Ibrahim Kodra with about 20 international awards, as well as the iconographic painter Lin Delia who took part in some audiences with the Pope Pole VI etc... First Koliqi and then Camaj after his death took literary - cultural studies within the Albanian districts of Italy, tracing the genealogy of the Arbëresh migration in the United States in the years 1974 - 1986. After Koliqi's death in January 1975 and the final departure of Camaj from the Italy Circle as e professor of the Albanian Language at the University of Munich (1978), closed the frame of four decades of the Italy Literary Circle as the core of the Literary Diaspora Sub-system.

Key words: Albanian Diaspora; Italy's Literary Circle; Koliqi;

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1. Introduction

This paper is a modified chapter of a wide volume about Albanian Diaspora Literary History (1945-1990) in process. All the material that we are presenting in this paper, is taken from the original books and reviews of the time, and some of the concepts are borrowed from the theory books as secondary sources for our arguments, aiming to prove that the sub-system has worked in Diaspora as a Literary National System.

The most adequate method, that helped our tracing in Literary History and esthetic analysis, is the comparative and intercultural method. Our choice to analyze the various periods of the Albanian Exile Literary during the communist rule in Albania, separately or in confront with the main stream of Albanian Literary Activities in Albania itself as a chronological proceeding is a new one. This method brought a new taste of ethics carried by different literary norms between system/ sub-system, as an achievement of a different value-system that prevails the Albanian Literary System.

The materials considered as reliable taken in consideration, compared, analyzed and presented from the research paper that follows the critical method to trace back the creation resource of Diaspora Literary System in Italy. Tracing the aspirations of the most quoted Albanian novelist during 1930-1960 Ernest Koliqi, as the main producer (author) of Literary Sub-System Center or Albanian National Literary, the paper aiming to understand the literary difference between the Diaspora and the producers Center.

2. The socio - political context in Italy

Italy's geopolitical position and emphasized international role during and after World War II served as the first refuge for Diaspora political personalities. Most of them were educated in Western countries. They left Albania fallen into the hands of Communist Party. Their exile was sometimes deliberately given by the extreme situation, because in Albania (1945) started the prosecution against the "enemies" of the "liberators". They took refuge in Italy, beginning from the President of the National Front, Midhat Frashëri, the Free Albanian Committee, Independent National Bloc members presented by Ernest Koliqi and the head of Mirdita region, Gjonmarkaj.

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These political organizations brought into light in Rome, their temporary newspress L'Albanie libre (Roma 1949); the most famous magazine Shêjzat (1957-1978) and Koha e Jonë (1962-1992). Political developments in the Western politics, brought reconciliations and induced disputes among groups of emigrants, moved to a less familiar environment depending from the quality of Diaspora press that opened from the Italy a new period of opposition that was more evident in culture and literary field . The only guide of their political existence to have been prepared or have fulfilled the programs about political activities, was the press first and the magazines after (1957). Various publications appeared during 40 years of exile period. These groups accelerated the emergence of an independent press, their form of communication was political originally, but often some of them communicate with forms of artistic expression as Bardhyl Pogoni or Eduart Liçaj (editors of political newspaper L'Albanie Libre) who received degrees in literature. Some publications for example the poem of the Nation Face, were dedicated to exile leader such as Midhat Frashëri. The cultural press was inseparable from the politics, following a tradition established at the time of the Renaissance. This norm was allowed in the first postwar period. But the main factor of the birth of a cultural press in exile was a radical change of the cultural policy in Albania, considered in the opinion of Western Albanian Scholars or Diaspora writers as the danger of an alienation of the national tradition, changed from East communist culture, as a core component of the Center Systemic Literary in Tirana and Prishtina-Skopje binomial sub-centers.

3. The creation of Systemic Literary Center in Italy.

The literary history scholars of the 40's such as Gaetan Petrotta, Karl Gurakuqi, Namik Ressuli, Zef Valentini's under the direction of the senator Rosolin Petrotta created the Albanian Center for International Studies at the University of Palermo in 1948. The Centre allowed to open according to the decree of the Italian Republic President, what happened also for the opening of the Institute of the Albanian Studies in Rome, in 1957, under the direction of Koliqi. The establishment of this institution for the Albanian culture was followed simultaneously by the establishment of Shêjzat magazine, with contributors from the scientific centers of both Rome and Palermo. The magazine with over 8,000 pages in 19 years of its life, became the capital benchmark for all Albanian culture in the West in the years 1957-1978.

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Shêjzat (The Pleiades) magazine, beside the tradition developed also the primary artistic literature, the contemporary literary criticism and the Albanian historiography. The most prepared for this initiative was Dr. Martin Camaj who studied philology at Belgrade and Sarajevo Universities, the Italian-Albanian Giuseppe Gradilone, who kept alive the basic function of scientific criticism without ideological norms, directed from the freedom of expression, while Koliqi, Valentini and Karl Gurakuqi focused on the preservation of the tradition and the Western identity of the Albanian literature.

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3.1. The Mecenate and the new culture.

In the absence of a political unit to care for the development of the Albanian culture in Italy, played the role of the Capital city, the Italian-Arberesh Region with Palermo as its Center.

One of the most important cultural supporters was the Arbëresh Senator Rossolin Petrotta, who played a key role in supporting the establishment of the International Centre of Albanian Studies in Palermo, close to the university as well as the creation of the Institute for Albanian Studies in Rome in 1957. In addition, he placed the Albanian language, by virtue of the Italian presidential decree, on the compulsory education system in Arbëresh colonies in Southern Italy.

After the loss of Rosolin Petrota in 1966, Koliqi made some steps forward relying on the largest colony of the Albanians in the world, that of the United States, following the example of the Albanian Federation Vatra (the Hearth) in addition to the approval of special projects by the Italian State and also of the Holy See. On the other hand, Lec Shllaku editor in chief of Koha e Jonw review that appeared in Paris, had projected the naming of Skanderbeg Square in the capital city of France. He found the support of a businessman and of the politician Isa Ndreu from Dibra, and his friend Jacques Chirac, later the Mayor of Paris (1978). Isa Ndreu backed the political - cultural magazine Koha e Jonë during the thirty years 1962-1992, which was the most important project of the literary Diaspora sub-system, after the closing of Shêjzat magazine in 1978.

Koliqi's passing away in 1975 left a void that wasn't filled in by the Albanian Diaspora. Even in his lifetime, from time to time, the magazine declared a financial crisis of the review until 196, managed to secure the support of the Diaspora in America. There Koliqi launched a propaganda campaign and a new compliance as their lack of attendance was going to suspend the publication of the review.

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With the transferring of Dr. Martin Camaj to the University of Munich (1961), the editorial point of view became weaker and the magazine pronounced a collapse of the postal service, which adversely affected the distribution of the most prominent magazine in the Diaspora.

Italy Literary Circle led by Koliqi through literary and cultural magazine Shêjzat, created the most important movement of sub-system, accomplished the merging and the upbringing of various literary of Albanian writers. The Albanian Literary Circle of Italy was managed to fit the systemic market of values dominated by foreign culture and was overcome by the financial mysteries of the "foreign land"..

In the decade of 1980-1990, the most important cultural action of the Albanian Diaspora was supported by a businessman, Isa Ndreu owner of Giolli Colombari-s Hotel in Florence and of Our Time magazine too. During this period Arbëresh regions brought to light Our village, The Fire magazines etc. undertaking their publications. Albanian centers in the United States, the Albanian Federation Vatra (the Hearth), and the eminent writers from Martin Camaj, Namik Resuli, Arshi Pipa's to Tahir Kolgjini, Niyazi Sulce, Nermin Vlora, who directed by now the individual publications, were very distant from each other and the new Literary Diaspora had consumed its time and its space of light.

3.2. Koha e Jonë [Our Time] Magazine.

Our Time magazine in the last five years: 1985 – 1990. According to Martin Camaj, Shêjzat magazine, managed to keep alive the cultural patterns of action until the end of the sub-system literary diaspora: language writing in both dialects pointing at the literary development, model based in values of the Catholic School in Shkodra.

A continuation of dialectic tradition [Koha e Jonë] Our Time, (edited in Florence, but signed Paris) where values correspond to the misunderstanding between writers and researchers demonstrate a final attack about language patrimony by Artan Illyri (nicknamed Lec Shllaku). Here were submitted the ideas and the debates about the codification of the early geg language in Albania. The attention of the political writings about the regime were shifted from Albania to Kosovo to the rapid literary decrease and the difference between the esthetic and the waste in the

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debate was evident. This period was characterized by the full attention to the policy developed in Yugoslavia events that appeared in the pages of the news press and the cultural magazines of the Diaspora.

3.3. Gradilone and Koliqi.

Koliqi beside his early associates in Albania during the Italian occupation as Mustafa Kruja, Namik Resuli, Karl Gurakuqi, Vasil Alarupi and among others, Andrea Anesti, Zef Nekaj, Father Zef Oroshi, Fehime Pipa, especially the magazine editor Martin Camaj, who with his creativity, after the death of Koliqi (in 1975), became the most prominent figure in the artistic and scientific Diaspora. A paramount role played the critic even as an ordinary disciple of the Department of Languages and Literatures (La Sapienza University of Rome) and the Albanian Studies Institute of Rome, the Arbëresh Giuseppe Gradilone. He developed rather a fine criticism against the socialist realism and the theoretical processing of the dissident literary production in Albania.

3.4. The Italian- Arbëresh Heritage.

On November 24, 1948 the International Albanian Studies Center at the University of Palermo was founded. The Arbëresh cultural center was covered by immigration scholars whose literary and artistic developments were reflected almost exclusively in Shêjzat Magazine. This intercultural magazine followed the spirit of the European integration periodical run by Koliqi in Tirana between the years 1935-1944, in the literary review Illyria. In Shêjzat Magazine were published about 2,000 pages of writings on the Arbëresh literature and culture.

3.5. The alienation of the Systemic Center.

The communication between two literary systems: Tirana - Rome. Martin Camaj directed the Shêjzat Magazine with an editorial discipline supported by a theoretical education worthy of his achievements that was focused especially against the Albanian Literature in its Center. His assessments on the literary ideology that was the principal part of the form, but he wasn't engaged on the literary forms. The most famous mention of Camaj about the writers in Albania was the stigmatized expression for the real-soc writer as the "barracks soldier".

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While Koliqi tried to be more a contributor to the literary historiography especially upon Fishta-De Rada, but also to formal assessment upon Migjeni, offering a compromised view, because Migjeni was considered as a Center of Literary System in Albania.

4. The literary criticism: Kosovo-Albanian / Rome Circle.

A unique criticism spread out from Kosovo against Koliqi (Shejzat, 1967), on the occasion of the new Anthology edition, in 1963 selected by Koliqi. All the poems were translated by Koliqi. Ali Podrimja pointed out that the Anthology published in Italian wasn't presentable for all the Albanians. The very accurate while addressing the criticism of Podrimja (1968) against Koliqi as a translator, which signed the beginning of the inter-criticism in the inherency of the literary system.

The critics asserted that in order to harmonize the system/sub-system, they should provide assessments of the poetry of Fatos Arapi, Ismail Kadare. This led to the exclusion of these poets from the Anthology: The New Albanian poetry on the occasion of the publication in Italian. These debates were the first set against the Diaspora sub-system and were so important on that occasion because from it depended the role of the superior norm/subject of the western literature.

4.1. The festivities in the two cultural systems.

In the case of the 500th anniversary of Scanderbeg in 1968, were founded and shared two systems: the one in Palermo - Rome - Brussels - New York and the other Tirana with Pristina. There were also conventions and symposia held on the most prestigious historical figure, which was the only historical figure to unify these two literary - political systems that hold Scanderbeg's cult.

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4.2. The National cult of the writer George Fishta.

George Fishta's cult became a dangerous flashpoint between the two systems that brought the split on the perspectives about the Center of the National Literature.

While Fishta's cult flourished as never before during the great celebrations in Rome and Palermo on 20th anniversary of death, (1960) giving way to publications in magazines and a number of scientific activities, conferences and symposia in Rome and Palermo directed from Koliqi.

After the closing of Shêjzat Magazine, the destruction of the myth of George Fishta had almost entered in its final phase only to be revamped again in 1991. George Fishta's cult was the most visible sign of the split between the Diaspora sub-system/system.

Conclusions

Koliqi in his approach with the cultural movements in Diaspora created a national literature like Dante Alighieri from the opposite side of the Regime's Literature. Being a politician and a writer too, Koliqi was responsible for the future of the Albanian Literature, considering the literature as a bridge that keeps the Diaspora united with the homeland. Dante's themes took place occasionally in Shêjzat magazine, as well as the commemorative studies on the translations of the Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri had appeared frequently in Shêjzat Magazine. On the other hand, Camaj analysis undertaken among various translations of the Dante Alighieri's Divine Comedy took a critical position compared to the values of the Divine Comedy translation by Pashko Gjeçi. Camaj analyzes the best literary product in Tirana Center, using all the knowledge of a conceptual scholar based in radical opinions that render the Tirana literature obviously ahead of the traditional ethics.

Dante's sources, exploited by Eugenio Montale, were an example to our Diaspora authors. The quality results carried by literary sub-system is now perhaps more effective as the two Literary System's: Diaspora/Center are in the unification process. Dante's repertoire was based on the Albanian receptors of the Diaspora's Literature, so the model of the great poet of Florence,

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carried by a System-Creator such as Ernest Koliqi, was decisive, constructive and a model to be held onto in the Literary System of the Diaspora.

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