

Abstract: *The following paper aims to shed light on the creative method used by Ernest Koliqi in composing his short stories, as after his fifty-year-long exclusion from Albanian literary historiography, his work is back to Albanian literature. The internal dynamics of literature arguably need concepts of modern literary theory to ensure efficient development of literary thought in the present-day freedom. It has been noted by scholars since the very beginning that Koliqi is a founder of modern Albanian prose, but what supports such claim? Has it stood the test of time? Utilizing this approach, the authors intend to offer our point of view on these issues of special importance for Albanian literature. By analysing specific short stories from the collections "The Shadow of the Mountains" (1929) and "Flags' Merchant", (1935) the authors highlight in this essay specific technical elements of Koliqi's short prose which bring it closer to the poetics of modernist prose. The authors have used a comparative approach regarding Koliqi's literary poetics as well as an analytical approach for Koliqi's development as a prose writer.*

Keywords: *Albanian short stories, modernist narrative techniques, metaphoric/metonymic code, Ernest Koliqi.*

Introduction

That Koliqi lost his chance to be a romantic is made obvious by the criticisms made by some authoritative authors, all of them in clerical clothing, such as Gjergj Fishta, Anton Harapi and Fulvio Cordignano. They had expected from him the spiritual elevation of man, as our romantics or renaissance did, but they did not find this in his short stories.¹

1 There are three names of critics and creators in clerical clothing: Gjergj Fishta, Fulvio Cordignano and Anton Harapi. (See A. Ndreca, *Vrumulisjet e shpirtit qytetar: Koliqi mes nesh*. Introduction to the anastatic edition of Koliqi's two books. Berk Publishing House, Tirana 2020, III-XV). Fishta criticizes him from the point of view of classical art, opposing the art of strong romantic feelings of Koliqi's characters. Considering the novella "Blood" (Volume *The Shadow of the Mountains*), Fishta insists that it is not love that softens the heart of an Albanian, but also religion, education, and civic education, which are criticized in the story. It seems that the classical taste, which requires values within certain frameworks, but also the romantic taste, which requires high virtues of heroes, were deeply affected by these stories. What Fishta meant, we can see in

What is the methodological approach that leads us to answer the question: what really characterizes these novellas?

As the discipline of narrative teaches us, if modern poetry raised the question of the relationship between the subject and the object, the poet and the world, the writer and the language, the novel (prose) raised the issues

- of presenting reality
- of its ordinal logical structure².

The consequences of this are still with us, in two related aspects:

- obsession with formal issues, aesthetic wholeness and the use of language and general sketching instead of chance and imitation;
- The problem - both artistic and historical - of capturing and making authoritative the traditional stuff of fiction, and reality itself, in an effective word order.

From this point of view, we think that it is the elements of *fable* and *subject*, *who narrates* and *focalization*, *setting* and *characters*, *narrative time*, *style* and *themes*³, as they are studied by the discipline of narratology, would shed light on the nature of the discussion.

From realistic metonymy to modernist metaphor

To be as effective as possible in this issue, it would be worth a look in comparative plan with the first books of the emblematic writer of modernism, James Joyce. *Dubliners* is seen as non-metaphorical. *The portrait of the artist as a young man* is seen as semi-metaphorical, in the fact that in a work of literature he gives what belongs to the art of painting. However, *Dubliners* do not fully belong to the realism of the XIX century, because the stories do not fully obey the criteria required by that literary trend:

the portrayal of a writer like Goethe, whom he presents as godless and irreligious (or pantheist). He even questions his patriotic feelings because while his fellow citizens were killed in the war with the French, he, without drying anyone's tears or comforting anyone's heart, "grow up singing love songs" in the Mediterranean shores of Italy. (Fishta, Gjergj. *Aesthetics and Criticism (Estetikë dhe Kritikë)* (prepared by Persida Asllani), Hylli i Dritës & Shtëpia e Librit Publishing House, Tirana 1999, 149). Fulvio Cordignano's criticism of the book "The Shadow of the Mountains" follows this line. According to him, the writer did not bring the echo of the mountains, but of the city, "not of the old, generous Shkodra full of manliness and bravery, but of the new and spoiled Shkodra", which is covered by the "scum of pseudo-European civilization". According to him, the writer lacks the national spirit. Anton Harapi is on the same line when he reviews the book "The Merchant of Flags": the whole problem lies in the binomial "Art and morality".

2 *Modernism: A Guide to European Literature 1890-1930* (Edited Malcolm Bradbury & James McFarlane), Penguin Literary Criticism, 1986, 394.

3 See J. Culler, *Literary theory*. Oxford 1997, 86-90.

- justification
- coherence

The reader who approaches the *Dubliners* with that expectation would be left disappointed and confused, which would also happen with Kolíqi's novellas, although his books, *The Shadow of the Mountains* and *The Merchant of Flags*, could be titled: *Shkodra people*. Kolíqi's titles generally show a tendency to escape from realism. So even the titles themselves help to confirm the typological classifications.

- We have *Flag Merchants* (if we look at it as an *ordinary merchant*) and *Uncle Goriot*, *Cousin Pons*, *David Copperfield*, etc.⁴
- We have *Flag Merchants* (if we see him as a *metaphorical merchant*) and *Ulysses*, *The Waste Land*, etc.

Let us recall that as Jakobson noted, the development of a discourse can be done through two different semantic lines; one topic can lead to another through two paths:

- similarities;
- closeness.

That the best name for the first case (similarities) would be the metaphorical way, while for the second case (closeness) the metonymic way, since they find themselves expressed through these two means. In ordinary verbal behavior they are processes that operate continuously, while under the influence of a cultural model, personality or speech style, our liking puts one over the other⁵.

Thus, we see that:

- Realistic writing is **metonymic**⁶;

4 The realistic typology in Kolíqi's short prose is the subject of another paper.

5 Northrop Frye gives us this picture: 1. *Metaphorical discourse code* – a poetic use of language. Outside the imagination it is impossible for A to be B without first ceasing to be A. Metaphor not only denies this but shows and approves that it can be as such, that is, it affirms whatever the imagination can do. 2. *Metonymic discourse code* – an analogical language, in a verbal imitation of reality, which is also related to the social engagement of the work. 3. *Descriptive code* – a clear separation between object and subject, possessing the criterion of truth and reality, more related to external sources than to internal references. The writer sees everything: he does not interfere, but only describes. Realism is generally equated with the idea of the metonymic and the descriptive. While in modernist writers we see the tendency to re-present the experience (within one work, or from one work to another) from the metonymic to the metaphorical (symbolic or mythological). (N. Frye, *The Great Code, the Bible and Literature*, Harcourt, New York, 1982).

6 Ending in a scheme: Metaphor - Metonymy: Similarity - Closeness; Replacement - (Deletion) Context; Closeness Disorder - Similarity Disorder; Lack of context - Lack of selection; Poetry - Prose; Lyric - Epic; Romanticism & Symbolism – Realism. (D. Lodge, *The Modes of Modern Writing*, Edward Arnold, London 1977, 81).

- Modernist writing is **metaphorical**;
However, these terms should be seen in their relativity.

Modernist typology

Kolliqi's stories *The Plum Tree Beyond the Wall*, *Dream of a Summer Afternoon*, *Little Drama*, have previously had psychospective analyses⁷ where they are seen from the point of view of the Freudian analysis of the displacement or overcoming of realities. Such a view is also the basis of this analysis, which seeks to point out the modernist elements in some of Kolliqi's short stories. Its methodology consists of the elements pointed out by the discipline of narrative.

Audience Each short story meets the modernist condition of having an audience of mostly upper-middle-class, well-educated people. A city like Shkodra fulfilled this condition. This literature, unlike the rest of Albanian literature, romantic or realistic, was aimed at those who wanted to think more than people who just wanted to be entertained.

Focus Each short story presents the world from the point of view of a particular, individual consciousness. The invention of a fictional world through the imagination conceives a reality that is more than the real copy. It overcomes unimaginable obstacles:

- It brings the sea, which takes the place of the world of numbers, specifically math exercises not wanted by the personage of the child (3)⁸.
- To fulfill the character's world of hindered desires, take relatives out of photos and places them in a real world (2)
- Brings past childhood, to conquer what the character lacks (1)

Background Real places, in the city, but, by fulfilling the modernist condition, from the perspective of a particular, individual consciousness, with its own limitations.

- A garden and civic family environment, where an adult who returns after many years, touches the reality of his childhood (1)
- Civic family environments, where the obstacles placed on the ungrown throw the latter into unimaginable realities (2, 3).

Themes Each short story consistently presents how individuals experience the world in their consciousness. The measure of experience appears incomplete. The effects of memory and unconsciousness, internal conflicts and crises are created by the self "doubled" before new, suddenly appearing conditions. (1, 2, 3) In the search for meaning, occurs the modernist awareness that knowledge is not absolute. For some time, the unconscious conquers the conscious, taking over its power. (1, 2, 3)

7 A. Plasari, *Qasje tregimit të Kolliqit*, in Literary magazine "Nëntori", 3/91, 100-110.

8 The numbers indicate the order of the novels taken into consideration.

*What grieved the son of Tef Ballstani, the Shkodra merchant day and night, was absorbed in thoughts of profit, was his ignorance at that moment, developed beyond the beautiful tale of the sea....*⁹

Value Unlike previous typologies, value is the key to understanding the self the unconscious part of the mind. Individual experiences, although not objective, rise above those of the group, disobeying conformity. (1,2,3).

Enlightenment disruption occurs.

Characters The character has unconsciously suppressed unacceptable thoughts of which he is unaware. These unconscious thoughts keep coming back and bothering him constantly. (2, 3) The ability to understand experiences is difficult because:

- the world is fragmented, complicated and meaningless;
- the senses deceive;
- language cannot capture the world objectively.

The characters are characterized by the struggle to make sense of themselves and the world or the consequences of doubting “truth” and “meaning”, but memory is merciless - remembering things we don’t want to remember, forgetting things we want to, they remember them because they are trying to hide something from themselves. (1, 2, 3)

*In the blue mists that enveloped his childhood in his mind, that plum tree stood vividly above all other things. He didn’t know why. (1)*¹⁰

*At the same time, with this desire, he woke up and broke in on himself that a similar whim shook his soul many years ago. (1)*¹¹

*He forgot his age, lost track of time and place, used legs and hands to work and found himself on top of the wall, among the plum tree branches. (1)*¹²

*The taste of plums awakened in his mouth a taste of lost summers, a source of wonderful seasons came to life after a distant evening. (1)*¹³

In the short story “The Plum Tree Beyond the Wall”, the confused, alienated character in crisis, experiences moments of “great significance” at which occurs a fresh thought about the world suddenly comes, which has been called a modernist “epiphany”. (1, 2, 3)¹⁴

9 Koliqi, Ernest. *The Shadow of the Mountains & Flags’ Merchant (Hija e maleve & Tregtar flamujsh*. Novellas, anastatic edition. Berk Publishing house. Tirana 2020, 48. (Koliqi’s texts were translated by Granit Zela).

10 *Ibid.*, 116.

11 *Ibid.*, 117.

12 *Ibid.*, 117.

13 *Ibid.*, 117.

14 Epiphany: In Christianity, epiphany describes the revelation of God in human form in

When in the silent garden, he looked for the shadow of the past days he was not the only one who trembled in that sad touching feeling. The old woman, following him in his movements, became one with him spiritually. In her clean face, where it casted a light her long life, nobly spent in the spirit of our most beautiful customs, always shone the same strong longing that he also had. He lowered his head and asked for the jam. I still felt a taste of late summers, of distant seasons, especially when one falls in love, they left in our souls the river full of concern of their wonderful water source. When he raised his head, he saw that those still young eyes of the young woman, who sat there and looked at him, were crying with silent tears. But, through tears, they laughed.¹⁵

Time Since memory is a central theme¹⁶, it leaps from the past to the present and vice versa¹⁷, becoming a **symbolic** and psychological construction. As a result, there is a non-linear approach in the text. (1)

Time is subjective, so it contracts or stretches infinitely, according to the principle of the microscope or telescope. Finally, the story flows quickly, within a short amount of time. (1, 2, 3)

Narrator In the absence of writing from the first person point of view, as a characteristic of modernist literature, the narrator achieves what he seeks to by maintaining a psychospective position; that is, analyzing the character's feelings and emotions. (1, 2, 3)

What we get here is a messy mixture of rational thought, unconscious impressions and associations, memories or attempts to remember things. This embodies the modernist idea that thought is not (always) rational, organized, structured and controlled, or that stories are narrated from a subjective point of view. (1)

Style In each short story, there is a gradual abandonment of mimesis, of modernist presentation, which makes the work difficult for the reader

the person of Jesus Christ. Joyce uses epiphany as a literary device in his writings such as the stories in *Dubliners* (1914) and the novel *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), where the underlying meaning is obtained from a fragment of experience, or characters suddenly revise their view of themselves or their social condition, radically changing their world view. *The Modernism Handbook*, Philip Tew and Alex Murray (edited by), Continuum, New York 2009, 202.

15 Koliqi, Ernest. *The Shadow of the Mountains & Flags' Merchant (Hija e maleve & Tregtar flamujsh*. Novellas, anastatic edition. Berk Publishing house. Tirana 2020, 121.

16 As Viktor Shklovski noted: Novelistic time is a convention that uses the notion of "time" to give the viewer or listener a multitude of ideas.

17 Gerard Genette systematically creates new terms for narrative aspects. This jargon serves not only to further shed light on the differences, but also to express the fact that narrative does not depend on relationships with reality, but on its own internal laws and logic.

who comes from romantic or realistic poetics, a way to save literature from the lack of taste and its fall into the category of easy entertainment. (1, 2, 3) The reader is thrown into a narrative and must orient himself because the texts provide little or no context.

Readers must “fill in” the gaps and connect the pieces of information themselves, to show how we create modernist meaning. The idea of realistic reportage or chronicle gives way to symbolism.

The reality of consciousness

During the analysis, we noticed that the stories’ action take place in the reality of consciousness, which reminds us of what happened in the course of the novelistic prose.

- The autobiographers of the novels, at the beginning of the development of this literary form, were self-observers with a persistent mentality.
- Novels of the realist century combined the presentation of characters as social beings with the analysis of their inner moral and emotional world.
- In modernism, reality was increasingly placed in subjective consciousness, but was unable to convey the full experience to others¹⁸.

The interior monologue, a discourse without an audience and unexpressed, by which a character expresses his most intimate thought, closest to the unconscious, before any logical organism, that is, in the state that is being brought to existence, by means of direct phrases, syntactically reduced to a minimum, in order to give the impression that it is as it emerges.

We find the interior monologue in the short story “The New Song” to be as such:

He remained for a long time, without moving, as if he melted in the nirvana of lights, shadows, perfumes, breezes, gusts of wind.

“I wish had you here, in this living beauty of nature”.

He thought of the garden, by imagining it, with all the vivid power of the mind, with all the desiring fire of the heart. The girl appeared before him. There it was, a pure face with sparkling eyes, with a freckle in the lily chin, with a line from the upper lip to behind the small nose; like, soft hands, with long and thin fingers; here it was, tall body, a small waist, blossoming chest.

“Come... sit and stay next to me... Since you love songs, I want to sing for

18 See Lodge, David. *The Art of Fiction*. Viking. New York, USA, 1993, 41.

you all day long..." He went to the other side and grabbed the fiddle. The same nature on that June day was full of sweetness to its farthest ends, and an abundance of light and freshness poured out beyond the circles of the horizon, so his soul was full to the brim with dreams of music, with desires for harmony, with buds of songs. He started singing the songs one after another. But as soon as he started one, it was left in the middle.

"He certainly doesn't like this... Neither this... Nor this..."¹⁹

In the sentence "He remained for a long time, without moving, as if he were melted in the nirvana of lights, shadows, perfumes, breezes, gusts of wind", is described the attitude of the character, while in "I wish I had her here, in this living beauty of nature", we have an interior monologue.

This definition applies also to the following paragraphs. So, "He thought of the garden, by imagining it, with all the vivid power of the mind, with all the desiring fire of the heart. The girl appeared before him. There it was, a pure face with sparkling eyes, with a freckle in the lily chin, with a line from the upper lip to behind the small nose; like, soft hands, with long and thin fingers; here it was, tall body, a small waist, blossoming chest", is a description of the image of the character, while "Come...sit down and sit next to me... Since you love the songs, I want to sing all day for you....", is an interior monologue.

In the third paragraph, "Neither this... Nor this...", the verb is missing: because we don't think in well-structured sentences.

Koliqi put all the parts defined as interior monologue in quotation marks, as he could not leave them to the Albanian readers of the nineteen twenties.

2. The "stream" of consciousness, a technique aimed at recording the (sometimes, obviously illogical) wave of impressions passing through the character's head, we notice below:

Shaqja stood up to see if was probable that the bright would show up. Shuku, from the place where he lived, was struggling with his thoughts in the garden, through the window. The garden was opened, but Shuku could see only one of its edges and the huge fig tree whose big branches extended up to the windows of the room.

Ah, that garden!... green grassland of the most beautiful games of childhood... It had been ten years that Shuku had not seen it, but he could remember every corner of it, everything, every bush and almost every leave of grass, because on the smallest thing inside it bloomed a sweet memory.

19 Koliqi, Ernest. *The Shadow of the Mountains & Flags' Merchant* (Hija e maleve & Tregtar flamujsh. Novellas, anastatic edition. Berk Publishing house. Tirana 2020, 77-78.

*Abroad, in a foreign land, every summer that garden had become green the environment of the soul.*²⁰

The paragraph "Shaqja stood up to see if was probable that the bright would show up. Shuku, from the place where he lived, was struggling with his thoughts in the garden, through the window. The garden was opened, but Shuku could see only one of its edges and the huge fig tree whose big branches extended up to the windows of the room" is a description of the gestures of the two characters. The passage: "Ah, that garden!... green grassland of the most beautiful games of childhood... shifts the focus of the narrative to the mind of the character, Shuk, using the free indirect speech, but by omitting the accompanying notes (as, for example, he thought). The next part brings us back to the narrator's explanation or description. In the same way, we would also see the fragment of the short story "Little Drama":

"He ceased crying but was filled with hatred against Vida, against himself, against everyone".

*"Even without making those arithmetic calculations... It was not hard to be penitent the other day. Why did the son of Tef Ballstani grieved, the merchant from Shkodra, spend day and night in thoughts of profit, it was his inability at that moment to go beyond the beautiful fairy tale of the sea..."*²¹

The part "Even without making those arithmetic calculations... It was not hard to be penitent the other day," shifts the focus of the narrative to the mind of the character, using indirect free speech, but omitting the accompanying notes (as, for example, he thought).

Conclusion

It is important to emphasize that all these proceedings of the Koliqi's short stories occur in the decade of High Modernism (1920-1930), since the volume "The Shadow of the Mountains" was published in 1929. This makes Albanian literature contemporary with such a special achievement of world literature, giving Koliqi's creativity a place of honor in our literature. Hence, the claim that Koliqi is a founder of modern Albanian prose, is found to be true and evidence.

By utilizing a comparative approach to Koliqi's literary poetics and an analytical approach with respect to Koliqi's development as a prose writer we evidenced the idea that Koliqi's short stories has the propensity to become metaphorical and literature of consciousness, characteristics

20 Koliqi, Ernest. *The Shadow of the Mountains & Flags' Merchant* (Hija e maleve & Tregtar flamujsh. Novellas, anastatic edition. Berk Publishing House, Tirana 2020, 151.

21 *Ibid.*, 48.

of modernist prose. Likewise, during this approach in the short stories analyzed, we identified typical modernist literary techniques, such as: the inner monologue, the “stream” of consciousness, narrative time, narrator’s position (a psychospective position), etc.

We think that Koliqi’s short story not only brought innovation to Albanian literature at the time it appeared, but it continues to be a new spirit even after almost a century since it entered literature. It continues to be re-read and enjoyed by readers of both levels. Which means that Koliqi’s stories have passed the test of time and remain paradigms of their kind.

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