



THE TOPIC OF KOSOVO IN THE WORK OF ISMAIL KADARE

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ABSTRACT

Ismail Kadare (1936) is one of the most famous writers of contemporary Albanian literature. He is the author of dozens of books of poetry and prose, which have been translated into 45 languages of the world, making him one of the most translated Albanian writers, but also the most famous in the world. He is a laureate of many international awards and several times nominated for the Nobel Prize for literature.

In my paper, I will address the aspects of his contribution in addressing the topic of Kosovo, both in the field of poetry and in that of prose and journalism. With this topic, in addition to some poems, he has published the novels "Krushqit janë të ngrirë", "Tri Këngë zie për Kosovën", as well as the publicist books "Ra ky mort e u pamë", "Bisedë mes grilash" and "Çlirimi i Serbisë Nga Kosova". Kadare's treatment of the Kosovo issue on an artistic level has made the violation of the national rights of the autochthonous Albanians of Kosovo by the Serbian occupying regime, in particular, and the issue of Kosovo, in general, sensitized in the international arena.

The methods used in this paper are that of analysis and synthesis.

Keywords: Ismail Kadare, Albanian writer, Kosovo topic, awareness, international arena.

Introduction

Ismail Kadare (1936) is one of the prominent writers of contemporary Albanian literature. Although he lived and wrote in a totalitarian communist system, where the methods of socialist realism were installed in literature, nevertheless, thanks to his talent, he managed to avoid this method. He started his literary creativity with a poetic book, to continue then, in addition to poetry, also with the prose. In 1963 he published his famous novel "Gjeneraliiushtrisëvdekur", which a few years later was translated into French, which was well received by French readers and critics.

This translation by Kadare paved the way for him to translate into other languages of the world. So far, his work has been translated into 45 languages of the world, making him one of the most translated Albanian writers, but also the most famous in the world. He has also been nominated for the Nobel Prize for Literature several times, which he has not yet won. He is the winner of many prestigious international awards for literature, among which: Prix Mondial CinoDel Duca (1992); Herder Prize (1998), Man Booker International (2005), Prince of Asturias Awards for Arts (2009), Jerusalem Prize (2015), Park Kyong(2019), Neustadt and Prozardt (2020), etc.

The topic of Kosovo and the reaction of the Serbian occupation regime-the banning of Kadare's work in Kosovo

Kosovo is an Albanian territory, in which over 90 percent of the Albanian population has lived for centuries, once called Dardani, in which in the IV century BC the Dardanian Kingdom was created, which layed exactly in the territory of today's Kosovo and the other surrounding

provinces. Its borders went north to the city of Nis, and south to Kukës and the upper reaches of the Vardar. The first Dardanian king we know is Longari.

Being an Illyrian territory, which is considered the ancestor of the Albanians, it was and remained Albanian territory. In 1389 the famous battle took place here between the Balkan alliances and the Ottoman invaders, where Sultan Murat himself was killed. In the time of the Ottoman Empire, this territory was called the Vilayet of Kosovo, while in the Congress of Berlin (1878) it was unjustly given to Serbia, which until 1999 continued to be occupied, violating for more than a century national rights and human Albanian natives of this part inhabited by 90 percent Albanian¹.

Therefore, the issue of Kosovo in particular and the Albanian one in general, being a deep and unresolved wound where the national rights of an indigenous people were systematically violated, became an inevitable thematic part of the literary and journalistic works of the prominent Albanian writer Ismail Kadare. In the field of poetry, Kadarewrote three poems about Kosovo, excluding any other poetry that has to do with any of its cities such as Gjakova, the city with the name of blood, etc. In 1966 Ismail Kadare wrote the poem "Kosovo", in 1975 the poem "Mundja e ballkanasve Nga turqit në fushën e Kosovës më 1389", while in 1981 the very significant poem "Terrori në Kosovë".

On the topic about Kosovo, Ismail Kadare wrote and published the novels "Krushqi tjanë të ngrirë" and "Tri këngë zie për Kosovën", while in the field of journalism the works

¹ In June 1999, after a bloody war that left behind thousands of victims, Kosovo was liberated from Serbia, and on February 17, 2008 it declared independence, becoming the youngest country in the world and recognized by over 117 countries of the world.



"Ra ky mort dhe u pamë" "Bisedë mes hekurash" and "Çlirimi i Serbisë prej Kosovës". Meanwhile, he addressed the topic of Kosovo and its problems in many of his books and presentations, both earlier, before the nineties of the last century, and even in recent years, where Kadare is very active on this issue. Addressing the issue of Kosovo and defending the oppressed Albanians in this unjustly occupied part, at that time had created harsh reactions from the Serbian regime but also the Yugoslav in general. As a result of all this, the Serbian regime banned books, removing them from school curricula at all levels of the time. Coincidentally, except in Kosovo, Kadare was banned from publishing novels at that time, or, better said, his publishing space was narrowed a lot in Albania, which he shows in the publications of his works after the fall of the dictatorship.

Awakening of strong national feelings and knocking on the international conscience in the face of the unresolved issue of Kosovo

When talking about the approach of the topic of Kosovo in poetry, then we should mention the poem entitled, "Kosovo", a creation of 12 verses, written in 1966 that was born as inspiration during a plane trip and when the plane was flying over the sky of Kosovo, of this "forbidden land and dream". During this flight, in a very fast way, just like the flight of a plane in space, the poet's eye and imagination manage to capture a view of Kosovo, that image, which imaginatively and visually appears and disappears "between the cavities and abysses of clouds" (Kraja, 2016).

Raindrops rolling from the plane window, which seem to the poet to say many things, because at the time Kadare was writing poetry, Kosovo and the Albanian people were subjected to unprecedented repression that resulted in imprisonment, murder, and even forced departure to Turkey as part of an agreement between Yugoslavia and Turkey. That is why Kadare, inadvertently, in his poetry mentions the rumbles and tears that roll in the window of the plane with which he traveled over the occupied Arberian land.

However, the Albanian writer has been harassed by the topic of the unresolved issue of Kosovo, but also by the Serbian and Yugoslav violence and terror against the defenseless Albanians of Kosovo. In this context, we should single out the time of the 1981 demonstrations of Albanian students, the suppression of those demonstrations, the imprisonment and killing of Albanian demonstrators, etc. He deals with this topic in the poem "Terrori në Kosovë" and the novel "Krushqit janë të ngrirë", which is very related to the aforementioned poetry, which can be considered as a synopsis of the novel. Then the topic of Kosovo will be addressed in the novel entitled "Tri këngë zie për Kosovën", which the writer notes with a subtitle "Tri novelat që bëjnë një roman", a work that is related to the poem entitled "Mundja e ballkanasve Nga turqit në fushën e Kosovës më 1389", written in 1975.

Ismail Kadare addressed the topic of Kosovo in other books related to Kosovo, which were published and continue to be published during these years. One of the creations of this writer, who has been praised for ideo-aesthetic values, both by readers and critics, is the poem entitled "Terrori në Kosovë". Written in 1981, at a time and difficult situation for the Albanian people of Kosovo, occurred in the grip of Serbian existence, repression, violence, and terror, it is one of the best creations of this poet, who in focus has their treatment, but also the reflection of the situation created in those years, respectively after the student demonstrations of 1981 that took place in Pristina and the main cities of Kosovo. In the verses of this poem, the poet presents a state of terror and repression in Kosovo after the post-demonstrations of 1981.

The poem "Terrori në Kosovë" represents a harsh reality of those years, of that miserable time, which was full of sentences of Albanians who stink of Serbo-Slavic prisons and barracks. In this poem the hurt soul of the poet is felt, who sees the long night of Prishtina, which is likened to the Night of St. Bartholomew, as a night that nevertheless has its end. Through this poem, which can be considered as an anthem of the sacrifice of the Kosovo Albanian youth, he called for the awakening of the international conscience for what was happening with the Kosovo Albanians ... With this, he also showed the communist regime in Albania that should have done more for the people of blood and the divided trunk of the Albanian state.

Closing verses of the poem "Terror in Kosovo" by Ismail Kadare:

*Just like in the whirlpool of the era
You arose as a monument;
You who touched the history
And went back to history itself*

show clearly that the poet wrote those verses to convey a powerful message and to erect the first monument to all those who shook the foundations of an undeclared empire, such as Yugoslavia of that time, in which state, in the most the human and national rights of Kosovo Albanians were oppressed.

The poem "Terrori në Kosovë" by I. Kadare is among the most realized poems of this poet that have Kosovo as its theme and its unresolved issue. But this poem is also among the best and most accomplished creations of this theme, written by Albanian creators during those years. It is a poem that evokes strong human and national associations and feelings. "Terrori në Kosovë" (Terror in Kosovo) is a creation that resembles a monument to all those who fell, were imprisoned, mistreated, and convicted during that time for the freedom and independence of Kosovo.

The first evidence of the Serbian massacre in Pristina and the search for the roots of a tragedy

The work in prose "Krushqit janë të ngrirë", by Ismail Kadare, which has Kosovo as its theme of the time after the demonstrations of 1981, was written between 1981-1983. It is



simultaneous with the poem "Terrori në Kosovë" and was published in 1986 in the volume of stories and novels "Koha e shkrimeve" (Kadare, 1986). It penetrated Kosovo very secretly and was published only in 1991, in Shaip Beqiri's book "Sfida e gjenit" (Beqiri, 1991), a book that talks about Kadare's escape from Albania and his settlement in France.

"Krushqit janë të ngrirë" is another contribution of Kadare, or a strong voice in support of Kosovo, for Kosovars it has been an integrative voice regardless of whether this contribution "came from the literary vocation or political discourse" (Kraja, 2016). Kadare's work "Krushqit janë të ngrirë", because of its subject matter, but also because of the time when it was written and published, has been described as the first and very rare evidence of the Serbian massacre in Pristina in spring 1981", which aimed to "acquaint the Albanian public, and especially the world, with the terror exercised in Kosovo" by the Yugoslav and Serbian regimes. Through this book, Ismail Kadare, in addition to political support, gave Kosovo "a strong literary support". (Kraja, 2016)

In 1998 Ismail Kadare published a book entitled "Tri këngë zie për Kosovën", in which he addresses (although now back in the XIV century), the topic which he had addressed since 1975 in the poem "Mundja e ballkanasve" (Lufta e Kosovës 1389).

In "Tri këngë zie për Kosovën", Kosovo and its problems inherited over the centuries is merged into art synthesis through three creations, which the author calls novels. These three creations, due to their thematic, narrative, and structural interconnectedness, lean towards the novel, while from the way of approach they lean towards the essay. So, when we consider what we said, then we are dealing with the prose of a special kind, which adds value to this work of Kadare, not only in terms of ideo-thematic but also structural and genre.

When we take into account the time of writing and publishing this prose (i.e. the time of the beginning of the last war in Kosovo against the Serbian regime 1998-1999, i.e. the war between indigenous Albanians and Serbs who stood as occupiers in these lands for more than a century) as well as the theme of its treatment, then "Tri këngë zie për Kosovën" should be conceived as a message that announces or foreshadows the tragedy of man of this accursed century. Kadare's work in question comes as a result of a tragic story, intended to describe the tragedy of a hatred or a centuries-old enmity between the two nations, which is an ancient disease. The book bears the date of the end of March 1998, a date that coincides with the date of the beginning of a new war in Kosovo, in this country, where almost at the same time six hundred years ago another war took place, known as the "Battle of Kosovo". Was this a deliberate coincidence of our eminent writer to write a book in which he deals with distant events but with a correlation with those of the time when the book was written and published? All this can be said to be the

result of a continuous search by Kadare over the years to resolve the issue of this enigma of its kind, which, in turn, generated hostility, hatred, war, and tragedy.

The diary of the Kosovo war of 1998-1999 and the emergence of views of UkshinHoti

Meanwhile, in 1998, the war in Kosovo had begun, a war led by the Kosovo Liberation Army, which resulted in the expulsion of the Serbian regime and the establishment of peace in June 1999, which was followed by the declaration of Kosovo's independence in February 2008. However, during this war, but also before it ended and before the declaration of Kosovo's independence, they had to go through difficult but very important processes for Kosovo. In this context, we have the difficult talks in Rambouillet and Paris of France, between the delegation of Kosovo Albanians and that of Serbia, which was mediated by the International Community, Europe, and the United States, which led to NATO military intervention.

Although he was not physically present in these talks, Kadare's role in these events was great. The reflection of these events on Ismail Kadare resulted in the publication of a book, which he titled with a very symbolic, provocative, and very significant title at the same time, borrowed from a popular Albanian expression "Ra ky mort dhe u pamë". The book is written in the form of a diary and was rightly called "diary for Kosovo", which is entirely dedicated to Kosovo and its war during 1998-1999, where the writer describes the most difficult situation that Kosovo was going through during that year. Written with a lot of passion, with a lot of dedication and a lot of responsibility, "Ra ky mort dhe u pamë", "is the most important work that has been recorded in the form of the Diary for Kosovo" (Kadare, 2000). In Kadare's book "we are introduced to the author's commitment in the face of the situation that Kosovo was going through and his desire to help him in resolving this issue" (Murselaj, 2016). Ismail Kadare's work "Ra ky mort dhe u pamë" is undoubtedly an important document of the efforts and reflection of the international community, towards the problem of Kosovo as well as the sublimation of the war and the demand for freedom of the Albanian people of Kosovo.

Simultaneously with the publication of the book "Ra ky mort dhe u pamë" is the book "Bisedë përmes hekurash" (2000), in which the letters between him and the well-known political scientist UkshinHoti are republished. Kadare's book, which has "the origins of the attempt to release UkshinHoti from prison, after sending a series of letters to international human rights institutions, as well as the foreign ministers of major Western countries", was considered such, in the form of dialogue, published in three languages: Albanian, French, and English, so that it would probably be more effective to sensitize the international public opinion about this prominent intellectual and activist of the Kosovo issue, fortunately of which is unknown as of May 16, 1999. That same day, he was released from the notorious Dubrava prison, but never got

home. Therefore, as such, he is missing among more than a thousand other Albanians missing in the recent war in Kosovo. Recently, there are rumors that he was taken by Serbian security inspectors, who disappeared his body after killing him.

However, in addition to sensitizing the international public to clarify the fate of UkshinHoti, Kadare through this book and indirect dialogue has also thought of publicly announcing the views of UkshinHoti, views which had led him to prison, but through to recognize the drama of Kosovo, but also the release of the now missing leader.

Ismail Kadare has not stopped writing and discussing Kosovo and the Albanian issue in the Balkans. Evidence of all this is dozens of interviews given to the world media in general and Serbian media in particular. His factual writings and opinions have been a powerful impetus for the progress of the processes related to the issue of Kosovo and the Albanians in this new state, but also of the Albanians in the Balkans, in general. An interview, which had a strong echo, and which was interpreted in different ways by the Serbian public, is also the one given to the Serbian newspaper NIN, published in the same newspaper in 2005, where the world-famous Albanian writer speaks with fact on the most delicate topics and divisions between Serbs and Albanians; for anger and rage, for friendship and misunderstandings with Serbian writers; for the

distortions of history that transcend the Balkan drama, and for the reason why Serbia should have recognized Kosovo's independence. This interview was also published as a separate book in Tirana by "Onufri" in 2012 but was also published in the Serbian press, being considered as the first time that Albanian opinion was coming out openly, without any contraction regarding the issue of Serbia and the whole Balkans (Kadare, 2012).

Conclusion

Ismail Kadare's interest in Kosovo and its cause, as noted, has been almost since the beginning of his career, or since the stage of his affirmation as a prominent writer. The theme of Kosovo has occupied a deserved and superior place in his works, whether literary or publicist. Both in poetry and prose. It has been published within general volumes, but also in separate editions.

The treatment of the topic of Kosovo in Kadare's work captures a long period as a problem, even from the time of the Turkish occupation of Kosovo (1389) until now, when Kosovo remains on the agenda of Albania and the international community. Kadare's contribution has been inalienable about this issue, which, not infrequently, has caused him troubles of its kind. However, in the face of this issue, he has done and continues to do his duty as an outstanding intellectual and literary writer of his nation.

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