



TECHNIUM
SOCIAL SCIENCES JOURNAL

Vol. 79/2026
A New Decade for Social Changes



PLUS
COMMUNICATION P



International
Communication & PR

The specificity and generality of the characters of Ismail Kadare's novels

Arlind Farizi

University of Tetovo, Faculty of Philology, North Macedonia

Arlind.farizi@unite.edu.mk

Abstract. The study will be based on the main hypothesis that Ismail Kadare's characters, through their typology, bring this writer closer to his immediate followers of the period of modernism and postmodernism. Throughout the narrative, the characters appear to us with their actions, thoughts, monologues, the thoughts of other characters and through the portrayals of the narrator. Although the separation between character and action has been made since antiquity by Aristotle and by various theorists later, giving priority to one or the other, when talking about the realistic novel, perhaps the most stable is the idea that character and action are inseparable, because in every breath they merge into each other. They are in a symbiotic relationship and, through one, the reader manages to get to know the other, by analyzing the action, reaches its causes and from horizontal analysis, moves to vertical. If we rely on the fact that, through narratives, we can recognize ourselves as active personalities who exist in time, then, through the narration of events in "The General of the Dead Army", "Concert at the End of Winter", "Chronicle in Stone" and "Lul Mazreku", we can recognize types of characters and each of them carries characteristics that differentiate him from others, make him special, but also characteristics that align him, not only with other characters who have the same position in society, the same goals in life, but also with real people, which allows the reader to have a clearer perception of the world and the people who live in it, and in addition, of himself. Thus, in Kadare's four novels, each character represents at the same time the class to which he himself belongs, therefore, he is the bearer of collective and individual characteristics. In addition, we do not know them only in one sphere of life, but in the moments that build its entirety, therefore, in most cases, we are not dealing with one-dimensional characters, but multidimensional. They appear to us in the family circle, but also in society, they are in conflict with themselves, with the close circle where they live (the family), with people of the same class, but also with those of the opposing class, then with nature and in many cases even with God.

Keywords. typology, character, novel, modernity, image

Introduction

Kadare's characters embody the entirety of national and human traits, therefore we find in them a part of our past, present, and future. As such, the characters of his novels can be analyzed on a social-ethical, psychological, philosophical, and religious level, but they can also be classified, depending on their position in the event, their evolution along the course of the plot, the degree of realization, gender, social status, etc.

Theories about character

At first I thought that there were few specific theories on character and that there was an evident lack of specialized literature on characters and their typology. Some of the most important and very necessary researchers for the realization of a topic related to character typology are: Filip Amon, Seymour Chatman, Jerzy Faryno, James Phelan and Marvin Minsky. S. Chatman distinguishes the three central elements of narrative, under two names: "subject", in the category of events and "character" and "atmosphere" in the category of existents.¹ He strongly opposes Aristotle's concept (this concept, later taken up by formalists and structuralisms), according to which character depends on the subject. S. Chatman proposes the "open theory of character", according to which the figures created in literary texts "are not equal to the words on the printed page". In his "open theory", S. Chatman analyzes characters as more or less independent figures, who are not in the function of the subject.

How is a character built within a literary work? S. Chatman's answer is that, in the course of reading an event within a work, in our case, within a novel, we gradually build a character, uniting his personal qualities and virtues into a single whole. These qualities are derived from the data within the novel: the character's name, his actions, the thoughts and words he expresses, the data conveyed by other characters, etc. In this way, the reader/student forms an image of the character, which in principle is a "*paradigm of character traits*"².

The very notion of **character** tells us that each person has a *fictional character* in a literary work. The fictional character is given to him by the writer. During the nineteenth century, the novel, unlike other types of literary works, was becoming a dominant genre, precisely at that time the first Albanian novel by the writer Ndoc Nikaj was published³, which also **redefined the concept of the character**.

The character is a complex notion, it is like a creature, whose birth comes as a result of the novelist's close relationship with the logic of the creative universe. The researcher Albert Thibaudet says: "*The true novelist creates his characters with infinite directions in his possible life, the novelist creates a model with a single line from his real life. The true story is a possible autobiography (...) the genius of the novel makes us live the possible, without discovering the truth*"⁴. Whatever the typology of the novel, be it a character novel or a novel, the category of the character is the lens or the engine of fiction, by which we measure the degree of truthfulness and authenticity. The typologies of the character can be of various kinds: clear, explicit, carriers of narratives, or indicators of signs and differences of civil status, gender or social class. The writer *paints portraits of characters with words*, makes psychological analyses that portray a particular character, but more often, these are implied through connotations that refer to oneself or the other, or the narrative combination of social discourse and social relations, which, indirectly, complement the knowledge of the literary scholar about the character. When the novelist puts himself in the role of demiurge, he focuses attention on the possibilities of the world he has created, giving the character an identity through which he wants to make him credible and important. The description of the character is also a privileged means of explicit characterization, from omniscient positions, to discover the past of a character, to discover his

¹Marisa Kerbizi, PHENOMENA OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF ALBANIAN LITERATURE AFTER THE 1990S (Modernist and postmodernist features of the novel production of V.Zhiti, F.Kongoli, A.Tufë, Z.Çela, R.Dibra, etc.) PhD thesis defended at the University of Tirana, Faculty of History and Philology, 2013, p. 229 (manuscript)

²A **trait** is considered a "relatively stable personal quality"

³Robert Elsie, *History of Albanian Literature*, published by "Dukagjini", Peja-Tirana, 1997, p. 164.

⁴Albert Thibaudet, *Réflexions sur le roman*, "Gallimard", 1965 - Literary Criticism, p. 257.

thoughts synthetically, and then, to organize a detailed picture. As for the physical aspect, the character is presented with a body and with his own characteristic features chosen, picturesque, but also in terms of specific details, which can suggest traits. From a moral perspective, the novelist focuses on expressing the feelings of the character he creates, is interested in penetrating their manifestations, the appearance of tears, the appearance of a smile, or important gestures.

An important theoretical consideration is also *the personality of the character*, which the novelist can place only in specific individuals, or present as a single hero or antihero, and not in ordinary characters at the level of a social species. From a social perspective, the character represents an environment, a dress, a workplace, represents language, ideology... He, thus, becomes a type and, hence, a rich typology of characters arises.

The study and evaluation of the character, that is, of his figuration, by literary scholars has been treated as one of the most important elements of the work, which, in a way, has also served as a direct impetus for the choice of the object of this paper, all the more so when we consider the fact that, for this segment of Kadare's novel, we have managed to notice different perspectives in the consulted literature ; this element, with which scholars of Albanian literature have been widely concerned, while Kadare's characters, since their appearance until now, have managed to become very close characters for the Albanian reader, as well as beyond that. It is enough to remember some of them, which for the careful reader already represent prominent and highly original characters: Konstantin and Doruntina, Plana Nicë, Zonjë Mëmë, Diana, Gjogu, Gent Ruvina, Gurameto, etc.

Undoubtedly, in this study relationship that a researcher has with the novels of one of the best novelists of Albanian literature, we find evidence that in increasing the artistic value of his novel, their artistic realization has had a great influence, such as the physical and moral description, the social and psychological motivation, the strong linguistic differentiation of most of the characters, as well as the way of reacting to critical life situations, which coincides particularly with the typical Albanian temperament and mentality.

The French researcher, Philippe Amon, through his theoretical-scientific book, “*Pour un statut sémiologique du personnage*”, provides vital data for the realization of a topic such as the typology of characters. In addition to this book, a large number of theoretical texts related to the character are also listed, which come from authors such as: Todorov, Greimas, Barthes, Becker, Eco, etc...

However, in addition to Kadare's novels, extensive literature has been used on realism and its creative principles, on the theory of the novel and on the novel itself (based on the structuralist theories of Bart, Torodov) and with special emphasis on characters, the ways in which they are conceived and realized in a literary work, especially on some of Kadare's novels, as well as on the definition of essential notions related to their construction, such as: typification, individualization, characterization, accompanied by the auxiliary literature of our and foreign scholars, who have extensively dealt with the author's novels, among the most famous in Albanian literature of all time. Kadare's character is not just a simple man or social species, but *a narrator who communicates directly with the reader, connecting him to himself*.⁵

The specific and generality of the characters of Ismail Kadare's novels

Through so many universal ideas that the characters in his novels carry, Ismail Kadare is a communicator of uniqueness, both national and historical. Known for his found allegorical

⁵Floresha, Dado, “*Intuition and critical awareness*”, Onufri, Tirana, 2006, p.104.

style, familiar with and influenced by the writing models of modern novels in world literature, he managed to bring to Albanian and foreign readers a gallery of unique characters.

The commonality of his characters is: the constant shadow of dictatorship that hangs over them over time; and **the uniqueness** of his character is, survival in the face of it.

The theme of the totalitarian communist dictatorship and the theme of the city, although seemingly distant, are actually connected according to the cause-effect chain that is also reflected in the characters' character. The motif of suffering, death, and alienation that he experiences under a dictatorial system serves as a recent past, which sometimes appears in the form of painful memories, and sometimes in the form of the unconscious, which manifests itself as a mental structure...

The general thing about characters is that we see some characters pass from one work to another. This "passage" or "recapture" is noticeable when reading novels that refer to the 70s, such as: "The Great Winter", and "Concert at the End of Winter". But such transitions have existed before. From a not-so-accurate count, the characters that appear several times in different novels are: Adrian Guma, Ekrem Fortuzi, Enver Hoxha, Hanë Hajdije, Pezë e madhe and Nurihan Kryekurti. Characters that appear in two different novels are: Ana Krasniqi, Ana Vuksani (both of whom are mentioned as having died from cancer the second time), Arben Struga, architect Kauri, Besnik Struga, Diana Bermema, Emili Kryekurti, Ebu Qerimi, Frede Riku, Hawaii, Hava Fortuzi, Hurshit Pasha, Iliri, Isa Toska, Javer Kurti, Kritiku CV, Kako Pinua, Lame Kareco Spiri, Mama Belgjika, Maks Bermema, Mark Kryekurti, Miharor Pashari, Musabelliu, the Cypriots, Ramiz Kurti, Rrem Huti, Rrok Simonjaku, Silva Krasniqi, Skender Bermema, Timur Tashi, Viktor Hila and Xhemal Struga.

The type of character that is carried over from one novel to another, just to complete the epic character of the novel, is a general characteristic of Kadare's character. He simply completes the dimension of the resistance and survival of the Albanians in the times of the totalitarian system, when the fate of Albania found itself facing two great powers, the Soviet Union and Mao Zedong's China. Likewise, through this way of carrying over the main figures, and also of the depiction of the characters, with complete, individualizing and typifying characterization, the author has completed another dimension of the beautiful sculpting of the characters, down to the most complete details, which we will mention below as their special characteristics.

This type of transient character, a wanderer in need, pre-typed as such, that is, who passes from one text to another, is in fact more widespread in the case of the two novels *The Winter of the Great Loneliness*, which deals with resistance during the dictatorship, and *Concert at the End of Winter*, which focuses on the time of relations with the Chinese. The generality of the characters that are taken up from one text to another, even while preserving their most representative typology, is the value of the novel and not at all a stale repetition in the absence of a completely new character...

This typology of characters that are carried over from one novel to another includes the figures of leaders, but also of several other characters who have great weight in the action of the events of these novels.

The uniqueness of Kadare's character is the phenomenology of the sacrificed character, the bearer of the legend and the keeper of the faith. This feature of the character is not only a central element, but a complex relationship, among others; where *intertextuality*, a writing feature of his novel, reflected through the character, intervenes at the heart of a system of literary signs, which define the character in his uniqueness. The appearance of the intertext is read in the titles of the novels, but also in the naming of the characters. While another part of these

titles: *The Boring Season in Olympus, Who Brought Doruntina, The Wrong Dinner*, due to their special formulation, also refract a new way of thinking and invite one to study a new relationship of meeting points. The characters are stripped of their usual human traits, so the names turn into symbols, without whose decomposition, one cannot enter their psychological universe. And in particular, the characters introduce numerous narrative voices into the text of the novel. Another special aspect is the mythological character, who brings the myth as reconstructed, as a literary myth, inserted, juxtaposed, transformed in the Albanian context.

All the characters, in reality, are rare in themselves, but the idea is to point out which characters we have not seen appear in any other work of Albanian literature; rare in terms of the uniqueness and novelty they bring, through their participation in the novel. In his novel, Kadare, as one of the rare novelists of Albanian literature, among other things, also has some rare characters, who have some unique features. "Why rare?", the question naturally comes, which would require special consideration. It is enough to remember the character of **Kakopino** in the novel "*Chronicle in Stone*", the character who regulates women during marriage. Kakopino is rare, because he has the most special profession than any character in all of Albanian literature, and even one with such a profession is hardly found in world literature. As a bride's beautician at weddings (even in times of war), he has been created as a rare character, who carries the continuity of life on his shoulders in times of great crisis.

A rare character of Kadare and of all Albanian literature, it marks a phenomenon that would require great attention to capture the way in which the author has sketched him to perfection during the description. I do not know of a second case in Albanian literature, that in any work a character is presented, even slightly similar to this sculpted type with all its characteristic features. And this circumstance of the complete drawing of this rare character type, necessarily, does not happen by chance. Kadare, as in most aspects, has the great mastery of capturing every type and personality of the characters, which in his novels comes with a variety of sketches. Being a good connoisseur of cultural and traditional circumstances, a good connoisseur of the soul of his people, he beautifully typified the Albanian, as well as his character... Also wearing the veil of rare Kadarean prominence are the grave robber Abd Ej Gurna nicknamed *Qorri*, who appears in the novel "Pyramid"; the character called Agai of Poisons in "*The Great Pashalëqet*", who was a kind of pharmacist in the Ottoman imperial court, from whom the embalming medicines for severed heads were obtained, before they were placed in the Chamber of Shame; ⁶in "*The Great Winter*", *the seller of antiques* also stands out.

...

The way in which Kadare, through the character, deals with the themes of pain, life and death, alienation under a dictatorial system, is a unique sign in Albanian literature. How he deals with the character, the endangerment of man and his values, his pain, trauma, depersonalization, physical, spiritual and intellectual death in a dictatorial system, become dominant motifs in the literature written and published after 1990. The central function of such characters, defined as special, can be interpreted in several ways. The inability to "access" the treatment of such themes during the dictatorship has made writers feverish researchers, to repay this hostage that comes from the past full of memories. According to researcher Barbara Hermstein Smith: "aesthetic experience is inseparable from memory, context, the meaning of fate, who we are, where we are, as well as from the totality of everything that has happened before ...". Therefore, the return to traumatic events, according to S. Freud, is explained by the necessity to retrace the path of death. Through this psychoanalytic concept, it is explained why human beings return to

⁶Tefik Çausi, *Dictionary of Characters*, Encyclopedic Publishing House, Tirana, 1995, p 33

painful or traumatic events, even though the latter seem to contradict our instincts, which seek/aim for pleasure. Through the tendency to repeat, human beings try to overcome trauma in search of a state of comfort, **typical of Kadare's characters**. The desire to relive a difficult time, through writing a literary work, as Kadare often does, is the only opportunity to heal from the clutches of the past. Repetition can be understood, according to Carl Gustav Jung, as a form of entatiodromy, (the collision of opposites). From this clash, the contemporary writer unconsciously seeks to triumph over the past, to free himself from its power. But is the over-treatment of this theme related only to the self-healing effort of the writer's creative ego? Of course not. The literary work fulfills its minimal existence through the triangle of *the Giver-Message-Receiver*, and the dominance of this theme is closely related to its reader. The (first-level) recipient after the 90s needed to experience homeopathic catharsis, and, in this way, returns to the experience of the past through the reading of novels that deal with this theme. As U. Eco suggests: "No one lives in the immediate present; we all connect things or events through the adhesive function of memory, personal or collective (whether history or myth)" ⁷. As part of the "collective memory", shocking images are preserved. Psychoses formed by the pressure of the past lead the reader towards the novel with the theme of the dictatorial "yesterday". The selection of such themes is made in an attempt to "extinguish" fear, pain, uncertainty, despair during the reading process, after the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder have passed ⁸. From this perspective, it seems that the concept of cultural Darwinism proposed by U. Eco is confirmed. According to him, the reading (and writing) of certain texts is related to the satisfaction of a specific community ⁹. Thus, such themes are written for the sake of the writers' need for emotional "emptying", as much as for the sake of readers. The reader himself seeks with a magnetic force, to heal from the past, through the process of re-experiencing it, so the writer writes for it, as much as for himself. This bilateral relationship of "Giver-Receiver", (which can be considered as an aesthetic variable of the connection between demand and supply) is a response to the dictatorship or dictatorships, which, although they bend man, do not manage to defeat him in any way. Every dictatorship, no matter how savage it is, is destined to die and turn into aesthetic "food", which is consumed by man, either as a writer or as a reader. Moreover, this novel production, thus, takes on another function (in addition to the aesthetic and therapeutic one). This literature, as Shaban Sinani suggests, is: "an unyielding survivor of the memory of man and the nation, in an attempt to preserve its identity", so from this perspective, this literature comes as evidence of the survival of man and Humanity. Literature transcends human limitation (forgetfulness), because through it universal messages are given. These messages are intended to model the present (but not only), on the basis of past experience.

Conclude

His novels, in genre typology, also due to the fact that they sculpt characters from all walks of life, in physical and moral traits, in general, by literary studies, have been seen as literary masterpieces, in which, even the image of the Albanian Golgotha under the dictatorship is portrayed with a high artistic level; the extraordinary spiritual experiences and concerns of a creator, who wanted to see the Albanian and Albania differently, often, by giving the model "the other", as an invitation of the novel's poetics to escape from the harsh reality of the monist

⁷Eco, Umberto. (2007). *Six walks in the forests of storytelling*, Tirana: Dituria, 15

⁸Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is considered a severe anxiety disorder resulting from exposure to a traumatic event, which may be associated with the risk of death of the individual or loved ones.

⁹Eco, Umberto., Rorty, Richard., et al. (1992). *Interpretation and overinterpretation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 27

system. That special circumstance, which constitutes his vital syntagm, and above all, the literary markings, in a free and comprehensive paraphrase of his novels, looks like this: Kadare's novel is an imagological impact on Albanian literature. A more beautiful image and a more worthy identity card before the world than the writer's novels is unlikely to be found in the literary realm of the contemporary period. Taken as a whole, Kadare's novel, that is, the writing planes that the novel typology marks as a system, appears to us as a literary universe, which shocks us with the endless gallery of characters, who carry and embody the destinies of human beings, with the trajectories cast after the ages, with the grotesque and human tragedy, with fine lyricism and epic thunder, and so on, with the apocalypses of tyrannies and the rebirth of peoples. A similar pulsation of a mobile imagist world characterizes almost all of Kadare's novels and characters.

The assessment of the character by literary scholars as one of the most important elements of the work, most likely the center of the universe of the author's novels, has served as the main impetus towards choosing the object of this paper, while Kadare's characters, since their appearance until now, have managed to become very close characters for the Albanian reader (even to the limits of the model), as well as for the foreign reader, as a result of the translation of the novels into many languages of the world. Undoubtedly, in this genuine relationship with Kadare's creatures, their artistic realization has had a great influence, such as the detailed physical description, social and psychological motivation, linguistic differentiation, characterization and typification, as well as the way of reacting to critical life situations, which most closely matches the Albanian temperament and mentality.

Literature:

- [1] Eco, Umberto. (2007). *Six walks in the forests of storytelling*, Tirana: Dituria, 15
- [2] Marisa Kerbizi, PHENOMENA OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF ALBANIAN LITERATURE AFTER THE 1990S (Modernist and postmodernist features of the novel production of V.Zhiti, F.Kongoli, A.Tufë, Z.Çela, R.Dibra, etc.) PhD thesis defended at the University of Tirana, Faculty of History and Philology, 2013, p. 229 (manuscript
- [3] Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is considered a severe anxiety disorder resulting from exposure to a traumatic event, which may be associated with the risk of death of the individual or loved ones.
- [4] Eco, Umberto., Rorty, Richard., et al. (1992). *Interpretation and overinterpretation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 27
- [5] Floresha, Dado, “ *Intuition and critical awareness* ”, Onufri, Tirana, 2006
- [6] Robert Elsie, *History of Albanian Literature* , published by “Dukagjini”, Peja-Tirana, 1997, p. 164.
- [7] Albert Thibaudet, *Réflexions sur le roman* , "Gallimard", 1965 - Literary Criticism