

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18454/RULB.2019.20.4.2>**МЕСТА КАДАРЕ: ЛИТЕРАТУРА И КОЛЛЕКТИВНАЯ ПАМЯТЬ**

Обзор

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Аннотация

В этой статье рассматривается связь между литературой и памятью путем анализа работ албанского писателя Исмаила Кадаре.

Исмаил Кадаре родился в городе Гирокастра на юге Албании. Университетские годы он провел в Москве (Россия), где принял решение стать писателем, и в конце периода албанской диктатуры отправился в самоизгнание в Париж. Города вдохновляли творчество писателя, благодаря этому мировая литература пополнилась такими великими романами как «Хроника в камне», «Великая зима» и «Утро в кафе Rostand».

Эти города, места, где он провел большую часть своей жизни, являются не только достоянием национальной литературы, но и в коллективной памяти албанского народа. Когда диктатура рухнула и исчезли ее лидеры, что осталось в памяти людей? Какую роль играет литературы в эпоху посткоммунизма для сохранения «памяти»? Критики называли Кадаре «хранителем памяти», но нам бы хотелось развить эту тему дальше, доказав, что его работы являются хранителем коллективной памяти народа.

Ключевые слова: Кадаре, коллективная память, мемориальные сооружения.

THE PLACES OF KADARE: LITERATURE AND COLLECTIVE MEMORY

Review

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Abstract

This article focuses the relation between literature and memory by analyzing the work of the Albanian writer Ismail Kadare.

Albanian writer Ismail Kadare was born in the city of Gjirokastra, south of Albania, he went to university in Moscow, Russia where he decided to become a writer and went into exile in Paris just at the end of the dictatorship. Each town inspired him and gave to the world literature great novels as *Chronicle in stone*, *The great winter* or *Mornings in the Rostand Café*.

These cities, the places where he spent most of his life are engraved not only in the national literature, but also in the collective memory of his people. As dictatorship is gone, together with its leaders, what do people select to remember from the past? More precisely, what is the role of literature in post-communism time towards retaining "memory"? While critics qualified Kadare as the "memory keeper", can we go further by affirming that his works contain "the collective memory keeper" and collective memory itself?

Keywords: Kadare, collective memory, memorial buildings.

"Toutes les grandes œuvres, [...] transforment la façon don't nous voyons et racontons le monde, et par consequent transforment le monde" [1, P. 112].

Introduction

Kadare did use "the past" and "the historical and cultural heritage of his nation" for literary and undeniably political purposes, but at the same time, he helped preserve it by his work, while dictatorship stifled it while stifling the freedom of the people. According to Kadare this is the responsibility of any writer:

"Like all great writers, Aeschylus was conscious that, in the eyes of the official-whatever his rank was-who represented power, he himself was a prince, and not only of art, but of his own nation. As such he was higher than any statesman, and the fate of Greece weighed on his shoulders more heavily perhaps than on the whole mechanism of the Greek state" [2, P. 52-53].

His work, written mainly during the dictatorship and in the heart of the dictatorship, aimed to denounce the regime of Enver Hoxha and "restore the icon" of Albania.

"Albania was being undone before our eyes. Like a worm-eaten icon, she grew old day by day, disfigured herself, withered away. If I still had any good reason to be a writer ... the only one, the first and the last reason was that: try to restore the icon. For generations to come, when they scratch the nail polish of this time without mercy, rediscover the image intact" [3, P. 401].

For the dictator, the history of Albania was to begin with him and the communist Albanian was "the new man". The dictator appropriated the past to reshape it in order impose his ideology and strengthen his authority. Albania's post-dictatorship in turn will try to "erase" the past, but in this case for a "more humanizing" purpose of blurring the traces of this 50-year- old-night.

Kadare, the "guardian of memory"

The Albanian writer Ismail Kadare is considered today as one of the greatest writers of the world. His main novels were written during the dictatorship and they denounce, between the lines, this same dictatorship. Kadare's work has revived the old

myths not only to keep them alive but also to fight the dictatorship. By making his reader travel in time and space, from antiquity to modern times, stopping for a long time in the Ottoman era, from Egypt to Russia, it was always Albania who was at the center of his work, Albania under the regime, even under the heavy make-up.

Kadare's work by its parables and allegories is courageous in the denunciation of the regime, and furthermore, with institutions like the "besa", and the "Kanun" his work becomes uniquely universal while remaining national. With the help of symbols, myths, bridges, citadels, pyramids and wooden horse as well as with his characters, Kadare made his work sometimes a shield of the nation as well as an open window for the foreign reader. Indeed, we can say that "even the most universal writers of the imaginary can be seen as the personification, the spokesperson of a national identity" [4, P. 19]. Alain Bosquet has titled his article in the French newspaper *Le Monde*, April 9, 1982: "Ismail Kadare, le chantre de l'Albanie", "Ismail Kadare, the chanter of Albania".

Ismail Kadare is proud of his nation, of his heritage. Even the ancient code of *Kanun* (the main theme in his novel *Broken April*), is noble against the dictatorship's codes, *the Besa* (in the novel *Doruntine*) is stronger than death, embedding the pride of all Albanians in the word of honor. Similarly, during the symposium titled *Kadare, the memory guardian*, Charles Saint-Prot declared:

"Rhapsode of the Albanian epic, he recalls that nationalism is humanism because it is a question of reaching the universal through depths of national culture and opening up to the world without ever showing up one's own face" [5, P. 109].

But Kadare is not only the writer of the past, his novels "take place in the collective memory and represent it" because "one of the characteristics of the historical novel is: to make the past be presented as continuous with the present, even though this past is given explicitly as past. The novel gains a function of transmission of the past, by which it makes memory. It is particularly remembered for one more reason: in spite of the hypothesis of historiography and even though it uses elements of historiography, it depicts what has passed as an object which could or could not have been seized by contemporaries from this past" [6, P. 62].

"The Pyramid" and other places in the works of Kadare

Contemporary Albania is in the process of working on memory, beyond testimonies, stories, biographies and autobiographies, it has in front of itself an architecture, starting with its capital Tirana where some of these buildings witnessed the "dark years". The identity of Tirana was built at different times, during communism too, and the identity of the citizen is closely linked to the identity of the city. If one works a lot on *lieux de mémoire* (places, monuments of memory, see P.Mora) as the House of the Leaves (Museum devoted to the intelligence services during the communist period,) the Bunkers transformed into memorials, etc., the memory of the places seems to be a less urgent concern of the authorities or a completely forgotten diary.

"One just has to ask how a society treats its past, how it uses it according to the circumstances or how it neglects it, to find oneself in the field of memory; memory, conceived sometimes as a matrix giving birth to the past, sometimes as a reservoir accumulating memories, sometimes as a well feeding the present and the future" [7, P. 7].

The French historian Pierre Nora [8, P. 2] defined *the lieux de mémoire* as a necessary part of the personality of a society and categorized it in topographic, monumental, symbolic and functional places; among others museums are topographic places and cemeteries and architectures are monumental places.

In our case, the socio-realistic mural mosaic above the entrance of the National Museum of History in Tirana can be considered as topographic *lieu de mémoire*, and its removal has been requested from some citizens as an inheritance of the communist past as well as Hoxha's Pyramid or the National Theatre monumental *lieux de mémoire*, whose fate are still theme of debates. The National Theater was built in 1939, the mural mosaic above the entrance of the National Museum of History in 1981. The civil society protesting with citizens against the political decision to demolish these buildings consider this as a will to erase the past, by building a modern city from zero and by creating the new Pharaohs and demonstrating their power.

"The city's heritage and public spaces are disappearing one after the other. The theater is one of the last witnesses of the history of the capital, it knew fascism, communism, intellectuals were killed in front of its doors to liberation ..." [9].

When reality goes in an opposite direction with the will of citizens, then art will appear as means to "save the memory".

"As for the urban object, some literary matrices staging the city tend to be part of the logic of a heritage, of a collective memory" [10, P. 292].

Therefore, we can emphasize here that the connections between literature and memory are multiple. Readings, as conversations or walks, are a good way to visualize a city, an epoch or a personality and to engrave it in one's memory; writings "save" cities and places which may become *lieux de mémoire* or simply disappear out of books.

Renate Lachmann states that "literature is a mnemonic art *par excellence*. Literature supplies the memory for a culture and records such a memory. It is in itself an act of memory. (...)" [11, P. 15].

If, as the critics pointed out, Kadare has "restored the icon of Albania", he has also given himself the task of enlightening the image of this icon and preserving the memory.

"He (Kadare, N.K), wants to be first of all the guardians of the collective memory and thus of the national identity – contributing even to enliven it. This implies the obligation for the writer to enroot the work within the land from which it comes, which, moreover, is the safest way to access universality" [12, P. 79].

The first novel of Kadare to be translated in a western country was "*Gjenerali i Ushtrisë së vdekur*", "*Le Général de l'Armée morte*" in 1970 in Paris. International readers imagined the main town of Albania through the novel, whereas Albanians "entered" with the Italian general and priest in *Hotel Dajti*, where only foreigners were allowed to go.

"After twenty days they returned to Tirana. The evening had fallen. Their green car stopped in front of the *Hotel Dajti*, at the foot of the tall pine curtain rising in front of the building" [13, P. 29].

Today, in the modern Tirana, *Hotel Dajti* can function "as a vehicle of memory" as the Pyramid does. [14, P. 223-251] In fact this hotel is in a bad shape, privatized, and it may become a bank, or even demolished. The debate whether to erase the traces of a terrible past or to keep them in order to "not forget", whether to erase them because of bad memories or keep them

for the sake of collective memory, was certainly not the first of its kind in Albania or elsewhere in the world. A controversy will also ignite society around the "Pyramid", the former museum erected for Enver Hoxha in 1988.

Kadare didn't mention directly in his works the "pyramid", however the title of his novel *"The Pyramid"* published in 1992, after some failed attempts to publish it before the fall of communism, is not only a political parabola of the dictatorship and a reference to the Egyptian pyramids and their pharaoh-dictator but also a literary representation of this museum which the citizens very rapidly renamed Hoxha's mausoleum showing that "collective memory would have such short expiration date" [15, P. 1-23] not like "the eternal entombment in stone" as mentioned by Bruce Brawer:

"For the pyramid, viewed by his subjects as an abiding symbol of his total and incontestable power, comes to be seen by him as a personal memento mori, a constant and paralyzing reminder that his brief life will give way to an eternal entombment in stone" [16].

Engelbert Ruoss, Director of Unesco for Europe, states that "If one must destroy all the objects, sculptures and works of art and architecture that remind us of the dictatorship, then any connection between the good or the bad would disappear with no distinction. The cost of forgetting is multiple. The communist period, like all the others has its place in history. As such it must be treated as part of the common heritage" [17].

Similarly, the Albanian architect and painter, the former political prisoner Maks Velo and the researcher Artan Lame, said that "this place no longer symbolizes the former Communist dictator. "For both intellectuals, this object serves instead to remind all future generations what the image of Enver Hoxha represented in the system, in order to better understand this era of Albanian history" [17].

The works of Kadare in relation to the phenomena of the post-communist time shows well "... that the past, as negative, as lacking as it may be, cannot die, that it is reopened by the construction of memory, that is, by the very play of the narrative, if this narrative explicitly gives the mediation of the plurality of histories and that of historicity and expectation" [18, P. 70].

Conclusion

Literature and memory are closely linked because both are concerned with the past, with people and with places, which will cling to the memory during everyday lives, keeping in remembrance their past, and building legacy for future generations.

It can be concluded that the works of Kadare have engrained "immutable and / or emblematic" places within the collective memory of Albanians. They are part of the daily life of its citizens. These places of memory serve the memory of places. The tourist who is walking in Albania today walks with Kadare, like the sociologist Halbwachs who was walking in London with Dickens.

Kadare's work is part of the collective memory in Albania, but it also helps to keep this memory alive through its archetypal characters and places.

Конфликт интересов

Не указан.

Conflict of Interest

None declared.

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