

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18454/RULB.2019.19.3.2>**ТВОРЧЕСТВО ФАТОСА КОНГОЛИ**

Обзор

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Аннотация

Данная статья является обзором творчества албанского писателя Фатоса Конголи. Фатос Конголи является одним из наиболее важных авторов албанской современной литературы, созданной на рубеже XX и XXI веков. Конголи также является одним из наиболее уважаемых авторов албанской литературной критики и входит в число самых читаемых писателей. Хотя свою карьеру писатель начал с рассказов, его признание албанскими читателями и литературными критиками были достигнуты благодаря романам. Даже сейчас его романы по-прежнему пользуются наибольшим спросом у албанских любителей искусства. В особенности стоит отметить его роман «Потерянные», который стал культовым произведением переходного периода между коммунизмом и демократией в Албании.

Ключевые слова: романы, тема, мотив, Конголи, персонажи.

NOVELS OF FATOS KONGOLI

Review

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Abstract

Our paper study about Fatos Kongoli novels is a summary that makes clear that Fatos Kongoli is one of the most important and productive writers of Albanian contemporary literature created during the last years of the XX-th century and the first years of XXI-st century. Besides being very productive, Kongoli is also one of the most esteemed authors from Albanian literary criticism and is ranked among the most widely-read writers. Although in the beginning he started writing stories, his recognition by Albanian readers and literary criticism was attained through the novel. Even now, his novels continue to be the most wanted by Albanian art lovers. His novel "The Lost," especially, turned into a cult novel for the transitional period between communism and democracy in Albania.

Keywords: novels, theme, motive, Kongoli, characters.

1. The special feature of Kongli novels

The novels of Fatos Kongoli are as follows: "The Three of Us" (1985), "The Lost" (1992), "The Carusel"(1990), "The Ghost" (1994), "The Ivory Dragon" (1999), "Demokleu Dream" (2004), "Dog's Skin" (2003), "Saint Peter's Gate" (2005), "Life in a Racket Box" (2007), "Bolero in the House of Elders" (2008), "Ilusions in a Drawer" (2010), "Si-do-re-la" (2011), "Gjemia e Mbytur" (2015) and "The Lucky Man" (2015). The special feature of these novels in comparison to other Albanian novels is that they have the individual in focus and treat the approach of the simple human being in facing the difficult periods and times of the most recent Albanian history.

This, in fact, is also a staple of Fatos Kongoli's novels. Also as a conjoint point might be considered their philosophical treatment of the various human life situations, especially those that represent the height of the existential struggle of the Albanian man with doing what he thinks, and as a result, the impossibility of acting because of certain circumstances. The essence of existentialist thinking is the unifying point of narrative works of this author. Such a feature makes him a mature writer in the world of conception and ideas, since such a treatment of the characters and narratives that represent his works makes Kongol an author of contemporary mentality and comparable with different world writers who have this point of view.

2. The common feature of Kongoli novels

Another common feature of Kongoli novels is the fact that in his creativity we find a novelian corpus that is titled "Prisons of Memories" by the author, including these novels: "The Lost", "The Ghost" "Dog's skin", "Ivory Dragon" and "Dream of Demokleu". As it might clearly be seen by the title of this novelian campus, the novelian prose is treated by the author the same as a human memory, a kind of past but not too distant memory, the time when our hero was a hostage of a system inside which every action was dictated.

As can be seen from reading his novels, we are dealing with an author who has experienced the recent past and the transitional or transitional phase spiritually, something that was still disunited and with various complications, ranging from ideological to interpersonal ones. Recognizing both the communist and the transition period, this author enters into the psychology of time and creates characters through which he recounts the time and the people of the time. He is one of the Albanian authors who has the essential aim to break down the psychology of the hero and character that is identifiable with the ordinary Albanian man. So, the characters of Kongol, besides acting as human beings, as usually happens in the writing genre of his novels, are also the signification of ideas and meanings that go beyond the boundaries of their concrete action. Being so accomplished at the stylistic and conceptual level, Fatos Kongoli's prosaic works had a delightful and enviable acceptance by each author. His novels were translated into many world languages and were read and appreciated by international literary critics and literary writers in famous European magazines and newspapers. We recall the articles of well-known European newspapers such as Le Monde, Le Figaro, Le Temps, La Stampa, L'Express, The Guardian, The Independent, and Der Tagesspiegel. Also, his novels were written about and given ratings by the magazine Magazine Litteraire, which is one of the

most important literary media in the francophone world. In these newspapers and magazines, his artistic and narrative work has been compared in parallel with the ideas and works of great artistic writers such as F. Dojstojevski, Alber Kamy, Samuel Beket, and others. Of particular mention, thematic and conceptual comparisons with Kamy's novels are most common. Kongol has been awarded the most important prizes, both national and international. So, those who have read and know the narrative work of Fatos Kongol have no reason to be surprised with the importance of this author and the love the Albanian reader has for his work, as well as his penetration and international success, where after I. Kadare is the second author of international significance and representation.

2.1. The Lost

As we said above, "The Lost" is a cult-novel for what can be termed a transition period or a transition period between the communist era and the beginning of Albanian democracy. It is the first novel of the series of five novels that the author over-named "The Prison of Memories", which includes the novels: "The Ghost", "Ivory Dragon", "Damokleu's Dream" and "Dog Skin". According to Professor Agim Vinca, "The Lost" is the novel that marked the footstep of a writer [21, P.371], adding that this novel is precisely the one that will open the writer's path toward a new creativity, a new quality, and a new world. While, for other researchers, "The Lost" is a novel of absurdity, of the gloomy routine of the dictatorial times, of impossibility and lack of freedom" [17, P.127], adding that "The Lost" is a novel of the character. The whole narrative's thematic and conceptual axis revolves around the character called Thesar Lumi, whose actions and thoughts are motivated by the title of this novel. "The researcher of contemporary Albanian literature and novel Arben Prendi claims that the "The Lost" is a "novel with a sincere confession where the protagonist as a confessional character positions himself, in the present, through a retrospective of the past". As it can be seen from reading this novel by Kongoli, his main character, Thesar Lumi, or Sari, as often is seen in different situations of this confession, is a being who has not made any concrete action. Even in the beginning, he refuses to escape with the ship that is sending people to Italy, just as all his friends had. He is different from the others. He is a revolted being inside himself, but without having the slightest opportunity or the slightest courage to express it: in other words, a being that is more observant than active. Thesar Lumi descends from the ship and takes the road to the city cemetery and begins to confess its past and present. He feels lost and stuck, so that he no longer feels it necessary to take any concrete steps. He speaks for himself and for others, and from all that can be read, we can say that we are dealing with a character who can usually be termed as a nucleus character around whom all other characters of the novel act and behave. The main character of this novel, Thesar Lumi represents the profile of a character built on the basis of the absurd model, whose essence is around the blade of consciousness and the impossible, which confront each other from the beginning of confession till the end of it.

Through the story of the Thesar Lumi we see that we are dealing with two basic and two story themes in this novel of Kongoli: the confession before the collapse of the communist system, and the story of the time known as a transitional one, where Albanians have reclaimed as two very important epochs in their recent history. According to this story, this character of Kongoli has a stain in his biography, and it is enough a reason for the authorities of the communist regime to have doubts about him. So he feels excluded, lost, during a system where you are not part of it, anyway. The honest man was part of the defeated, and that was not only personal, but also collective. Thesar Lumi feels lost, just as the title of this novel. He feels himself such as he is aware of the deformities of the communist system, but cannot do anything. The story of this novel, according to researcher Prendi, is built on a base of a realistic novel, but approaching a novel of "brook of consciousness" [17, P.45].

Different international and Albanian critics and researches have made comparisons between Alber Kamy's novel "Alien" and Fatos Kongoli's "The Lost", saying that Mersos of the French writer and Thesari of the Albanian writer both act in the same overflowing situation of absurdity, where each one of them "feels lost and foreigners in their own way" [23, P.532]. This is clearly stated by the researcher of literature, Severina Pasha, who interprets the ideological and conceptual of these two novels, where among other things she states that "Thesar Lumi is the brother of the absurd Kamysian, Merso" [24, P.333].

"The Lost" is one of the most arisen novels of Albanian literature that must be particularly analysed, dealing with the features and characters that come out of his confession.

2.2. The Ghost

The novel "The Ghost" of Fatos Kongoli has an ideal and stylistic similarity with the above mentioned novel of the same author, stemming from the fact that they are part of a novelian corpus called "The Prisons of Memories". Festim Gurabardhi of "The Ghost" is an ideal extension of the character Thesar Lumi in the "The Lost". According to the literature researcher Arben Prendi, the author "in the case of the character Festimi has entered deeper into the psychological, spiritual and identity world" [25, P.49] of the individual in a dictatorship time, as the communist Albania was at that time. In this novel of Kongoli, we have the exposure of a reality that resembles a fragmented nightmare of characters and individuals rather than a natural reality. So we have a controversial truth which, more than concrete, seems to be absurd and grotesque. The protagonists of this novel, Festim and Valmir D., are alienated by a regime which could not put up with the vertical and humane attitude of its citizens. It changed them. For the gear of the system, there were only collaborators and enemies. People who did not want to be placed in these categories were constantly in trouble and fear. The system required profiling, side-by-side. Such a thing is suffered by our main protagonist, Festim Gurabardhi. He is a human being who ends up in madness, because as a man who becomes a gadget of the system, like Valmir D., he is forced to collaborate with the system to punish his superior in the publishing house where he works as an editor of artistic publications for children. So we're dealing with a low-ranking official in a totalitarian regime, a children's literature editor in a public publishing house, who does not want to get involved in the deep gears of the system, but is imposed on because such was the system. Feeling guilty of doing the act, he ends up going mad. After coming out of it, he feels like a "ghost among the living", which is the motivation for the title of this novel.

2.3. Ivory Dragon

Kongoli's novel "Ivory Dragon" has conceptual similarities to the two above-mentioned novels, but also has a difference in terms of time-keeping and especially space of confession. The main character, Genc Skampa, remains a hostage of the past, like Thesar and Festim Gurabardhi, but, unlike the two, his past is not related to Albania, but to a distanced country, China in

the 1960s, when he was a student. This is the country of the ivory dragons, from which the novel gets the title. As the literature researcher and professor Laura Smaçi states, the time of confession of this novel is the “time of big moral crises” [26, P.207], a time when the Albanian young man who had no idea of big global politics or ideological international currents, and who was not even interested in either, becomes victim of these huge political currents, which will deeply influence his life.

During the time when communist Albania had good relations with the China of Mao Zedong, many Albanian students went to study there. One of them is our character, Genc Skampa. But with the collapse of relations between these two states, Albanian students were forced to return. This was the destiny of our character. But he had left a part of his soul there. He was deeply in love with a Chinese girl, Sui Lini. He is forced to abandon his love, remaining imprisoned in his emotional memory. Returning to Albania, Genc Skampa tries to build his new life, but does not succeed. After a short time, he separates from his wife and, in one way or another, loses contact with his children, especially after they are grown up.

When he reaches an older age, memories of China and Liun only became stronger to him, transforming him into a being who lives in two times—in his admirable past, for which he feels guilty, and in the present, filled with solitude.

2.4. Demokleu Dream

The novel “Demokleu Dream” is one of the best novels of this writer based on the ideas and messages that come out of it. Different from the other novels of this author, the “Dream of Democleu” focuses on the element of fatality, the misfortune of the individual imposed because of inadequate inaction and dictated social and political circumstances. So it is under the dictates of destiny and metaphorically puts the punishment or “Demokle’s Sword” on its head. Such a mythical metaphor brings out the title of this novel. So we’re dealing with an author who has an enviable peculiarity in finding the titles of his prose works.

The main character of this novel is Ergys, a young man who faces the struggles that transition time in Albania brings, which with no doubt influence his life and the life of his lovers. He is a human being with a sense of loneliness, like the character of “Ivory Dragon”. He is only comforted by the love that is almost the only essential and real thing in times of crisis.

The storyline of this novel is set in 1997 when there were social troubles in Albania, almost a civil war. A victim of these circumstances is also our character. One of the most interesting and accomplished scenes not only in this novel, but in all Albanian novelce creativity is the situation when Ergysi cannot send his wife to give birth to their child because of the traffic jams and blockades due to the social confrontations in Albania at the time. The novel is important because of the narrative technique. It is said in the prologue that this is a lost manuscript of an unknown Albanian writer called Balzak. So, our author, Fatos Kongoli, plays with this narrative technique, which is a typical specifying feature of the world contemporary novel, as well as the Albanian one.

2.5. Dog’s Skin

The novel “Dog’s Skin” of Fatos Kongoli has in the center of its narrative discourse a writer and film screen player, Kristi Trapin, who lives an emotionally debilitated life as a result of the troubles he had suffered from the not so distant past. He considers himself failed and unfulfilled both professionally and emotionally.

The story of the communist past is linked to an internment family punished by generations of the communist regime under Enver Hoxha. It was Dolores’ family with whom our character was extramarital. He had known her since they were both young, waiting in a queue to get the milk that the so-called popular warehouses shared to the citizens. So it is a confession about the power of a state that does not allow the individual to possess any private property. Even the necessary milk for the family and children had to be taken from the state rather than providing for it oneself. His girlfriend’s family had biographical notes, and almost every one of her members was punished for it. Communists also doubted about Kristi because of the closeness he had with this family. Kristi Trapi despises himself for his inability to do something for his beloved people because of the fear that accompanies him all the time. The only thing that keeps him alive is flirting with different women, one of them Dori, his daughter’s friend who turns out to be the granddaughter of his early girlfriend Dolores. So we’re dealing with a character who is followed by his past in each step of life.

2.6. To Saint Peter’s Gate

Fatos Kongoli’s novel “To Saint Peter’s Gate” has an essential ideo-thematic difference in comparison to the other novels that are included in his novelian corpus, “Prison of Memories”. In this novel, we have a revealing of criticism and fiery revolt with the moral crisis and reality in Albania during the phase of democratic transition. This novel takes place in several lines of confession, and a dominant technique is that of the monologue. The four main characters, Platon Guri, Ardiana Gjini, Sabit Kurti and Erald Perjaku have their own monologues, through which they combine the storylines and make the novel unique.

The main character, Platon Guri, a university professor of history, is shot dead accidentally and erroneously during an assassination that a criminal group had prepared for someone else. He is in hospital and in a state of being between death and life, that is, “at St. Peter’s Gate”, confesses about his life, and revolts against the Albanian reality of post-dictatorship. His beautiful wife, Ardiana, who was a well-known writer, was tempted by fame and had left their marriage behind.

As a result, the professor of the university, Platoni, had started an extramarital affair with Roksana, an unknown woman to the society, to fulfill himself emotionally. Ardiana’s monologue is very important in this novel and expands its thematic range. It criticizes the press mania for creating gossip and writing untruthful things. The Tirana press alluded to the fact that behind the assassination of the professor was his beautiful wife, the well-known writer, possibly because of the extramarital affair. A very interesting character in this novel is Sabit Kurti, a police inspector who is looking for the professor’s assassins. Meanwhile, one of the very special characters not only of this novel, but of all contemporary Albanian literature, is Erald Perjaku, a young man living in the suburbs of the city who has no criminal precedents, but, because of the difficult economic situation, joins a criminal group headed by the owner of a business complex. Through his monologue we see that the group the young Erald was part of had accidentally shot the professor. Eraldi goes to prison and here the tragedy begins for his sister, who is one of the most tragic characters of contemporary Albanian novel. She is looking for a visa to go abroad due to the difficult economic and family situation. The business owner and boss of the Eraldi uses her condition, deceiving her into believing he will provide her assistance in the process of leaving Albania. She turns into a half prostitute of this boss and

various Albanian politicians connected to organized crime. With the novel "At St. Peter's Gate", Fatos Kongoli has introduced themes and thematic motifs that were not previously encountered in Albanian literature. Therefore, it is enough reason to appreciate this novel.

2.7. Life in a Racket Box

The novel "Life in a Racket Box" by Fatos Kongoli has two great narrative lines. First, he speaks to us about the transition period in Albania following the fall of the Enverist regime, which makes it one of the main thematic motifs of this novel and, in general, the novels of Fatos Kongoli. Secondly, we have a narrative construction of the absurd situation that follows the literary work of the Albanian author. In the second line, this novel has an ideological-thematic and worldview connection with the novel "The Lost" of the same author, but also with Albert Kamy's novel "Alien".

Bledi Terziu, a well-known journalist, is a human being who constantly faces an absurd situation and a constant sense of guilt. Accidentally, a gipsy girl knocks on the door of his apartment, and he invites her to love him. She accidentally dies in the journalist's bathtub. Then there is the dilemma of what to do: call the police or throw the body somewhere in the suburbs of the city. He decides on the second. This changes his destiny and the course of his life, even his human character. So a moment of life, an unimportant evening in his life making love with a gipsy girl, is the reason that his life takes another direction. He then thinks differently about himself, society, time, and the people with whom he works and collaborates. Such a thing makes him intolerant of their actions, and he feels disgusted with the fakeness that is mostly found during the transition in Albania.

2.8. Bolero in the House of Elders

The novel "Bolero in the House of Elders" of Fatos Kongoli, due to the thematic aspect and the message it gives, is one of the most special novels, not only of this author but of all Albanian literature. We say this because it includes topics and motifs that we have not seen before in the contemporary Albanian prose, such as the thematic motif of homosexuality between two women. Unlike all the novels of Kongol where the narrator is male, in this novel the narrator is a woman. The narrator is Parashqevia, a nurse who cares for two lonely elders.

In this novel of Kongol, we have three thematic motifs:

- Loneliness (relationship between old people and the existing reality);
- Social troubles in Albania during 1997;
- Love between two women, Parashqevi and Ana.

Sending letters between the elder and his old lady from the first floor to the second is one of the most beautiful motifs in our contemporary prose. The sender or bearer of their letters is Parashqevia. In them, they write and confess their past overwhelmed by problems and their present overflowing with solitude. Parashqevi is disgusted with herself and suffers the lack of friend and girlfriend Anna, who was killed during the social troubles that had occurred in Albania in 1997. She has suffered from these situation herself because a group of men led by Anne's brother have raped her.

Parashqevia is a character who disgusts everything she sees and has significant psychological and emotional loss. Being such, she is a very important and intriguing character in Albanian literature, not only of Fatos Kongoli's prose.

2.9. Gjemia e mbytur

The fate of the Fatos Kongoli novel "Gjemija e Mbytur" is a confession that pays homage to the victims of the regime, a confession about the past and the present of Albanian society as we see in many works of this author. The line of confession begins with Glauk Fusha, returned to Albania after several years of exile. He returns to find his human and family identity and dignity as well as to find the truth about the destruction of his family by certain sections of Enver Hoxha's communist regime. "Mysterious villa" is an allegoric construction, an allegoric premise that comes out of the realistic discourse which dominates many parts of Kongoli prose. It is a building where some notes of the mighty people of the former communist Albanian regime were kept. Therefore, through these records and testimonies the truth could be reached. So we're dealing with a kind of archives, where the files of the dictatorship monist were kept. The main character attempts to open the files, but it is impossible because they are guarded by the state police, which do not allow them to be opened up to democracy.

2.10. Si-do-re-la

The novel "Si-do-re-la" is special in the thematic aspect because it is the only one where, in the center of discourse, we have only the theme of love. The erotic motive, the memory of an early love, is more present here than in many novels of this author. We have a character who, like many characters of this author, is a hostage of the past. Unlike many of the other novels, however, there is no strong connection between social and political circumstances and his love affairs.

2.11. Lucky Man

The novel "Lucky Man" has two narrative shafts: first of all, a narrative about the world of crime, represented by Sabit Kurti's figure and, secondly, a confession about love and deception, represented by the figure of the main character, Gentian Engjelli. Sabit Kurti is sent to investigate a crime: a hotel with a weird name was blown up by a criminal group just one day before he was to be inaugurated. Meanwhile, Gentian Engjelli is caught between two loves, two truths—what looks real and what he fantasizes, and who is more a product of his imagination.

Conclusion

As a conclusion we aim to understand that the main foundation of the Kongoli novel is the reality of the Albanian people, their former life connected to so many situations before, during, and after communism. The construction of Kongoli novels is real, mostly-true situations lived by each of the characters. It should be noted that the variety of characters' actions in the novels of Kongoli and many other credible facts are the human situations and actions artistically presented by the author in his novels.

Kongol has written many novels, so to discuss each of them, a single study paper is not enough. It remains for another occasion to present the other situations of his novels in detail.

Конфликт интересов

Не указан.

Conflict of Interest

None declared.

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