Reading in Space: An Exemplary Case of Continuity in the Contemporary Albanian Literature

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Abstract

The aim of our work was the discovery of a reading dimension in the contemporary Albanian literature, respectively in the Albanian post soc-realist prose, which is not merely a structural tool for the construction of the text and its meaning, but a condition for identifying the literary process in its continuity. We are based on the implications of the implementation of a hybrid Eco (Umberto) - Fish (Stanley) model as a time content in its core, in relation to the notion of intertextuality proposed by Julia Kristeva and used by us as 'reading in space', during the study on the process of overcoming socialist realism in the early 90s in the Albanian literature through the texts of Fatos Kongoli, an eminent Albanian author. The role of the traditional reading community has been proved as determinant for the sustainability of the process and the building of new structural and meaning equilibriums.

Keywords: **Albanian prose, Eco-Fish hybrid model, reading in space**, **structural meaning.**

1. Introduction

What is *reading in space*? Is not reading a process accomplished in time? Why should *reading in time* be separated from *reading in space*? At first glance, the above *syntagma* has an somehow   speculative authority. Yet, this is no speculation.

R*eading in space* takes special importance in the case of Albanian literature, as an opportunity to understand the process of shifting the literary process from the stylistic and ideological format of socialist realism to the literature of the 90s and beyond. Especially in the context of an Eco[1]-Fish[2] reading model[3] on which we have supported our endeavor, *reading in*

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[1] Eco, Umberto., Lector in Fabula: La cooperazione interpretative nei testi narrativi, Tascabili Bompiani, Milano, 2006

[2] Fish, Stanley., Is There a Text in This Class?, Interpreting the Variorum, Harvard University Press

[3] Xhindi, Ermir.,. The Initiation of Religion in Literature, p. 136, The XXXIV International Seminar for Albanian Language, Literature and Culture, 34/2, Pristine, 2015. Eco's model was chosen mainly for structural accomplishment of the text. That model formulate in poetical terms what happens between the text and the reader in time. Eco sees its meaning to be closed in interpretative relations text-reader, where the first's status remaining objective is, in the same time, open to the reader cooperation, who tries a number of interpretative choices, which even though being textually limited, still remains not exactly defined within a semantic model in the form of an encyclopedia, which fulfills the conditions for a textual pragmatism. It removes the meaning from the textual frame to offer a moving model, where meaning is not discovered, but materialized in the reader-text relation. The reader takes part in the form of using a encyclopedia, through which a possible view of the text can be build. Fish, also, explain that undoubtedly the words are meaningful or that the reader isn't free from the textual constrains. The kind of experience allowed from the text is controlled from linguistic and literary competence of the individual reader. The reader reacts in a way not in another to words because he acts supported by the same rules used by the author to generate them – at this point Fish reuses the gist of the interactive activity of the reader according to Eco. For both of them meaning isn't anymore a feature of the literary text, but a product of the reader's activity, forced and limited from the text. The question looking for an answer isn't what is the meaning of the text but how do the readers make the meaning in time? From this point of view Eco's time meaning appears as a function of the reader's competence under the constrains of the text to take interpretative decisions to construct a structure, which for Fish meaning is an order of preliminary impulses motivated by text's signals and which in Fish's practice can be interpreted. The

space is a '*sine qua non*' condition to understand the reconstruction of contacts between the community of readers of the socialist realism literature with the New Albanian Literature after the 90s. Post soc-realism would be conditioned by this phenomenon, due to the fact that the most visible part of that literature is the continuation of the phenomena and relevant authors of the socialist realism. In particular, the most representative phenomenon would be the case of Fatos Kongoli[1] and his cycle *Burgjet e Kujtesës (Prisons of Memory).*[2]

2. Theoretical aspect

First, let's see the theoretical aspect of the process in its core. As Eco affirms in a semantics oriented toward textual actualizations - *semema* - should appear as a virtual text and *a text is nothing more than extension of a semema*. The reader's cooperative action constitutes the fundamental condition for the extension of the semema - this process accomplished in time, however, materializes the semema's ability to promote this expansion and at the same time to protect its original idiosyncrasy (identity).

 In this way, a finished text is a semema set in motion by the reader, a finished system that does not lose its initial connection, but it is not infinite in relation to the reader's competence. Reading in space is a finding of this completed system, carried out with the help of the reader, in relation to other signified systems. In a sense, reading in space is a systematic recapture of the text to understand its intertextual identity.

It is still about a closed unity, where the above mentioned reference indicators now form a structure - obviously, with the help of reader interpretative actions, although the intertextuality is not a specific function of the reader. Julia Kristeva explains similarly to Eco the textual actualizing process: "*Narration, therefore is always constituted as a dialogical matrix by the receiver to whom this narration refers*"[3]. Regardless of the mechanism that produces this expansion of the semema (the text), reading in space refers to the semiotic definition of the semema (the text), in relation to the existent semiotics systems. We are talking about *Identity* as a relation of completed systems to avoid any misunderstanding that aligns the intertextuality with the concept of *intertextuality scenarios* proposed by Eco in the time model of reading which we incorporated into the concept of reference code.

The concept of *intertextuality* was first defined by Julia Kristeva in 1974[4]. Her concept is generally misunderstood, as Kristeva notes: *"The term intertextuality denotes this transposition of one (or several) sign-systems into another; but since this term has often been understood in the banal sense of "study of sources", we prefer the term transposition because it specifies that the passage from one signifying system to another demands a new articulation of the thetic - of enunciative and denotative positionality. If one grants that every signifying practice is a field of transpositions of various systems (an intertextuality), one then understands that its 'place' of enunciation and its denoted object are never single, complete and identical to themselves*"[5].

Further on, Kristeva notes, *"We shall call transposition the signifying process 'ability' to pass from one sign-system to another, to exchange and permutate them, and representability the specific articulations of the semiotic and thetic for a sign-system, Transpositions plays an essential role inasmuch as it implies the abandonment of a former sign-system, the passage to a second via an instinctual intermediary common to the two systems and the articulation of the new system with its new representability*"[6].

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meaning to Eco is a structural function of the text, while to Fish it is a function – if it can be defined this way – prestructural , an immediate impulse, meaning of the first level. The models have compatibility in spite of the debate about text centrism.

[1] Xhindi, Ermir., Lector faber, Europrint, Vlorë, 2010.

[2] The Cycle is composed by these novels: I Humburi (The Lost), Dituria, Tiranë, 1992; Kufoma (The Corps), MÇM, Tiranë 1994; Dragoi i Fildishtë, (Ivory Dragon), MÇM, Tiranë 1999; Ëndrra e Damokleut (Damoclé's Dream), MÇM, Tiranë 2001; Lëkura e Qenit (Dog's Skin), Toena, Tiranë 2003.

[3] Kristeva, Julia., Desire in Language, A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art, Word, Dialogue and Novel, Columbia University Press, New York, p.76

[4] The Kristeva Reader, La Revolution du Language Poetique, Edited by Toril Moi, Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 2002, p. 111

[5] Ibid. p. 112

[6] Ibid. The Thetic: Rupture and/or Boundary, p.99

This new system, this new practice, *The Text*, is structured on the inevitable combination of two processes within the system: the '*genotext[1], which involves semantic processes, but also the advent of the symbolic*' and *phenotext*. The genotext '*includes drives, their disposition and their division of the body, plus the ecological and social systems surrounding the body, such as objects and pre-Oediapal relations with parents*'.[2] The phenotext encompasses '*the emergence of object and subject, and the constitution of nuclei of meaning involving categories: semantic and categorical fields*'.[3]

More precisely after Kristeva '…*designating the genotext in a text requires pointing out the transfers of drive in phonematic devices… in the way semantic and categorical field are set out in syntactic and and logical features or in the economy of mimesis The genotext is the discharge of energy of the channels that organizes a space in which the subject is not yet a complete unit which will later form the symbolism. The genotext is thus the only transfer of drive energies that organizes a space in which the subject is not yet a split unity that will become blurred, giving rise to the symbolic. Instead, the space it organizes is one in which the subject will be gebnerated a such by a process of facilitations and marks within the constraints of the biological and social structure'.[4]*

So Kristeva notes that the genotext *is not linguistic*. It is '*more of a process that tends to articulate the ephemeral and not significant structures*'. On the other hand '*the phenotext serves to denote the language that serves to communicate , which linguists describes in terms of "competence" and "performance"; … the phenotext is a structure – which can be generated …; it obeys rules of communication and presupposes a subject of enunciation and an addressee..*'[5]

In our concept reading in space relates to the definition of the relationship between the genotext and the phenotext in a completed structure: '*the signifying process therefore includes both the genotext and the phenotext*'[6] - a complete view of the implementation of our model Eco-Fish.

3. Albanian prose and the case of Fatos Kongoli

Back to the Albanian literature the case of the reader of Fatos Kongoli's *Burgjet e Kujtesës* (Prisons of Memory)' Cycle, a reader who is converted from the compact, receptive community of socialist realism literature to a new set of values in the early 90s, would be very expository. We recall that Fatos Kongoli began writing in the ideological-stylistic context of socialist realism during the 80s of the twentieth century.

In this case the question of Kongoli reader's identity would be raised. We think that the last reader of the socialist realism should not be associated with the change of the community where the reader is part of: the assignment of the relationships between the phenotext and the genotext constitutes the last (intuitive) interpretative action of the *Model Reader[7]* of the *Burgjet e Kujtesës* (Prisons of Memory) cycle.

What qualifies the reader's actual activity? Genotext or Phenotext? How does this structuring activity in relation to genotext/phenotext appears during the two creative periods of Fatos Kongoli, up to the end of the *Burgjet e Kujtesës* (Prisons of Memory(cycle?

Preliminary: the nature of the reader's actual activity is mainly related to the degree of impact from generating strategies more closely related to genotext or phenotext. As we can see, the concept of Kristeva is presented by us embedded in the complementary interaction of the reader on the textual strategies presented by Eco. During the first creative period, the stories and novels of Kongoli were subjected to conceptual generating schemes, the ideological and aesthetic principles of socialist realism. It is clear that the concepts about the *Hero*, *Characterization*, *Partisanship*, *Nature of Contradictions*, *Reflection*, define in a decisive fashion the textual generating strategy of the works of the Kongoli throughout the first creative period.

What are the standard generating schemes in the genotext/phenotext intercourse? (We emphasize that depending on the nature of that intercourse is determined the nature of the reader's interaction activity). What does it include, i.e., the concept

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[1] The Kristeva Reader, La Revolution du Language Poetique, Edited by Toril Moi, Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 2002, p.120.

[2] Ibid. p. 120.

[3] Ibid. p.120.

[4] Ibid. 120-121

[5] Ibid. 121

[6] Ibid. p. 122

[7] Eco, Umberto., Lector in Fabula: La cooperazione interpretative nei testi narrativi, Tascabili Bompiani, Milano, 2006, p.61

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of *Hero*, the phenotext, or genotext? We are at the margins of a process that intends to articulate the structure or in the boundaries of a completed structure? There are traits of "*existence*" or "*ways of existence*"?

By returning to Kristeva's definitions of the nature of the signifying process, standard generating schemes more than aim to *identify a structure*, *aim to build a structure*, to *orient a structure*: without being a militant of socialist ideas, the *Hero* can't be the protagonist of a meaningful structure. In this way, through an orientated mimetic relationship, the nature of linguistic continuum, social function, and conventional gender motivation, a meaningless ephemeral structure becomes a meaningful structure, corresponding to the semantic signifying process of the *thetic phase* according to Kristeva. The "body partition" of the text through these conceptual orientation joints is the classic case of the genotext. In fact, most of the literature of socialist realism subjected to the schemes and the conceptual generating is literature mastered by the phenotextual signifying process..

During the first creative period of Kongoli, the generative strategies have the genotextual contents: the interpreter's actualization, also has genotextual content, which corresponds to the institutional position of literature as an element of superstructures necessarily determined by the economic basis. The Reflection method, in spite of the conceptual schema of socialist realism, constitutes in this case a sign system transposed in literature from Marxist-Leninist philosophy.

Obviously, phenotextual elements are present during this period: several times Kongoli has accepted its influence from Chekhov: *A Case From Practice* (Kongoli) - *Case From Court Practice* (Chekhov), *An Unpleasant Event - An Unpleasant Event*, *Babushi - A Hard Session*, *The end of everything - Something Sincere*, *The Spouse – The Trotting*, *The Classmates - The Fat and the Slender*, *Neighbors - Neighbors* etc. During the first phase, however, a sense of evolution is noticed in the texts of Kongoli, conceptual schemes skipping, and extrication of genotext.

The reader's interpretative activity, which in accordance with the generating schemes, actualizes the genotext i.e., gives *meaning to the structures*, during the period of the stories is dim - the genotext promotes a low predictive activity of the reader. In both novels *Ne te tre[1]* (*The Three of Us*) *and Karuseli* (The Carousel) as we have noticed, the intensity of implementing conceptual generating schemes decreases: some genotextual mechanisms like *Hero*, *Theme*, *Characterization* no longer work, giving place to phenotext.

In the novel *Ne të tre* (*The Three of Us)*, the phenotext is affected by the interposition of the novel's *Sikur t'isha djale* phenotextual signifying system. Elements of phenotext are noted in the Karusel (*The Carousel)* novel - the discoursive topics, the introductory reference indexes of the characters, commemorate the novel *Koncert në fund të dimrit[2]* by Ismail Kadare *(Concert at the End of the Winter)[3]*. In both of the two novels of Kongolis, during the first phase, they possess the phenotext generating structures, a mastery expressed by a more visible reader interaction. Paradoxically, genotext release leads the reading of the novels of Kongol to classical phenotextual structures. The phenotextual structures appear to be constructed over to a series of repeatable themes during the first creative period.

3.1. The second creative period of Kongoli

Liberation from the conceptual schemes of socialist realism during 90s resulted in the decline of the genotextual generative systems that characterized the works of Kongoli. Text generating strategies now aim at the non-standard protagonist, previously untouched topics.

What is the nature of the signifying process on Kongoli works after '90s, more specifically, in the cycle of novels *'Burgjet e Kujtesës' (Prisons of Memory)*? It is clear that the Fall of the imposed genotext is a liberation not from the genotext as a whole but *from the genotext of socialist realism*. In some cases, the study has confirmed that the works of Kongoli after the 90s broke some conventions related to the texts composition, the protagonist, the time ratio, the shift of narrators.

What does the novelties in the post 90s Kongoli texts, the *architecture of the structure* or the *structure with several shows*? Translated into the thetic phase, Albanian literature after the 90s, including the works of Kongoli, was first, independently the genotext necessity, in the need of the articulation of a new structure, basically the need to orient it in a new way.

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[1] Kongoli, Fatos., *Ne të tre*, (*The Three of Us*), Shtëpia Botuese "Naim Frashëri", Tiranë 1985.

[2] Kadare, Ismail., *Koncert në fund të dimrit* (Concert at the End of the Winter), Shtëpia Botuese "Naim Frashëri", Tiranë 1988.

[3] Kongoli, Fatos., *Karuseli*, (*The Carousel*), Shtëpia Botuese "Naim Frashëri", Tiranë 1991.

The work of Kongoli was naturally affected by this necessity: the first novel of the cycle, in essence, constitutes the submission of the phenotext elements inherited from the works of the early 90s. Overcoming the thetic phase qualified as the dominance of the genotext in the novel I Humburi, 1992, (*The Lost*), brings another situation to the next cycle novels, the emergence of the phenotext as a *signifying reality*: at the end of the structural articulation of the novel I Humburi (*The Lost)*, in fact triumphed the phenotext (the loss, alienation, identity crisis, the reigning of absurdity in Albanian society traumatized by communism after the 90s). Genotextual elements such as *turbulent, unclear protagonist identity*, building speech and narrative structures through the aspectual features of times, manage to build a structure.

Next, during the cycle, Kongoli modified other genotextual elements associated with discoursive and narrative structures, which, however, gain a common sense, according to reference indicators, a kind of routine, which also permeates phenotextual elements. For example, alternating the *discoursive identity*, adding them, building the story at some time levels, are more dynamic processes than regaining some standard motives.

More than the structure itself, which continuously gains its symbolic weight, the cycle articulates the structure (genotext) which strengthens the symbolizing ability of the phenotext - at the Ëndrra e Damokleut (*Dream of Damoclés)* identity crisis arrives even to the pathology of the protagonist, indecidability, *Damokle's shadow* as a genotextual means brings to a new relation, to a new level, classical father-boy motif.

However, in the Burgjet e Kujtesës (*Prisons of Memory)* cycle, the dynamic tendency to strengthen phenotextual elements is confirmed, especially in the latest novel of the cycle Lëkura e Qenit (The Dog's Skin): reduction of genotextual conventions, strengthening of the structure through the behavior of the protagonist in an active process, contrary to the other cycle novels, where is important the articulation of a closed structure. In general the signifying nature throughout the cycle is mostly related with the possession of the genotextual elements – is obvious the tendency to emphasize the importance of phenotextual elements, the process that starts from the Ëndrra e Damokleut (*Dream of Damoclés*) and becomes dominant in the Lëkura e Qenit (*Skin of the Dog*) - turning point is constituted by the unnecessary renovation of the classic conventions at the Ëndrra e Damokleut (*Dream of Damoclés*)

What happens to the reader? What does he do? The presence of articulated genotextual elements, of a structure with symbolic dominance, promotes an active interaction of the reader, despite the complicated nature of the process. The interaction of the reader, gradually associated with the routine significance gained by the genotextual elements, goes down to the genotext level and at the phenotext level; however, the decline of interaction activity of the reader in this case does not have mutual conditioning but relates to the routine reading of the cycle.

Which is the role of Kongoli's works in *reading in space* as a exemplary case in today Albanian prose?

During the first period, the articulation of structures is predominant, whereby the genotextual elements are preferred: the texts of Kongoli are part to a literature without a clear identity. During the second period there the genotext is the function of phenotext; the phenotextual routine makes it necessary the changing of the genotextual mechanisms: the literary work gains a distinct identity.

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