

IDENTITY POLITICS IN AGAMEMNON'S DAUGHTER: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

The Agamemnon's daughter is one of the most famous novels written by Ismail Kadare. Same as the antique tragedy, the daughter is sacrificed by her father for his career and to come to power. Kadare is famous for taking artistic motives from the Old and Antic Literature by changing the context where these characters are further developed. His literary works is one of the main references in terms of important historical concepts and cultural phenomena in Albania and as Enis Sulstarova (2013) says, 'he is the first Albanian author who achieved to create an Albanian identity. The various genres, the richness of treated topics, starting with antiquity and its modern continuity, accompanied with a wide range of characters and geographical areas included in it, create a great chance to trace the problem of feminist identity construction. This paper, aims to bring together theories of communication, literary criticism and feminism, being thus the first different reading approach done to this author's novels. Based on a poststructuralist approach this paper traces the dynamics of gender roles in this novel. Through discourse analysis, it will analyze how is constructed the feminist identity, looking for main features or functions that are attributed to women, especially in terms of identity politics. I aim to identify and examine the discursive strategies that are embedded in the novels I have selected, not only in their content, but also in their form, style and structure. Having in mind the political importance of the plot of this novel and the time when it was written, it is of special scientific interest to see how identity categories are built and interact among them.

Keywords: Identity, language, women, communism.

INTRODUCTION

Ismail Kadare is the most prominent author in Albania. His books are listed among the most well-known books, not only in Albania, but also in the European and World Literature. Both novels and poems written by him are a testimony of a highest artistic level that the Albanian language, as one of the oldest languages of the Balkans could offer. Ramon Sanches Lizarralde, one of his translators in Spanish, says that Ismail Kadare creates a gallery of characters, places, environments, connections, real or fantasies that live within his books...characters that want to create a whole new world, self-sufficient and alternative to this real world we live (Lizarralde 2008: pp. 23). As an author he is famous for his limits of time, geographies and sociological models. He himself says that "the combination of different periods of time, spaces, people's destinies, histories are often treated in literature and this means that literature is a vivid organism that has an answer for each dimension of human life (Beqiri, 1991: pp.127). Said this, in his works we can see the three dimensions of time clash together with geographical coordination, with social stereotypes and prejudices, all levels of consciousness, the man himself is a vivid and continuous battle field. It is due to this continuous dissonance that Ismail Kadare never declares a novel or a poem completely closed (Lizarralde 2008: pp. 21).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Nationalism, *the Other* and identity are some of the variables that are used to read and analyze the work of Kadare. His complexity has been one of the reasons why Kadare and his works have been subjected to these kinds of studies. Enis Sulstarova, author of a book based on the analysis of Kadare's works, says that Kadare in difference with other socialist writers has achieved to create an identity literature for Albanians.... [Because] he has chosen to treat in his works themes that are related with key moments of the Albanian nation (Sulstarova, 2013; pp. 156). Robert Elsie shares the same opinion, saying that the works of Kadare are a perfect reflection of the Albanian political life (Elsie, 1997: pp.338). For Eric Faye, critic of Ismail Kadare, says that the ambiguity of the writer is a chance for a complete radiology of the Albanian society (Novel 5. 12). Another study conducted on Kadare's novels is the one written by Viola Isufaj, who sees the return of famous mythological figures in his novels. Ke jing is another researcher, who tries to analyze the national identity of Albanians in relation to the *Other*. Same as Sulstarova, he traces the appearances of the *Other* and literature is used as a mean to make people believe what are the do's and the don'ts of their nation (Jing 2013; pp. 39).

This paper, part of a PhD thesis, brings in the attention of the research the gender variable, which has remained unnoticed till now. Tefik Caushi, Kadare's most famous critic, says that Eros is a cuddling fire in all his works and in many cases the milestone of the whole novel's structure (Caushi 2000; pp. 9). Another researcher, John Cox, say that Kadare is quite interested in issues dealing with women rights... [but] as in all Balkan literature, women are present only through their silence (Cox 2004). Here we can bring an interesting data about the absence of women. Tefik Caushi says that from 1200 characters, 77% of them are males and only 21% females and in his works we can find representatives of all gender and sex roles such as prostitutes, whores, courtiers, lesbians, homosexuals, hermaphrodites etc(Caushi 2005: pp.10). All these data are closer, but do not cover entirely the focus of this paper that tries to analyze identity based on the lingual characteristics that the main characters have and how do these "discourse" performs their identity, in term of gender relations.

METHODOLOGY

This study is based in the idea that writers tend to present and bring in the eyes of their readers, cultural notions related with gender, within their texts. Generally speaking these notions come in the form of stereotypes or prejudices about the role of men and women and in the majority of novels men tend to share different characteristics than women. The feminist critical approach aims to raise the awareness on the importance that language plays in constructing characters within the novels and how language in literature is used to show that the dominant group, so men are in a much more comfortable power position than women (Lacoff, pp.161). Concisely below are explained the main research objectives, questions, hypothesis and study limitations.

Research objectives

This paper has two main objectives

1. To explore the role of discourse in constructing gender identity

2. To highlight the relation between discourse, politics and gender concepts in the Agamemnon's daughter novel.

Research questions

- 1- How is created the feminist identity in this novel
 - How is constructed femininity?
 - How do characters politically perform their gender?
- 2- How do characters talk?
 - What kind of language structure they use?
- 3- When do characters talk?
 - Are topics objects of gender divisions?

Hypothesis

The main hypothesis of this paper is that Ismail Kadare, as a writer, builds the femininity and the *female based on a typical masculine position*, describing them as the other of the history and the drama that the hero passes through. Female characters tend to speak about less important topics than male characters, using simpler words in a complex grammatical structure. This kind of reading brings or better to say finds out lost elements within the text, completing entirely the character's identities in the eyes of the reader and in the image that the author itself creates for the female and the male within his literary universe.

Main theories and instruments of analysis

This paper aims to analyse the nature of discourse and its relation with power and ideology. As one of the main focuses of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is power relations within the text, the gender variable is one of the most interesting approaches in this field. In many ways, the feminist approach is paradigm, where a good part of the research is focused in social inequalities and domination (Van Dijk 2009: pp. 359). According to Michele Lazar (2005) the motivation for such an approach was that main names of CDA, such as Fairclough or Van Dijk have not been interested in this issue (pp.2-3). Jorgensen and Phillips (2004), in a broader sense CDA is a social –constructivist based in the idea that the representation of the world is half discursive, meanings are specific both culturally and historical and knowledge is created through social action (pp. 4-6). The feminist approach in CDA claims that this process of analysis is called demystification or denaturalization- so that its role is to undo those gender suppositions that are nothing but ideological and strengthen the power relation differences and inequalities (Lazar 2005: pp.7, Sunderland and Litosseliti: pp.19, 5, Talbot 1995: 151). Having in mind that CDA is a post- structuralist approach, we should not forget that language does not operate in an isolated environment, same as discourse that is always changing. Said this, the change in discourse in its essence is a cultural and systematic; even in the cases when it starts by one individual, it requires from the social community to change the way it speaks and reacts about it (Lemke 2008: pp. 26). Foucault says that...change in the case of discourse does presume the birth of “new ideas”, a small intervention or creativity...[it] implies transformations in the social practice, even in those close to it(Foucault 1969: 209).

We have no two main operational concepts to analyse the figure of women and femininity in Ismail Kadare's works. She is a semiotic body and a social subject. Lemke (2008) says that body carries a meaning (pp.71). Apart its biological function that is not of our interest, the

body carries out a social meaning, or better to say the individual *perse*. What Lemke said above is the sum of meanings that we give and use together with specifics of speaking, opinions and actions. This semiotic body is the basis where will be built later on the social subject and based on this we will analyze how does the author give to all female characters features that he himself perceives as typically feminine.

RESULTS

The Agamemnon of Suzana! - the father or the lover

Same as in antiquity, the daughter should be sacrificed for the future of her father. The modern Iphigenia is sacrificed in the name of power, ideology and the need to keep the state strong. Her outer characteristics such as age, gender, state, appearance and special features, are synchronized with her role as the daughter of the tyrant and together are important identity features of the character that in another time and another context is called Suzana (Isufaj 2013: pp.82). While her father, Agamemnon shares the same functions as the ancient tyrant, even though his actions are performed a) from another character and b) in another way (Isufaj 2013: pp.81), the successor sacrifices the love of his daughter.

The main male character, who is in the same time the narrator, does not possess any specific name; he is just he and his presence is in function of Suzana's identity. During the whole plot he waits for her, to come, to see him but she does not come and their communicative actions are performed in her absence. Her absence signifies that her sacrifice was taking place and together with her, was being sacrificed their love, the power and lives of many people. Sacrifice as an utterance in this case reveals the true identity and personality of Suzana; as a woman it is her duty to sacrifice herself for one of the men of life. This sacrifice, even though accepted, is not fully understood by the narrator who compares her mysteries with her sexuality.

Her words were half naked as her body and they would come out halved, unveiling their meanings with difficulty.

The importance of Suzana in the narrator's life is understood by the utterances that he uses to describe her sexuality. Without any discussion, it is the status of Suzana that defines the discourse that creates the narrator. Even though they are sexist in their lingual nature, they manage to transmit to the reader the nature of their relation and indirectly expressing the inferiority that the narrator uses to feel towards Suzana, not because she is a woman, but because she is the daughter of the tyrant.

To be true to myself, I was not sure, I would change for anything else, even with Vienna, that body in whose smoothness and whiteness was the hidden the girl and the woman; The St. Elysee of her legs, with the arch of triumph in their end and with the pink undead fire between. It has never happened to me to see a female that preserved such a smiling light in her face as she was seeing a dream, when she was making love.

Compared with other female characters of Kadare, Suzana is worthy for such metaphors, even though at the end the narrator discovers that behind the black shrub was nothing but a poor little animal. Said this, we have a strong statement for our analysis; females earn their status based on the male figure is close to them. The father of Suzana is the prerequisite of her status and the narrator the evaluator of her sexuality. Her sex and her sexuality gain

relevance thanks to her virginity. It's Suzana who brings up the topic, uncertain if her virginity was an added value or an impediment in his eyes.

Suzana does not talk and this is her first sacrifice, because the vocal scarcity does not permit her to say her own version of truth. The narrator is convinced that he lost Suzana for the tribune, same as her father, who is the representative of the patriarchal environment. Together these two men reveal the woman's drama that has always been obliged to sacrifice her for the sake of the men. The drama of Suzana walks in the plot unnoticed, paying attention only to the drama of hero. He accuses the father but forgets that he is also guilty, at least in the emotional sense.

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The Agamemnon's daughter is a political novel. Not only for the plot, but for the way characters interact together. In terms of discourse analysis it reaffirms the idea Fairclough that language is a powerful structure and it reveals the power relation between social actors. Suzana, as the only female character of the novel, represents the division between the private and public life; as a woman she is meant to be part of the private, even though she has to sacrifice herself for the public, which is represented in this case by the figure of her father and the voice of the narrator. In this sense Suzana brings again the myth that the female is apolitical in matters of state, but as a Mother, female, woman she is born to be sacrificed.

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