

## V. Propp Analysis of the 80s Short Prose Poetics in Albanian Literature

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### Abstract

The article explored through the lens of tale poetics, to find out whether there was an outline of the theory on the poetics of the tale in Albanian historiography or in the literary critical thought of the 80's, based on the structural morphological analysis of V. Propp. The chosen prose was among Albanian prose writers of the 80s, such as: V. Koreshi, N. Lera, Z. Çela, N. Prifti, K. Kosta, E. Kadare, S. Spasse etc. The methodology used within the article is based on the qualitative approach of the study, specifically on Propp's structuralist methodology has been used to categorize the functions and characters included within the short prose of the 80s Albanian authors. The study findings concluded that the cognition function is seen to have a special feature, both from the frequent use, as well as from the increased drama of the passages when this function occurs within the prose of the 80s literature in Albanian prose. Here we can say that the authors of socialist realism, have inadvertently followed a tradition or are strongly attached to the motive of recognition. Another important element is the transfiguration, which in the classical structure of the tale on which Propp has based his analysis, is totally physical, and for the most part is associated with a good change in the appearance of the hero, such as the removal of rags and wearing new clothes before taking the throne. In the case of the works analyzed in this paper, we have major changes that occur to the characters, both physically and in character development, but these changes occur with causes predetermined by the author, and do not occur for superficial reasons, as this was against the ideology of the time.

**Keywords:** *Propp, prose, 80s, Albania, author, structuralism, poetics, tale.*

### Introduction

The poetics of the tale, which reveals the totality of artistic means and features of the style of a writer or a literary direction (Dictionary of the Albanian Language, 2021). It includes various elements, such as the creative individuality of the writer, the peculiarities of the artistic portrait, the individual means of expression, the display of

the wonderful, magic, mysticism, myth, mystery, narrative style, treatments of social problems and phenomena of life, characters, popular psychology and wisdom, the dynamics of the development of the tale, its fable, etc. In the current article, the main aim is to analyse elements of the poetics of the tale will be studied in relation to the short prose of the 80's, through the optics of the structural morphology analysis of V. Propp. Prose is the conversion of a certain poem into a text using more or less the same literary figures. It is a simple creation. It has a freely defined structure, so it lacks the formal metric structure of the verse found in traditional poetry. It includes complete grammatical sentences and, consequently, paragraphs. Prose is widely suited to spoken dialogue, factual discourse, and actual and imaginary writing. Short prose is characterized by the breadth of an imaginative form of characters (as in dreams), the monopolizing monologue, and a shrinking dialogue (Dabishevci, 2020). The article will focus on revealing the poetics of the tale, elaborating on the research question: *Is there an outline of the theory on the poetics of the tale in Albanian historiography or in the literary critical thought of the 80's, based on the structural morphological analysis of V. Propp?* The identification of these elements in the Albanian historiography of the 80's will serve to build a hierarchy of literary values in this perspective. In this period, we include prose writers, such as: V. Koreshi, N. Lera, Z. Çela, N. Prifti, K. Kosta, E. Kadare, S. Spasse etc, and their short prose novels.

### **Literature Review: The Influence of Communism on 80s Prose in Albanian Literature**

It is inalienable that social, political and economic changes deeply affect the psychosis of a society, without question they are convincingly reflected in the artistic work of the authors of the works. The process of formation of socialist realism in literary creativity goes hand in hand with the crystallization of social consciousness "down", within the psychology of the masses and "up", with the strengthening of the ideological party institutes of the state. Endless discourses between artist circles in this plan, so competent is the new artistic unity as the "soc-realist method" that gained the status of state doctrine (Egypt, 2015).

During this period, literary production was forced to conform to the rules of the official method of socialist realism, which led, for the most part, to a literature deeply rooted in ideology, without true values (Gjika, n / a). Socialist realism in Albanian literature, in essence, took the form of a dynamic canonism (Even-Zohar, 1990). This was a method that was not imposed through texts, but prevailed as an external model of literary rules and norms, which served as the basis for literary productions.

Socialist realism was a creative method of literature and the arts, applied first in the former Soviet Union and then more intensively throughout the former communist countries during the twentieth century. In 1936, the Soviet government took measures to implement the indisputably total soc-realist method of all the arts in the USSR. Socialist realism became the dominant term in the science of Soviet literature and art sciences from the 1930s to mark the "fundamental approach" which "requires

the artist to present the concrete historical truth of reality in his revolutionary development", so literature had to be created with the task of educating workers in the spirit of socialism (Even-Zohar, 1990).

The notion of aesthetic "realism" had to do with the definition of "socialist", brought about the practice of subjugating literature and the arts to ideology. The demands for the use of the techniques of socialist realism actually became an obstacle, an anxiety to stop the creativity that for years was avoided against the spiritual life of the people, so that the writers created in their majority mediocre works of conformists who blew trumpets, which served propagandistic tendencies.

### **Methodology**

The article is based on the qualitative approach of the study. The literature review on the chosen topic is a methodology used in order to collect data from studies as well as the works of Albanian and foreign authors to better understand the elements of the poetics of the tale in the short prose of the 80's. Moreover, Propp's structuralist methodology has been used to categorize the functions and characters included within the short prose of Albanian authors of the 80's, assessing whether there is an outline of the theory on the poetics of the fairy tale in Albanian historiography (Dundes, 1964). There is usually an initial situation, after which the tale usually assumes 31 other functions, implying the action of the character from the point of view of its meaning for the course of action. Thus, similar actions can have different meanings and vice versa. The article uses 31 Propp functions which are: abstinence, influence, prohibition violation, detection, surrender, deception, cooperation, satanism or absence, mediation, initiation interaction, initiation, first donor function, hero reaction, reception of a magical agent, leadership, war, branding, profit, liquidation, return, pursuit, rescue, unknown arrival, grounded claims, difficult task, solution, recognition, exposure, transfiguration, punishment, and weddings. Not all fairy tales provide evidence for all functions (Propp, 1968).

Characters are categorized into Satan, sender, helper, princess or prize, giver, hero and fake hero. These roles can sometimes be distributed among different characters or a character can be involved in actions by playing more than one role in the play (Propp, 1968). Propp's method is the "syntagmatic" way of estimating, where the structure of folklore is divided and described in the chronological order of the linear events included in it. Diachronic analysis, equivalent to syntagmatic analysis conveys the feeling of traversing the low levels of a story. The criticism regarding this approach lies in the fact that it concerns only the structure of the text, isolating it from its social and cultural context. Structural analysis can be successfully applied to folklore, or to traditional stories within a community that have co-existed as a source of entertainment and social narrative functions, which are best unfolded in the literature of different countries. Propp opened wide perspectives for the analysis of folk history and narrative art in general, significantly advanced typological-structural investigations conducted in the West (Propp, 1968).

## Discussion

Exactly in the 80's the prose of Albanian writers underwent changes as a result of socialist realism in literary creativity. The latter adapts to the ideology, the external system of literary rules and norms. The demands for the use of the techniques of socialist realism actually became an obstacle, an anxiety to stop the creativity that for years was avoided against the spiritual life of the people, so the writers created in most of them mediocre works of conformists, which served propaganda tendencies. Among the basic principles on which socialist realism was based were proletarian partisanship, the progressive spirit, the social and class appreciation of reality, events and people; national character and popular spirit; socialist content, national spirit, positive hero and revolutionary optimism. In the late 80's in our country, realism became a literary and historical term. He promoted schematism, political adaptation, solidarity with the ruling ideology and propaganda of the time. The critical, theoretical and aesthetic thought of that time, as well as limited the line of Albanian novels based on the principle of ideas, characters, conflicts, forms the composition, narrative flow, stylistic and linguistic characteristics, in detail, comprehensive to soc-realistic methods. The Albanian author learned to be a social activist, a fighter, prisoner, liberator, or censor, or censored, persecutor and persecuted, anti-fascist, anti-communist, cynical, aggressive, peaceful, indifferent, dissatisfied. Sometimes writers were heroes, somewhat justified for what they did, because the dictatorship did not leave many choices, but the worst was the silence or rejection of the artistic creation of Albanian writers. The novel of Albanian literature of these years left the empty space so long for the desired reader in a subconscious world of a writer who really discovers what a reader needs. In addition to the literature published in Albania, there was also the literature of prisons and the literature of drawers; creators who, due to political persecution, were deprived of publication, but who had continued to write and publish their books in prose, poetry, dramaturgy, memoirs, etc. In addition to the works of the drawers, it is worth mentioning the censored or banned works, which despite the coercive measures, did not remain completely faithful to the socialist realization, so they did not remain hostage to dogma and therefore were banned and censored. It is worth mentioning the main metaphors of totalitarian discourse, which were the metaphor of the siege of the Albanian people in the face of the external and internal enemy, the image of the enemy presented with a negative emotional charge, the positive hero as a representative of a healthy Albanian socialist society, the construction of the cult of the leader as far-sighted and eternal and the sick figure of the micro-bourgeois intellectual.

The conduct of Propp analysis in this study is not related to the use of a benchmark for the quality of literature and literary works in the 80's, but comes as a missing innovation in terms of analysis and empirical approaches to literature when it comes to literature, and mainly for the literature of this historical period. If we refer to Propp's structuralist analysis of the works of Albanian short prose writers in the 80's, we can say that there is a partial outline of the theory on the poetics of the fairy tale

in Albanian historiography and literary critical thought. Propp in fact individualizes the structure of a very specific literary genre, that of Russian magic fairy tales, a genre rich in formulas which are repeated identically, through the structural analysis of a limited and organic fairy tale body: thus with full consciousness, no will be counted in any genre or narrative, but as a structure of a certain historically defined genre. Propp's morphology focuses on constant elements rather than variable details that characterize the creative contribution of individual narrators. Perhaps the most common criticism, one that can be raised against structuralism in general, is that an emphasis on basic structure can lead to a devaluation of the materials being studied and the specific people and cultures that create these materials.

However, in a large number of cases it is not easy to apply Propp's scheme in the literature of socialist realism, due to the influence of factors inside and outside the work, such as the difficulties of the characters in the time of communism, which do not allow the end of the characters to be happy, just as it happens in fairy tales and other works according to Propp. On the contrary, they could end up in death, because the system itself killed their dreams and happiness, as was the case of Linda B. in Kadare's "Obstructed". It is noticed that the heroes are the common people and that the devils are persons in power, who create innumerable difficulties for the heroes.

On the other hand, the difficulty of incorporating Propp analysis is related to the developmental stage of literature itself, beyond the influence of communism on ideological elements, the literature of socialist realism itself had entered a somewhat modernist, at least compared to pre-war literature Second in Albania, and not taking into account the foreign literature which was considered decadent. This literature does not have a canonical structure, like that of the classical tale presented by Propp, where the structure stops at most of the list of analysis functions. However, the literary period itself, mixed with the ideology and artistic-political constraints of the time, causes a large part of the functions of analysis to be missing, or to appear indirectly, by means of parallels, which were obligatory for the authors at a time when it was impossible to express their direct opinion.

However, in different authors is seen a greater mastery in working the structure beyond the content, where we can certainly single out Kadare. Among the most common elements found and during the analysis of various works and authors, we can notice the absenteeism or the escape and absence of someone, evil or cunning which often came in the form of the invading enemy, the element of initial interaction, which unites the hero or characters of the work with the antagonist or representative of evil, while raising the moral values and not only of the other party. Also, among other functions we can include the function of branding or marking, ie leaving the mark on the hero or antagonist, the function of victory, unknown arrival, difficult task, recognition and transfiguration. In some of the works, among which we can mention the clear example of "Ballad of Kurbin" by Vath Koreshi, the hero's sign comes as a

reminder of his bravery and sacrifice, but nevertheless makes him find no later happiness in life.

On the other hand, the function of victory is seen that in works of heroic character is emphasized more, showing that the Albanian people always win against the enemy, even in very difficult situations, while on the other hand, in works of more personal character, internal victory or and small individual victories of the characters are not given much importance. The function of the difficult task often takes the form of a heroism and self-sacrifice of varying magnitude depending on the character and the type of work, to suit the morals and needs of his country.

The cognition function is seen to have a special feature, both from the frequent use, as well as from the increased drama of the passages when this function occurs. Here we can say that the authors of socialist realism, have inadvertently followed a tradition or are strongly attached to the motive of recognition.

Another important element is the transfiguration, which in the classical structure of the tale on which Propp has based his analysis, is totally physical, and for the most part is associated with a good change in the appearance of the hero, such as the removal of rags and wearing new clothes before taking the throne. In the case of the works analyzed in this paper, we have major changes that occur to the characters, both physically and in character development, but these changes occur with causes predetermined by the author, and do not occur for superficial reasons, as this was against the ideology of the time.

Although the Propp scheme can be used to give a linear view of events, synchronous analysis would be more desirable than Propp diachronic analysis, to provide a greater sense of unity among the components of a story. In this way, the elements of the plot can be extracted from their existing order and regrouped according to different analytical schemes. One such reason has to do with the fact that it is not easy to grasp the profound meaning of events through Propp's diachronic analysis of communist literature in conditions where authors had to defend themselves against power and at the same time express their indignation at it.

Based on this analysis, a number of functions are missing in the Albanian works of the 80's, including mediation, the hero's reaction, the magic element and salvation. Mediation is a missing function mainly for ideological reasons, considering that the pride of the heroes does not allow them to mediate with the enemy, as in the case of the priest and the villagers with the foreign commander of Zija Çela's "Twilight Bells", bringing thus just one of many examples.

Based on all these findings, we can not analyze and draw conclusions about the quality of a work, and moreover an entire literature, only that it is not in full structural compliance with a certain analytical model. However, taking into account the great compatibility of Propp analysis and its constituent functions with the oldest Albanian literature, from the popular myths and legends, to the literary stage when socialist

realism appeared, linking both variables together, we can conclude that the influence of the ideology of the time was not only seen in the content of the works, supporting certain narratives and censoring others, but was also seen in the structure of the works, leaving a large part of them empty, without a intended to go and touch the reader in any way, albeit within politically permitted limits.

Many scholars consider the tale a reflection of social utopia and the developmental and structural continuity of the myth, and therefore the tale, beyond its aesthetic and ethical functions, also contains reflections of social and cultural, moral, and aesthetic paradigms. The tale with its very specific discourse, has a highly symbolic structure which takes on meaning only within the internal semantic context of the tale, having within it an essential truth, which has no sense outside the tale directly, nor makes sense if we see it as a parallelism or analogy in real life.

The intertextual interplay of fabulous structures, when it comes to Kadare's works, is investigable in his prose, sometimes even quite cultivated towards and intricate and difficult to locate precisely as oral hypertext in relation to the element of the authorial imagination that follows a is always supplemented by an oral model or becomes part of it. In some prose, signs of *trasmotiv* were found.

Considering one of the research questions of this paper, on the existence of an outline of the theory on the poetics of the tale in Albanian historiography or in literary critical thought, we can say that this outline appears weak if we consider the universe of Albanian literature as belongs to the time period analyzed in this study. Poetics is identified in theoretical and critical terms. Artistic prose does not function in the same way as other non-artistic verbal structures. The very need for a special portico for artistic prose makes us think of it as a separate genre, with its own features, problems and opportunities, different from others. In attempts to define poetics the tendency to distinguish it as indicative of the science and art of poetry at the same time has been observed. So poetics is presented to us as a functional analysis of literary development. It is important, however, that poetics be seen not only as the individual talent of the author, but also as a microstructure, as a socio-historical context.

The literature of the communist period in Albania, with a special focus on the literature of the 80's, develops between the two extremes in terms of taking motives and structural elements from fairy tales or similar literary categories. On the one hand, most of the authors did not have such an inspiration or basis and wrote works completely original and in accordance with the literary principles of socialist realism, which is evidenced by the profound lack of functions of the Propp model, however, are the same authors whose works are often analyzed as works of a certain historiographical significance, but not necessarily literary, as they are often seen to have the sole purpose of conveying an ideological message to the reader. The literature of socialist realism, extending in a not short period, remains completely uninterpreted: not in the causes and context of flourishing, but in its internal legitimacy, in the determination of values and anti-values, in the distortion of the

relation of the principles of poetics internal and extra-literary imposing factors, etc. Outside the complexes related to the political period of communism, today's studies should be directed to this period, as a scientific necessity, to complete the structure of the history of the development of literature in Albania. Modernity is a new interpretation of the secret spirit of the world, it is the search for a new referent for the world that discovers it by marking it. The intertexts of history and function are evident in the works taken in the socialist analysis of the 1980s. So the text to access it more from the lens of its connection to history. with the signs of ideological and political worlds, eccentric and parodic, as well as with the force humanism, cultural discourse and postmodernism.

## Conclusions

The article explored through the lense of tale poetics, to find out wether *there wasan outline of the theory on the poetics of the tale in Albanian historiography or in the literary critical thought of the 80's, based on the structural morphological analysis of V. Propp*. The choosen proze was among albanian prose writers of the 80s, such as: V. Koreshi, N. Lera, Z. Çela, N. Prifti, K. Kosta, E. Kadare, S. Spasse etc. The cognition function is seen to have a special feature, both from the frequent use, as well as from the increased drama of the passages when this function occurs. Here we can say that the authors of socialist realism, have inadvertently followed a tradition or are strongly attached to the motive of recognition. Another important element is the transfiguration, which in the classical structure of the tale on which Propp has based his analysis, is totally physical, and for the most part is associated with a good change in the appearance of the hero, such as the removal of rags and wearing new clothes before taking the throne. In the case of the works analyzed in this paper, we have major changes that occur to the characters, both physically and in character development, but these changes occur with causes predetermined by the author, and do not occur for superficial reasons, as this was against the ideology of the time.

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