

Dritero Agolli – The Writer of Tradition who Enriched the Albanian Vocabulary

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Abstract

Dritero Agolli was an Albanian writer who is mostly remembered in October due to his birthday. He was born on October 13th of 1931 and passed away on February 3rd of 2017 in Tirana. The critics have named Agolli as a poet of the land. The month of October was traditionally tagged as the “Month of Literature”. We say it traditionally since this month is already considered as a festive period when all readers and writers are brought together by the ART OF THE WORD. Scholars and academicians celebrate this month. They pay honor to all ones who contributed to the history of Albanian literature: Padre Gjergj Fishta, born on October 23rd of 1871 and described as Albanian Homer; Migjeni, born on October 13th of 1911 whom famous Ismail Kadare considered as the hurricane of the Albanian literature. Through the work of the pen, producing a perfect, rich, accurate and pure language – with the words and terminologies deriving from random people – Dritero Agolli earned a destination in the pantheon of Albanian culture. We say often that a writer or another was a product of the setting and social-historical and cultural circumstances where they were born and grew up. But, could we say the same statement for writer Dritero Agolli? Certainly, yes! All his work was based on the Albanian tradition and on the magnificent Albanian word. The writer paid attention that all his products were enriched by a vocabulary that derives from the treasure of Albanian ethnic folklore.

Keywords: Mud, rain, woman, land, plough.

The depth of a study is equally important to the methodology used in scientific research aiming to reach accurate conclusions about the history of Albanian literature. There is a need to use several methodological approaches to carry out a study regarding the figure and work of Dritero Agolli. The biographical approach reveals the truthful evidence that influenced the life of the writer, the way he grew up, the way he was educated and how he emigrated abroad. All these elements impacted his literary and life views. The sociological and psychological approaches become a source to analyse the work of Agolli. The combination of the three approaches mentioned above constitutes the methodology of scientific work research.

Dritero Agolli was born on October 13th of 1931 in Menkulas, Devoll District near Korca and passed away on February 3rd in Tirana. Upon

receiving his first lessons in his hometown he continued to attend a high school in Gjirokastra – a school with a sound tradition. (Baku, Pasho: 2011).

The list of Dritero Agolli works was considerable, but we can cite some of his poetry works: I went out (Albanian: *Në rrugë dola*); My steps on the pavement (Albanian: *Hapat e mija në asfalt*, 1961); Mountain paths and sideways (Albanian: *Shtigje malesh dhe trotuare*, 1965); Midday (Albanian: *Mesditë*, 1969); Flea (Albanian: *Pleshti*, 1971); Mother Albania (Albanian: *Nënë Shqipëri*, 1974); A word carves the stone (Albanian: *Fjala gdhen gurin*, 1977); Travelling thoughtfully (Albanian: *Udhëtoj i menduar*, 1985); The delayed pilgrim (Albanian: *Pelegrini i vonuar*, 1993); The time beggar (Albanian: *Lypësi i kohës*, 1995); The strange man approaches (Albanian: *Vjen njeriu i çuditshëm*,

1996); The spirit of our forefathers (Albanian: *Shpirti i gjyshëve*, 1996); proses: The noise of the winds of the past (Albanian: *Zhurma e erërave të dikurshme*, 1964); A good man (Albanian: *Njeriu i mirë*, 1973); Insane people (Albanian: *Njerëz të krisur*, 1995); plays: White age (*Mosha e Bardhë*, 1974); novels: Commissar Memo (Albanian: *Komisari Memo*, 1970); The splendor and fall of comrade Zylo (Albanian: *Shkëlqimi dhe rënia e shokut Zylo*, 1973); The man with a cannon (Albanian: *Njeriu me top*, 1980); Rose in the glass (Albanian: *Trëndafili në gotë*, 1980); The loser (Albanian: *Dështaku*, 1991); The naked horseman (Albanian: *Kalorësi lakuriq*, 1996); The devil's box (Albanian: *Arka e Djallit*, 1997).

In regards to the Albanian literary historiography that has created an illusion for a poetic continuity under the dictate of socialist realism principles, created later, and the poetry of the generation of the years '60, and as an unusual bearer of historical and ideological thought of the time – the art of Dritero Agolli of the years '60, similarly to that of Kadare and Arapi, runs as a formally rigorous poetic discourse, connoted through an expressive artistic knot that talks within the context of poetry, without compromising any historical or ideological deformation (Suta, Blerina: 2013)

Agolli turned his focus to folk poetry because of his concept to create a poem that should contain defined national tones and insignia. His works begin only in those works, happenings or spiritual sense that he experienced directly, where he was physically and spiritually present, which reminds you of a folk poet. He was directly nourished by it, as much as reliance on folklore comes naturally, so the elements borrowed from the folklore are organically incorporated within the new work and exploited creatively. Albanian poetry, of all ages, marks the core of our national culture because it represents the soul of our nation more than other arts. (Gjokutaj, Merita: 2013)

In the pages of a new book, we meet an old relative who brings us his poetic word embracing the phases of the historic development of the country, the progress of the literature, the psychology of the time, and researches and achievements on the field of mastery. (Brahimi, Razi: 1986)

The prose and particularly the poetry of Dritero Agolli has constantly reflected a strong feeling of love for the homeland, for honesty, human relations between people and for sincerity

and honesty of communication. It seems always you have found something new when reading Agolli's poems.

Dritero Agolli has never ceased to be a very popular poet. He does not keep any distance from a random reader, where he perceives the pain, joy and human weakness as universal feelings and merges them into a life philosophy (Memisha, Valter: 2013)

The loyalty to the verse he started his career, regardless of his great success as a narrator, novelist, playwright, screenwriter, literary critic, journalist, etc., has upgraded him to the level of a proper national poet, because inside the modern verse you may feel the charming poetic scent of Naim and the life philosophy of Lasgushi's poetry. (Bexheti, Vebi: 2013)

Dritero Agolli has the village as a "starting point" to pave the highest paths of appropriately composed poetry and represents a determined creator who "tries and suffers over poetry", who "suffers over syllables and verses", and who is satisfied with a little. Such is the poem entitled Poetic desire (Albanian: *Dëshirë poetike*):

*"Let me take the word and make it a "plis ugari",**

*Take the foam and make it sugar,
take the wheat and make it a cigarette paper,
to take the river and make it a rainbow,
to take the mountain and make it a barn,
to take the raindrop and to make it a ballerina".*

(*"I travel thinking"*, Tirana, p.11).

There is no avoidance of reality in Agolli's lyrics. The sense of feeling and mastery of poetry are in artistic harmony with aesthetic values conveyed by the reality, along with the beauty of nature to which the author is particularly sensitive (Brahimi, Razi: 1986).

His love for poetry, which he calls "my first love", prompted him to rush towards its towers to find the poetic "muse" and to follow it, without being hindered as did Halil for pretty Tanushe in the epics of the braves.

The novels Commissar Memo (Albanian: *Komisari Memo*, 1970) is the most engaged work of Dritero Agolli in prose. But, The splendour and fall of comrade Zylo (Albanian: *Shkëlqimi dhe rënia e shokut Zylo*, 1973) was considered as one of his most important contributions in prose.

* The *plis* is a white brimless felt cap traditionally worn by Albanians; *Ugari* means a cultivated land.

Describing the dishonour career of an official, the novel at the same time gives a reflection on the inseparable position of his subordinate, who is part of “crazy people”, a feature of overall Agolli’s literature.

The man to whom Dritero Agolli sings is connected to the earth, like the *meat to nail*. The earth marks his cradle and grave, his happiness and misfortune. He cannot live without it. The relationships: life / death, happiness / sorrow, betrayal / faith coexist and collide with each other both in the external and internal reality of Agolli.

The poet indicates to have learned from his father, his knowledge and education derived from his father. The benefit depends on how you treat something. Dritero Agolli entered into Albanian literature as a character, changing the dimension of the future. The Albanian literature of the '60 would have been turned into a big empty box if Agolli’s works might have been missing. The characters of Dritero Agolli comprise the farmer, peasant, shepherd, student, highlander, wife, mother, girlfriend, etc.

For almost half a century, Dritero Agolli skillfully elaborated the story, enriching thus the traditional and modern Albanian narration. Above all, the writer was attracted by “crazy people”, “crazy” out of time, the ones who like adventures and behaviours that break taboos and norms; beings who survive different temporal and cultural strata, the ones committing crimes and sins; the ones mainly possessed by demons.

Dritero Agolli is already now a classic of Albanian literature. His place in this literature is defined and endured forever. Dritero Agolli was highly evaluated by literary historians and at the same time highly read and much loved by readers.

Dritero Agolli is a writer who views and treats the ordinary as unordinary, within the daily he treats the permanent, within the small he views and treats the big, and within the goodness, he treats the evil. Not many writers embrace such talent. Agolli’s characters are as strange as random, as tragic as comic, and as simple as much magnificent. All those merits derive from his mastery, enriching Albanian vocabulary and lexicon.

Much read and loved by readers, he was also a great orator in literary, cultural and political life, or in overall social life. He was a real master in verbal communication, in literary and artistic creativity; so, he was a real artist.

The readers of his literary creativity also hear the voice of Naim Frasheri, Andon Zako Cajupi, Ndre Mjeda, Fan Noli, Migjeni and Lasgush Poradeci.

Thus, he becomes a continuator, animator, enricher of the hidden language, full of wisdom and beauty of people and its most representative creators.

Dritero Agolli will remain precarious or very precarious to his biographers, just for a reason: he will always be evaluated for his vertical and dignified attitude after the fall of communism. He has never tried or in other words justified himself for some actions or articles he might have done in the past, as it happened or as the others did. Dear Dritero, rest in peace in the house of eternity, because you will be considered as an incomparable precious and loved by readers, by the ones who love the beautiful and wise word, as it was your word.

The poetry that constantly challenged the time, bringing with it numerous evidences even for the moments, including most thrilling, kept intact the high artistic value without being transformed into a daily chronicle. In these difficult moments for Albanian society, the poet transformed his experiences from personal to universal scales. Rare are the poems, the verses of which are so harmonized in form and content, a phenomenon that is known to Agolli’s poetry that makes this poem so dear to the reader and listener. Despite the poet’s tendency to draft verses without rhyme frequently, he was identified with a verse believing that this was the way to deliver to the reader both poetry and song.

The entire work of Agolli was inspired by the highest principles that humanity had created through centuries, by the best values of Albanianism, humanism, justice, and love for humanity, homeland, for its history and language, for the land and song, for the wonderful folklore and customs of its ethnicity. The poet’s love has conditioned the aestheticization of the Albanian rural world; of the mud, forests, animals and birds, transforming them into significant and representative signs of our old and new civilization.

His literary work demonstrates the fact that the author is a free creator, mature just like few ones in Albanian literature, wise on his word and opinion, careful to ethical, moral, national and universal values, where the word and its elements – the spiritual world of an individual and his metaphysics – were treated with a new, modern and innovative spirit (Zisi, Roland & Boçi, Luçiano: 2013).

Dritero Agolli's creativity was dominated and prevailed by a boundless love for Albanian customs, psyche and specific culture, respect for parents and grandparents, honor and adoration for the material and spiritual culture created over centuries.

Dritero Agolli was a lifelong traveller of Arbanon lands, traveller of a day and night, a modern poet of Albanian land, of *Plisi* and *Ugari*, a poet of a village and villager who survives with the nature, where he seeks and finds the paradise, true harmony, a simple and magnificent singer of the plant and animal world (Zisi, Rolan & Boçi, Luciani: 2013).

Creating beauty in the difficult and hard times of history means having a broad vision for freedom, democracy and humanism (Agolli, Dritero: 2006).

Different types of verses and meters, ways of figure construction as the great intertwining of thoughts and feelings, resembling the random life objects, most often of rural life – are adapted in his popular poetry. Through these values, particularly renewing the traditional types, he was among the most influential poets in the internal development of poetry, as well as over the mass readers. Agolli's poems have been published even in foreign languages: French, English, Italian, German, Spanish, Turkish, Greek, Swedish, Chinese, etc. (Kuçuku, Bashkim: 2014)

Conclusion

The workload of the Dritero Agolli created a new tradition in Albanian literature and this fact makes us happy. He uses very simple words he took from the muse of Albanian folklore; he is distinguished by other writers who didn't keep a distance from random readers. His work is appreciated for having the highest human and intellectual values in which the virtue turned them into a verse and then a verse to poetry. He was distinguished for the strongest spiritual feelings that overpassed any living being, in which the sorrow, happiness and concerns were considered as universal feelings and were immortalized in the daily life of Albanians.

In our opinion, the works of Dritero Agolli marks the most perfect model when using the Albanian word both in prose and poetry. Using a masterful poetic word author achieved to enrich the lexicon of the Albanian language.

Dritero Agolli provided a valuable opportunity to our mother tongue by using in

poetry many words and expressions from everyday life or making known some expressions that haven't been used in the past, or some words that were little known or totally unknown in Albanian language.

Dritero Agolli owns the undeniable merit having brought to Albanian language a model that the language lacked, the original and unrepeatable model, that of media communication with the conversation, the direct and simple word. So, he brought the everyday word as a model.

Dritero Agolli enriched the Albanian word and focused his attention on the Land and Human. Agolli's prose and poetry mark the love for Albanian language, the intuited use of it in unknown situations and its masterful combination of its lexicon with all aspects of daily life.

Dritero Agolli enriched the Albanian word with a lexicon, phraseology and proverbs from Devolli region, the region he was born. All these words supported the traditional enrichment of the pan Albanian folklore lexicon. He bears the merit of transformation of everyday language to literary discourse.

Dritero Agolli was highly appreciated by literary students and much read and loved by readers because he was a versatile writer. He was a famous poet, narrator, novelist, playwright, screenwriter, publicist, essayist and orator.

In his works he has presented various aspects of Albanian life, the happiness and pain, good or bad things, victories and defeats, freedom and violence – that was a reason he was much loved and read.

His literary creativity represents a spiritual biography for Albanian people. In the eyes of Agolli the ordinary life was seen as unusual; the everyday life was seen as permanent; the big was seen within the small; the sorrow was seen within the happiness. Not many writers have such a talent.

Dritero Agolli will remain precious, very precious to his biographers, just for another reason: for his vertical and dignified attitude after the fall of communism. He will never try, in one way or other, to justify himself for some actions or for some writings done in the past, as it has happened or as did few others.

Rest in eternal peace dear, because you will be immeasurably precious and immeasurably loved by readers who love the beautiful and the wise word, such as your word.

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