

THE FORMATIVE AND SEMANTIC FEATURES OF ANTON PASHKU'S NOVEL "OH"



Literature

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Abstract

Anton Pashku is one of the most important writers of Albanian literature. His writing model makes him special and important. By reversing the structure and the traditional writing of the time he brought innovation to his writings, becoming the leader of modernity among us. Through supporting folk language and phraseology, theme selection, narration, etc., he gained the nickname of the master of writing. The marking title: The formative and semantic features of Anton Pashku's novel, marks the object of this paper and the study's approach within it. Therefore, the subject of the study will be the novel "Oh", while the study approach will be its formative and semantic features. Basically, the study approach of this paper will start from text markers as the first step to entering the text; the oral premodel as a figure and discourse, marking the substrate on which the roots of the works lie; the text layers, which, as narrative levels, keep the story and story-narrator connected to the text; themes grounding from history and modernity, as the "arena" from which ideas will be brought. All the aforementioned elements will lead us to the conclusion that: considering Anton Pashku's novel "Oh" as a synthesis work, from which the threads of later scripts are also taken into account, but in which are seen the signs of previous writings, it follows that, this novel, is based on profound, consolidated, restructured, transposed, and materialized recent thoughts in the work.

Introduction

Anton Pashku (1937-1995) began to write at an early age. From the early beginnings of his writings¹, his talent and the his writing style differed from the literature written in his time. First of all, his writing style disregarded the literary standard norms of that time, so, in Pashku's writing was noticed a disenchantment from formative signers to the level of expression as a discourse.

Through new structuring, in his work, Pashku builds figurative language on the essence of literature, which on the one hand performs aesthetic function and at the same time becomes "double protective from censorship and from slipping into militancy",² while on the other hand in the thematic field, by not conducting himself to great subjects, and through launching individual themes that address the fate of the individual, individual vital and psychological concerns, Pashku establishes the thematic foundation of his work. Since in the novel "Oh", the fate of the individual, problems and challenges during the course of history, dialogue together from time to time, the figurative language has the forefront of folklore, and the thematic code in mythology, history and modernity.

Facing the folklore pre-model, through figurative language, and escaping from the broad themes to free the space for individual ones, were the foundation of modern writers of the thirties of the last century.

¹ Anton Pashku published his first story in 1955, in youth magazine *Jeta e re*, titled: *Në gjiri* (In genesis).

² Sabri Hamiti, *Tematologjia*, Kosovo Academy of Sciences and Arts, Prishtinë, 2005, f. 45.

In the context of this, the work of Pashku is consequently structured on the basis of a prior consent, as a recognition and as renewed acquaintance to modern scripture re/emerging and re/marking as a form/pattern of these writings.

Subsequently, Pashku just follows this stream, perfecting it and making a pattern of his literary writing. As such, Anton Pashku is the leader of modernity in Kosovo; his literary work is avant-garde and a journey towards symbolism.

The novel “*Oh*”, was published in 1971. This novel, whether by form or content, remains unique and became the crown of the great master of the novel writing, Anton Pashku.

Text Markers in “OH”

The marking title “*Oh*” (*oh! Ouch!*) as a sorrow of pain, carries the most representative symbol of the destiny of the people. This is a sigh of grief for the historical past, for the present (the time of writing the work), which is reflected as the ideological violence of the repressive system and fear of future violence.

The novel “*Oh*” is Anton Pashku' Synthesis Work "by the way the text microthemes are structured on overall theme, as well as by the way of structuring different levels of texts and different novel layers within the novel. The work collects almost all of the first topics that emerge in the previous and subsequent works of this author, be it in the stories, as well as in the later plays.”³

Depending on the narration of the story, the narrative plan of the text of this novel is multifaceted. In addition to the fable that keeps the parts of the text chronologically linked from the beginning to the end, through the various stories in this text (variants), spoken through the characters, that are made in different narrative ways and each of these stories requires a corresponding decoding.

The novel “*Oh*” elaborates the subject of betrayal in the universal, national and individual variant”.⁴

However, Anton Pashku did not become modern writer only by the choice of subject. The modernization of the work and the way of confession made him modern and special. These elements give him the primacy of the peculiar writer, of the writing master, of the born narrator, of the modern monk of Albanian letters, and so on. The novel “*Oh*” carries the symbols of a well-thought-out script, the decoding of which symbols requires the semiotic / aesthetic reader ⁵.

³ Sabri Hamiti, *Anton Pashku*, Albas, Tiranë, 2017, pg. 71.

⁴ Kujtim Shala, *Elipsa*, Buzuku, Prishtinë, 2007, pg. 207.

⁵ Kujtim Shala, *Analepsa, Letërsia shqipe në katër pamje*, Timegate, Prishtinë, 2013, pg. 341.

a) Pre-Model/Model

Anton Pashku stated that: "I am constantly saying that I consider folk literature; I can freely say that I have recently come out of folklore".⁶ Highly appreciating the folkloric pre-model, he marveled at the perfect form of proverbs and rumors that he says has made the poem of poetic language in the novel "Oh". However, he complained about not enhanced language, whether in speech or in writing, because of not enriching it with its variants, as the authors of great literature do.

Therefore, "At the level of literary expression, this figurative folk language is involved in the work as a quotation ...",⁷ as a style, rounded into discourse, which becomes a script model in the novel "Oh".

While Pashku himself considered folk literature as pre-model, the thematic code refers to betrayal in variations, separately from that universal, national and individual betrayal.

b) Structure of the Work

The structure of the novel "Oh" is circular and, as such, figuratively closed. It means that Pashku's story keeps the stories that are related to it, regardless of narrative and narrative movements from one personage to another. Then, within the general structure, we encounter other circles, each closed in its own variant, and in the function of that principal. The work begins and ends with the same characters - He and She, and other stories within this novel are in function of the idea connected within the fable.

Within the text structure, in the novel "Oh", we observe six narrative levels, which are: the story of the narrator revealed to a female (woman) marked as dialog between He and She, the story of the Elder, the story of Batos, the story of the Misogamist, the story of the Father and the Son, and the story of The Hunters (within the text of the reportage form). The beginning and ending of the novel "Oh" is in present time, while other stories are moving through within the time, from antiquity to the idea of a projection for the future. The present relates to reality as a place and time, while other times are part of imaginary journeys.

c) The Thematic Code

The main motive and theme of the novel "Oh" has a paradigm in treason. Then this betrayal lies in variations, from the universal, national and individual levels.

⁶ Rexhep Murtez Shala, *CD Libris, Antidrama e autorit (intervistë e improvizuar me Pashkun)*, Papyrus, Prishtinë, 2001, pg. 59.

⁷ Sabri Hamiti, *Vetëdija letrare*, Rilindja, Prishtinë, 1989, pg. 370.

As the biblical variation emerges, then these signs must be revealed from figurative and allegorical language. The Bible variation is also related to the individual betrayal, while, national variation is related to folklore and history, as strings that go hand in hand.

The theme of betrayal in all variants has a genesis.

In the universal and philosophical, biblical code, betrayal (as a derivative of sin) has the roots deriving from the first people of the world, Adam and Eve.

Eating the Forbidden Fruit, without God's permission, would punish Adam and Eve with the expulsion from Heaven. The eating of the Fruit becomes the Incarnation of Greed, which has consequences.

In the Pashku's novel, the sin is allegorically reflected through the characters He and She. Here, if we raise the parallels between Eve and Adam, it is She (the female) who leaves Him (the male) and escapes from Him, who in biblical philosophy makes a sin against him. Therefore the female (She) betrays the male (who we are marking here as He).

In the national variant, historic betrayal is reflected through Batos' war. The Bato of Desidiats is betrayed by the Bato of Breuks. The betrayal comes as a result of the greed for power. In the novel "Oh", betrayal is enshrined through two-sided mirrors, as a trait element and by the greed for the power of Gent, which he intends to do through the beautiful Etleva.

Textual Analysis

a) As mentioned above, "Oh" has a closed structure (in the form of a circle) and within this structure are investigated six narrative levels, which relate to the tale, and serve to its function.

To remember the structure in a circle shape, note that the first part of the text (beginning) is almost the same as the last part (ending). For example, while at the beginning, the fish stand inside the aquarium along with the reddish fish, by the end, the fish fall down (dye), and above remain only reddish fish, which, here, symbolize the hangman.

Then, the first and last part of the novel characterizes the time, place and characters, which are the same. The time within the text is expressed through the expression: *only a little separated us from the dawn*; the place is expressed through *the rooms*; the characters are expressed through *He (narrator) and She (woman)*. Both characters are characterized by different elements; while He marks the character of thought and meditation (but does not act), She is characterized by the type of dreaming character, building sand castles. So, characters are different on their own. Seeking for her man from the dreams, She always criticizes Him for inaction, demanding from Him to join her

dream and become one with her. The contradictions between them in the end lead to separation, because She abandons Him, leaving him lonely in his room.

While the first and last part is characterized by the real time and place (within the world of the novel), all other narrative parts are imaginary journeys, in the form of neatly accomplished stories.

b) The transition from the first narrative level (that of the beginning of the novel) to the second level is done through the aquarium water. Through the look of the aquarium water, He begins the imaginary journey into the Water of the Artificial Lake where He and She meet the Elder, who as a character reflects the symbol of life experience, wisdom of antiquity.

The narrator's description of the Elder's character passes through four time levels to show the age: first - *the old man said*, next - *said the old man*, later - *said the old man with a white beard*, and finally - *said the elder with a wrinkled face*. All four of these figures and symbols represent a state of aging. The story of the old man is told through anguish and pride. He recounts the story of his life, of his connection to the earth and the mountain as an emblem of resistance. The epiphany of life he narrates through the figure (symbol) of the black-patched sheep, which is always absent and separated from the herd, implies the fact that the black-patched (the sheep separating from the herd) never existed.

When confession rebounds to the elder, it is characterized by two levels of recounting – on one hand the recount is mythically related to folklore and mythical philosophy, and on the other hand it is historically related to the issue itself.

The Elder portrays a folk figuration when he speaks of the loss of a sheep (black-patched), more over, when portreying folk tales (for the oaks, whose stem can not be fastened even by the arms of twelve men).

c) The Elder's shrift bouncing from the folk tales to the historical issues is made by a universal Pashkian symbol, the water, which takes the place of topos. He, through the *çifteli*⁸ boat travels in the historical past to reveal a picture of the past, which carries elements of pride and betrayal at the same time.

d) The main symbols that come out on the historic plain within the novel "*Oh*" are: *The çiftelia boat*, marks survival and memory since it never sinks, so it is the symbol of resistance; *It (çiftelia)* marks the song as a remembrance and reminiscence.

⁸ The çifteli (çiftelia - "double stringed") is a plucked string instrument, with only two strings, played mainly by the Gheg people of northern and central Albania, Southern Montenegro, and Kosovo.

Folk symbols are presented through: *The Sun Cart* - "connotes the Illyrian God of the war of unity"⁹, *Two-sided mirrors* - sign and symbol of betrayal (double game), *wood wedges* - symbol of splitting and dividing.

The socio-ethical cripples and the tendency to disguise them through reticative and idle speeches has been figuratively realized through the character of Misogamist.

The oval chamber, in which he appears as a leader and manipulates with the crowd, marks the character of the smuggler. While he, on the one hand, seeks to reign with justice and respect, on the other hand, speaks of his children born out of wedlock, who are too many and behave veldly.

The speech held before the crowd, a fascinating misogyny speech, is a conversation related to the empty demagogic speeches of the politicians of the time when the repressive system forced the mass to attend gatherings to adopt politicians' plans and in their interest, for sure.

e) The conversation between The Father and The Son is ambiguous. Also, their conversation is related to The Elder's story of earth and mountain and love for the country, it advances further through the demagogy of Misogamist, allegedly about justice between nations and countries.

While The Father is spiritually connected to the earth, what concretely requires first to recognize the autochthony and then what is universal, The Son, in his imagination, designs cosmopolitan politics through the symbol of Cosmopole, proclaiming the equality of all citizens of the world. This is not even less than the demagogy of the communist system within the union-brotherhood motto. So, in this story, The Son betrays what is national and craves universality, without knowing what the first is.

Thus, the figurative and symbolic language of violence and political demagogy of the time is drawn through the image of the demagogue and the oval room. While his conversation with his father (conversation between The Father and The Son) best describes the idea of first having to know what is autochthonous, what is yours (your home), and then what is more distant, is presented through the figure of Cosmopole.

f) The sixth narrative level is presented in a reportage form. In addition to being connected to Christophoris's "Mountaineer's Nest" as it prophesies the "waiting horizon" as predicting a war (massacre) that would occur in Kosovo.

⁹ Nysret Krasniqi, *Libri i Pashkut (Romani Oh – Interpretim letrar)*, Buzuku, Prishtinë, 2005, f. 76.

This slaughterhouse has its roots in treason, where in national terms, begins with the deprivation of Kosovo's autonomy and ends with a bloody war. The conversations between hunters about the reason for going hunting, where one affirms that "I did not come because I don't have, but because I want to have more", marks the vagueness and the tendency that at any cost, and by all means, he should acquire and prey the prey.

Conclusions

Reading Anton Pashku's novel "*Oh*" reveals the main features and undisputed value of it, through formal and contentable markers. Thus for, we have three elements that distinguish this novel and make it modern:

1. Overthrowing the "standard" rate of literature of his time through the artistically closed structure - although within this framework (circle), in the context of the main story (plot), which is depicted around the characters, such as He and She, there are pieces of other histories, such as variations, which are in function of the main plot.

2. Returning from modernity, with support in folklore - Pashku himself emphasized that pre-model is folk literature; connects to the folk symbols, alias figurative text. The decoding of proverbs, rumors, and other folk eloquence, requires rhetorical familiarity in its entirety, in the contrary, non-decoding leads to misunderstanding.

3. Topics (Fleeing from wide topics and diverting to the individual ones) - turn out to be complex. Concentrating on a theme rooting from treason, as if trying to extract lessons from history. In the novel *Oh*, through the ONE, namely the individual psychological war, individual fate unfolds as a sign of the social totality, whether in the distant historical past, or under the totalitarian system or the forecast for the future.

The novel "*Oh*" of Anton Pashku remains unique in Albanian literature both as a form and content and as an idea. This novel, has a figurative tale in the symbolic spirit as the seed of its confession.

In the national historical arena, these are the same elements: envy and rage, that come as a result of the exaltation of power. In "*Oh*", this is reflected through Batos' war. Batos' war is precisely lost because of the envy of power. Envy brings betrayal and betrayal paves the way for the invaders to take the place. Through the history of Batos' war we draw the conclusion that when the union takes place, the victory is unquestionable, and when the disruption occurs, the loss is also expected.

Folkloric prebasis (as a style and discourse) and historical issues (as a subject of network themes) in the novel "*Oh*" knit as "memory or message of history, which is overlaid with

literature, as a national myth". The story orge that comes as a reminder through the story of the old man has the basis for popular folk legacy and historical writings. It follows that Anton Pashku's literary work is based on profound, consolidated, restructured, and transposed thoughts to materialize in the literary work.

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