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## Reception of “Winter of the Great Loneliness” in the Novel’s Publishing Time

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### Abstract:

*This paper analyzes the reception of the novel, “Winter of the Great Ismail Kadare Loneliness”, whose resources lay on the conceptual network elaborated by one of the founders of the aesthetical reception theory, Hans Robert Jauss. Kadare’s writing faced an interpretative reception code. In theory the socialist realism method is defined as hybrid and not only for time and space extension. The method’s principles articulations are specific, depending on a defined place and time. Beyond the theoretical debate regarding the socialist realism method principles, in this paper you will find the book reception from the articulated code of its publishing time, so the code of the 70’s. An analysis of the novel reception in its publishing time, will answer to many arguments rising around Kadare’s work in general, and to “Winter of the Great Loneliness” in particular.*

**Keywords:** Reception, socialist realism, reception code, horizons of expectations, dissident

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### Preface

“Winter of the Great Loneliness” has a special reception story. Published for the first time in 1973, the novel faced the socialist realism code of the time, in an unusual approach. It was unusual because toward this book was orchestrated a counter-campaign, that in a way involved the whole state and leading party mechanism supervising a literary process, which never happened before, neither with another book of Kadare, nor with other authors of the time, whose books were banned.<sup>1</sup>

Other than state and leading party mechanism in this campaign, unlikely for any other book of the time, debates were set up in basic party organizations, workers and cooperatives’ collectives, and the opinions were often published in the press. The campaign then reached schools, military units, veterans, different organizations and unions, thus turning step by step into a popular discussion<sup>2</sup>.

Nevertheless, the knock of the time code toward the novel was of a paradoxical character. The turn of the official criticism into a public debate – that never occurred in the communism period - put the structure’s existence at risk, not to mention that the book became pretty popular and the most controversial work during the communist period in Albania. This paradox came to an end when the dictator Enver Hoxha expressed his opinion on the novel and Kadare, in a meeting by the Metallurgic Combine of Elbasan<sup>3</sup>.

The Ever Hoxha state on a literary work in front of the Metallurgic Combine workers is a unique case in the relationship the dictator had with arts. Nevertheless, even after Enver Hoxha’s statement, the novel didn’t go along with the socialist realism code; on the contrary, the upcoming years immersed the novel into a deep silence. The novel reconciled with the code, only after the writer rewrote and republished it, under the title of “The Great Winter”, in 1977.

The object of this paper is the reception of the novel “Winter of the Great Loneliness”, in its publishing time. Through this perspective we will try to understand if and to what extension the novel came up, deluded, exceeded, or denied at all the public expectations of the code it faced. Second, we will try to understand if

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<sup>1</sup> Sinani, Sh. “A dossier for Kadare”, OMSCA 1, Tirana 2005; Sinani Sh. A dossier for Kadare (2) Albas, Tetovo 2005

<sup>2</sup> Qesari, V. “In the ‘Winter of the Great Loneliness’”, Dita, March 12, 2002

<sup>3</sup> Hoxha, E. “Selected works 51”, 8 Nëntori, Tirana 1986, Page 71-77

there was a difference between the horizons of expectations and if so, of which character was it. Third, if there was a case of the horizons of expectations alteration, because of the book reception. Hence, from the reception theory point of view, such an inquiry will help to understand the "artistic character of a literary creation"<sup>4</sup> and therefore we could answer to a lot of arguments on this book nature, raised in the after-90's debates, regarding Kadare works and "Winter of the Great Loneliness" in particular. It will give respectively answers to the questions if he wrote a socialist realism novel, which helped further Enver Hoxha's worshipping<sup>5</sup>; if he created an aesthetic dissidence<sup>6</sup>; or that this one was just a dissident book<sup>7</sup>.

## I. The school nature/ methods/ socialist realism code

Regardless the term "socialist realism" pretends to associate with a school/ method/ unified aesthetic code, nowadays it is referred as "Marxist literary theories"<sup>8</sup>. During the last century, the Marxist conception on literature was pretty vast; time and geographically extended; "it arose in a time of world changes, to bring some more changes to the world"<sup>9</sup>. Therefore, "Marxist theories do not consist of a school, like the representatives of Moscow and Petersburg Formalism, Prague Structuralism or Paris *Tel Quel*"<sup>10</sup>, and the Marxist theory, "although its rigorous character, still stands out as a hybrid character"<sup>11</sup>.

Even our theory school after the 90's was offering different views on the socialist realism method. For example, Shaban Sinani finds that "even the term socialist realism is not properly defined"<sup>12</sup>. Agron Tufa treats the thematic broadly. According to him, "the main postulates of the socialist realism were the ruling party perspective and social idealism... even the attempts (around the end of the 50's) to enlarge the "theoretical ground" of socialist realism (the postulates of the popular art and socialist humanism) couldn't enable the establishment of a socialist realism aesthetic, as an artistic method"<sup>13</sup>. As you can notice in Tufa's perspective, it is not possible to claim an establishment of a socialist realism aesthetic, but still there ruling party perspective, social idealism, popular character and socialist humanism, are accepted as principles that we will mention below, when treating the relationship between the code and "Winter of the Great Loneliness".

As a result, more than just a single theory we have theories and some principles of this method/code. Looks like the study of the novel "Winter of the Great Loneliness" in front of the code, hence its reception deals with an undefined term/concept, that in return would put into doubt the analysis premises. Nonetheless, if the "Marxist theories" on literature are in discussion, here we will refer to the one that in the Albanian practice has been considered and operated as a "theory"/ one of the Marxist theories. According to Ann Jeferson, "The soviet theory of the socialist realism, shaped in the 30's, more than a reliable literary theory was kind of a normative regulation, as a writing style that was considered acceptable from the ruling party, and as a criticism criteria of the "decadent" literature"<sup>14</sup>. In the analyze proceeding we will refer to this concept, that considers the code as a normative regulation on the style that was acceptable from the ruling party, focusing in the theoretical articulation of the code in the publishing time of "Winter of the Great Loneliness".

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<sup>4</sup> Hans, Jauss "Perche la storia della letteratura", Guida Editori, Naples, 1977, Page 116

<sup>5</sup> Klosi, A. Rama, E. "Reflections", Albania, Tirana, 1992

<sup>6</sup> Tufa, A. "Kadare aesthetic dissidence", <http://lajme.shqiperia.com/lajme/artikull/iden/1046843035/titulli/Disidencë-estetike-e-Kadarese>

<sup>7</sup> Çali, E "Il dissenso in Albania durante il periodo comunista", <http://www.comune.torino.it/sq/scoprire/la-dissidenza-e-il-dissenso-nella-letteratura-alba.shtml>

<sup>8</sup> Jeferson, A., Roby, D. "Modern Literary theory", Albas, Tirana, 2006, page 238

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> Sinani, Sh "Kadare Dossier 2", Albas, Tetovo, 2005, page 168

<sup>13</sup> Tufa, A "Literature and the literary process in the XX century 1" ShBLU, Tirana, 2008, Page 84

<sup>14</sup> Jeferson, A., Roby, D. "Modern Literary theory", Albas, Tirana, 2006, page 239

## II. A code outline in the publishing time of the “Winter...”

The novel “Winter...” was published in 1973. Hence, “Winter...” faced a socialist realism code articulated the way it was shaped in the middle of the 70's, which climaxed with the 4<sup>th</sup> Plenum of the Party Central Committee about literature and arts. On my opinion, the exact articulation of the code, on the approach of it as a normative regulation, is done by the critic Dalan Shaplo, in its work “Phenomenon and literary works”, published in 1974. (As we will see below, the reaction toward/against the “Winter...”, hence its reception regarding the main lines fits/justifies the points defined by Dalan Shaplo).

Below is an outline of the code principles according to the critic Dalan Shaplo:

1. *Code principles*: “The principles covered by our party relate to the communist partisanship and the popular character of art, trustfully life depiction, and the battle against bourgeois-revisionist aesthetics, in the approach of the content, form, tradition and innovation. The ruling party has defended the principle of life exposition in the war of classes’ context, against the position of the above-classes humanity. In this way our party has shown loyalty to Marxism-Leninism and has contributed in further development of the Marxist-Leninist notions on art and revolution, in an international level.”<sup>15</sup>.
2. *Positive hero*: “The problem of the positive hero in literature and arts is naturally, vital. It is closely related to the partisanship principle and to the central pathos that possesses the work. The positive hero problem is fundamental, but still more fundamental remains the partisanship principle that defines the ideological sound of the work, and the hero’s character treatment.”<sup>16</sup> Pg. 85
3. *Symbolic heroes*: “The theory supported in the positive hero argument rises as a vital necessity the so-called symbolic heroes, which were innovators, against others claimed as traditionalists.”<sup>17</sup>
4. *Individual and the masses*: “If we depict the masses as amorphous or just the masses symbolism and the so-called individual hero as anachronic and conservative, that would be wrong, unfair and would lead – like it actually did – to formalism.”<sup>18</sup>
5. *“Uncrowning” the hero*: “The mistakes that were criticized on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Plenum... were and are related to a certain “uncrowning” of the highest moral attributes of our people, figuring as eclectic either the positive hero, or the negative characters, from time to time assigning nonsense imperfections, for the sake of realist conceptualization”<sup>19</sup>.
6. *De-idolization of the hero*: “the ‘uncrowning’ theory derives from the revisionists and is related to the hero de-idolization, by lacking idealism in him”<sup>20</sup>.
7. *The hesitating hero*: “Another revisionist attitude is expressed through the theory of the hesitating hero. Such a character cannot take the main role”<sup>21</sup>.

This code outline formulates not only what commonly are referred as basic socialist realism principles like partisanship, popular character, etc; but also prescripts the attitude toward the so-called liberalism age at the beginning of the 70's, that strongly influenced literary styles, correspondingly symbolic heroes, ‘uncrowning’ heroes, etc., that was tagged as within the range of ideological cliché of “revisionist influence”. This is the code that faced the novel “Winter...” on his first publishing.

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<sup>15</sup> Shaplo, D, “Phenomenon and literary works”, Naim Frashëri, Tirana 1974, Page 7

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, Page 85

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, Page 87

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, Page 90

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, Page 100

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, Page 101

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, Page 101

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### III. The text in front of the code

In the reception aesthetic frame, we are first concerned in the code's attitude toward the novel, secondly in the distance between the novel and the official horizon of expectations – if there was such – and thirdly the establishment of a new horizons of expectations - if it ever happened.

To achieve this we should in the first place specify what the official criticism was in the historical background. According to Shaban Sinani, the criticism types of that period were: "official criticism; official criticism reviews; correspondence between editors and party officials; party discussions; criticism by party organizations associated with the party-line implementation in arts, and debates within the party leadership"<sup>22</sup>. Secondly, if from the code's attitude toward the book, we can prove the distance with the official horizon of expectations, for the establishment of a new horizon of expectations from the book, we can deduct to a result only from the reader's reviews. But this cannot be documented in this historical context, as the reader was represented by the official code. Same goes for the criticism. We cannot document if there were voices supporting the novel, as they have been excluded by the official criticism system.

#### 1. The distance with the official horizons of expectations

As abovementioned, toward/against the novel was orchestrated a media campaign. The atmosphere of the period is brought to us by Elena Kadare<sup>23</sup>, but also from other authors' memories, for example the ones of Vasil Qesari<sup>24</sup>. According to them, the novel was published in 20.000 copies was drawn within the same day from all bookstores. Initially there was no comment in the press, and only after a month, in the third page of "Zëri i Rinisë" ("Youth Voice") was published a letter, that casted doubts on the ideological values of the novel, which sounded like the signal to trigger the campaign against it. After that letter, not only in that newspaper, but also on the other ones were published messages, standpoints and letters sent by servicemen, cooperative members etc., where anyone was expressing their indignation toward the novel. All this fuss climaxed when letters and messages were sent to the Party Central Committee, accusing the novel for reality blacken, some even claiming for the author to get arrested<sup>25</sup>. This is enough for the atmosphere. As for the "offices criticism" or correspondence between editors and party officials etc., we get a well documented frame by the two publications of Shaban Sinani<sup>26</sup>.

The main paper's concern is the code reaction in the public campaign and official criticism. On this purpose it will first touch the code reaction by the so-called "masses judgment", that according to the time colloquialism presupposed the reader; and secondly we will touch the official criticism reaction, that in the period colloquialism represented the "scientific assesment". For the first, - "massive reader judgment" – among a variety of writers, we have selected Robert Shalësi, whose article on "Zërin e rinisë", seem to be the campaign igniter. For the second, - official criticism - we have chosen as a representative the critic Xhezair Abazi<sup>27</sup>, that published a review on "Nëntori", the most literary scientific authoritative magazine of the time, representing the official code.

#### 2. Reception from the "masses judgment"/ reader point of view

The broad ranged discussion regarding "Winter..." developed on "Zëri i rinisë" newspaper. This generated as

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<sup>22</sup> Sinani, Sh. "Dossier K" (2) Albas, Tetovo 2005 Page. 40-47

<sup>23</sup> Kadare, E. "Insufficient time", Onufri, Tirana, 2012

<sup>24</sup> Qesari V "In the 'Winter of the great loneliness'" Dita, March 12, 2002

<sup>25</sup> Ibid

<sup>26</sup> Sinani, Sh. quoted works.

<sup>27</sup> Abazi, Xh. "I. Kadare novel 'Winter of the Great Loneliness'", Nëntori, July 7, 1973

an inner need to express the numerous discussions among the readers, because of the way the PPSH (acronym for Albanian Labor Party) war was treated in the novel<sup>28</sup>. Author/reader of the first article on this debate was Robert Shalësi, who introduced himself as a new technical-scientific collaborator by the Mathematical Calculating Centre, i.e. young reader, but qualified one (Scientific Centre).

This is the way the code reacted through him:

Party-People Unity Manifestation: "We have lived in person the period and we witnessed the party and our working masses heroism, in facing the revisionist blockade; the eye for an eye war with the revisionists is still vivid in our mind's eye... As a reader, having in mind the socialist realism literature character, my expectation was exactly this to be clean-cut in the novel, but the author didn't do that and I think this is one of the basic defects"<sup>29</sup>.

Enver Hoxha: "In the novel, comrade Enver Hoxha and the PPSH delegation war in Moscow... is figured very artistically from the author and in my opinion it is the only decent part of the novel"<sup>30</sup>.

War (against the revisionism) obscuration: "From my viewpoint through the novel pages the war is obscured, instead of glorified"<sup>31</sup>.

The characters, working class, declassified: There is no representative of the working classes, but of the declassified ones ..."<sup>32</sup>.

Characters stratification: "Kristaq, Xhemal Struga, Liria and Raqi are ex-partisans, representing the old generation. Besniku, Iliri etc. represent - if we can use such a definition - an intermediary generation."<sup>33</sup>.

Youth depiction, Broadwayers: "The Broadwayers are posed as promoters of the idea that in the world one might only have fun, love like hippies or kill the time by all possible means. Therefore, they are a group of immoral juveniles ... They [Broadwayers] retain the family creation as the ugliest thing in one's life (bear in mind Tori's panic and the infamy he winds up, to avoid the payment for the child). ...There was a certain "emancipation" in our girls, through the cigarettes pending from their lips, polishes and cognac. Where is the true youth to give these Broadwayers a chase and to eventually destroy them?"<sup>34</sup>

Depiction of the ex-partisan generation: "Xhemal Struga still has no positive role, not even in its son upbringing ... Furthermore; Raqi develops as a negative element... Liria, the wife of the deputy minister, an ex-partisan and communist is immature and full of petty-bourgeois residuals... Summing up, this generation is represented by elements that lack in power, sacrifice spirit and devotion. Are really the fighting people of this kind? These are the ones that disentrilled the country and overthrew the old regime? These are the ones that set the foundations of the socialist society? These are the party support in the war against the revisionism?"<sup>35</sup>

Besniku, Zana, the break, the trust in party organization: "After the Moscow meeting, where he [Besnik] witnessed the party glory and power ... instead of mobilizing, flaming up, fight and confront his generation... [He] falls into inactivity, like he doesn't know what he is doing. He is confused and instead of associating more to Zana, breaks up with her artificially; he cannot even trust to the party organization. Besnik does not accept to explain anything to the basic party organization, not even to Zana, but reveals himself to Beni!"<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Zëri i rinisë, Editorial note, May 12, 1973, Page 2

<sup>29</sup> Shalësi R. "Three remarks on the novel 'Winter of the Great Loneliness'", Zëri i rinisë May 12, 1973, Page 212 maj 1973, Page 2

<sup>30</sup> Ibid

<sup>31</sup> Ibid

<sup>32</sup> Ibid

<sup>33</sup> Ibid

<sup>34</sup> Ibid

<sup>35</sup> Ibid

<sup>36</sup> Ibid

Intelligence depiction: "This intelligence is not only ideologically and politically immature, with a moral that does not stand for our communist moral, but it also creates the impression that anyone is unreliable to the party"<sup>37</sup>.

People masses: "In addition, where are our real popular masses? The workers class, the cooperatives peasants, the real youth, the popular intelligence; they are totally absent in this novel"<sup>38</sup>.

The liberal spirit, the class enemy surrender: Thirdly, the novel is characterized from the begging to the end, by a strong liberal and immoral spirit that revolts the readers. Ana Kondakçi is introduced in the novel just to show immorality ...and the climax is reached when she handles Zana to the class enemy"<sup>39</sup>.

Verdict, the novel denunciation: In short, in my judgment this novel does avail to our workers masses cultivation, not to mention the new generation, above all because it is not a real indicator of the war, heroism, self-denial, sacrifice spirit that the Albanian people, led by its Labor Party manifested against the modern revisionism, with the soviets to the fore"<sup>40</sup>.

### 3. Reception from the official criticism

As above mentioned, "Nëntori" magazine at the time represented the official criticism on literature and arts, but also the scientific authority. Below you will find the reaction related to the novel, in the discussion climax, through the critic Xh. Abazi, who after acknowledging as positive Enver Hoxha's statement in the Moscow meeting, and the PPSH war against revisionism, enlists "the weak" points of the novel:

Characters scheme: "As long as the novel follows the consequences of the revisionist treachery, as long as in the novel find place intellectuals and declasses, why isn't there space for them, the ones that love to work, either workers, or cooperative peasants?"<sup>41</sup>.

The people and the work settings: The lack of people in the work settings makes the background very gloomy, unilateral and monotonous"<sup>42</sup>.

The hero, positive example: The lack of social positive elements, that opposes the negative phenomenon, has brought the novel to the point of lacking the militant acting power... Indeed I think that was the reason that many disputants of "Zëri i rinisë" and "Studenti" reached the point of rejecting the book"<sup>43</sup>.

Characters, Broadwayers: "Kadare does not err when he introduces in the novel Turi, Sala, Raimonda, "freak", Ana Kondakçi and R.C. ...But introducing them is not enough, he should manage them, by fitting them somewhere or setting them into a direction fitting our reality"<sup>44</sup>.

Females: The female portrayal in the novel is unilateral and subjective. Except Mama Rabo and Mira (although she is also flirting), the other females are frivolous, conceited and blabber mouthed"<sup>45</sup>.

Intellectuals: "Same for the faded intellectual figures. The journalists have been touched superficially and do not create the impression that they are the public opinion architects"<sup>46</sup>.

Characters development: "The author is not coherent to the character's development"<sup>47</sup>.

Besniku: "There are plenty of unjustified actions and situations in his intimate life"<sup>48</sup>.

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>41</sup> Abazi, Xh. Quoted article, *Nëntori*/7, Page 44

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, Page 45

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, Page 45

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, Page 46

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, Page 46

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, Page 47

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, Page 47

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, Page 47

Besnik-Zana line: "There is no objective ground for Zana and Besnik to break up; therefore it means to the reader nothing, but irritation"<sup>49</sup>.

Modernist influence: "There are moments where the author slips into inner stories and the book is burdened with elaborated psychological details. The conscious starts intertwine with the subconscious ...some passages in the book follow the stream of consciousness technique. Ismail Kadare knows how to profit from the contemporary art technique, but in this novel he cannot escape from the modernist influence"<sup>50</sup>. Page 51.

It is obvious that either from the massive readers' point of view, or the critics' one, the socialist realism code of the period reacted almost homogeneously, according to their principles. The difference lays in the fact that the criticism didn't give to its opinions a denunciation or verdict nuance. On the other side, as we remarked through Abaz, the criticism has perforated into the modernist influence, that is to say the intertwine between the conscious and the subconscious and the stream of consciousness technique usage. Here we should take in regard that Freud or Joyce was banished authors, so the abovementioned claims leave space for the opportunity to castigate the novel.

## Conclusions

The raised questions on the reception aesthetics point of view are:

1. Through this perspective we will try to understand if and to what extension the novel came up, deluded, exceeded, or denied the public expectations of the code it faced.  
As a result we can deduct that "Winter..." denied the public expectation of the official code of the period. As the analyze points out, this code from the novel accepted only the Enver Hoxha's role depiction in the Moscow meeting.
2. If there was a difference between the horizons of expectations and if so, of which character was it. There was a difference between the official horizons of expectations. As the analyze points out, the code has been shocked from the novel, a shock that climaxed with the request not only to banish the book, but also to arrest the author.
3. If there was a case of the horizons of expectations alteration, because of the book reception. From the analysis we get to the result that there is an alteration of the horizons of expectations, induced by the novel reception. It is true that the criticism, set against the novel in all possible ways, but it was not the same for the readers. Just the fact that a book published in 20 000 copies, was withdrawn from the bookstores on the same day, among other things, proved that there was another horizon of expectations, different from the official reception code. This confirms that Kadare, with his works and the peak of his creativity, had already created a followers club that had other expectations in correlation to the reader/official code.
4. After-90's debates regarding Kadare works and in particular "Winter... ". The options were:
  - a. a socialist realism novel, which helped further Enver Hoxha's worshipping  
The novel was not fitting to the cliché frame of the socialist realism and the response of the official code confirms this. Enver Hoxha worship goes beyond the reception aesthetic boundaries. But the fact that Enver Hoxha, regardless of all critics, shielded the author and the book, which proves the political sensibility of another horizon of expectations, out of the official code.
  - b. aesthetic dissidence  
Aesthetic dissidence is demonstrated only in two elements, mentioned from the official critics of the time: "conscious and subconscious" and "stream of consciousness". But from the analysis

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, Page 48

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, Page 51

we can deduct that the code was shocked not because of them; only the official criticism is shocked by these, not the "masses opinion"/readers.

c. dissident book

As comes out of the analysis, the code reaction through a several months' campaign proves that there was a soviet style campaign against a dissident work. The fact that neither the author, nor the book was sentenced, but was left in silence until to a new revised edition a few years later, proves that the reception code didn't accept it, thus it handled the novel as a dissident book.

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