

THE MYTHICAL AND FAIRY TALE SYMBOLISM IN THE NOVEL „THE EAGLE“ BY I. KADARE

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The work of Ismail Kadare, as a whole, is one of those rare cases in which the links to the mythical fairy tale references underpin nearly all the creative levels. Nevertheless, the weight of gravity does not pull this work toward archaic models of structure and discourse. Rather, as it has been widely observed by Albanian and international reviewers, the mythical universe, the way it is modulated and rendered functional within the Kadarean artistic universe, has powered the indicators of modernity. Henri Amouroux, referring to Kadare's work, writes: "*They are novels that feed from your history and the oral traditions, a history that you modulate and arrange according to your modern tastes...*" (Amouroux 2009. The speech during the public reception of Ismail Kadare's into the French Academy of Moral and Political Sciences", "*Pena të arta franceze për shqiptarët*" Tiranë, 2009, 722). Kadare employs the literary myth modulation for two goals clearly articulated in his work; on one hand, through this process, it becomes possible to approach the existential grounds and anthropological premises of our tribe; on the other hand, through the universal codes and messages that carry the myths, it becomes possible to design a universal act. Thus, for example, the reintegration of the incest myth in Kadare's work, especially the novel "*Who Brought Doruntine*", takes place not simply to recast the dramatic tension brought upon the human communities by the relationship of endogamy – in itself technologically and anthropologically very old – but also to announce that the Albanian civilization, like most older civilizations, stems from an adelphic incest. As it is well established, the incest myth is part of all the myths about the universe and humanity creation, and, thereby, the culture as well. Isis and Osiris are at the origin of the Egyptian civilization, Zeus and Hera are at the origin of the Greek civilization, while the Moon and the Sun, frequently found as poetic symbols or sacred heroes in our own folk stories, lie at the foundation of several other civilizations.

The exploitation of the many primal existential experiences, gestures, codes and universal behaviours, such as the sanctification of sexual intercourse, incest or the Dioskouroi; the creation of some of the most beautiful and original semantic and poetic inter-sexual relations, are a few more reasons enabling Kadare's work to artistically communicate with a multilingual and multicultural audience.

The Kadare's uniqueness, in the suggested context, can also be seen in the model that he follows for the modulated reintegration of the myth and mythical symbols in his work. He does not interpret the myth, but turns its poetic, symbolic, semiotic and subjective richness into a metaphor, because any interpretation would render the myth poorer and ultimately strangle it. In Italo Calvino's words, "... with the myths, one should not go fast; we should allow them to be deposited in the memory, we should pause and reflect about every detail; we should reason about them without leaving their language of images" (Calvino 2000. *American lectures*. Shtëpia e Librit, Tiranë, 2000: 45). This concept, which is consistent with the basic concept of the linguistic school of mythology, allows our writer to turn his attention, while updating the creative epiphanies, on the composition of a polyvalent plurality of mythical and fairy tale linguistic signs that sometimes converts into the form of an allegory or symbol, while at other times convert into the form of an irony or sarcasm that, within a double structure, leads to both, the sanctification of ordinary phenomena, as well as the banalization of sacred phenomena. I. Kadare provides yet another original model; he transforms into characters all the repertoire of the mythical, fairy tale symbols and those of worship, regardless of their anthropological, zoomorphic, phytomorphic or totemic nature, which are, according to Claude Levi-Strauss, spawned by "the wild mind as a system" (Levi - Strauss 1999. *La Pensee Sauvage*. Dukagjini, Pejë, 1999: 13). This way, the writer goes beyond the notion of anthropomorphic exclusivity of the character, which Philippe Hamon defines as "an achievement of modern prose".

Elements of what has been stated to this point succinctly about Kadare's work, can be found epitomized in a particular narrative and structuring model in the novel "Eagle". This prose builds on multiple, fundamental semantic axes, some of which, such as the hell's projection, the labyrinthical nature of the projected hell, the meeting with the magical

bird, the dramatic effort to come back from the underworld, the plutonian concept of the cave, etc., are borrowed from the mythical tale “Qerozi in the underworld” and the symbolic-mythical series in general. While several other thematic axes, such as the wall of power, which according to Milan Kundera “has the character of a labyrinth with vanishing light” (Kundera 2001. *The Art of the Novel*. Toena. Tiranë, 149), the doubling of the characters, the sexuality, the contextual and Ourellianesque relationships, the cohabitation of spirits that are alive with those that are dead, etc., are conceived by the author himself. However, even in this case, the author steps on the creative experiences and the symbolic and mythical patrimony. The main element of the popular tale poetry, masterfully used by the writer to realize an artistic structure that has direct connotations with the infernal character of the communist system is, the fantastic. “The manipulation of the fantastic in this mythological tale” – Eric Faye writes – “is not unintended in Kadare”. The supernatural migration helps to capture the extension at which the arbitrariness reigned supreme during the communist regime. In this other end of the world a “novlangue”, a type ourellianesque is used. After the fall of the regime Max finds himself at a restaurant, the so called “Freedom Bar”. Indeed a change of sides where a Kafkaesque climate prevails (Faye 2000. *The Introduction of the Novel Vulture*. Paris, 2000: 306). The links to the mythical universe in this novel, just as in other works published before and after the one we are analyzing, are created by Kadare not only on semantic axes, but also on other planes. Thus, many initial situations of the narration, the creation of a surreal and Oniresque time, but also of such heroes; the inclusion of a magic act, such as the journey of the man over the eagle to climb into the real world, are taken by the writer from the mythical and fairy tale material of the popular culture. This artistic modelling makes the narrator in the novel sound like “the mythical creator of the universe” (Kayser 1977. *Qui raconte le roman. Poétique du recit*. Paris, 1977: 80). Max, the main hero, as soon as he falls, starts experiencing a process of profound psychological metamorphosis so as to adapt to the lower world. The escape from the natural habitat, and the fall into a surreal setting, is accompanied by an overlapping of behaviours and relationships Oniresque and fantastic. These large displacements of time and local topics, this dense in Kadare, give his work a universal expressive power.

One of the original features of the prose in “Eagle” is that the mythical subject matter, with all its poetic, semantic and semiologic components, undergoes a process of deep processing and enrichment. The writer destroys, only to recreate, ever so creatively, the sense of absolutism and the frozen and timeless character of the mythical symbol. “The myth”, Mircea Eliade writes, “with its message and its code is recaptured at different times thereby restoring the mythic time” (Eliade 1974. *La nascita mistica*. Brescia, 1974: 113). Eagle’s mythical symbol is borrowed by Kadare from the mythical tale “Qerozi in the underworld”, only to be reprojected poetically and semantically along new dimensions. This symbol, which does good deeds in the tale (the eagle returns Qerozi from the underworld back to her home), in the novel becomes a symbol of a tragic undertaking. Therefore, referring to the anthropological structuralism of Claude Levi – Strauss, there is a structural change between the tale and the novel *Eagle*. In the tale, there is the following structure, graphically presented: the quest of the hero for the impossible – falling into the underworld – accomplishing his goal of coming back from the underworld – meeting with the magical bird and the return. While in Kadare’s novel, the structure appears more or less like this: the sudden fall of the hero into the underworld – his psychological transformation to adapt to this world’s nomocracy – the sexuality – the ideology – the effort to stand up again, the meeting with the magical bird – the tragic clash with him. It is easily noticeable that the structure of the novel not only is different from that of the mythical tale, but is also richer. Above all, the novel brings a qualitative change in the content and meaning of the main symbol, that of the eagle. In the novel the eagle goes from being helpful to fatal, not least because of the different attitude of the human towards it. The fundamental difference between the tale and the novel, in terms of the nature of the Eagle’s final action, is further accentuated by the big difference that exists between the two poetic creations; that of the mythical tale and the modern prose. While the mythical tale is dominated by archetypal elements, abstracted synthesis, reduced stories, episodes not widely developed and a somewhat poor writing, the prose of the novel *Eagle* is dominated by a poetry that is rich across all levels. With his novel, Kadare undertakes to build a sophisticated structural and polyphonic system. The tragic alienation of the individual, the major ambiguities he

faces within a dictatorial social systems, the partition of the human being, caused not only by the hostile social circumstances, but also by the information and cultural stratification of archetypal nature, are conveyed by the writer with a syntagmatic and phonological richness. The last ones are based on the Being as a category that also carries with it eternal human and cultural essentials. The functional use of the mythical symbols enables the writer to build parables with distant civilizations to realize the historical phenomena and to create a chronotropic system that is as universal as possible. I. Kadare proves yet again in the *Eagle* that he is a master of using the mythical time and the symbolism of ancient forms of human creation, to create a poetic time as free of the tangible dimensions as possible. Furthermore, I think that the mythical poetry helps to further deepen the duality between the narrator and the real story in the novel we are analyzing, thereby bringing to the foreground the global visions for the human being and the world at large. While telling the tragic-absurd event taking place in Max's life, the hero of the novel, the writer cares deeply for the discovery of the hero's individual life. However, he does not do this based on everyday life experiences. Instead, the writer proceeds according to the providential rules of the Being, which greatly narrow the boundary between the Kadarean artistic universe and the poetic universe of the myths.

An important place in the poetics of the novel *Eagle* is reserved for the antinomic pairs such as, life-death, love-separation; day – night, profane – sacred. In fact this antinomy extends to the characters. This is what happens with Ana, projected in the Max's self-awareness. At an oniresque moment he talks to her: "I thought that you were she, the Ana from the above. My heart slowed its beating down when I noticed you. My whole being was trembling. Love, I said, your divine part finally prevailed within you. But it is somehow meant that I get disappointed again" (Kadare 2000. *L'aigle*. Fayard, Paris 2000: 359). All the pairs are placed in two worlds that have a significant connotation with the myth of the Dioskouroi. The pairing of fatal opposites, which cannot exist without each other makes Dioskouroi one of the oldest myths that synthesize the great and dramatic act of the birth of life. In Kadare's novel, however, this pairing, which exploits indirectly the old mythical symbolism, not only feeds the dramatic notes of the narrative, but it also enables the movement of the narrator

from point zero of the chronological system to the high points of the mythical system of the human universe. The novel has a really tangible historical context, Albania's communist dictatorship, but the Romanesque narrative does not remain within the measurable limits of time and space. The mythical model helps to render universal the dramatic and absurd Albanian chronicle, whereas it moves the Romanesque story from the historical present to the eternal present. At the same time, the symbols of oral creativity are reconsidered by the writer in order to present the complex procedures, the crossing at different levels of the Being and the Kafkesque metamorphosis. By focusing on the internal logic of the symbols, I. Kadare manages to have them leveraged by the novel's poetic to convey artistically what took place in the consciousness and the sub-consciousness of the characters. Later on, the mythical symbols allow the writer to illuminate the characters' psyche in crisis and the pathologic regression the characters undergo through under a totalitarian society. Furthermore, these symbols allow him to illuminate, as Mircea Eliade said, "some areas of individual and collective unconsciousness dominated by Logos" (Eliades 2008. *Images et symboles*. Gallimard, Paris, 2008, :51). A remarkable accomplishment for Kadare, not only in this novel, but also in other works that have been classified as works with eternal themes, is that, he artistically uses the archetypal mythical-fairy tail models as an engram and/or footprint of archetypal. This approach avoids the risk of repeating the paradigms as well as allows the creation of new models.

In the novel, in addition to the main character, the eagle, mythical and other symbols of worship are also put to use for the work's poetic material. These symbols, although limited in scope, are merely inhabitants of the zoo and significantly expand the semantic and stylistic bedrock of the novel. These symbols are of different origin and expressive powers. The character of snake, for example, is one the oldest and the most polysemantic, just as the fox is largely a character of fairy tales, while the deer originates from the old cults symbols of humanity, with dense functionalities mainly among the Nordic peoples. This symbolic polyphony significantly increases the novel's polysemantic and creates the kind of ambiguity that is necessary for a multitude of interpretations, which once again proves that the relationships between myth and fiction are deep and multifaceted.

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