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## The Topic of Death in the Literary Discourse of Kosovo

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### Abstract

We will hereby analyse religiosity as a matrix and phenomenon of literary creative philosophy. Furthermore, we will discuss the influence of this matrix in Kosovan literary discourse, whether folk or authorial. The research will not include discussion of the doctrines, but the topic that emanates from them, which subsequently turns into literary discourse, whether symbolic-metonymic or metaphorical-allegorical, making the religiosity its distinctive aesthetics. In this chain of models, we will treat the ballad and poetic elements, as works of Albanian literature. This will create a view of the dominance of religion in them, nonetheless, it will likewise help investigate the differences regarding authorial access to religion, whether observed as faith or as a culture. Similarly, we will focus on the study of this martyrdom in the plan of discursive crossings from their presence, as rhapsodic songs in written texts or manuscripts, known as texts of Aljamiado.

**Keywords:** Religiosity, Topic, Death, Folklore, Aljamiado, Authorial literature.

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## 1. Religiosity and Literature

Viewed in an arbitrary sense, religiosity, as a personal, social, and transcendental teleological researching activity, in its conceptual essence, does not have strong bond with the phenomenon of literature. Nevertheless, there remains a major question as to, whether it is possible to separate religiosity from art in general, even from the literary point, which for centuries intends its specific independence.

Religiosity, as far as its legacy reveals us, touches the individual as devotion to the divine, accompanies the ritual as an act and devotion, and, by all means, produces its consequences as a culture of life and form of life. According to this, it appears that, the power of religiosity captures the inner nature of man, in the psychological plan, as well as his *zoon politicon*, in the sociological plan. This power, in variation with the power of faith, as an influence, necessarily entails the cognitive believer, as well as the secular believer, and in any case keeps tensed the agnostic one, even as the philosophical mixture.

Under this umbrella, which covers man from the childhood to the death, literature is not direct accompaniment. Nonetheless, when the formation of man and all of his actions, whether dictated by faith or superstition, is transformed into an object of literature, which in some way claims its religiosity and the author as a devotee of literature, then literary writing fails to distance itself from the philosophy of religiosity, transforming the religiousness into the image of the artistic being of the text of the scribe.

Religiosity as a spirit and influence, transforms into a *literary myth*, which touches each time and each literature, influencing and dictating to countless literary discourses. Still, since literature claims independent life, as such, it has the convenience of choosing, combining, binding and denying between the literary claim of the figure of religiosity and the literary "denial" of this figure. Nevertheless, claim and denial, as a philosophy of opposites, does not touch the essence of religiosity, which, before being "hurt" by literature, is protected by inheritance, which is necessarily rooted in the Philosophy of Creation. Religiosity as its "weapon" has the teleological faith, while the literature has aesthetic faith. Aesthetic faith, even in its most supreme creation, can constantly be regarded as a *desirable* aesthetic and literary *game*, while the religiosity is systematics of the philosophy of piety and devotion, just to distinguish the white from the black. Moreover, all forms of religiosity aim the white and deny the black!

Whereas literature does not envision separating white from black, but living in the world of questioning, suspicion, and crises of the human soul, without the need for an uncontested faith in physics and metaphysics. Furthermore, we can even say that literature, through this questioning, creates a particular form of faith, albeit it has religious faith within it. According to this, it appears that literature needs religion, either to build a human vision for God or to use *religious symbolism*. When all this arises in the literary author, we can emphasize that it is a great fortune for a man of letters, who possesses both, namely, religiousness and literacy. Since, in this case, we would have to do with the realization of the power of complementarity rather than of rejection. If religiosity and religion aim definite, teleological faith, besides, this aim is canonized in doctrinal texts, this task does not belong to literature, which, recognizing the religiosity, does not accept the definitive faith, but matures the philosophy of the questioning. In this complexity, between the religious divinity and literary humanity, the literary author, even when in his text dominates religious symbolism, does not claim doctrinal text in his work, yet he claims *literary autonomy*. Because the using literary text only in definitive faith, means loss of aesthetic reflection, which has freedom of meaning as its fundamental principle, in various time and space.

Thus, to pleasingly study a literary corpus, merely formalistic or compositional scientific tube is not sufficient, additionally, it is not sufficient for the puritanism of the literary word. The study of literature, whether as essaying, literary criticism, or literary knowledge that strives to be achieved through study corpuses, must contain in its spirit the ethical and religious principles and cognition which aim more the perception and recognition of their metaphor than the recognition of doctrines in the sense of a deep and

researching faith of the roots or lawfulness which forbids the literary metaphor but still bursts in its ontological humanity.

We have already been convinced, avoiding the orthodox thinkers of Marxism and atheism, that literature created by the tendency of arbitrary avoidance from the religion does not have the proper colour of humanity and as such, rather than conveying the human figure, it gives the human caricature.

Therefore, recognizing the power of this collaboration, of this metaphor, we must pass from cognitive perspectives to literary texts. This means a variety of choices, not necessarily chronological, in order to see how some of the literary discourses appear in the compositions of faith, ritual, cult, social and psychological effect in the literary text, which are afterwards transformed into the spiritual inheritance of Albanian literature.

## 2. The Ballad - Topic of the Sacrifice

In order to come to the written texts, on this occasion, we recall a singing text, interweaving with the sound of a medieval ballad of immurement, which, as personal empirical claim, comes to me from the stentorian voice of a rhapsody who sang passionately of the song of *Holy Bridge*. With the *mythos* of these ballads, nevertheless, there are three elements that, in relation to the *childhood psyche*, must be hereby reaffirmed: the myth, the religiosity and the memory. The myth of immurement is fantastic as an elementary form of sacrifice for the general good. In our case, the bringer of the "misfortune" for the need of the immurement of the younger brother's wife is the *old dervish*, who appears in the song as the voice of *mystic religiosity*, and then the *memory* of the transformation of the song occurs turning into a *neurotic cultural-religious layer* for a child, a reminder that he carries on the path of personality formation. We found the same ballad later as folklore collected in the *Folk song I* from which we quote:

*The Godsend old dervish heaves into sights:*

*Good work to thee oh you three hasjans*

*The work oh thou oldie is not good for us*

*The work does not go easy on us.*

*It is three years that we struggle,*

*We cannot put arch on wall of our*

*We build a floor by floor*

*But through night we find it overthrown*

*The bricks flying, we saw.*

*The old dervish replies:*

*May you believe each other*

*Not tell the wives further*

*The food bringing wife*

*For the bridge to be sacrificed.*

*Farewell you lads I will now rise*

*Farewell to you Dervish dear,*

*With no move he disappears. (Gashi, 2017: 19-20)*

Accordingly, we can emphasize that religiosity, as the inheritance of human life, is disseminated in various forms, even merging in a work of art as a song in its mythical, religious, and fantastic forms, to influence man by its weight, suggesting to his *psyche* that man in this world is the result of his formation by tradition. Not to forget, here we speak of a fortunate formation of a child and a young man, because we understand human destiny and concern as various differences and inabilities. However, the obliviousness of the tradition as human happiness is a lifestyle without the thought that it exists.

However, in our folk culture, we have the myth of immurement, in many versions, whether if such a confession captures the building of a fortress, a bridge or a *khayrat*, that is, a common good. Yet, the topic of death and its religious affiliation in literature is brought into mind by an *old dervish*, whether in the quality of prophesying, as a transcendental voice, or as a topic of sacrifice, which in universal culture and literature is known since the sacrifices of classical literature, which have become canonical literary works. From this it appears that the topic of death, in this type of oral literary discourse, relates to the philosophical maxim that the death is the opening of the path of life. Thus, to give life, death must occur.

### 3. The Topic of Debauchery and Death

As we are in the folkloristic world, we want to observe the presence of the religious topic, more precisely the *topic of death*, which in almost all the later songs of *haqeeqat*, that exist as reminiscences of various fractures of canonized religious value, in numerous phases of the local life, recall and reminisce human end, the death, through lamenting verses to strive for fortifying of the instable morality, initially before the man and society, and then as the ultimate destination of the acknowledgment of God's power and principles. We will hereby mention the *capital letter Alif*<sup>3</sup> and *the small Alif*. The *capital Alif*, sang in the Rhapsodic realm of Kosovo, judged on the basis of textual and consequently semantic rhetoric, preserves the fundamental points of obedience as a fear of eternity, with the theme of care from the ethical and moral debauchery of the society. The relation of the old with the new, in the religious aspect, dominates the *lucus* of this song with the continuous repetition of the verses of the type: *May Allah judge you, day by day the heresy increases*, - either as a topic of rage or as a request to preserve the world from further debauchery, or as a prayer for care by the transcendental One.

Whereas, *small Alif* having the end, the death, the mystery of the transition from this world as the topic, requires devotion to ethical, moral and canonical religious values through which the light of eternity is gained! Verses: *Alif Allah in this world, from death rescue does not have any!* (Gashi, 2017: 363) - as a starting point of the topic, give the legacy of this topic, as an arch-historical concern throughout all phases of human versification for the phenomenon of death, hence, now being coloured with Islamic morality!

Isn't there the same topic of the crisis, the debauchery of the demand for the restoration of values, also in the *aljamiado* of the authors of the *divans*, *bejtes*, *kasidas* (ode) and *antiphon* (*ilahi*) of Oriental provenience in the written Albanian literature, even as an interesting dimension of the eastern fatality? Moreover, isn't this topic even in the meditative-philosophical poetry of Naim Frashëri (1846-1900), Lasgush Poradeci (1899-1987), where in continuity there is philosophical game between the *body and the psyche*. Perchance, this will return us into the initial topic of the dialectical and consequently rhetorical discussions, in Plato's many dialogues, where the relationship between *semiotic and somatic*, and thus his philosophical concept of *psyche*, is constantly being elaborated? Was this the topic of the morality of the soul not the cause of Plato's intention to expel artists from his ideally designed state? Thus, the *capital letter Alif and the small Alif* are reminiscences of an old *topos*, we can assume that when in the *metaphorical stages* (according to

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<sup>3</sup> Without entering into the Persian-Arab-Ottoman etymology, we emphasize that the noun aleph or Alif emerges as the first letter of the Arabic alphabet by which the absolute unity of God is represented. Its meaning is idiomatic, therefore unique.

Frye) man became aware of his end. Let us just mention it as a hypothesis: Does this matter not exist even in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* (Berisha, 2008:7-15), which was discovered in the vicinity of nowadays Baghdad, with an antiquity that reaches 2800 years BC!

#### 4. The Topic of Syncretisation of the Topos, the Author in Poetic Text

When we saw the *topic of debauchery and death*, on the structural principles of the *topos*, we analysed the songs of folk culture the *capital Alif and the small Alif*. We were aware of the time of their appearance, consequently the time of the Pashas, nonetheless, since their lives were developed in oral rather than written form, we placed them after the legendary songs. However, when we are in written literature, after the Albanian Medieval Literature, in our literature, there appear authors of *manuscript* literature, of *aljamiado*, consequently *bejtexhinj* authors. Since the gradual inculcation of Islamic culture in the Albanian lands, there were also inculcated the topos of Orient, in particular in the administrative-educational and religious cores, such as dervish lodges, mosques, schools (mekteps) etc., where the Ottoman system of "pilgrimage" plays an important role in the realization of these topoi, whether for administrative purposes or for religious-educational purposes. The myth of the man who goes and sees Istanbul, beyond Istanbul sees the oasis of the East, and returns with his knowledge and experience, even in times of crisis, constitutes one of the fundamental elements of the authority and authoring of the Bejtexhinjs.

Besides, most of the *aljamiado* authors are worshipers and contenders of a mystical observation within Islamic culture, who fortifies *metempsychosis* as a journey of souls. Their theme captures life and death as *melos*, but captures a form of *dialog with reality*, which closely connected to their Oriental formation, creates a special topic of syncretisation of author-based *topos*, that, in most cases emerges as a *constituent part of the poetic text*. The use of the Arabic alphabet is not merely copying or spreading of the graphemes, yet through it was carried strong symbolic of Oriental discourse, particularly based on religious formulations. Nezim Frakulla (1685-1760) in his *Divan* says:

*Poetry is the right of true stream*

*It is not as having sweet crème*

*Do not enter the torment*

*It is never written by accident* (Aljamiado Poetry, 2010:106)

The conception of the ability of versification as a burden loaded by transcendental power, as a voice that not everyone hears, but that a chosen author, has the ability to carry on the shoulder precisely this metaphysical weight, even with the constant suffering in life, can be considered as the unique *topos* of Oriental culture, which covers the author with the mystic aureole. Since this author, in this case Nezim, has greater abilities than others, necessarily, through his verses, he will initiate the game of sarcasm with others, to bring about another topos, of the quarrel, the phenomenon of the eastern authors, on who is the strongest in the perfection of devotional forms, which require knowledge of the mysteries of life and death, but also of style and singing, just as approaching the world of the style and discourse of the Qur'an. Who is not able to die for his verse, cannot be considered a rhetorical and high style aesthetic poet. It is not by chance the topical phenomenon of the author's presence in the text, in the forms of the *topic of initiation and conclusion*:

*I start my verses with Bismil-lah*

*And with love to you ja Mawla,*

*For Muhammed Mustafa*

*And your heart ja Mawla*

The dedicatory topic to God as an *initiation* takes on the Divan literary form, Mevlana alias God, Muhammad Mustafa in the capacity of the prophet, while *ja Mevla* restates the extreme dedication and devotion to the Creator. Meanwhile, on the principles that earthly life is suffering, the concluding topic comes with the verses:

*Nezim is not fond of joy,*

*Give him torment, ja Mawla.* (Hamiti, 2008:33)

*Torment* (suffering) of the author (Nezim) is not a unknown topic in the framework of preromantic and romantic literature, which emerges as a dual mystical-philosophical request, established in the third authorial person with the concepts: lamenting religious suffering as a tendency to greater affinity to God, and there with suffering as a sacrifice for the general social and political good, even as a burden of a chosen and re-chosen missionary.

Therefore, in this model of *aljamiado* we investigate syncretisation of eastern topos, which necessarily establish a particular topic within the Albanian literature, which, as legacy will also be studied in other later authors, in any case in different ways, but that proves elements of this provenience. As a request for the poet's suffering, such a topos of *aljamiado* will necessarily go to the path of accepting the death for the sake of the adequate aesthetic realization of the poetic verse.

## 5. The Topic of Death in Contemporary Literature

In this study we cannot avoid but mention the topos of mysticism figuring in the literature of Kosovo, particularly in author Teki Dërvishi (1943-2011),<sup>4</sup> where the philosophy of transcendental meditation on the basis of the Sufi teachings, is clearly visible.

In the structure of his novel, entitled *The Heresy of Dervish Malluta*, we notice that the story begins from the field of imagination of a character who comes from death. Thus, the symbolic character comes to the world of the living from world of the graves, whereas his "resurrection" is artistically justified, only to confess his past life in the Lodge of Cermjan Slope and to return to his death, in his own grave, or in his solitude, which the living world does not comprehend. The symbolic character, who is unnamed, is a strong ideological sign of the author that, for those who know the political reality of Kosovo, represents the political prisoner, by all means a writer, who being afraid of using open discourse within the framework of the so-called *prison literature* creates a discourse, that resembles the religious-mystic discourse, nonetheless which essentially is organized as a corpus of figures for parabolic testimony of the suffering of the individual in Yugoslav prisons. The Lodge of Cermjan Slope is nothing more than an allegory or parable of the famous prison of Goli Otok! Such a reflection is artistically motivated, when it is known that any order, even the mystic one, includes within itself the pressure and as such becomes a sufficient allegory of the author's proving intentions to write in the prosaic form the personal suffering, whether by heightening the religion pressure aiming the figurative dissipation of prison's political pressure and violence.

Dervish Malluta, the Pale Mullah Hamid, Lik the Thin-neck, Kardhiç the Player, are figurative characters whom the ideographic symbolic characters clashes with inside the Lodge to try and test the pressure, violence, hypocrisy and defamation, always covered with the veil of a mysticism. The permanent

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<sup>4</sup> The mystical theme, both as a discourse and as a religiosity, we encounter implicitly in the poetic work *Sick House* by Teki Dërvishi (1979), as well as the poetic work *Dinner of Magic* by Beqir Musliu (1978).

allegorizing of their discourse towards the symbolic character connotes the phenomenon of the people of order and a man who does not accept the order. Consequently, it enters the field of individual's relationship with the system, turning the literature into the mechanism of idea shaping. How powerful the individual is to the system, even as involved in his nomenclature, without his choice, meaning in his imprisonment, is illustrated by the literature of Dërvishi. Indeed, it is well-known the philosophy that the individual thinking in relation to breaking the established rule is always a challenge and an issue. This issue is the permanent motif in this author's writing process.

In this prism, the characters' dialogue is highly motivational, even his interrogation, by the Pale Mullah Hamid in the Lodge of Cermjan Slope, where it writes:

*- Pay attention here, - said Mullah Hamid. - What do you see here, why do you see it? Tell me the truth?*

*- To describe it, - I replied. - But do not ask me about the thing that all the epigones of the letter ask, do not ask me: what benefit will you have from the description...*

...

*- And when you describe us in that Book of yours, all of us who live here on the Slope, and yourself among us, will anyone believe your book as a true story, or will they consider it an imaginary literary work?*

*- As far as mankind is able to see, that much power and ability he has to believe.*

*- Well, you have learned the craft well, - he added. - You will know how to hit wonderful toys, but can you find costumers to buy these? Those who know the value of your toys will kill you, while the others will not even be able to see them. (Dërvishi, 1981:42-43)*

While looking at the dimension or the first layer of mystical and religious text discourse, the edge of this author's allegory catches the hypocrisy and defamation, where the pursuit of the Divine is often only a mask for the realization of everyday life pragmatics and policies. It should be hereby emphasized that the author Teki Dërvishi, through this demystification does not strive or aim the de-religiousness of literature, the lack of God and religion, because he knows very clearly that aiming this would get the ideological layers, it would even damage the literary flavour, but pleasantly notices the absence of motivation towards spirituality, the absence of which, when it happens, turns the religious leaders always into a caricature. Briefly stated, if this layer is observed, without the allegorical-political dimension, then Dërvishi's prose in this work also catches the peak of the satyr.

Likewise, in contemporary literature of Kosovo, we have the well-known author Beqir Musliu (1945-96) who, in his work, treats the topos of death as a crossing rather than an end. Beqir Musliu's novel, *Krupa*, as a clear intention has the formation of the personality of the man of letters on the sorrows of the family saga, where the literature is in the role of the saviour. According to Musliu's philosophy, this man of letters will recognize the literary and philosophical alchemy of the East and West, the Quran and the Bible, Christ and Muhammad, their teachings and variants. Moreover, he should know ancestor authors of the pain and literary alchemy, especially should know the mystical field of transformation of the souls of Goethe's Faust, etc., in order to accept the death. Still, in his prose, death as topos is projected into every letter, becoming personal preoccupation, by all means, as a mystic and philosophical meditation. Though, this author does not write the projected death according to the familiar traditional technique of the novel but strives to give everything to his creative philosophy through symbols and little subjective narration.

*Doctor M came in the scullery and smiled again. I do not know why. I said: I'm living for the fourteenth day. He still smiled at me. I said: For the fourteenth day I will smile either under the burial robe or on it. Doctor M told me: Don't say that, be patient as you have been so far. I told Doctor M: Doctor M, if I accidentally die, please tell Hope that I have barely closed my eyes (Musliu, 1989:110-111).*

Passing or not of the *thirteenth day*, looking at the symbolic level of the number, enforces overcoming or not of the crisis, the illness and the rejection of death, with the intention of coming on the *fourteenth day*. All this has hope as ideals a symbol for life, even as a desire to not die.

However, this prose reaches its dramatics when the death strengthens and defeats the hope for life of the symbolic character, which in its extreme meditations and visions describes its state in a spiritual situation, where everything is covered by whiteness, of the veil of *winter* or death: *it still comes to my mind that this whiteness will be of the snow of the unseen winter and beyond all ken* (Ibid: 136). According to this, it appears that, the novel *Krupa* can be described as a figure of suffering, but now of the personal immanent suffering, nevertheless transformed into a literary text with the pretence of universal meditation on the mystery of death from the plan of the Sufi philosophy of overcoming.

## 6. Conclusion

As part of this study, we concluded that the connection between the literary expression, whether folk or written by a certain author, cannot be separated from the phenomenon of religiosity, especially if literary discourse is organized as a legacy of tradition, which will necessarily be mythical, mystical and religious provenience. Subsequently, religiosity is a theatre where, in addition to the power of doctrine, we likewise have the powerful play of topics that comprise human imagination. If the death is still considered to be mysterious finality, the concept of which is the basis of theological philosophy, this finality is necessarily part of the great and persistent questioning in literary discourse. In this study, we analysed the relationship of religious philosophy with literary discourse, ascertaining their hybridization in the gnoseological plan, to find this relationship in certain literary phenomena. In folk culture we noticed the topic of death as a sacrifice in the corpus of ballads, as the intent of the source of life from death. Afterwards, in *aljamiado* literature, we saw death as a result of the poet's inner crisis in relation to social crises where the author evokes his death as a journey of the soul to eternity. Here, the topic of death is related to the strings of haqeeqat songs, which have touched a certain dimension of Albanian literature. Similarly, the topic of death, as the legacy and the provenience of the mystic world, emerges in contemporary Albanian literature of Kosovo, with the authors Beqir Musliu and Teki Dërvishi, where death is perceived as salvation from life, as a crossing to the true world of eternity (in the first author) and the death as the allegory of the personality and identity crisis (in the second author). Thus, the topic of death, as the legacy of mythical and mystic religiosity, is present in the Albanian literary discourse of Kosovo in all literary forms, both as theme, as topic, as symbol and figure of constant concern with the mysterious finality it.

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