

THE SOCIO-POLITICAL LEXICON IN THE POETRY OF THE ALBANIAN WRITER DRITËRO AGOLLI

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ABSTRACT

Dritëro Agolli is one of the best-known poets of contemporary Albanian literature. He is a prolific writer despite the fact that he began writing in early youth. His early verse collections in late 50s introduced him to the public as a gifted writer together with I. Kadare. In addition to being a writer, he has been one of the most active members in the socio-political life of the country, identifying himself as a writer affiliated with a political party who put his talent to good use when it came to ideological issues. He strongly believed in "the communist ideal" on which he had pinned his dreams about himself and his country.

In this article we will talk about the lexicon he uses in his creations which feature party content. Since it is impossible to analyze his whole work we will concentrate on two such typical works written in different political periods, the poem "Mother Albania" (1974) and the volume "The Belated Pilgrim" (1993). Our aim is not merely to highlight the socio-political lexicon he uses, but also through analyses to show its function in his poetry and the mastery of the poet to transform it into a source of expression. Despite the penumbras that have accompanied the writer's high standing and his poetry, he remains one of the poets who, despite his political commitments, elevated Albanian poetry to new heights.

UDC & KEYWORDS

■ UDC: 880 ■ SOCIO-POLITICAL LEXICON ■ EXPRESSION
■ STYLE-FORMING ■ EFFECT

INTRODUCTION

Agolli is one of the best-known poets of contemporary Albanian literature. He has not stopped writing poetry and prose for over 50 years. Apart from this he has also been an active member of the socio-political life of the country. Before the 90s he positioned himself as a supporter of communist ideals.

In his poetic work he appears "at times a lyricist, at times meditating and philosopher, but always a patriot and revolutionary who bounds with joy in his verse when he sees around him new phenomena," (Kallulli, 1979, p. 60). Agolli believed in the "communist ideal" to which he had tied his hopes for himself and his country and he did not hesitate to express this in verse. The poem "Mother Albania", is one of the works written with ideological pathos. The motives that he treats there go hand-in-hand with the poetic language. In this poem, D. Agolli creates the ideal image of the country, "there he appears as a poet who wanted to build a happy Albania. Poetically this could be achieved either in the form of the myth of the past or in the form of utopia- the cult of the future," (Sinani, 2012, p. 20). But, for our poet the past served as inspiration for "the glorious future" of the country, that is why by glorifying the past he believes in the future.

After the fall of communism, the poet was part of a new reality, which presented him with various challenges.

Despite this he did not stop writing, on the contrary, he burst with new works which focused primarily on existential topics. One of the first volumes is "The Belated Pilgrim," where the poetic ego is a disillusioned idealist.

Agolli never denied his political commitment and never tried to apologize for his beliefs. In his verse written before the 90s despite the creative mastery of the poet we can see the influence of the communist regime on his language. In our article we will focus on the nature of the socio-political lexicon in two works: "Mother Albania" and "The Belated Pilgrim", written in two different ideological contexts, to see the influence of the regime not only on the writer, but on the language in general. To show that "language is directly related to the spiritual condition of a certain time in history, which mirrors the structure of society, and also its political stratification," (Lloshi, 1999, p. 231). In the abovementioned works, but especially in the poem "Mother Albania", the poet often uses the ideological lexicon to transmit the feelings and experiences of the lyric hero, but also to describe environments, events and to portray political and social characters.

From a thematic point of view in these works this lexicon includes:

1. Designations regarding the organization, and the life of the party: Congress, party, politics of communism, politician, The Central Committee of the Party, Party of Labour, etc.
2. Words belonging to the ideo-political sphere: the dictatorship of proletariat, socialism did not give in, Marxism, democracy etc.
3. Lexicon regarding the structure and socio-economical orders: republic, working class, communist, throne, Zogist (supporters of king Zog); power of the proletarians, the estates of the monarchs etc.
4. Words dealing with socio-political struggle, class struggle: sparks a revolution, action, victory, the overthrown, decadence, conspiracy, blackmail etc.

Thus, we notice the existence of designating lexemes with ideological content, which have been incorporated into the poetic language, Samara (1985) for example points out that: this lexicon includes not only words and terms which have to do with the life and activity of different socio-political organisations, but also many terms from the field of philosophy, political economy, justice, morale of the army etc. The use of terms from all these fields in a sphere which is included in the socio-political lexicon can be explained through the domineering influence of politics and ideology on other forms of social conscience.

We can feel this when we read his verse and we notice many words which in the communist reality had acquired ideological meanings and through them the poet transmits the philosophy of the time. Throughout the poem we find words such as: star, red, righteous, fierce, tough, fist, sweat, through fire, the new epoch, the future, the world is boiling,

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freedom, revolutionary, remain vigilant etc., which were typical of communication during the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.

In the poetic language of the poem we encounter many words which the spirit of the time had made a part of the ideological stratum, which means that in this period the border between general lexicon and political terminology was a fine one. Thus, words of the active lexicon of the Albanian language have acquired political colouring being used positively or negatively.

The words comrade and mister which create a contextual antonymic pair occupy the main place. These words were not neutral during communism in Albania, but were emotionally charged. The first had positive meaning and the second negative derogatory meaning. In fact even in the explanatory dictionary of the Albanian language published in 1980 the primary meaning of the word mister is given with the annotation, "outdated: Rich man or man with power; owner of wealth," (DMAL, 1980, p. 2248).

The poet ironically describes:

The lazy life of misters languished away amongst the flies, without a future, no light, no hope... ("Poetry," Dritëro Agolli, 1979, p. 592)

Or

From his hide-out the mister prayed to his wealth
As if praying to an ancient god ("Poetry," Dritëro Agolli, 1979, p.593)

One of the meanings of the word comrade, in DMAL is genuinely ideological, member of the Party of Labour of Albania, member of the grass roots in the Socialist People's Republic of Albania... Due to its connotations this word is at times substituted by French or Russian words: tavarish and camarad.

After the fall of communism these words replaced one another. However their ideological meaning and effect which people use ironically, have not faded.

The word red, which represents the colour of the ideal has a wide field of application in the verses of the poem. e.g.

The train of time with the red star of November ("Poetry," Dritëro Agolli, 1979, p.559)

The Party issued "The first great call"

And your charm awoke by the red ray of the red star ("Poetry," Dritëro Agolli, 1979, p.600) etc.

After WWII, for reasons which are well-known Albania positioned itself in the Eastern Bloc, which had its own ideology and platform. In these circumstances a feeling of optimism to build the New Albania had swept the entire country. The motto "Unity is power" is also utilized by our poet:

Only then a thousand fists become one
And we lift the new world up on its feet ("Poetry," Dritëro Agolli, 1979, p.618)

The density of lexicon with ideological content, the trite phrases, high pathos, direct communication, involvement of the poetic ego in communication, the embellishing of reality, "the great" messages the poet aims at transmitting, as well as a series of other features bring to the fore characteristics of the so-called "wooden language," (Rrokaj, 2009, p.67) which in the Albanian language was the language of totalitarian speech. The scholar Françoise Thom says that "No regime is as prolix as the communist regime and as

jealous of its monopoly on the language (Thom, 1987, p.7) In Albania, where the system was one of the harshest and the pressure on language was unprecedented, a "new variant" which fitted very well the mentality of the time was born. The linguist Sh. Rrokaj (2009) thinks that: The Albanian language in certain types of discourses, trying to adapt to the perception of the Marxist-Leninist dogma, started to solidify and calcify in a broad bed of pre-fabricated concrete-like panels typical of the expression of an ad hoc outlook for this dogma (p. 67-69).

"That is to say that the ideo-political authority and topicality of the content here becomes an authority and linguistic topicality," (Lloshi, 1985, p.63) that Dritëro Agolli also could not avoid. Thus the verses:

Little refuge,
You were the first cell of the Central Committee of the Party,
You were the first cell of the Cabinet of Ministers,
Where all the ministries used to come and go, From the Ministry of Defense to the Ministry of Industry ("Poetry," Dritëro Agolli, 1979, p. 601)

Make a dry description using formal calcified phrases, which are in the function of the idea that the protection and the industrialization of the country were the two main "duties" of the time.

Whereas he sees the future of socialism in the youth:

And out of the cradle of the mountains comes my youth
in waves
It comes out to plant the land with dreams,
Youth, youth
You bird of socialism! ("Poetry," Dritëro Agolli, 1979, p. 634)

In the post-dictatorial poetry the poetic language freed itself from the official formalism which the regime dictated and so did the poetry of Agolli. In the volume "The Belated Pilgrim" where the lyric hero appears disenchanted with the ideal in which he had believed for decades, the ideological lexicon occupies a considerable space; its nature together with the system changed. Thus he chooses words with figurative meaning to denote the political concepts. In the poem which carries the same title as the volume, Agolli writes:

I am a pilgrim from a long time,
Wanderer of the lost caravan. ("The Belated Pilgrim," D. Agolli, 1991, p.7)

The lyric hero speaks in the first person about the disappointments and experiences of the past, juxtaposing two periods: yesterday and today.

I lived the ocean of wars, I lived revolutions,
That is why I carry on my shoulders the rancour of the century.
But I breathe the air of the planet of life,
As everybody else does,
Only with a difference, I was a member of the relay. ("The Belated Pilgrim," D. Agolli, 1991, p. 125)

Further the poet alludes to the time when on his epigraph in black letter will be written:

"Here lies an ex-communist"
Some petty poet might say:
"Haven't we eradicated this dog yet?" ("The Belated Pilgrim," D. Agolli, 1991, p. 154)

In the poem "The roses of the Turkish girl" he applies irony to himself in moments of joy and intimacy.

E.g.

I showed her that in verse I am an honest communist
"Cok gyzel, the Turkish girl told me-communist and a muslim.

How stupid of me! – I say to myself - empty mind like a tea pot shame on us who graze on the political meadow!

...and the Turkish girl messes up my dialectal outlook but in the meantime she frowns and lowers her black eyes towards the ground: "Communist; a real mess, a devilish mess in the clouds!"

I tell her we communists are red devils in the world. But we treat respectably maidens like you ... farewell you, bearded men, Lenin, Engels, father Marx! ("The Belated Pilgrim," D. Agolli, 1991, p. 171-172)

Thus, in the abovementioned verses, the political lexicon placed in another context plays a different role from that used in the poem "Mother Albania", "which shows that the expressive values of the words are conditioned by the parentage and social standing of the person speaking, (Baly, 1952, p. 79.) This shows that the poetic ego has a close relationship with the political and social developments. With the change in position of the poet changed also the aim of using the words with political meanings and colourings. The ideological liberation is accompanied by the liberation of the poetic language.

Despite the "calcification" that the language underwent during communism and the influence that the social-realist principles had on the poet, the creative talent helped him to skip many drawbacks that the use of this lexicon in the poetry dictated, by including the ideological lexicon also in stylistic attainments and by using the relationship of the words to get stylistic polysemy, synonymy and stylistic antonymy.

Stylistic polysemy is an impressive attainment in the verses of Dritëro Agolli. He plays with the meanings of the words, and also makes use of the ideological meanings which some words like-wolf, jackal- have acquired.

Jackals bore down and charged at you. (The invaders), ("Poetry," Dritëro Agolli, 1979, p. 583)

In the great amphitheatre of the Balkans!
The wolves howled amidst the cold heat
Dressed in chivalric attire
Tamed by the frock of diplomacy. ("Poetry," Dritëro Agolli, 1979, p. 590)

The wolves (the invaders) from their lairs extended their sharp jaws. ("Poetry," Dritëro Agolli, 1979, p. 559)

Stylistic synonymy is present in the verses of the poem through the purposeful replacements of the words, not only to avoid repetition, but to make language more expressive. "Stylistic synonyms with expressive-emotional connotation are used in texts or socio-political contexts as stylistic elements to enliven or to strengthen the feelings of deterioration," (Samara, 2008, p. 171). This enhances the expressive power and makes the verse more engaging. So in the multitude of words that could be used in that context there Agolli chooses the word harpy. (Creature in Albanian mythology, which is imagined as an enormous evil snake, having a long tail, with several heads and which is insatiable, similar to a dragon (DMAL, p. 1016).

"We the communists killed the harpy which caused poverty" ("Poetry," Dritëro Agolli, 1979, p. 627), which carries emotional charge and stylistic colouring. He intentionally uses the word Great Britain instead of using the word England.

There came Great Britain to the gate. (Where the fate of Albanian borders was being decided)

And wanted to cut freedom in two words strings or synonymic pairs, mainly verbs, which have a strengthening

role are also used. E.g. I want to carry on my shoulders the time which boils and blares; The palaces of the Quisling monarchs, regents/ Blared and shook under our feet; Jackals bore down and charged at you; Eh, your dress / how many times it tore up/ ripped up and sundered (figurative meanings); Keep your eyes peeled, remain vigilant/ The blockade should be breached; The broom of the revolution swept and threw them away etc.

Stylistic antonyms. As we mentioned above, the words mister-comrade create stylistic antonymy. "These antonyms have been designated contextual, because the opposition takes place only within a context," (Thomai, 1999, p. 144). In the same way "greaser offspring", although it is a synonym of the word – descendant, in the context in which it is used has an ironizing stylistic meaning. Goçi (1987) points out that: Stylistic antonyms, like lexical ones, depend on the linguistic conditions at given times, on the degree of the development of the language, on the ratio to the time and in accordance with the kind of style as well as on the extralinguistic conditions (p. 115).

The word Allah/u, in certain contexts had acquired emotional colouring, it was not neutral anymore. e.g. The overthrown prayed to Allah at dusk like moles.

Agolli has built a rich figurative system to transmit the desired feelings and messages, despite the effect that the use of the ideological lexicon has in the poetry. This lexicon occupies an important place among the literary figures or linguistic tropes used in the poem. Personification, occupies the main place among the literary figures of the poem. It is present even in the title « Mother Albania », where we notice the embodiment of Albania. Further he addresses her:

Let me fall in your lap and receive your embrace
My centuries-old troubled [mother Albania] ...
The old mother lifted her forehead for her son ... etc.

Ideological metaphor is a main literary figure in the poem, which is obtained by the figurative use of the socio-political lexicon. We encounter the stereotype metaphor and the original. Here are some of the examples:

But the working class gives birth to its real genius ("Poetry," Dritëro Agolli, 1979, p. 617)

Socialism strikes

With the hammer of the class day and night. ("Poetry," Dritëro Agolli, 1979, p. 625)

This offensive would be an avalanche of history. ("Poetry," Dritëro Agolli, 1979, p. 614)

"The evaluation of the relationships between realias or concepts denoted by these words is done via metaphor," (Samara, 2008, p. 177).

Metonymy is another linguistic trope which the poet attains through the use of the ideological lexicon.

Without a working class the revolution
Cannot gather the people as one fist!
The working class adds iron wings to society. ("Poetry," Dritëro Agolli, 1979, p. 617)

Or,

"The overthrown prayed to Allah so that the power of the mountain would wane/so they could re-mount the horse."

The logical affinity between the concepts enables him to transmit the spirit of the age figuratively.

Epithets of an ideological nature are commonly attained in the verse of Dritëro Agolli. To evaluate The Party, the

leader and the common people he uses a string of epithets with positive connotation.

The great, sage, righteous Genius

The most humane Genius – the Party ("Poetry," Dritëro Agolli, 1979, p. 618)

Thus, socialism climbed the mountain unrelentingly
With books, mortar, slaked lime, nitrogen, wires, tractor
Determined on its path, without sentimentalism
It carried the torch of New Age in its hand ("Poetry," Dritëro Agolli, 1979, p. 625)

The figurative system used by Agolli is very rich and diverse. He does not use ideological lexicon only to complement designatory (nominative) demands, but also to create expressive values. Thus Samara (1985) points out that:

In the poem, "Mother Albania", the socio-political lexicon occupies almost 30% of the general lexicon. The wide use of this lexicon can be explained also through the strengthening of the proletarian partisanship of the spirit of militantism in the works of literature of our socialist art" (p.89).

In this article we brought only some of the cases which help us understand the influence that the system had on the language in general and on his poetic language especially. To do this we chose two of the works which link the poet to the political developments in the country. At the end of the volume, "The Belated Pilgrim", he gives his evaluation:

Better nothing today than the golden yesterday...("The Belated Pilgrim," Dritëro Agolli, 1991, p. 213)

Conclusion

Despite the penumbra which have accompanied the position of the writer and his political engagement, he remains one of the poets who elevated Albanian poetry to new heights. Although "the creative poetic individuality of D. Agolli, cannot be detached from the social and political conditions in which it was shaped," (Çulli, 1978, p. 91) we have to admit that he is a poet with ideological orientation, who knew how to express in a superb manner the ideal which he embraced. In every verse of his poetry we feel the honest love for the country and the people, the dream for a better future and the intentional glorification of Mother Albania.

Dritëro Agolli is one of the Albanian poets, who for decades has contributed not only to the development of Albanian poetry, but also to the enrichment and refinement of our language. In the same way that the work of the poet who has dedicated his life to poetry is voluminous so are the literary and linguistic values which they carry.

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