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Research Article

DRITËRO AGOLLI, A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE CONTEMPORARY ALBANIAN LITERATURE

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INTRODUCTION

The history of Albanian literature and Albanian journalism cannot be understood without the name of Dritëro Agolli¹, because of the fact that Dritëro has given a valuable contribution to the emancipation and democratization of political and social life in Albania. He entered our literature as one of the most important representatives of the 1960s generation, and as one of the greatest critics of the new post-war² spirit. Dritëro Agolli, brought in Albanian literature new variations and techniques, but at the same time he was careful to fundamentally touch the Albanian versification of the poets of Renaissance and hence. In his poetical work, among other things, the influence of oral literature is evident, which is also stated by Agolli himself when he states that: "I came in poetry from folk song... Then I went into books. I did not learn folk poetry, fairy tale, humor and all the folk culture, but I lived it. At first I used to write as people did³". So, D. Agolli, I. Kadare, J. Xoxa, A. Pashku, and other writers through their work featured a new ethnographic cycle and created to the Albanian world another image of Albania in the European world. We can assert that this generation of authors created the foundations of another future in Albanian literature and journalism, exposing new concepts not only in literature, but also in art, music, etc., which strongly influenced the orientation of Albanian society.

Researchers R. Zisi-L. Boci assert that: Nowadays we see Dritëro Agolli as one of the most important and prominent writers of Albanian literature, a productive and qualitative poet⁴, author of many finished and unfinished works, as an

idealist, a dreamy poet and an eternal traveler. So he is one of our best contemporary poets but also one of our best poets of all time. Despite the fact that Dritëro relied on the oral folk literature tradition as well as literature created before him, he tried to elevate his work to a higher level using various rhythmic-melodic techniques.

Agolli throughout his life researched and studied the language of the people, leaned on it and was led by it for everything. The poetry of D. Agolli is multifaceted, as it is observed by M. Zeqo who points out: "Poetry in the creative work of D. Agolli is the most precious thing, but not the only one⁵", this owing to the fact that Agolli cultivates ceaselessly poetry in all its diversity: the short poetry, the poem, the ballad, the fable, the sonnet, etc.,

It is a well known fact that Dritëro Agolli's poetry is more identified with his creator, he remained faithful to the spirit he had brought up to the last days of his life. This fidelity was preserved throughout his creativity not only as a storyteller, novelist, literary critic, novelist, playwright, etc. but also in the field of journalism, which made the figure of Dritëro rise to the levels of poetics of Naim and Lasgush.

During his entire creative journey he always tried to have poetry as his own companion, regardless of the verse content. He tried to objectify through poetry his entire life path. It is a fact that throughout his creative process, Agolli was directly influenced by folk poetry, Naimian, Lasgushian art, Burns and other Russian authors of the 20th century who influenced the spirit, simplicity and grandeur of the Agollian verse, such features are found today since the first poetic summaries "I went out on the street (Albanian: Në rrugë dolla)", to the "Midnight notebook (Albanian: Fletorka e mesnatës)" or "The belated pilgrim (Albanian: Pelegrini i vonuar)".

¹ M. Gero, "Rhyme vocabulary of Dritëro Agolli", Introduction, Toena publications, Tirana, 2013, p. 15

² Sh. Sinani, "The madmen" by Dritëro Agolli, Publishing House "Naimi", Tirana, 2012, p. 16

³ D. Agolli, *Life in Literature*. Tirana, 1987, p. 265

⁴ R. Zisi-L. Boci, Dritëro Agolli and Albanian Literature, International Scientific Conference "Dritëro Agolli, Distinguished Personality of Albanian Literature and Culture", Gjirokastrë, 2013, p. 17

⁵ M. Zeqo, *Lyric of the land, Demon of the word*, Toena publications, Tirana, 1996, p. 31

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In the common journey with his creator he was inspired by the highest and most beautiful principles of the time. Agolli at the same time is well-known for new entries in Albanian literature, as he presented in his work the best values of Albanianism, the humanism, justice and love for man, his fatherland and his history, for Albanian language, Albanian land and song, for the Folklore and wonderful customs of his own ethnicity. On the other hand, in its entirety, the work and mostly the poetry of Dritëro Agolli is dominated by the living world, the infusion with spirit into environment, the sanctification of the environment, of nature, of the field and the livestock. Through this feature, the poet presents in his poetry Naim's pantheism and traces of the Bektashi outlook. Dritëro was recognized in all Albanian literature as the poet who created the image of an ideal Albania in poetry, "he appeared as a poet who wanted to build a happy Albania", which he conveys through the poem "Mother Albania".

In various studies on his creative work, Agolli is considered as one of the people and masters of the pen, who living in the bosom of the people, besides the subjects, the themes and the best elements of his discourse, which he uses in a striking way, he tends to make the language expression of the given content more functional and more pleasant, so he connects the daily work as a master of the word with the question as how to make his creation more influential and understandable to the reader. Particularly in the poetry of Agolli, the thematic that draws attention, as the researcher B. Kucuku (1998)⁶ notes, is a long and sometimes troublesome "round-trip" zigzag, which is also reflected in the verses:

When I start on a journey
Everything shines to me and I feel hope
When I come back, I feel sleepy
Something from me begins to die.

Among the numerous scholars who have treated his work is Academician J. Bulo who closely followed the creative work and growth of Dritëro Agolli as a poet and a prose-writer. He writes about him: "Dritëro Agolli is a prominent personality and protagonist of the cultural, artistic and social developments of Albanians during the last half century; He is undoubtedly the most popular writer of contemporary Albanian literature. Dritëro Agolli is one of the leaders of that generation who came to Albanian literature in the sixties of the past century and with their work they paved the way for the emancipation of the thought and modernization of Albanian letters and culture, even though it developed within the schematic bed of socialist realism."⁷

And the look of academician J. Bulo for the poet becomes wider, when he asserts that "At all times, Dritëro Agolli has faced with the dignity the challenge of giving the deserved value to freedom and the challenge of waiting in new horizons. The Work of Dritëro is our spiritual asset, we cannot do without it, we miss it; with him we are better, richer in spirit, more beautiful spiritually, more humane and more peaceful. Love for the man, the philosophy of reconciliation with man

and nature, is a rare Bektashi motive in Dritëro Agolli's work that gives us spiritual calm when we read it."⁸

Another scholar who has analyzed Dritëro Agolli's work, especially its linguistic wealth, is also the linguist Emil Lafa. He writes that "The Dritëro came in Albanian literature, as he himself wrote, with his bag stuffed with mud from Devoll. But to make this good mud of Devoll become literature, is needed the "holy spirit" or "the demon of creation," which I have the impression that Dritëro has descended from the Mountains of Dangëllia through the plateau of Kolonja. Dritëro's poetry is born naturally and it is healthy, without great efforts; He masters the coveted art well to make flowing, heart-penetrating verses, which are learned and remembered."⁹

The linguist Emil Lafa goes further that making a characterization of the writer through his achievements in prose and poetry. The scholar writes that "Dritëro is a poet who talks warmly to the people who speaks with them simply and beautifully, giving our poetry the tone of a warm and intimate conversation." Not only the poetry, but also the prose of D. Agolli, are distinguished for a masterful elaboration of the living language of ordinary people. In Dritëro's works, the riches, the liveliness, the variety of colors and the aromas of popular discourse are appealing. I remember that when I read "The noise of winds of the past (Albanian: Zhurma e ererave të dikurshme)," (1964), the first work in the writer's prose I was so much drawn by the language of stories and their characters. With this mastery of the story he continued in other works afterwards. I do not believe there's anyone who left in the middle a book written by Dritëro."¹⁰

Dritëro Agolli, through his realistic work and of special literary values, often with sharp satire and refined sense of humor, and sometimes even in a direct way, has presented in a very artistic way the truth about life and time. His poetry is close to man, which makes Agolli the poet of the earth and his love for it, the writer of philosophy and human sorrow. The literary work of Dritëro Agolli thus created the new tradition of writing in Albanian literature. He is known as the great writer of a "small language"¹¹, as the most popular contemporary writer, most beloved by compatriot readers and equally well known abroad in the metropolises of world culture. Through the idea and the theme that follows his creative work, Dritëro, is defined as the intelligent man of letters, as master and slave of the word, of the figure and thought as the creator of philosophical-metaphysical inspiration, hence a rare poetic individuality of universal values. His works have been translated into many languages of the world.

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⁸ J. Bulo, *Dritëro Agolli*, in J. Bulo, *Word's breath*, Tirana, 2014, p. 382

⁹ E. Lafa, *85th Anniversary of Dritëro Agolli, how I have known him 30 years before*, internet.

¹⁰ E. Lafa, *85th Anniversary of Dritëro Agolli, how I have known him 30 years before*, internet.

¹¹ Sh. Sinani *Dritëro Agolli, the writer of sorrow and life philosophy*, Contemporary Albanian Literature, Tetovo, 2002, p. 133

⁶ Bashkim Kuçuku, *Renewal of the Albanian lyric*, in D. Agolli, *Bell's Prayers*, Tirana, 1998, p.341-375

⁷ J. Bulo, *Dritëro Agolli*, në J. Bulo, *Word's breath*, Tirana, 2014, p. 381

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In his own way, Dritëro Agolli created on this point "an alternative Albania", which was based on a romantic ideal. This is a common poetic relationship with reality, known in Albanian and foreign traditions. The "other Albania" of Dritëro is deified in "Mother Albania" and in other works by which Agolli wanted to create a happy Albania, which could be poetically achieved either in the form of the myth of the past (nostalgia for the "Great Age"¹²), as most Renaissance activists did), or in the form of the utopia-cult of the future, the idealism of a place that does not exist.

Looking at the matter in this point of view, Dritëro Agolli is undoubtedly considered one of the most prominent poets of present day's Albanian literature, which we see mirrored in his emotional attitude towards life, in the linguistic artistic expression as well as the special experience in the field of art. Since his work reflects the reality of the Albanian society after the 60s, we can say that it includes all aspects of the Albanian society from the social situation, Albanian mentality, different spheres of social, political, economic and cultural life in the Albanian environment and soil. So his work reaches out to include the entire universe of Albanian life, attached here the ideas, characteristics and themes of a successfully accomplished literary work.

His work has left marks, not only in Albanian poetry, where he is distinguished, as one of the poets, especially his most seasoned, echoing and influential era. But even in Albanian prose he has been a man who has left remarkable works, here we can mention one of the best works of Albanian humor, such as *Splendor and fall of comrade Zylo* (Albanian: *Shkëlqimi dhe rënja e shokut Zylo*), or "The devil's box (Albanian: *Arka e djallit*)". But he has also made a significant contribution to cinematography. He is among those Albanians, who have become a point of reference, and not all manage to become such.

Not only in poetry but also in prose he was distinguished for a narrative structure, brought innovations of this nature to the gallery of people. Dritëro Agolli was also distinguished for a rich folk phraseology by means of which he reflected the philosophy of life in all his creative work. He also brought interesting examples in the short prose even in dealing with topics that constituted the main focus of literature over a long period of time and a great engagement of writers and artists, such as the treatment of the woman's figure, the woman or otherwise known as a theme the emancipation of woman and the presentation of contemporary reality. The totalitarian society and the literature of socialist realism in this regard created the myths of progress and of the future, of gender

equality and youth, with which they tried to soften and adorn, but that they could not conceal the faded emptiness and reality surrounding the Socialist "Paradise".

This way, Dritëro Agolli, in order to avoid demands and clichés of the official art, sometimes consciously and sometimes with the unconsciousness of the artist, always demanding from his art, employed the introduction of "problematic characters" under the labeling of cracked people and a little odd who with their behaviors, their iniquities and morals are in conflict with the rules of society. For this they often end up abandoned by it, and sometimes even in tragic disasters. In addition to the preferred official themes, which he dealt with a personal point of view, and in many cases avoiding general conformism, D. Agolli had the courage to interweave within these themes the motives of despair, gloom, death, boredom of life by presenting them as the existential complexes of human life. We can say that D. Agolli's work in short prose expressed his essence of the virtuous narrator by avoiding the perverse forms, the models turned into taboo of social realism. And this constitutes a difficult challenge for a real artist.

For the Albanian literature scholar, Floresha Dado, who has been involved with Dritëro Agolli's contribution to our literature, emphasizes that "The prose and especially the poetry of Dritëro Agolli has repeatedly reflected a strong sense of love for the country, for honesty, for human interrelations among the people, for sincerity and honesty of communication. Agolli's work, being in the group of the most prominent authors of Albanian literature, always conducts human messages, principles of a civilized moral and relationship. Through original communication, sometimes through humor, sometimes through human despair, sometimes through the affirmation of social ideals, our writer builds up a very special relationship with his Albanians, where, on the one hand, the simplicity, the direct mode of expression prevails, on the one other deep human philosophy over the essence of life and man. It is precisely this inner philosophy that comes simply to the rage that penetrates our souls."¹³

While the scholar Gjovalin Shkurtaj writes that "The poet comes from the parts of Devoll and he will mention his birthplace, the nature, the people, the affairs and every other good thing so densely in his poems, but he is not a rustic poet. His poetry cannot be considered as pastoral, though so common are the words and terms of agriculture, livestock, the names of animals and herbs, trees of the forest, all the birds. D. Agolli has the village as a "starting point" to impart the most poignant passages of poetry that is gracefully cultivated and represents the persistent creator who "tries and pains over poetry" who "suffers over syllables and verses" and who is not content with little".¹⁴

Gj. Shkurtaj writes that "Dritëro Agolli, who in his earliest poetic volumes appeared in our literature as a poet with a particularly prominent personality, as a creator who is keen to attain the highest levels of well-organized artistic discourse and who brings verses with a clear emphasis on originality, but never takes off the shoes with the muddy fields and who

¹² Sh.Sinani, *Man and atypical phenomenon in D. Agolli's Work*, Studies for Albanian literature of the 20th century, QSA, Tiranë, 2010, p. 269

¹³ F. Dado, *Appraisal on the occasion of giving the title "Doctor Honoris Causa" to the writer D. Agolli*, in Dritëro Agolli "Doctor Honoris Causa", Korçë, October, 201, p. 8-9

¹⁴ Gj. Shkurtaj, *Some characteristics of the Poetic discourse of Dritëro Agolli*, in Gj. Shkurtaj, *The Weight of the Albanian Word*, Tirana, 2009, p. 137

always feels himself as simple, as a man coming from the bosom of the people. His early verse "I am a villager of the south not a poet (Albanian: "jam fshatar i Jugut jo poet") will be repeated and recaptured in various forms and artistic finds, but always to reveal his deep spiritual bond with ordinary people of the country of origin, with the farmers With the stockbreeders, with all those who have their "hands eared" from work."¹⁵

At the same time, Dritëro has been active with his creative work even after the 90s, despite the political circumstances of the time, he managed to survive by facing with rare wisdom and will the attacks against his talent. Referring to his work in both periods, we can assert that Agolli remains the poet of clarity and simplicity. In both periods, he preserves preference for the detail, regardless of metaphors and fresh comparisons. In the second period of his creativity he added musicality, without replacing it as many poets did at the end of their creative work, with the cold cult of form the vigor the inner youth momentum. The clarity and simplicity of his poetry are related to the tendency to poetize the ordinary and with the quality that does not allow him to take poses, or to run after fashions that would push him to betray the essence of his creative individuality. Agolli will remain one of the poets who sing to the end and to whom only death closes their mouth as he says with nice humor in his poetry.

By clarifying his literary position in the '90s, in the afterword of the poetic collection "The Belated Pilgrim", besides the poetic message reflecting the verses of these poems, he wrote, among other things: "We believed in building a society where people live in freedom and equality..., and then he goes on. "We did not know that today's wound become tomorrow's gangrene."¹⁶.

Asserting popular appreciations for Dritëro Agolli, we once again point out that he is one of the most prominent personalities of our national culture and one of the most prominent authors of contemporary Albanian literature. The assistance of his work is multifaceted: for the messages it carries, for the variety of topics and problems it poses, for the fascinating views, the extraordinary flow of style, the beautiful, rich, versatile language full of local and national color. Dritëro Agolli has over 50 years of rich creative work, which has always come to grow in values. The language of his work is a lab where many new words were born, where many meanings were born, hundreds and hundreds of regional words and meanings were picked up to local discourse and were used. The language of his poetry and not just that, it is the metaphorical head and an extraordinary source for the democratization and intellectualization of the contemporary Albanian language.

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Dritëro Agolli, also known as a skilled translator, bringing into Albanian language many popular poetic works and authors of world literature and culture (we remind here the poets R. Burns and P. Eluar). He, in addition to other translators, has the credit of having faced Albanian language with other highly elaborate languages and with a remarkable tradition in literary-artistic creativity, and the Albanian word through the Dritëro Agolli pen, and in these translations came with high quality expressive values.

So, as a conclusion, we can say that: The writers are those who with their creative work and artistic literature become inexhaustible sources for enriching the standard Albanian language. Among them, the language of the poet Dritëro Agolli, who is a part of artistic literature, is considered an inexhaustible source for the enrichment of the Albanian national literary language.

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¹⁵ Gj. Shkurtaj, *Some characteristics of the Poetic discourse of Dritëro Agolli*, in Gj. Shkurtaj, *The Weight of the Albanian Word*, Tirana, 2009, p. 133

¹⁶ R. Zisi, *Contemporary Albanian Literature -Poetry*, Tirana 2008, p. 146