

Macbeth—the messenger—between—Shakespeare—and Kadare

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Abstract:

Shakespeare's figure in this research paper is loomed as tangential, since his world wide dimension has already entered in the records of the world literature together with Homer, Aeschylus, Dante, Cervantes up to other later writers such as Marques and Eco. Fortunately for us, this list also includes our writer Ismail Kadare.

A lot of contemporary world's scholars and critics, when writing about Kadare (surely the merits for being the first to write about him belong to the French writer Alen Boske), drew the parallel between Kadare and other writers such as Aeschylus, Shakespeare, Gogol, Kafka, and Orwell.

His correlations with these colossi present a versatile interest, but we are going to focus especially on the intersections with Shakespeare, respectively with his work.

The first embryo of the intersection is undoubtedly *Macbeth*, one of Shakespeare's masterpieces, which Kadare had read in his early childhood.

Methodology of this research

Since this topic typologically belongs to the comparative literature, the research method will also precisely follow the *comparison* and the *parallels* between the work and life of both of them. The analysis will reveal the position of *Macbeth* the mediator in the form of a messenger, whereas the vertical and horizontal structure of their impact and intersection is mainly based on *Hamlet*. The explanations about Macbeth, Kadare brings to us for the first time in his essay *Ftesë në studio (Invitation to the studio)* and also in his occasional interviews and lectures. The full core of their intersection appears in Kadare's work *Hamlet, the tough prince*.

Keywords: *Shakespeare, Macbeth, Intersection, Chronicle in stone*

Introduction

It seems an unusual start or motive for nonliterary situations to become the impetus for writing a scientific paper. Even a more unusual fact is that a comparative literary topic arises on the calendar period of circumstances. It is this very year, 2016, which intersects the subjects of this paper: William Shakespeare marks the four century death anniversary (at the same time with Cervantes, 23 April 1616), a date which entered in the substratum of the World Book Day, and Ismail Kadare marks his 80th birthday (28 January 1936), an anniversary which is recognized as the Year of Kadare in the Albanian world.

Through Fan Noli's translation of Othello, Hamlet, Julius Caesar etc, Shakespeare came as a whole with his works in the Albanian literature, especially in the 1930s of the last century.

Kadare appears with his works on the half of the last century (*Youthful Inspiration, poems, 1954*).

Fan Noli, being an Albanian polyhedric figure, except for taking the merits for translating Shakespeare's works and many other eminent works of world literature, he also had the privilege of being a critic of these works without even being a critic or a literature scholar by profession. However, the truth is that, a part of *Introductions*- as he names the forewords that he writes in the translated works, are deep critical views. While English literature is the focus of this paper, we cannot overcome the detailed observation of Noli related to Shakespeare's Macbeth:

The tragedy of the criminal ambition, sin and blink are not present in the Hell of the afterlife, but in the Hell of this life, and from this point of view the religious sermon is deeper, stronger and more terrifying which was preached by an anglo-saxon priest since the origination of Christianity until today. The topic is this: Unscrupulous selfish ambition, with no mercy and conscience is an adder that eats itself and creates a Hell on Earth, and more terrifying than that of the religious medieval poet Dante.. Shakespeare's hell is not based on controversial dogma but on facts gained from life experience ...'' (Shakespeare, 1968, p. 8-9).

By viewing the relationships of Shakespeare- Kadare in this point of view, of course they can be included in a broader panorama as relations between two literatures. In this plan, there are cases of comparison between Kadare and Shakespeare as well as with an entire constellation of the English field. If we intersect and compare Albanian literature and English Literature, it results that the relationships between the two should be separated. The word composition stands for an amount of receiving and providing. This

relationship phenomenon should be seen in the context of mutual knowledge and information over time. The integrity of this methodological aspect can be formulated as *a brief background of the relationship between the two literatures*.

The cognitive phenomenon between the two literatures results with attitudes and critical evaluations of the literary values, therefore in this context we will view the literary critical values and literary historical opinion related to these relationships.

Since the literature of a nation, country or language is usually marked by the literary representative authorities, Shakespeare, Bayron, Joyce and Orwell cannot be avoided in relation with Kadare, therefore, Kadare may be seen in relation with the predecessor: *Kadare in relation with Shakespeare*.

As it was said above, relationships not only have to do with recognition but with similarities, diversities and impacts in various timely and spatial contexts, similarities, impacts and contextual basis. All this underplot emphasizes a broad theme and goes outside the aim of this paper.

Such analysis would lead to the Albanian-English literary development in receiving and providing relations, we are especially referring here to Macbeth. Where, when and in what circumstances did the intersection happen? In this position, Macbeth, aside from being a literary character, he is a messenger who brings information between the great predecessor, Shakespeare and the great successor Kadare, who in the last instance belong to the same type, the type of the writer.

The first intersection

The composition '*intersection*' is figuratively used here and will be similarly used further on. The first intersection, that of Kadare with Shakespeare is fictional in the literary field or more precisely between two alter egos in the novel 'Chronicle in Stone'. This novel 'tells the story of the South City, but he also had his first sapling, The Big Plane' story. (Kadare, Invitation... 1990, p.141) and there is an intersection of characters, the Protagonist of 'Chronicle...' is a child, who plays the narrator in the first person, takes the Shakespeare's work 'Macbeth' although Javier who gives him the book tells him that ... the book is difficult for you to understand (Kadare, Chronicle... 2000, p.76) he insists : Finally I found a book, where the first written words are 'ghost', 'magician', 'the first killer', even the 'the second killer'. (Kadare, 2000. P.76). Here are the preconditions which fill the world of children's

interests for mysteries, adventures, ghosts, even when their content treats topics such as bloody shocks, terrors and nightmares.

There is no doubt that the choice of the author to make the narrator a child, as it is the case in ‘Chronicle in Stone’ is not something casual and unexpected, a fantasy or a stylistic combinatory. It is neither a presentation of a ransomed style, but a premeditated and well thought action. Through that, the author gains the freedom of speech, of aggression, and always under the veil of innocence, sentences the paradoxes, sarcasm, the parody of things and that of the society. The Scholar Ornela Domi has precisely noticed this alibi: ‘in this way of argumentation our purpose is not to say that the writer is trapping us by masterfully hiding behind the child. In fact at the first sight this is seen as a beautiful deceit but without doubt it goes with the ideo-artistic intentions of the author if we would talk with the terms of traditional literature theory.’ (Domi,2009, p. 49/50).

On the same page we have the description where the child asks for the Jung’s book to Javier, a slanderously interest influenced by hearing the adults conversation, but when he finds out that the book is not appropriate for him, for children, and that it is written in a foreign language, he is forced to accept the alternative for Macbeth. While in the first variant, the name Jung says nothing to him, in the second variant, the name Macbeth leads to nightmare and anxiety, towards a labyrinth which opens the trails of fantasy, imagination and flashbacks. *I closed the door and quickly went up the stairs. There was no person in the big room. I sat next to the window and opened the book. I was reading slowly and did not understand almost anything. I went to a place and started over again from the beginning. I started to understand something. I had a big tumult in my head. It was getting dark...* (Kadare, Invitation... 1990 p.77.)

The curiosity of a child urges the little boy to open the book once again with eagerness and right after the cover page he finds the names of the People of Drama but cannot concentrate. After the empty page comes

ACT I

SCENE I. Then the description of the first scene in italics:

A desert place. Thunder and lightning. Three Witches enter (Shakespeare, 1968, p.15).

After that follows a troublesome, slow, incomprehensible but persistent reading. The witches have gone out to search for Macbeth, similar to Foretellers of Albanian stories, as they went out to search for and say everything they had to say to the infant. Then again blur. *I could not sleep. The book stood silent nearby on the table... Inside the two hard covers*

were the noises, the gate, the screams, the horses, the people... Composed in tiny, black symbols. Hair, eyes, cries, knocking, voices, nails, feet, doors, walls, blood, beards, horse hoofs, orders (Kadare, Invitation at the Studio, 1990, p.77).

The rest of Macbeth appears to him in other symbols rather than letters, in the alleys, squares and *Streets of the mad* of his stone city, alternating fiction with reality, imagination with perception.

The second intersection

They boy of the chronicle has already become a man, a writer, and is an internationally known author.

The second intersection with Shakespeare is also through the herald *Macbeth*. Only now the reflection is shown during daylight, but with considerate to the herald. The narration style and language become more direct, lighter and without use of figures of speech. Perhaps the sensitivity deep within him reflects that.

Kadare has unfolded this biographic part a few times in different variants, in many interviews and other writings, but without changing the essence of the vital truth. While in my opinion, the best version of the scene was written in collaboration with Eric Faye.

His formulation on childhood and the house resembles the concept of Gaston Bachelard, who said in his book *Poetics of Space* that the child's first cosmos is his house and vault (as Kadare would say for roof), his sky. *The whole family lived in a house filled with anxiety, mysteries and inexplicable things*, says Kadare. It is precisely here that he finds the path for Eric Faye, to ask the fundamental question, the answer of which enables the second intersection with Shakespeare.

E. F. – *I would like to know if reading a book can change one's life according to you, and in this case which books have done so to you. I am referring to the discovery of Macbeth, mentioned also in Chronicle in Stone.*

I. K. – *In fact, Macbeth might have changed my life. I was eleven years-old. Why did I read it? Reading the first pages I noticed it was about ghosts and witches. I liked mysterious things so I began to read it. It was difficult reading the book but I was drawn to it. It made me suffer, but I could not put it down. I read the first half and really liked it. Since I did not own the book I started to copy it...I copied it in two weeks; I wrote slowly because I was a kid...It was about a specific crime: Someone had murdered a guest in the house. As a child, I had heard a lot about the Albanian tradition of*

trust (besa), according to which, killing a friend was the greatest crime in the world. (Faye, 2007, pp. 17-18).

Reading this fragment of the answer that Kadare gives to Faye it is impossible not to think about this fact: How is it possible that in the entire fragment he never even once mentions Shakespeare? What is the matter? Is the author beyond his interest? Does the child not have a concept about the author? He is not a child anymore. Is it a casual slip? This dilemma with a flurry of questions and sub-questions is best explored by Charles Baudelaire. Writing about a painting in an exhibit, about the picture and the perfection in art, Baudelaire states that the best picture is the one that grasps your sight and you forget to read the caption. In this case too, it seems like the herald Macbeth personifies Shakespeare. It is the internal drama - which begins with the mystery of the *witches* - that leads the curious kid towards labyrinths of anxious mysteries, and in these circumstances he does not seek for logical endings and equilibrium of reason. He seeks an adventure in an unknown and unexplored world. He does no longer recognize the line between fiction and reality; he does not know if he is reading a story or watching a real play unravel.

Being such a profound experience that affects all the sufferings and leaves mark everywhere, it is precisely the fact that makes old Kadare claim even today that this is the most influential book in his literary shaping. World War II twists on the young Kadare not only that they did not distract his attention from Macbeth, but on the contrary, they clarified and filled in the gaps. It suffices to recall the visit of the *Chronicle* boy together with his friend, Ilir to the city's slaughter: *Suddenly, the butcher took out the knife from the belt with his right hand and cut slightly the neck of the calf, apparently only for direction. Then he stabbed the calf to the spine. The calf's legs quivered. His front kneecaps broke first and then the hind legs, the calf was dead. The pool of blood beside the head lying on the cement began to expand. We had turned yellow (Kadare, The Fall of the Stone City, 1971, p.14).*

Doesn't it resemble Act II, Scene II?

What hands are here? ha! they pluck out mine eyes.

Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood

Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather

The multitudinous seas in incarnadine, (Shakespeare, 1968, 49).

Macabre and morbid scenes like this will be repeated or will appear throughout the literary work of Kadare. Of course, with specific nuances

dependent on the circumstances. Sometimes, a simple phrase such as *Macbethian nights* is sufficient to revive mirages of death.

Strangely, this anxious world of Macbeth in some cases is also ambiguous, with an all-modern image of Lady Macbeth, an anti-commercial, as he uses it in the subtitle in the poem “Lady Macbeth” Soap. The poem was written in 1987 but published in 1990.

*For four-hundred years
She's been washing them
With all types of soap
“Lux”, “Camay”,*

*But none of them
Will ever remove
The blood stains on*

Lady Macbeth hands. (Kadare, *Invitation at the Studio*, 1990, p.35)

The intersections between Kadare and Shakespeare certainly do not end here. He is an author whose works are already part of the world literary treasure. Being as such, he will be among the *unavoidable authors* in the creating profile together with Homer, Aeschylus, Virgil, Cervantes, Dante and others.

We talked about their intersections through *Macbeth* since the beginning. Their contact has many reasons to be special. It is special also in and through many other works of Shakespeare, except that now the author is not absent. For Kadare, he has turned into a loved and admired author.

In the following course we will see the third Kadare – Shakespeare intersection.

The third intersection

It has been said many times that Shakespeare's plays are the “Himalayas of world dramaturgy” (Uçi, *Prometeu dhe Hamleti*, 2001, 19). Among them are distinguished *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*. However, it does not mean that ancient Greek tragedies are overshadowed, they still remain at the top and continue to shine on the path of humanity for centuries, Uçi complements his statement. More than twenty centuries separate Shakespeare from Aeschylus, yet the tragic reflections of the human soul remain the same; about four centuries separate Kadare from Shakespeare, but the shivering of the human soul resembles inseparably in both their works.

Irrefutable evidence also exists regarding this, especially when it comes to Kadare. He has written an almost exhaustive Foreword for the work of Aeschylus, published as a set in Albanian language, but he has done his utmost with the novel (which he treats as esthetic genre) *Aeschylus or the Great Loser* (Kadare, 2001, p. 156), written earnestly for a fifteen years period (Tirana, January 1985, Paris 2000). The difference of time between Aeschylus and Shakespeare, respectively Hamlet is not more than five or six years, Paris, Mal i Robit/Durrës, 2005 – 2006 (Kadare, 2006, p. 150). Kadare in 2005 writes and publishes *Inevitable Dante* perhaps as an unavoidable interval to interconnect knots between the great people: Aeschylus, Dante and Shakespeare (Kadare, 2005).

Despite the fact that Kadare treats and names the three of them as testing, they are in fact a monographic presentation of each one.

From the first chapter of the testing for Hamlet, namely from the first sentence Kadare writes: *It is easy to say that Shakespeare's "Hamlet" is a universal work. Furthermore it may be considered as the most universal work of the world's literature. It is harder to tell whether this description glorifies or criticizes it. But this is only the first step of Kadare for facing Shakespeare: It was simply the powerful radiation of Shakespeare. It is known, although not common, the phenomenon when the writer, although he/she arrives late, happens to be so dominant that it extends his/her influence not only on contemporaries, and those who come after, but also where it sounds impossible, at a previous time, when he did not exist. And so the unbelievable happens, instead chronicles affect us when reading Shakespeare, the latter one unsettles them* (Kadare, 2006, p.11)

Perhaps this is exactly the right moment to say that the third intersection, the real one, between Kadare and Shakespeare happens at Hamlet, at: *We love him and of course we support him even when he makes mistakes, because he resembles us. He is one of us, one of the clan, our blood, deeply and mysteriously. We become one with him and this is when the misunderstanding starts. He, our doubled portrait does not obey us* (Kadare, 2006, p. 9).

Is Kadare himself the *doubled portrait* of Shakespeare?

Conclusion

In the context of this paper, object of our interest was the *intersection* between Kadare and Shakespeare. If we also notice the correlations of Kadare with other authors of English sphere, Shakespeare is undoubtedly the subject. We saw that he appeared in the world of Kadare since his

childhood. Kadare initially proves this as an artifact in the pages of *Chronicle in Stone* novel, where for the first time he faces *Macbeth*, or precisely the three witches that appear in the beginning of the tragedy, similar to the foretelling of the Albanian mythology, sufficient to lure the imagination of the child.

Kadare will later prove this in interviews, and especially in the *Invitation in the Studio* aesthetic book and *Hamlet, the tough prince* essay.

It is useless to analyze Kadare – Shakespeare relationship in a work such as this one, because of the known fact that this last book solely, so the essay, contains about one hundred and fifty pages text and it is impossible to take any part for citation. It is the same as trying to take only one stone from a castle just to prove its sublimity. Let us take only the first sentence of this novel as an example: “*It is easy to say that Shakespeare's “Hamlet” is a universal work... It is harder to tell whether this description glorifies or criticizes it*”. (Kadare, 2006, p. 7).

When it seems that that was it, the unexpected appears. Some Shakespearian reflections are noticed not only in so far mentioned novels, but also in the early “General...”. A special contribute related to the impacts of the English literature in the work of Kadare, with an exclusive focus in the *General of the dead army*, is brought by the new scholar Dr. Ag Apolloni. He finds and analyses in view and backgrounds the impact profiles, especially those of Shakespeare: “*Hamlet is Shakespearian masterpiece which contains a part where a grave is dug... The most famous grave of literature is the one of Ophelia, therefore in each literary work where we can notice digging of a grave, our memory takes us at the grave that Shakespeare's gravediggers dig. This is how the General, as he continuously talks about digging the graves, continuously reminds us of Hamlet*” (Apolloni, 2012, p.310).

Kadare, by facing Hamlet and by stating his leaven from the evidence given by Saxon Grammaticus, the famous chronicler of Denmark, finds and states something else regarding Shakespeare's work: *Can it be said that Shakespeare has created a whole cyclone that does not have any relation with the old chronicle from a soulless mineral?... This may seem easy because of the admiration we have for the playwright. Because it is easy, and not wrong, to say that the genius, that is why he is considered such, can create a pearl from something so simple, like a grain of sand for example.*

Perhaps this would be the most logical epilogue for Kadare himself, who by analyzing the geniuses and their work, enters triumphantly in their kind and becomes a permanent resident of the neighborhood of geniuses.

Almost every scholar has written at least two or three words, and has taken as a reference the dilemma of Hamlet, *To be or not to be, that is the question*, but there are only a few of them that have noticed that this dilemma has a source:

*The time is out of joint. O cursèd spite,
That ever I was born to set it right!
Nay, come, let's go together.* (Shakespeare, 1981, p. 65).

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