

Adelina Mamaqi: a writer for childhood in 20th century Albania

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ABSTRACT: This essay focuses on the work of Adelina Mamaqi, one of the first female authors of Albanian children's literature of the twentieth century. Firstly, the communication problems between the scriptures and the Albanian people and the subsequent resolution through Rilindja (the National Risorgimento) are analyzed. Secondly, the research deals with the characteristics of fairy tales, fables and poems for the childhood of Albanian writers in a realistic key. Finally, the writing traits of Adelina Mamaqi are highlighted, appreciated for her concrete texts. Some examples are *Bubi i vogël* (The little puppy, 1963), and *Orizi i milingonave* (The rice of the ants, 1965).

EET/TEE KEYWORDS: History of education; Childhood; Writing; Albania; XXth Century.

Introduction. A Brief History of Albanian Literature

Across the scenario of European literary cultures, Albanian literature reveals thematic affinities with the grand spiritual routes of modern culture. Its specific traits arise from the distinct path of its history.

Addressed by many as «the people without books» and dominated, among others, by the Turks for five hundred years, Albanian mainly bore an oral tradition, not limited to fantastic and epic traits, but with a strong social temperament: suffice is to mention the Code of Dukagjini, a veritable *jus communis* of the Albanian nation, which in the oral tradition represented a shared canon reference¹.

Despite the lack of literary references, due to the aforementioned uncertain situation or utter absence of written traditions, oral sources portrayed the

¹ R.D. Martucci, *Il Kanun di Lek Dukagjini*, Lecce, Besa Editrice, 2008.

intertwined relations with the cultural traditions of bordering countries, such as Greece, Yugoslavia, and Serbia. As a matter of fact, most Albanian writers borrowed their alphabets from these neighboring populations, and from their literary legacy.

Although a real political unity of the country did not exist, concrete testimony could be made through the study of the local folklore of popular songs, and family traditions².

For the first time, perhaps upon the onset of the *Rilindja*³. Patriotic leagues supported the birth of Albanian publishers, as is the case of the 1879 *Shoqëri e të shtypuri shkronja shqip* (Society for the print of the Albanian alphabet) based in Istanbul, which tried to establish a unified language to be taught in schools and used as the idiom for literature. Therefore, the publication of magazines such as represented a way to make the Albanian people's sufferings known to a wider public. Together with other publications, the newspaper «Drita» (The Light), which went to print in 1887 in Bucharest, Romania, evidenced «the right to publish books in an indigenous language»⁴.

The Albanian language was also spoken in rather consistent *enclaves* such as the Italian-Albanians or *Arbëresh* who lived in Southern Italy, in Calabria after the fall of Albania under Turkish rule. Over time, these communities have shown a strong bond with their homeland. This is widely testified by the tenacious resistance of the Albanian lineage to be assimilated by languages, such as Italian and Greek. As Domenico Comparetti wrote:

More than anything else, what in our view qualified the Albanian people is the language they speak. This entailed its extraordinarily resilient conservation, against any grievance which, arising from stronger motives, opposed its very existence, thus preventing the Albanian people from being adrift, as was the case of many others who became entangled with the melting pot of diverse dominant populations. Albanian is yet another example of a language considered as a robust factor to preserve nationality, even when nations, in the political sense, may have lost their unity and independence⁵.

After a long period of political upheaval and ethnic disruption, nowadays Albania is a constitutional state, and this destiny very much relies upon the

² M. Mandalà, G. Petrotta (edd.), *Studi di storia della letteratura albanese. Svolgimento storico della cultura e della letteratura albanese. Studies in History of Albanian Literature. The Historic Unwinding of Albanian Culture and Literature*, Palermo, A.C. Mirror, 2003, p. 12.

³ The *Rilindja Kombëtare Skjipëtare* (Rinascita Nazionale Albanese) a kind of communication channel was created between Albanian writings and Albanian readers. See D. Shehri, *Come leggere la letteratura albanese* (How to Read Albanian Literature), Rome, Aracne, 2013, p. 9.

⁴ M. Geraci, *Prometeo in Albania. Passaggi letterari e politici di un paese balcanico* (Prometheus in Albania. Literary and Political Passages in a Balkan Country), Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2014, p. 62.

⁵ D. Comparetti, *Saggio di grammatologia comparata sulla lingua albanese* (A Comparative Grammatology Essay on the Albanian Language), «Revue critique d'histoire et littérature», April 21, 1866, pp. 249-252.

way Albanians managed to preserve their native language. It was a lingering, silent, but extremely resilient struggle in which the *Arbëreshe* writers played an essential role during the 19th century.

It appeared as a particularly remarkable phenomenon also for foreign scholars, for instance for the French glottologist Antoine Meillet⁶, who does not associate the preservation of the Albanian language with the actual Albanian State. This view was also shared by others, such as the Italian ethnography scholar Antonio Baldacci⁷, who defines the Albanian language «which some claim to be a poor and simple idiom [...] on the contrary, it is a language with vigorous expressions and far from lacking culture»⁸.

The debate is widespread, and has been developed through compelling contributions curated by Italian-Albanians, namely Girolamo De Rada⁹ and Demetrio Camarda¹⁰. They began to be concerned with the matter over the course of 19th century, as they were scholars who had the merit of harmonizing the Albanian linguistic and literary production.

De Rada became immediately renowned for “The Albanian of Italy”, published in Naples, 1848, in addition to the many poems, songs, philological and grammatical works. Basically, in Girolamo De Rada it is possible to meet an all-European and Italian romantic sensitivity, through which he placed himself into the Albanian oral tradition of their National *Risorgimento*¹¹. Demetrio Camarda¹² wrote a *Sprovë e gramatologjisë krahasuese mbi gjuhën shqipe* (Essay on the Albanian Language, 1864), along with many other works such as poems, songs and literary pieces, written on Albanology topics¹³.

In addition, Camarda is credited with having contributed to the unification of the Albanian alphabet, along with other Albanian and Italian-Albanian scholars. This process reached its peak during the Congress of Manastir (1908), aptly called the *Congress of the Alphabet*¹⁴, when the current Albanian writing

⁶ A. Meillet (Moulins 1866-Châteaumeillant 1936) was a French linguist, and a scholar of Greek and Slavic languages. He was the chief exponent of the French Indo-European linguistic school since the start of the 20th century.

⁷ Antonio Baldacci (Bologna 1867-1950) was an Italian botanist and geographer. A scholar in the ethnographic, political and socio-economical fields, in 1913 he published *Scutari d'Albania* on the «Italia» magazine.

⁸ Mandalà, Petrotta, *Studi di storia della letteratura albanese. Svolgimento storico della cultura e della letteratura albanese*, cit., pp. 13-14.

⁹ Girolamo De Rada (1814-1903) in Macchia Albanese (Cosenza).

¹⁰ Demetrio Camarda wrote a collection of poems in honor of Dora d'Istria, a Romanian writer and aristocrat of Albanian origins, and an attentive connoisseur of Albanian traditions and their people's rights.

¹¹ See Mandalà, Perotta (edd.), *Studi di storia della letteratura albanese. Svolgimento storico della cultura e della letteratura albanese*, cit., pp. 30-31.

¹² Demetrio Camarda (1821-1882), in *Piana degli Albanesi* (Palermo).

¹³ *Essay on the Albanian Language* (1864). Demetrio Camarda is renowned for his collection of poems in honor of Dora d'Istria.

¹⁴ Mandalà, Perotta (edd.), *Studi di storia della letteratura albanese. Svolgimento storico della cultura e della letteratura albanese*, cit., p. 36.

system was approved, and through which the Albanian people attained their own alphabet. Writing was finally rendered factual feat, and for the first time the Albanian literature took the stage after being «always isolated, since it was epitomized by non-communication [...] as in a cluster of cultural islands with no communications among them». Thus, writer began to establish communications across the 1920s and the 1930s¹⁵.

Next to the country's independence, the new fangled 20th century Albanian literature had to change its literary diffusion once again after the Second World War (1945). Albanian writers focused on realism, recounting the tragic events and griefs suffered by their people during the Fascist occupation and the communist totalitarianism of Herver Hoxha. There emerged a measured but steady desire to tell stories: pamphlets and hot satires on reactionary politicians were shaped as *feuilleton* publications¹⁶ and fictional writings grew slowly. These concerns also included issues related to youth education, with the onset of an Albanian literature for children and young people, addressing the key events faced by the Albanian youth.

As regards children's literature, some storytellers wrote fairy tales, fables and poems for kids, albeit in a realistic key. In the second half of the 20th century, the works of Virgil Muçi offered a broad view on the myths and legends of the Albanian people, a world inhabited by supernatural beings and humble but potent characters, full of symbolisms and allegories¹⁷. During the same period, Adelina Mamaqi also voiced childhood stories and poems for kids, putting animals at the center of the scene, such as the sparrow *Pupi mik* and the white butterfly *Flutura e bardhe*, the protagonists of simple and real stories in which she highlights her voice poetic is here directed to good feelings, imagination and imagery, so as to attain a vibrant awakening of children's curiosity¹⁸.

1. *The Realist Narrator*

Narrators can act as witnesses of facts, or manifest themselves as scrupulous spectators of unreal situations to be told, hence becoming voices who fills white pages with the truth. From the stand point of realist philosophy, Aristotle and Plato attributed an educational value to the realist narrator, conveying

¹⁵ D. Rossi, *Letteratura albanese. Realismo socialista 1945-1990*, Milan, P. Greco, 2016, p. 14.

¹⁶ The *Feuilleton* is also known as "serial novel", it developed as a genre in the first decades of the 19th century in France and England.

¹⁷ Virgil Muçi Tirana 1956. This children's author wrote several works, among which: V. Muçi, *Fiabe albanesi* (Albanian Fables), Nardò (Lecce), Besa, 2019.

¹⁸ Please see: N. Jorgaqi, *Antologia della letteratura albanese* (An Anthology of Albanian Literature), Cosenza, Luigi Pellegrini Editore, 2007.

a simplified cultural dimension where the confines of lived and imagined reality, between history and myth, are persistently reconsidered¹⁹. From the 19th century to the present day, the scientific evolution of literary production's critical analysis cast an aura of mystery to the term realism. Jean Paul Sartre's reality is not the same of Thomas Mann's, nor that of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, because they employ different methods of expression. Hence, one can infer that any genre of realistic narrative reflects the author's *Weltanschauung*²⁰. It is a valuable way to discover an author's vision of the world, a reality, not just an imaginable situation. Therefore, realism and pedagogism meet in a concrete fashion through certain contents, highlighting history trends and mythologizing positive characters, even when they are, so to speak, "distorted or overturned" by authors belonging to the different genres of contemporary realism.

During the 20th century, the narrative choices geared towards realism established a canon of writing according to certain moral values, even if for style reasons, particularly because these proposals had and still have young people in mind as readers. Across the ages, children's literature of any kind – popular, sentimental, and fantasy fiction – had to face debates due to the contrast between reality and imagination.

This awakening of argumentative attention was deemed by many as a sort of emphasis of the essentially moralizing value of realistic literature. In this regard, Anna Maria Bernardinis points out how a certain realism was pushed towards children's literature.

Diverse facets of everyday life, even those defined as «most perverse, become the subject of literature»²¹. One can here refer to a host of fairy tales: for instance Bluebeard, despite having been published centuries ago, is still dense with disconcerting realism, considering the topics related to violence against women²².

Often, "reality" is synonymous with truth, so one can refer to narratives that simply implement the power of feelings, making a halt at the mere description of facts, without delving into explanations²³. In realistic juvenile literature, the author intervenes with an educational drive, since in the writer's opinion the impact with reality must have its educational value and a moral purpose, especially when these purposes are aimed at young people.

¹⁹ A.M. Bernardinis, *Realismo e pedagogismo nella letteratura giovanile* (Realism and Pedagogism in Children's Literature), «Specchio del libro per ragazzi», n. 99, October – November 1980, p. 3.

²⁰ The concept of the world and the very life of an individual.

²¹ Bernardinis, *Realismo e pedagogismo nella letteratura giovanile*, cit., pp. 5-6.

²² Please see: C. Carrer, *Barba-Blu, Fiabe e storie (album)* (Blue-Beard, Fairy Tales and Stories), Rome, Donzelli, 2007; A. Articoni, *La sua barba non è così blu... immaginari collettivi e violenza misogina nella fiaba di Perrault*, Rome, Aracne, 2015.

²³ Bernardinis, *Realismo e pedagogismo nella letteratura giovanile*, cit., p. 5.

The critical debate on socialist realism is extremely wide-ranging, and this is the case of 20th century Albania, a time when the state-driven cultural plans showed a definite ideological firmness and uniformity. Starting in 1945, a new literature was shaped, in order to meet the new ideological needs of the Albanian society²⁴. In this new phase of its historical development, the Albanian literary production became an effective tool for building a new social order, educating workers through moral teaching.

In several occasions, Hoxha intervened with public appearances to steer the work of intellectuals, although some limitations were later introduced, as the seizure of private libraries and the establishment of a Soviet Stalinist kind of National Library²⁵.

Alongside this framework of principles, and with the mandate to lead the literary and artistic production, Hoxha outlined the intellectual's profile, with particular attention to the inner facet of the creative process. The role of the artist and that of the writer were wholly voided of critical capacity and embedded into a predefined scheme.

The new repertoire highlighted the new national character, namely that of themes on which the artists had to concentrate: the partisan war, the role of peasants and workers' masses, family and labor aimed at the birth and education of the "new man", rejecting any "cosmopolitan" and "progressive" influence. In this context, Adelina Mamaqi grows as a children's writer, recounting her stories through all her sentiment, shaping her texts in an educational, realistic and instructive fashion²⁶.

Nowadays, the educational value of fantastic literature is unanimously acknowledged, and one may look at realism in literature in a baffled fashion, particularly in the case of juvenile literature. In the case of Albania, I inevitably have to dwell on this category of writing. These are not necessarily disconsolate proposals, but rather "realistic" ones, perhaps melancholic, but for those who had a chance to know the Balkans like I had, it signifies that this kind of sentiment is quite common, as one must refer to everyday life in a concrete manner.

In this regard, Adelina Mamaqi was especially virtuous, because writing for children means first of all possessing an uncommon talent. The messages that each author transmits in writing are similar to the windows of the soul, useful to guide the true happiness of children towards their future²⁷. Her prose, focused on realism, succeeded in communicating real emotions.

²⁴ Rossi, *Letteratura albanese. Realismo socialista 1945-1990*, cit., pp. 9-11.

²⁵ Perotta, *Studi di storia della letteratura albanese*, cit., pp. 34-35.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Jorgaqi, *Antologia della letteratura albanese*, cit., 2007.

2. Realism in Adelina Mamaqi's Literature for Children

The style of an author is defined on the basis of the use of less adjectives and more verbs, more dialogues and few indirect speeches, attacks are important, as are the contents. Furthermore, the historical layout, the graphic aspect is also important, for this purpose the French are said to have raised the fate of children's literature by using the graphic aspect a lot and cultivating talented illustrators²⁸. At this point I wonder if the same situation could have occurred in the Balkan territories, precisely in Albania where the image was certainly important, but it was necessary to select a certain type of image in order not to generate problems and suspicions.

In general, authors who write for children and for children must absolutely deal with the reader's understanding skills, therefore with the language to be used to convey ideas, events and emotions in the right way. Just the words, their hidden meaning were considered dangerous during the communist regime in Albania.

Words used with the right size, considering them, simplifying them, I would almost trivialize them in order not to seem dangerous. For these reasons, at that time all intellectuals were looked upon with suspicion, they did not have the opportunity to be able to express their thoughts, because the only thought to follow was that coming from those who dictated the law. The basic idea to follow was an idea that was the same for everyone, no distortion, or disobedience.

This climate of restrictions began to change after the Nineties with the advent of democracy, leaving a glimpse of light for artists, intellectuals and writers such as Adelina Mamaqi, one of the best known, if not the best known, Albanian writer²⁹.

Adelina was born in Tirana in 1939 from a patriotic family of intellectuals, she immediately breathed a different climate, more open and inclined to change, therefore to be feared during the communist regime. Graduated from the University of Tirana, in Albanian literature and language she immediately began writing, in 1950 she made her debut with the novel *Endrra Vashërie* (Girlhood Dream) reserved for an adult audience, the story of a teenage girl's dreams, but the novel did not have the success deserved by a writer of the Mamaqi mold, because it did not respect the canons of the literature of socialist realism. It only happened in Kosovo, a country not affected by the dictatorship at the time, in Albania talking about "dreams" was not allowed, we had to remain anchored to reality, a reality that required very different attitudes from the fantasy world.

²⁸ A. Nobile, *Questioni di letteratura giovanile*, Rome, Anicia, 2019, p. 58.

²⁹ In this regard, consult: J. Nascho, *Antologia della Letteratura albanese*, Cosenza, Pellegrini, 2007.

So, in the early Sixties she began her relationship with the world of writing for children working for some magazines as an editor, «Nëntori» (November), «Fatosi» (Fatos) dedicated to children between seven and ten years, later for the magazine «Pioneers» reserved for children between ten and fourteen years of age. Until in 1963 he published his first book for children with the title *Bubi i vogël* (The little Puppy), followed by many others³⁰.

It can be said that in those years thanks to this first publication for children, the way of looking at things, characters and situations changed, as did its audience of readers. The peculiarity of her works is the narration of children's daily events, as well as those of animals and nature in general.

She was highly treasured in the Albanian cultural environment: Astrit Bishqemi, a scholar of juvenile literature in Albania, but also a teacher, defines her as a poet possessing extraordinary literary talents, and very creative. After all, across the ups and downs due to the political situation in her country, Adelina Mamaqi has always been a presence in the world of children by writing in an autonomous manner. She pursued a realistic narrative, within which pedagogical qualities are precisely documented by the choice of contents, and also by a story line structure that is stimulating and efficacious for the reader. This leads to a solidity of visions, which in the case of Adelina Mamaqi coincides with a reality that is lived, observed, which is true or plausible.

An instance is given by the following poem, *Fluturo, kërce e rend* (Fly, jump in line)³¹ which progresses as if it were a staged performance:

A e dini ç'ngjau një ditë?
Lamë pyllin dhe shtëpitë,
fluturo, kërce e rend,
te ky libër zumë vend! Në
çdo faqe, në çdo fletë,
emrin do ta themi vetë!³²

The verses of this poem were written with children's dreams in mind, and their attachment to animals. For this reason, her books have been appreciated by many as an invaluable resource for juvenile literature in Albania.

Throughout Europe, diverse authors valued her educational stance, such as the French literary critic and Italianist Dominique Fernandez³³, who wrote

³⁰ Adelina Mamaqi was born in Tirana in 1939. Her family was known as having patriotic and literary traditions, and since the end of the 1950s she emerged as a prominent writer of Albanian children's literature. She holds a Degree in Albanian Literature and Language at the University of Tirana, and worked for the *N. Frasheri* publishing house in its children's branch. She also was the publisher of the «Novembre» journal.

³¹ A. Mamaqi, *Fluturo, kërce e rend*, Tiranë, s.e., 1998, p. 1.

³² «Do you know what happened one day? We left the forest and our homes, we flew and jumped in the line, we dwelled in this book! On every page and every sheet we shall say our name, alone!».

³³ D. Fernandez, *French literary critic and a scholar of Italian literature*, 1929.

about her as one of those «writers who change the world». The topic is the world of childhood, alongside which adults travel, and their problems travel with them.

Adelina demonstrated to be aware of all the ambiguities dwelling in the childhood world, using a fresh and direct language that is very popular and convincing among the young audience. Her messages conveyed the issues of her time and contain pedagogical, didactic and ethical values³⁴ that also distinguished her writings during the following periods of her life. After the onset of the 3rd millennium, she kept on communicating messages, methods, didactic models and also scientific knowledge, thus facing the advent of a new historical-social reality: that of democracy.

Her interesting life as a writer was divided into three periods, including a pause for reflection.

The first phase from 1963 to 1990, defined as a moment of socialist realism, opens with the publication of the book entitled *Bubi i vogël* (Little Bubi), ends with a monograph entitled *Shipirti plot me rubine* (The soul full of rubies), and the study on the writing of Adelina Mamaqi *Kopshti i bukur* (The beautiful garden)³⁵, on her poems and tales.

The object of her attention are themes suitable for child psychology, full of creativity and humor, at this point Adelina's books become the subject of study by a series of writers among whom we mention Qdhise Grillo, Bedri De Dja, Xhahid Bushati³⁶, which appreciate her creative originality. Between the 1920s and 1930s, she was called «the greatest and most talented author of fairy tales of all time», because she identified the difficulty of writing for a young audience, of looking at the world with the charm of childhood.

In this regard Angelo Nobile writes that in order to be in tune with a youth audience it is necessary to have very clear requirements, a vocation gained mostly through the reading of the classics of children's literature, reading Andersen, Lindgren, London and so on³⁷. It is important the creative vein that Adelina possesses in massive talents, the knowledge of literature for the young age to which she gives a pedagogical value.

During the second period (1990-2000) the writer pauses writing during which she observes what is happening around her, reflects and prepares for a very prolific new season of children's books. The period is very particular, the communist regime of Enver Hoxa has fallen, new problems emerge such as immigration, overcoming poverty, the start of the democratic regime.

³⁴ Rossi, *Letteratura albanese. Realismo socialista 1945-1990*, cit., p. 35.

³⁵ Shukrie Rama, *Kopshti i bukur*, Prishtina, Casa editrice Rozafa, 2007.

³⁶ Odhise Grillo (Vuno, 21 marzo 1932 – Tiranë, 24 settembre 2003) was a well known writer in Albania. He has mainly dealt with children's literature. Bedri Dedja another writer for children (born in Korça on 20 November 1930-13 April 2004), studied the psychology and pedagogy of children's literature in Moscow.

³⁷ A. Nobile, *Questioni di Letteratura giovanile*, Rome, Anicia, 2019, p. 66.

The important element of these long ten years is nostalgia, observes the indifference of the Albanian state towards artists and intellectuals and her way of reacting is melancholic. In her silence, she collects ideas to start writing again in 2000 with a different spirit, she elaborates different books, the fruit of her observation. This third period is very rich especially with new writings. The author tries to communicate a certain knowledge to the children, sends didactic messages together with a genuine creativity that is clearly evident in her works³⁸. These works have in common the reference to everyday life and events related to children, animals. She manages to transmit, using a carefully chosen vocabulary, a further knowledge of the world of children.

At this point, critics no longer write about her, perhaps because of the entry of other theories of education, because of the numerous changes that materialize throughout Albania.

3. *What to Communicate to the Young Reader*

The history of literature and literary criticism defines the currents of realism as responses to excessive formalism, underlining the inclination to manifest reality in an artistic fashion³⁹. Therefore, Verga or Machiavelli may represent realistic literature in Italian, despite being rather divergent from each other because of their style, the content and the purpose of their works. The history of children's literature envisages some priorities: the young reader.

Adelina strived to transmit a pretty variegated kind of learning to the young reader, rich with messages and examples, delivering a fertile teaching course as she also communicated real knowledge.

Upon analyzing some of her recent works, as *Sa shtëpi ka dielli?* (how many homes does the sun have?) the common denominator is always the narration of everyday life, both for children and animals⁴⁰.

For instance, in her book *Joy-Toi*, the child is portrayed with vital realism, the story is imbued with his playful daily life, and his voice is audible through everyday images, just like in the world of every child.

The author succeeds in outlining her character by following the child's relationships, both with his parents and with the games he plays. Therefore, this work highlights her thorough research towards the educational aspect of other works. Point in fact, if Joey has a more controlled relationship with his parents,

³⁸ Some of his works: *Lodra Alfabeti, Ora Shiba, Joey Toi, Sa shtëpi ka dielli?, Fluturojnë kërcëjnë dhe vrapojnë; Ariu dhe dy karriget; Bardhoshi Xhepkoshi; Vallja e bletëve; Zogu Pup.*

³⁹ K. Bihiku, *Storia della letteratura albanese* (History of Albanian Literature), Tiranë, Nëntori, 1981.

⁴⁰ A. Mamaqi, *Sa shtëpi ka dielli?*, Tiranë, Botuar në, 2008.

his attitude is different with regard to playing, when he feels more spontaneous and free. What did she communicate to the young reader? Adelina tried to describe the life of a child in the simplest possible fashion, where the intimate, the social aspect and family relationships are combined, later differentiating their course through the child's communication models⁴¹.

With the collection of short stories *Zogu pup* it best expresses this natural relationship of children with nature. This is not the author's most interesting work, but I decided to talk about it because in 1981 she won the first prize in the national competition for children's literature, therefore in full communist rule.

Why does he win the award? Perhaps because he manages to tell simple stories, at the same time using literary figures as comparisons and metaphors alluding to the conditions in which the population lived during the communist regime.

a. *Zogu pup*

Adelina Mamaqi's publication entitled *Zogu pup* (the bird Pup), cannot be said to be among the most interesting of the Albanian writer, but surely it is the one that through simple, but very direct language, managed to hit the reader leaving a sense of freshness mixed with an inevitable melancholy. In fact, the particularity of the publication in question lies precisely in the fact that it can be read in various ways, simply by following the adventures of the feathered *Zogu Pup*, or by making frequent analogies with the communist period.

The story, divided into several chapters, is written in a simple but clear way and begins with the description of the autumn season; the protagonists are animals and vegetables, elements that certainly appear genuine and suitable for a child's audience, but surely not trivial. The dialogue between a bird and a vegetable is obviously not true, but describes the political situation in Albania in a different way. The symbols are important: the greenhouse that she calls a glass house where you cannot see, but you can be seen. The greenhouse represents Albania, a country at that time closed, without contact with the outside and absolutely autonomous.

Adelina Mamaqi's skill lies in being able to camouflage this thought. The fantastic dialogue between *Zogu Pup* and the vegetables is absolutely unreal, but full of symbolic elements, the flight represents freedom, exactly what the Albanian people had lost at that moment. Therefore, the greenhouse represents Albania closed to contacts with other countries, the need to produce all that was needed to live independently.

⁴¹ Bihiku, *Storia della letteratura albanese*, cit., 1981.

Mirëmëngjes! – i tha Pupi. Bima e vështroi njëcopëherë. Dukej që nuk kishte parë qenie të tillë: Çfarëje ti? – e pyeti⁴².

«To ask too many questions the other person is annoyed», another element of connection with the period of communist realism and Pupi is very curious, he always and continuously asks questions, also with his wings he can fly, look from above, depicts the independence and autonomy.

Just this gift of his: the wings will allow him to save himself from being closed, from being imprisoned in the greenhouse. This is an additional interesting point in the story.

Pupi in fact remains closed in the greenhouse of vegetables and at that moment the irrigation of vegetables begins, «drops of water that may seem like tears like the human cry of those who suffer from the loss of independence», but the water also serves to nourish plants, make them grow well.

Pupi also cries, because he cannot go back to its nest, to its family and the little plants console him by saying:

Unëu mërzita, se mbeta këtu brenda. Si do të dal tani? Nëna dhe vëllai im Fluri do të pikëllohen shumë. Nuk do të lënë vend pa më kërkuar. Mbase do të mendojnë se më ka rrëmbyer Skifteri. Ja prandaj qaj, se nuk i mbaj dot lotët.

Duke thënë këto fjalë, Pupi ia dha përsëri të qarit...

Mos qaj, Pup, i dashur, - e qetësoi bima, e cila e kuptoi ç'ishin lotët, - dritaret do të hapen përsëri dhe ti do të shkosh te nëna e te vëllai Flur.

Kur do të hapen? – nxitoi të pyeste Pupi. Nesër në mëngjes.

Në mëngjes?! – U tmerrua ai.

Gjer atëherë nëna ime do të plasënga hidhërimi 43.

The possibility of being able to get out of that greenhouse, however, exists and materializes when the workers finished their shift, they go away, a window opens and Pupi takes advantage of it, flies away towards freedom, returns to its family. This is also the escape of a coward, as defined by the workers.

Even in these verses of the story there is a link with the oppression of the communist regime where there was a fear of speaking, but there is also a call to

⁴² «Good morning! Pupi said. Look at the plant from time to time. He did not seem to have seen such a being: - What are you? – churches». A. Mamaqi, *Zogu Pup ne Shtepine Prej Xhami: novele*, Tiranë, s.e., 1982, p. 5.

⁴³ «I was angry that I stayed inside. How will you get out now? My mother and my brother Fluri will be very sad. They won't leave the place without asking me. They'll probably think Falcon kidnapped me. That's why I cry, because I can't hold back the tears. Saying these words, Pupi made him cry again 'Don't cry, Pup, darling', she calmed the plant, realizing what the tears were, «the windows will reopen and you will go to your mother and your brother Flur». – When will they open? – Pupi hurried to ask – In the morning. – In the morning?! – He was terrified. Until then my mother would have been in pain». Mamaqi, *Zogu Pup ne Shtepine Prej Xhami: novele*, cit., p. 7.

the need to always tell the truth, even when Pupi knows that by telling it to its mother it will be reprimanded for its escape from the nest. Although its brother will encourage Pupi not to tell that truth so as not to incur punishment, but Zogu pup will do so by telling its brother that «mom is free to scold me, but I'm not free to tell lies»⁴⁴.

A further symbol present in the story is the ray of sunshine that can be interpreted in various ways: the sun is high and from above illuminates, dominates the earth, warms it, favors the ripening of fruits, vegetables. However, the vegetables closed in the greenhouse are unable to rejoice in these rays, so the sun in this case does not do its job as it should, does not arrive in the closed place. The closure is comparable to the interruption of communications during the Hoxa regime, together with the resignation that this closure generates in the inhabitants, as «the cucumber that is in the greenhouse is convinced that it is comfortable in that place»⁴⁵.

This story written by Mamaqi mainly for children, expresses simple and linear concepts, refers to communism, to the damage it has created, the greenhouse is seen as a symbol of closure, separation from the real world.

The vegetables closed in the greenhouse do not know the wind, they cannot take advantage of the benefits of the sun and rain, they are cared for, irrigated and preserved thanks to a glass that protects them from the elements, but also makes them live differently.

When a new disturbance appears, characterized by the storm, by dark clouds, it almost seems to refer to jealousy towards the sun, its rays that heat up. The sun's rays are welcome by everyone, because it seems that they joke with flowers, with butterflies, with children, with fruit. The cloud seems so angry when it swells and releases its anger with heavy rain, with thunder and lightning.

This wrath unloads her especially in autumn and winter. Then he begins to hail, ruining the glass greenhouse and bringing the cold to the inhabitants trees. So Pup flies to ask men for help. Until it hears their voices, because Pup had learned the language of men. The boilers arrive and turn on to heat the greenhouse.

On the other hand, the benefit of the sun is described, also seen as the sun is hope, light and then the clouds that express negativity. The cloud is envious. He does not want the sun's rays to see beautiful things like butterflies, animals. At this point in the story, Adelina Mamaqi refers to other impulses, that of communication. Pupi is everyone's friend, speaks as if he were human, sings,

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁴⁵ In this regard, consult: A. Cuka, *Considerazioni sul realismo socialista in Albania, fra rigide direttive ufficiali e aperture culturali*, «Ricerche di S/Confine. Oggetti e pratiche artistico culturali», vol. IV, n. 1, 2013.

is cheerful, sees shops, people, sees a situation that does not correspond to the economic and political situation of Albania in those years.

At this point of the story Adelina falls within the logic of socialist realism making references regarding the goodness and obedience that represented the ideology of the time giving that image of ethnicity and nationality filtered through communist ideology, resonated within the mind of the reader and work to develop cultural stereotypes and identities⁴⁶. As Leerssen also pointed out, good literature often works on the assumption of suspected disbelief and some appreciation from the public. The images of nationalism used in children's books promote the national communist consciousness, as well as the virtues of communist emancipation, citizenship and economics⁴⁷.

So, we talk about the weather and some manifestations such as hail, rain, fog apparently simple, but with a singular potential, the realist socialist literary metaphors with respect to nationalism and ethnicity provide a background for the writers of children in Albania. The reasons for communist realism in these texts helps to transform children into ideally communist citizens with a strong concept of family, honesty, control.

So when in the story Pupi appropriates a tomato without asking for it "steals it", Mira forgives him for the gesture because he has the courage to self denounce it, therefore he is rewarded and invited to live in the greenhouse together with his family. This educational part, this invitation to live in a protected place, suggests the control of the regime.

Janë mbushur dyqanet plot me domate e kastraveca, mu në mes të dimrit, sikur të jetë mesi i korrikut. Tani miku im, do tëpresim ca këtu në magazinë, sa tëna shkarkojnë, dhe pastaj do t'ia mbathim në serën e domateve⁴⁸.

These are certainly educational dialogues, aimed at the growth of children, therefore the difference between vegetables, plants, animals in general can be seen as a treatment of the various problems existing in a society.

According to the writer, cucumbers resemble people, the cucumber plant is full of parasites, the parasites of society, but cucumbers dress the shirt, It is a sort of retina placed on them and then put on sale.

⁴⁶ E. O'Sullivan, *Imagogy meets children's literature*, «International Research Children's Literature», 4 July 2011, pp. 1-14; J. Leerssen, *Imagology: History and Method. Imagology: The Cultural Construction and Literary Representation of National Characters: A Critical Survey*, Amsterdam, Ed. Manfred Beller and Joep Leerssen, Rodopi, 2007, pp. 17-32.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ «The shops are full of tomatoes and cucumbers, right in the middle of winter, like it's mid-July. – Now my friend, we will wait here in the warehouse until they unload us, and then we will run to the tomato greenhouse». See Mamaqi, *Zogu Pup ne Shtepine Prej Xhami: novele*, cit., p. 26.

Jam penduar, jam penduar dhe më ka qortuar nëna, - u ngut ta sqaronte Pup, i cili e kuptonte gjuhën e njerëzve. Po Mira nuk i kupyonte cicërimat e tij. Ajo, duke vazhduar tëbuzëqeshte, këputi nga kati i parënjëbisk me domate tëvogla sa njëkokërr qershë dhe ia zgjati nënës Ciuci⁴⁹.

In the final part of the book, autumn is greeted with a “goodbye” to next year, ending up attributing to the simple role of the cucumber a sort of peculiar task for a young society like the Albanian one, in constant change and evolution.

Conclusion

Alongside a very rigid framework of principles regarding literary production, during the period of Hoxha’s dictatorship, an intellectual profile was outlined, with particular attention to the psychological aspect of his creative process. For this purpose, in order to avoid the danger of the immobilization of a class of scholars in a privileged niche, it was decided to invite them to participate in the production processes, thus considering manual labor as a necessary solution to create that solid link between the commitment of the intellectual and the condition of the masses⁵⁰.

The role of the artist and that of the writer came in this way completely emptied of individual critical capacity and inserted within a predefined scheme, which placed them in an exchange with their public, of which they were students and teachers together. On the other hand, however, it is necessary to note that this formalization of the role of the artist represented for the first time an identification of intellectual work as a real “job”, comparable to the others in terms of public utility.

Adelina Mamaqi was part of that group of intellectuals, mostly women, who was sentenced to partial silence during the regime. A note from the field of childhood literature, she also distinguished herself as a novelist and poet for children⁵¹.

She fully lives the period of the communist bloc, aware that the ideal communist models were tied to extreme patriotism and taught to value and protect Albanian goods and material resources. At the same time the poet- writer loves literature for children.

⁴⁹ «I repented, I repented and my mother scolded me, hurried Pup, who understood the language of the people. Yes, Mira did not understand his tweets. She, still smiling, tore a biscuit with cherry tomatoes from the first floor and he handed to mother Ciuci». *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁵⁰ E. Shockett Qafleshi, *Images of Ethnicity, Nationality, and Class Struggle in Communist albanian children’s literature and media*, 4 October 2013, <<https://doi.org/10.1353/bkb.2014.0002>> (last access: 29.07.2020), pp. 21-22.

⁵¹ In this regard, consult: Jorgaqi, *Antologia della Letteratura albanese*, cit.

Still to this day, Adelina Mamaqi endures as an icon of Albanian literature for children and young readers. She erected her figure as an artist in the field of Albanian writing canons. She is the only model of an artist who proved to possess a real talent in writing for children, also by means of an authentic consistency with her lifestyle.

For about fifty years, she let herself be inspired by real life, harnessing robust poetic and educational abilities. Writing for children is certainly not an easy feat, one must master an indisputable talent and also a decisive sensitivity towards their world. Mamaqi managed to accomplish half of the above, also placing the importance of juvenile literature not as a second-rater genre, but rather an integral part of a nation's literature⁵².

When asked in an interview «what does it mean to write for children?», she replies that writing for children means first and foremost to have a prominent talent. Children's literature is an integral part of a nation's literature and the writers who deliver it, marks differentiation, are the writers of that nation»⁵³.

⁵² Rossi, *Letteratura albanese. Realismo socialista 1945-1990*, cit., p. 30.

⁵³ A. Mamaqi, *La scrittrice che illumina la letteratura per bambini e giovani*, 4 february 2018, Last updated: july 29, 2020, <<https://Shqiptarja.com>> (last access: 29.07.2020).