

HEMINGWAY AND KADARE - A COMPARATIVE OUTLINE

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Abstract:

In this article I tried give a comparative view between two great novel writers, who belong to different nations, cultures and periods, Ernest Hemingway and Ismail Kadare. Both of them are the greatest representatives of their own national literature, and both are part of the world elite literature, translated in more than 40 languages, and internationally awarded. Similarity between Hemingway and Kadare can be noticed not only in their literary works, but in their political ideology as well. I analyzed some of their novels, and in this paper I pointed out some similarities and differences in themes, characters, style, narration etc. Hemingway's novels that I cover in this paper are Farewell to Arms, For Whom the Bell Tolls, Islands in the Stream, Moveable Feast and Old Man and the Sea, as long as Kadare's novels are: Chronicle in Stone, General of the Dead Army and November of a Capital City. As a result, I noticed that these two authors have many things in common, their relation to Paris, their political ideology, and in their novels we can notice similar characteristics in their characters - their heroes represent moral values; themes - both of them write about war, love, social issues, etc; naration, style, etc. So, no matter Hemingway and Kadare distant in time and place, there are some touching points between them.

Key words: Hemingway, Kadare, war, novels, characters, politics.

1. Introduction

Both Hemingway and Kadare are distinctive part of the elite group of world writers; they both are the most prominent writers of their native literatures, translated in over 40 world languages.

Hemingway is one of the greatest modernist writers of American literature. He was born in Oak Park, Illinois, on 21st July 1899. As a part of a big family, he didn't feel free enough to express himself, so he found some freedom and independence in hunting, fishing, and camping with friends. However, as far as his profession is concerned, he took up journalism from a very young age, so he became a great reporter of very important events, like different wars and conflicts in Europe. All this marked not only his life, but his writing career as well.

Ismail Kadare is the greatest Albanian writer of all times, and he has secured a place among the best world novelists. He was born in Gjirokastra, Albania, on 28th January 1936, so we see that he was a part of communist Albania. His country and his further education in Moscow played an important role in his career and his life.

Their native countries did not fulfill their ideals, so they both felt disappointed – Hemingway was angry at post war America and the great depression, so he was called the greatest representative of the Lost Generation. This is why Hemingway spent most of his time in Europe, where he found quietness, especially in Paris in the 20s. He described these Paris years in his famous *Moveable Feast*, where he talks about his friends and acquaintances that had a very important role in his life and career, and influenced his ideology and philosophy, like Fitzgerald, Dos Passos, Gertrude Stein, etc. Café houses in Paris were places where he found peace and motivation to write. This is why almost all of Hemingway's novels are set in Europe and not in the USA. Kadare was disappointed by the communist regime in Albania. Paris was Kadare's shelter from the cruel Albanian dictatorship too. He immigrated to France in 1990, leaving the disastrous regime that was counting its last days behind. He found peace in Paris, where he still lives and works as an intellectual and a world writer, and has an honorable position among the greatest intellectuals. Just as Hemingway, Kadare enjoys the mornings in Paris cafés, gathers his thoughts and gets inspired for his great works. So we see that Paris was their common 'love'. They express their infatuation with by writing about their life in Paris, Hemingway described it in *Moveable Feast*, and Kadare in *Mornings in Café Rostand*.

However, Hemingway travelled a lot, lived abroad, visited different places, like Italy, Spain, England, France, Cuba, Switzerland, etc, and this influenced his literary works, Kadare's movements were limited because of the Hoxha regime, so he did not have the opportunity to travel. His life was concentrated in and around Albania, until he arrived in France 1990. Both of them experienced expatriate life, and both of them found a real tranquility in Paris.

Hemingway was closely related to journalism, not only because he became a reporter at a very young age, but because journalism became the basement of his literary career. He reported from the World War I for Kansas City Star, later he covered Europe for Toronto Star and Hearst's International News Service. This is how journalism opened him the way to literature. Journalism was not strange for Kadare either. He was not a real journalist but had an important experience with journalism when he worked for the Drita magazine and when he edited „Les lettres albanaises“ magazine.

Both Hemingway and Kadare are awarded international prizes and awards: beside many other awards and prizes, Hemingway was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Literature, and the greatest possible award, the Nobel Prize, for the wonderful *The Old Man and the Sea*. Kadare on the other hand, for many years in a row is one of the most serious candidates for the Nobel Prize, but he has been awarded many other prizes like Man Booker Prize, Prince of Asturias Prize, Jerusalem Prize, etc. These are the points that their lives have in common.

Hemingway and Kadare can be studied in the aspect of their political ideology, which means their views on politics, or better to say, their relation to socialism. They express their views and opinions on these issues through the opinions of their characters. Thus we understand that politics is a part of their lives as well. Firstly, both of them are against fascism, they express their attitude against this ideology and its followers. They are against violence, death, ignorance, injustice, products of this fascist ideology. Hemingway participates in and reports from different conflicts, like the WW I, the Spanish civil War, the WW II, where he experienced the fascist cruelties; Kadare on the other hand, witnesses war atrocities as a child, when Italian, Greek and German fascist armies occupied his birth place, the town of Gjirokastra.

Since they oppose fascism, they positioned on the side of communists. At first they considered communism as a refuge and rescue from fascism, but later they saw its real face, and their

opinion is not clearly defined. Hemingway is interested in global politics, and opposes everyone who is against communism, he is even angry at the American anti communist politics. It is until he experiences the real communism during the Spanish civil war when he sees the corruption and authority of communism. But still, fascism was much bigger evil. Because of this Hemingway is considered a man without a political home, a man opposed to fascism than socialism, but distrustful of all government¹. He expresses these views in *For Whom the bell Tolls*, *Island in the Stream*, etc.

As far as Kadare is concerned, he experiences socialism in Albania, where the harshest sort of communism ruled for 50 years. Enver Hoxha establishes an absolute power, and everyone who doesn't succumb to his wishes is destined to death or persecution, even his closest associates. They were all accused of alleged betrayal of national ideals. Kadare's attitude on politics might be ambiguous, since many consider him a dissident, who writes against the regime, but also a collaborator – he could not survive and work freely if he wasn't a collaborator, and on the other hand he wouldn't escape in Paris if he supported it. We notice that Kadare behaved wisely, and that saved him. *The Great Winter* and *The Wrong Dinner* are still debatable novels, because some believe that they represent his relation to the regime, and for the others they are dictated by the regime. His dissidence is an object of dispute.

2. Their Art

This is in fact a study based on the method of comparison. Even though they belong to different periods, there is a common point in the temporality of their works. In many cases, the action of their novels is set during a war period, and after war. For example, *Farewell to Arms*, that is set in the midst of Italian-Austrian conflict during the WW 1, than, *For Whom the Bell Tall*, set during the Spanish Civil war; than *Island in the Stream*, set during the WW 2, etc. Kadare on the other hand, writes about the WW 2, like *The Stone Chronicle*, *The General of the Dead Army*, etc, but also travels back in history writing about Albanian past, tradition, legends, ottoman occupation of Albania etc.

However, their narrative time, the tense the story is narrated, is actual, present, and thus directly transmits experiences and events that really happened, like for example the Spanish civil war that

¹*A Historical Guide to Ernest Hemingway*, ed. Linda Wagner-Martin, Oxford University Press, 2000, p.25/26

really happened and Hemingway witnessed, the Cuban coast, Paris, places that Hemingway lived in. Kadare writes about the past and historical events related to Albania and Albanians, he describes Tirana when it was liberated in 1944, describes his native town of Gjirokastra, and other Albanian cities.

As we see, the location the events are set are real, not fictive, those are places that really exist on the map. For example, in Farewell to Arms, Hemingway's hero F. Henry travels through Italy and visits Gorizia, Milano, north Plava, Rome, Naples, Padova, Abruzzo, Lausanne, Montreaux, Oberland Bernese, etc, and it resembles as we are following the map of Italy. It is the same with the hero of For Whom the Bell Tolls, R. Jordan, a teacher of Spanish, who came from America to participate in the Civil war, moves through different places like Extremadura, Madrid, La Granja, Segovia, El Escorial, Ronda, etc. In other works, he describes Paris (Moveable Feast), Africa (Snows of Kilimanjaro), Cuba (Islands in the Stream), etc.

Unlike Hemingway, Kadare generally writes about Albania and Albanian cities. For example, the general in The General of the Dead Army searches for dead soldiers throughout Albania, and in that way he describes the Albanian geography. November in a Capital City is set in Tirana, Chronicle in Stone in Gjirokastra etc. other cities...

3. Characters

As characters play the most important role in a novel, we'll see what Hemingway characters have in common with Kadare's. Both of them present a wide range of characters, with their own characteristics, but similarities as well. The characters come from different social classes; they are of various age and professions – for example Frederic Henry is an ambulance driver, Jordan is a teacher, Hudson is a painter, Catherine is a nurse, Bret is a dancer, Pilar is a guerilla fighter, and we also have doctors, soldiers, prostitutes, etc. Kadare introduces a general, a priest, a writer, a young boy, a miller, a soldier, old woman, radio presenters, etc.

But what do they have in common? First of all the military characters, for example Frederic Henry, Robert Jordan, Pablo, El Sordo, in Hemingway's novels, the general, the lieutenant, soldiers, etc. There are deserters – Frederic in Farewell to Arms, and the young German soldier. Both of them are in love. They are all generally young people, ambitious, with a particular aim and mission.

Hemingway and Kadare's heroes have specific missions, and are of various types. In some cases, the hero is at the centre of the actions, like Frederic Henry and Catherine, who strive to the end, only to protect their happiness. It is the same with Jordan who is the epicenter of all events and actions, than Santiago, etc. In Kadare's novels, the heroes who are at the centre are Gjergj Berisha, (Broken April) the General etc.

However, we can notice that almost all Hemingway's characters are Americans who deal in foreign countries, who strive for global ideals, like Frederic in Italy, Jordan in Spain, Hudson in Cuba, etc, as long as Kadare's heroes are all Albanians and deal in their own country, like the child in Chronicle in stone, Adrian Guma in November, etc, except the general, who presumably is Italian, whose mission is set in Albania. Kadare also incorporates some mythical and legendary heroes, like Scanderbeg, Rozafa, etc.

As far as their personalities are concerned, we can notice that all of them represent human values, even though in different aspects – they are dedicated to their missions and fulfill their moral duty, show their love towards their family, towards their nation, etc. However, all of them experience certain changes, and these changes can be moral, fateful or out of knowledge. For example, when Frederic is wounded, he suffers a destiny change, because he has to retreat from the battlefield and stay in the hospital, where he meets Catherine, and thus his life enters a new phase. Thomas Hudson experiences destiny changes when his children die in accidents, he loses every desire and will to go on, so he drinks, has no desire to paint, etc. Santiago undergoes destiny changes as well – he is happy to have caught a big fish, but this brings him a great pain as well when he has to face the sharks. Kadare's general suffers moral changes when he realizes the vanity and destructiveness of war, the hypocrisy of his mission, he realizes the evil his army had caused, so at the end we see him morally and psychologically destroyed, since he is nothing than a general of a dead army, of skeletons. The general also undergoes some destiny changes, and it is when he meets the old Nica, who slams him with the bones of the lieutenant Z he was searching for. At Chronicle in stone, the destiny changes of the characters are influenced by the war. The child protagonist experiences the destructiveness of the war and its atrocities as a very young boy, what actually touches his psyche. On the other hand, the moral changes occur when he realizes the craziness and immorality of the war; the mentality, superstition, magic, tradition do also influence his moral changes.

Hemingway creates real and everyday people, grounded, more natural and mundane ones, like different soldiers, literary wanderers, duck hunters, bullfighters, and thugs in American literature, people he had come across during his life. Kadare on the other hands shows a greater variety in this respect, more developed imagination in building the characters. For example he created a number of grotesque characters like Dino Chichua, the life old lady, Kail's daughter, Ibrahim Sheh, Kako Pinoja, Mark Alemi, the choir of the noble ladies, etc. Kadare uses the physical appearance, the outfit, gestures, mimicry, etc, to characterize the inner state and world of the characters.

Protagonists of both Hemingway and Kadare are usually males. They are presented as much more macho types in Hemingway than in Kadare, what embodies the masculinity of the writer. However, female characters are important as well. They are more present and have greater role in Hemingway's novels, where they always match the macho characters with their femininity, sensibility and sexiness, and affect the action— we do not see them at home, in the kitchen, but always outdoor. They are young, beautiful, energetic, and joyful, no matter to have experienced terribly difficult periods and experiences in their life. Kadare's women are kind of marginalized; they appear shortly, but have an impeccable influence, like for example the old Nica, who appears during the most explosive moment in the novel, and becomes the most important character, the one who bears all the responsibility. There are generally no matchable female heroines to male heroes. Kadare mainly presents the traditional Albanian woman – they take care of the home, gossip, are superstitious, etc. However, Kadare describes the Albanian intellectual woman as well, like the journalists in November of a Capital City.

In many cases they project their own characters in the personalities of their characters – like Frederic, Hudson, the child, Guma, etc.

4. Thematic comparison

One of the major themes which is common in the novels of both authors is the theme of war. Hemingway talks about WW1, the Spanish Civil war, the WW2, etc, wars not led in America, whether Kadare talks about the WW2 in Albania and its effects long after it is finished. Both of them write about something experienced, something real. They do not describe battles, but write about the consequences and destructiveness of war. They both write about war victims caused by

destructive arms, like tanks, shells, guns, etc. we can also notice indirect victims caused by war, like raped women, traumatized people, people who commit suicide as they are psychologically destroyed, wounded people, etc. so we can see the physical and psychological consequences of war.

It is clear that both authors based their works and themes in the revolt against injustice and violence. They both think that people are part of an incomprehensible world, so we clearly notice Bodler's idea that every generation considers oneself as the unluckiest of all.

Another kind of war that appears in the novels of the both authors is the class war. We see it in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, in the conflict between the republicans, loyal to the Spanish republic, and the nationalists, supported by the fascist forces, led by Francisco Franco, during the Spanish civil war. Kadare presents this kind of war in *November in a Capital City*, during the establishment of the communist system.

Another theme related to war is death. We read about many deaths caused in war, but death is unavoidable in peace time as well, like the death of Hudson's sons, death is present in bullfighting arenas, it appears 20 years after the war, than after Tirana is liberated, etc

In the works of both authors, certain social issues are treated as well, for example the suicide. In Hemingway's novels, it is exposed as a problem and the characters talk about it, for example in *Moveable Feast*, *Farewell to Arms*, etc, and in Kadare's novels it appears in many examples like Nica's daughter, the alleged suicide of the intellectuals, etc. However, it is a very serious matter and they consider it as cowardice, weakness and something unacceptable, which in the case of Hemingway is very ironic, since we know that he himself committed suicide. They also talk about politics, economics, racial issues, social differences, cultural problems, etc. all these issues in fact result in wars that they talk about.

But they do not write about these dark themes only. Another important theme they both discuss, but have different view on, is love and sexuality. Love is generally a parallel theme with the one of war. We have sincere and romantic love – Catherine sincerely loves Frederic, obeys him, believes him, leans on him, etc. Maria loves Jordan passionately; Jake Barnes loves Brett platonically, etc. Passionate scenes are present as well in Hemingway's novels, not only

expresses through typical sex scenes, scenes that are artistically described, like when Maria and Robert make love under the moon, than Frederic and Catherine in the hospital, etc.

Kadare incorporates the theme of love, but not in the dimensions and the form Hemingway does. We generally do not see couples in love, but we rather see forbidden love, like the love between the German deserter and the miller's daughter, than we have a youthful infatuation and erotic view of female figure from a child's point of view, etc.

Beside the romantic and emotional love, there is another form of love present. It is the love towards the nation and the native country, towards the family, nature etc, which characters express. Hemingway had personally been a part of the conflicts, contributed for the cause of equality, against injustice in global spheres, and had contributed for the benefit of many European nations. We can see this transmitted through his American characters that fight in Europe- Frederic in Italy, Jordan in Spain, Hudson in Cuba, etc.

Kadare expresses his strong patriotic sensitivity, and we notice it in his writing about Albania, Albanian history, tradition, Albanian issues, etc. In his novels we see great battles being fought for the freedom of the motherland, Albania, and Albanians – like the battles in Gjirakastra in *Chronicle in Stone*, than the fight for liberation of Tirana in November, than the Albanian tradition, sad history, mythology, etc.

Another common point is the dedication and love towards their jobs and missions- Hemingway's heroes are determined to fulfill their mission and task – Jordan to mine the bridge, Santiago spends his last atoms of strength to catch the fish, etc. The general as well loves his job and is proud of his mission, Guma is dedicated to his profession and he is not affected by the new regime, etc.

As we mentioned, historical theme is very important for Kadare, however he doesn't accept the concept of historical novel. When he uses a historical theme, he takes into consideration two sources: reality of the era he describes, and the period he lives in. This can be noticed in *The Castle*, in *Rain Drums*, etc. In this way he transmits an allegory of the Ottoman Empire and its time – for example the siege of Kruja is an allegory of the occupied Albania, etc. 'Who Brought Doruntina?' and *Broken April* deal with the Albanian tradition as well. We can see

that Albanians suffered many storms, difficult periods during the history, and this made them strong and persevering.

5. Narration

As we all know, Hemingway's novels are characterized by a simple, minimalistic style, with other words, he uses the theory of omission. With this theory he tries to omit any unnecessary word or structure, especially adjectives, he writes short and clear sentences, selected vocabulary, simple grammar, that is seen in almost all of his novels, especially in *Old Man and the Sea*. His minimalistic style conforms to the scientific ideals of originating the maximum amount of information with the minimum expenditure of energy,² that was inherited from his journalistic style. However, beside this economy, Hemingway tells a lot, and in order to see the larger part of his art, we have to read between lines, or dive deep under water and see the larger part of the iceberg. That is why his narrative technique is called Iceberg theory.

As we saw, Hemingway is a great realist; he tries to present everything truly, like the places, events, real characters, and he verifies this by saying - All you have to do is write one true sentence. Write the truest sentence that you know.”

As far as Kadare is concerned, we can notice the Iceberg theory as well, and the best example is the presented history of Nica's daughter in *The general of the dead army*. Kadare uses a simple style and syntax, but unlike Hemingway, he uses much more figurative language, a lot of grotesque elements and figures, more developed imagination, various stylistic devices like hyperbola, allegory, personification, metaphors, or simply said, real art. The grotesque is an aesthetic imaginative fiction that has the value of artistic conventions. ³ Even though he uses grotesque, he still present realistic art, and this is another thing that makes him great writer.

This means that both of them tried to tell the readers more than they wrote, Hemingway through the iceberg principle, and Kadare through his figurative and grotesque style, so we have to read between lines in order to understand them. We may say that Kadare creates the dialogue with its artistic prose influenced by famous style of Hemingway's novels, and his grotesque is similar to Kafka's. He gradually created his own original style, what makes him unique example in the

²A *Historical Guide to Ernest Hemingway*, ed.Linda Wagner-Martin,Oxford University Press, New York, London, 2000, p.54

³ Çausi, Tefik; *Universi Letrari Kadaresë*; 1993, Dituria, Tiranë. P.56

world literature. Kadare is capable of turning the dimmest feelings of human soul into words, where it is often hard to find clear thoughts⁴.

6. Conclusion

As we saw, regardless being distant in space and time, Hemingway and Kadare, have something in common. Hemingway's influence on Kadare can also be seen in Kadare's superb translation of *The Old Man and the Sea*. Their novels represent a real treasure for the world literature, so we should be lucky to have the opportunity to read and be illuminated by the characters, themes, and the narration of these big writers. I am especially proud to be a contemporary of the great Kadare and name him as the greatest representative of my national literature.

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⁴Ibid, p.140

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