



## Albanian Romanticism as an Expression of Self-consciousness and National Identity

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### ABSTRACT

*Roman Literature is a literature that belongs to the era of the XIX century, in the beginnings of the XX century which is also connected with the National Renaissance and reflects; cultural resurrection, national issue and deals with the universal themes. Romanticism is a universal literature school which has affected all the European national literatures. Eqerem Çabej admits that romanticism coming from the west Europe, slowly spread even in east and southeast Europe, so everywhere in Balkan. He sees the romantic literature product as conditional from the artistic expression viewpoint. From one side this is because of romantic conditions in which the Albanian writers were in contact and from the other side because of Albanian poetry. He clearly profiles the forms of Albanian romanticism, referring to authors such as : De Rada, Naimi and Fishta. According to Çabej the new literature stream brings in itself a dawn of the literature.*

**KEYWORDS :** albanian literature, romantism, self-consciousness, national identity

### INTRODUCTION

Theoretical tracts of the Romanticism period are closer to the humanist concepts for the world, because they emphasize awakening of the individuals, anti-dogmatism, adventures, emotions, sacrifice, love of the nature, idealization of the love and of the country, rebelling and dreaming for the future from a nationalism perspective.

Considering literature characteristics which are called "romantic", we find to the poetry the same concepts in the whole Europe and also for the functions of poetic configuration. Also the same concepts for the nature and its relation with the human and as a matter of fact it has the same poetic style, where the figure, symbol and myth play a completely different role... the one in neoclassic poetry of XVIII century, Wellek.R.(1949), "The concept of romanticism" The concept of romanticism of Rene Wellek refers to the German, English and French literature where we can even find clearer examples. But the researcher Paul van Tieghem says that the features of romantic literature strongly appear even in other literatures, especially in those little known.

The romantic literature is created with the aim of keeping the language alive which is also connected with the illuminist platform and folk culture which was in the same line with the creation of the national identity. Its aim was "the development of national conscience". Rexhep Qose writes that "identity is composed by history, language and religion, identity is of some kinds, we have special identity, general identity, self identity, collective identity, historic identity, cultural identity, political identity, mental identity, religion identity and state identity. All these identities join in one generalization that is called "national identity". (Frashëri. K. (2006) "National identity and other issues"; Tirana). Identity is not a static category and does not come to a definite station of the history, but it is born and inherited, from being enriched with comings and effects throughout history flow". (Sinai, Sh. 2012 "Tradition as etnotext"). Identity is a reflection of the whole features strongly connected with each-other such as ; historic conditions, social-political, cultural, economic conditions, etc).

Kristo Frasheri, a well-known historian, in his work "Albanian national identity and other issues" aims to give a definition of the term "identity". According to him Albanian national identity is a cultural identity in itself and features and components that they are made of are: spoken language, historical inheritance, folk culture, social mentality, the unwritten right, lifestyle, political aspirations, and religion in some specific historical moments. The term has in itself a variety of components, and the academic does not have the right when he/she insists that the identity issue "does not belong to literature area, consequently nor to the area of literal critic". According to him, this regards to some different disciplines taken together such as history, sociology, philosophy, ethnology, culture and also linguistics". (Frasheri, K. Albanian national identity and other such issues, Edisud, Tirana, 2006). But Çabej emphasizes that nationalism, which politically has its derivation in French rebellion and literal source in romanticism, (Çabej. E "Albanians between east and West, 1994). It is thought that the Albanian word "nation" has its sources from Arabic language "khaum" which explains in fact the meaning of tribe or blood connections, it is thought to be first

used by the renaissance with the meaning of "nation" (tribe and genre), found in many languages of the world.

The Balkans and Albania had suffered for long centuries under foreign conquest. National idea, as in Italy where a population lived in slavery, achieved a special development, became one of the main qualities of every romantic poetry. Eqerem Çabej gives the right to the scholar A. Narciss which understands the east Europe romanticism as the real romanticism. Closely connected with these aims, romantic literature found itself too close the war issue for national liberation but at the same time close even with the efforts of creating an identity unit. Romanticism became an important factor for the national renaissance. (Çabej, E, 'Naim Frasheri', N Jorgaqi, "Anthology of esthetic Albanian thinking, 2000). In this way is explained the political activity of our romantic writers. This is an extremely fruitful period, with artistic works that reflected the writers desire for a national awakening of the population, to retrieve the ancient ancestors, to evoke the figure of our national hero Scanderbeg, to make Albanian language alive as an expression of a repeating self conscience and this because of being banned for so many centuries. Albanians felt themselves as "nation". They knew themselves as an authentic nation and started to boast with the Albanian language. They started to boast with the folk songs and with the glorious history of the past. History and the character of a population are best reflected from his folk poetry. This is the reason why psychology and mentality of the population is reflected in the folk songs. In these songs romantics found the source of inspiration and the topics of studying which have been useful in every case.

What is essential in the determination of the Albanian national identity, is the Albanian language, written and spoken, mother tongue, as the most important one which serves to make this culture homogeneous and to consolidate the national unity. During Renaissance period Albanian language was seen as a crucial tool to preserve the identity and strengthen the national conscience. It was part of cultural program of Renaissance. Language was identified with the nation, glorified and changed in a cult. The well known names of the era; starting from Ve-qilharxhi, De Rada, Naimi, Noli, Fishta, Gurakuqi and Poradeci called it "mother" of all languages, "the god language". So language rose up in art, as it was the birth of romantic poetry and in Albanian conditions it connected with the issue of the nation and identity. The domineering content of the Albanian romantic literature is patriotic content. It is almost not found any Albanian author of the romantic period which does not write patriotic poetry. They all write with the intention to awake and to strengthen the love for the nation, to strengthen the national self conscience of its population and all these authors emphasized the poetry as a mean of war against the conquerors. In 1836 De Rada writes: The day of Arber came/ for sure we will die / in bed, hope not to fall / in the doorstep of our houses/" Milosao Songs", 1836).

Romantic ideas, in embryo, have circulated in the Albanian environment in Italy, concretely in Cosenza region and round it and also before the second wave of European romanticism. For this we mainly refer to the group of "Calabrese school" which is even showed by De Sancti-si in his work Letteeratura italiana. According to him, in the case of "

Calabrese School" was discussed for a "natural and pure" romanticism that later degraded in the meeting with conventional School of Napoli. De Rada, a romantic revolutionary of Naples. Can we impress the beginning of our actually moves from 'Calabrese Romantics' group to that of romanticism in 1836 or 1846? It would be quite controversial. In the historiography of our literature on romantic misunderstanding seems to have taken root the romanticism denial of De Rada by Michele Marchianoi in his work "Albania's Girolama de l'opera de Rada". After this work with De Rada will deal Vittorio Gualtieri who has the merit to have known the first character of the romantic poetry of De Rada and has argued it in details. Before the year '36 De Rada had himself conducted a work of poetry (in Italian) *Odissea* that seemed to the scholar Bideras 'del Byron', which meant 'smell coming; high romanticism'. Jeronim De Rada, published the work "Principles of aesthetics" that laid the theoretical foundations of Albanian Romanticism as an auxiliary enterprise identity. "Imagination" this basic categories for romantics will have for De Rada the same value as for those Italian romantic Enlightenment where the poetic word casts to the wise intellect and knowledge, which is then covered with visual images (GV Gravina (1708) *Region Poetica*). So not the reason of classicist poetic but 'universality of art' would concern De Rada under compliance with the best romantic Italian – illuminist bed.

Theory of beauty, is completed with observations on the ideal, miss and love. De Rada constructs an aesthetic system that if it's not a revelation, it has the originality. In Albanian Romanticism this originality is displayed by writers attempt to create awareness and the idea of the nation and free man. De Rada was thus the first warning and the first voice of Romantic movement in Albanian literature. A movement which, inspired by his unflinching energy on behalf of national awakening among Albanians in Italy and in the Balkans, was to evolve into as romantic nationalism characteristic of the Renaissance period in Albania. In Arbëresh romanticism realistic tendencies are present (as it admits even Çabej) and will arise even other concepts such as 'lyrical realism' or 'deradarian realism'. These trends not only contributed in promoting awareness in Arbëresh minority in Italy but also in laying the groundwork for a national Albanian literature. Starting from De Rada, for a generation called 'romantic' one can speak of the Arbëresh only after the year 1836. The beginnings of romanticism would be included between De Rada, Milosaat and Fishta who deputed to Konica's Albania in 1898. But considering that Fishta years of culmination would be in '10 and '20, while in Albania will continue to be published poetry and prose. We have accepted that for the Albanians, it is a romance which will be followed, at least by calendar, until Fishta's death in 1940. In its upper limits, this romanticism meets with the trend of Victorian European (verizmi of Konica), Çajupi's realism (as a passer by R. Elsieq poet, from romanticism to realism), naturalism, decadency of Koliqi, etc. While in the lower limits this romanticism was detached from (neo) or Enlightenment classicism (Naim Frashëri's case of sentimental rokoko of bejtenxhi in XVIII – XIX centuries). From this recent separation romantic content is enriched with new stylistic and ideological dimensions. (Plasari.A (2003), "Parallel worlds of Albanian Romanticism", *Journal* 55.)

In these conditions romantic Albanian literature that has the content of the country, is created and published in foreign countries, primarily in Albanian colonies. (R. Qosja, (2000) "History of Albanian literature", Romanticism I). This literature was a product of patriotic societies that were created everywhere. From one hand, they aim political education of the nation and on the other hand creating an alphabet and preserving a language script and literature. Country, love, freedom, language, nature, death and god are favorite topics of Albanians' romantics. Romantic is the nationalism of Naim as nationalism of De Rada and Fishta. Romantic is the religious spirit that pervades their works, but in Naimi this is mixed with Islamic mystical color. (Çabej, E. "Naim Frashëri", N.Jorgaqi (2000), "Anthology of Albanian aesthetic view", Tirana). Romantics imposed new ideas on moral mission, and art patriots. The most part of features of Albanian Romanticism was the trend towards morality, household values, Socialite and militancy, idealism, sharp feelings, uplift before nature, orient and glorious past of the Albanians. According to these rules no east literature even the Albanian literature has not thrown the illuminists and classicist paradigm. According to the scholar Aurel Plasari, Albanian romanticism birth and that of the east is an analog to the German (Biedermeier) where historical and political element takes place. Historical element relates to the creation of 'Albanian' etnonim that we find in the dictionary of FM da Lecce in 1702

, a romantic etnonim that spread massively from the Renaissants in roman time. But Romanticism referred to the advocacy of the XV century of Skanderbeg and Pelasgian origin of Albanians. Avulsion in history was a characteristic feature of all romantic poets. This trend appears and even to Naim, but with the intended purpose of ethnic education. The history of its own nation gave a material to the poet to stimulate humans in national acts.

Nationalist element is associated with the country setting on religion. As Pashko Vasa wrote "religion of the Albanians is Albania" ("Moj Shqypni e mjera shqypni", 1880). One of the requirements to be emphasized during the Renaissance was that in the churches people had to speak Albanian, all missionaries and religious leaders should know Albanian, ... let's continue the operation of schools in the Albanian language. (request from 'Arber Assembly' in 1703). In 1809 Lord Byron wrote that unlike other Balkan nationalities, to whom if you asked who they were, they immediately answer that they were Christians and only in a second line to announce that they were Greeks or Bulgarians or Serbians. Albanians immediately answered that they were Albanians and only then they showed their affiliation of religion belief.

Another British traveler A.Vikensel (A.Viquensel) wrote in 1844 that "Albanians adored freedom so much that besides this, religion came in the second row." But let us turn to religious identity and the role it played in forging national identity during the Renaissance. If in many European countries, religion has influenced in the formation of modern nations, we can not say the same for the Albanian national identity, firstly because of the existence of three faiths. What the prominent actors of our Renaissance better understood was that the presence of three faiths did not favored, instead it became an obstacle to national issues and the formation of the nation. Albanian elite knew how well to use it, that for Albanians it meant, religious tolerance "among Albanians this is not a developed quality in modern times and not even transmitted in school education, it was a tradition that came from the depth of centuries (Sinani, Sh (2012). Oral tradition as etnotext). Meanwhile in the heart of convergence we find figures of our national hero, Gjergj Kastrioti, who was born as Orthodox Christian, educated as Mohammedan and a Muslim believer and when he returned home back again, he trusted the ancients, finally asked to be buried in a Roman church (Lezha Cathedral). Europe had already provided a model of secularism way, separation of state and church. Enlightenment's attempt of Naim Frashëri through theological treaty "Fletorja e Bektashinjve", where would be in a single material the Bible and the Quran. This was more as an impossible utopian than a concrete one. Pantheistic Philosophy of his Bektashi education and powerful impact of Persian classics are beautifully harmonized with patriotic idealism of literature that served for the goals of national identity.

Romantics are religious in nature, on the one hand this relates to their education, on the other hand to the pegasus flights of romantic poets inspired by the mystics and antiquity of the religion. Pessimism, poison of the world, which the West had preached in modern romanticism, and, previously, although in another form, medieval church in the Orient had expressed poetry in ancient times and had associated it with religious opinion.

Political element refers to the Albanian League of Prizren (1878) and Sami Frashëri "Political treaty", *Shqipëria çka qene, ç'është dhe çdo të behet* (Bucharest, 1899). Political Program of that time, was to join Albania in a single Wilayah, to give her a simple, compact and strong organism (1879), the same idea Sami wrote to De Rada in 1881. Strength of national consciousness brings awakening and interest in popular literature and national myths. "Character and history of people are best reflected in folk poetry." This is the reason why in folk songs is reflected the psychology and mentality of the population. In these songs romantics found the source of inspiration and by studying themes that has been popular in each case. Past folk songs and myths are the source of romantic poetry. Pelasgic Myth or origin ancient myth that pervades almost all ancient literature of Romanticism revealed Romantics consciousness who will invite Albanians to be proud of being called so ancient people, sons of Pelasgian, and to join the war for independence. Myth of historical figures, the myth of the virtues, heroism myth, the myth of physical beauty, wisdom myth, the myth of the ideal woman, the myth of homeland - paradise together in a romantic imagination almost all poets of the Renaissance myths. These Romantic myths with a national significance were expression of historical illusions, national

romantic writers , they played a positive role in national life of Albanians during the last century .A tool of national self testimony, myths in literature impacted in creating awareness and national unity . With their myths our romantics educated Albanians to protect their national existence although they overpass with the idealism of national history.

So are moral and political changes that condition the constant modification of certain national genius which in turn creates romantic writer's creative genius. Changes made to the historical political position of European countries, the penetration of the Balkan peoples in the arena of European diplomacy , either as subject , even as object, links, meetings , but frequent friction of peoples and states , as a result of the changes and the wars in the early nineteenth century all these expressed in the Albanians the form of its interest to the West and the vice-versa communication. The renovation of Albanian literature with French and Italian literature that by time will occupy the site links to Arabic Persian and Turkish literature.

Romantics in general and those 'arbëreshë' in particular created direct relationships with nature, but unlike the European romantics they did not see nature as the place that created opportunities to escape from life , from her problems , what motivates our romantics is not fear from reality , but the insatiable miss of the land of the ancients , the desire to give life to the beauty of the country in their works. Here should be asked the essential identity of the Renaissance romantic poetry. Worship of nature "is not by chance... even though nature in National renaissance literature is more an object of inspiration of patriotic poetry than meditative poetry. ( Qosja.R, 1972 , Continuities , Pristina ) . Nature flew in their poetry as it flew into them the nostalgia for the homeland, nature was beautiful for many reasons , but primarily because it was identified with the country , certainly imagined with the land of their ancestors , it was often sad ,haunted , because homeland was under foreign occupation ( Xhiku,A. (2002) , 'Arbëresh Romanticism' , Tirana.

Our Renaissance literature had a basic problem which was 'the national problem' , then it became quite clear the difference between that and European romantic literature , the degree of intensity of social content, philosophical , and ethical that had nature treatment in their work. How they described their homeland , which they had never seen, Skiroi, they started knowing it through other sources, and this is especially noticed in the poem "Kenga e sprasme e Balës , Serafina Topia, the tendency to reflect with exaltation grades, magnificent performances of Albanian nature , sharp images of her beauty to recall some aspects of exotic European Romanticism . Bajron and Pukëvili offered such more features to Albanian nature , and is therefore understandable and this trend started from Albanian poetry. Targeted from clear patriotic aims, from the character of the theme that they created. Our poets would leave the magnificent beauty of the earth of our grandparents, they would create powerful and clean figures in the characteristics of their poetry. A poetry which had in its aim the national problem, was point-

less to leave the homeland apart and to pass in the description of the other areas. Spiritual sufferings caused by the conquest of the earth of their grandparents, inspired romantic poets to be deeply engaged. In their country they found the meaning of their real life, spiritual pleasure and affirmation of themselves. But even if they needed to express the spiritual world , demand trends and the desire to uphold the nation , opposition attitudes to the political situation of that time in Albania , romantics had a vibrant source of inexhaustible that was offered to all those who met their spiritual requirements. This source was the story of their people in particular the XV century , the era of Albanian resistance against Turkish invasion.

Moral purity with all its beauties was given by Albanian humans. To exalt the culture this country. Naim Frashëri knew well knew this culture. Through his word he awakened the people of his nation from a long sleep during these centuries. He lighted the torch of liberty and threw it in literature ( Çabej , E.1994 , "Albanians between West and East ", Tirana ) . The candle that he sings in one of his poems , which burns itself to bright others , is a symbol of the poet and his work , and even Naim was a light bringer because he sparked a light as he said himself , giving , ' a little light to his small country ' . First of all Naim is an educator and a missionary . Naimi was a visionary thinker and poet and his vision for the future of Albania is associated with sufferings man is in the center of Naim's poetry , as much as his country. The dream of romantic freedom and progress of the country was to rebuild the human. He first required to rebuild the Albanian. Jorgo Bulo (1999) , Tipologjia e lirikës së Naim Frashërit ' , Tirana ) . Poet came after the patriot. Mainly he sacrificed his artistic ideals to effort of national - politic. More than aesthetic purpose his works served to an ethic goal. The goal to unite his nation, to elevate the moral and cultural point of view, and he achieved this. Naimi belongs to the romantic literature as well as the national movement of the XIX century . He emphasized the place , nature and Albanian heroism. Although the hymn is usually associated with the cult of national heroism he has included a level of ethos and ethnos to move to restructure the national moral system, and especially in the work of Naim Frashëri, who is the largest lauded of Albanian literature .

## CONCLUSION

Romanticism created the basis of Albanian literature highlighting the local characteristics and universal values. Albanian romantic poetry reflects the ideals and aspirations of its people, in the docile Albanian language, Albanian poetry strongly denied the concept of its development from dependence in the models of foreign literatures and cultures , and brought literature near folk motives , it began to develop independently as a literature of the Albanian nation and as a self expression of Albanian human to his characteristic world. Romantic poetry dissolves in itself poetic inspiration with the great patriotic inspiration of liberation movement .

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