

## 2.15. ALBANIAN LITERATURE

By Jorgo Bulo

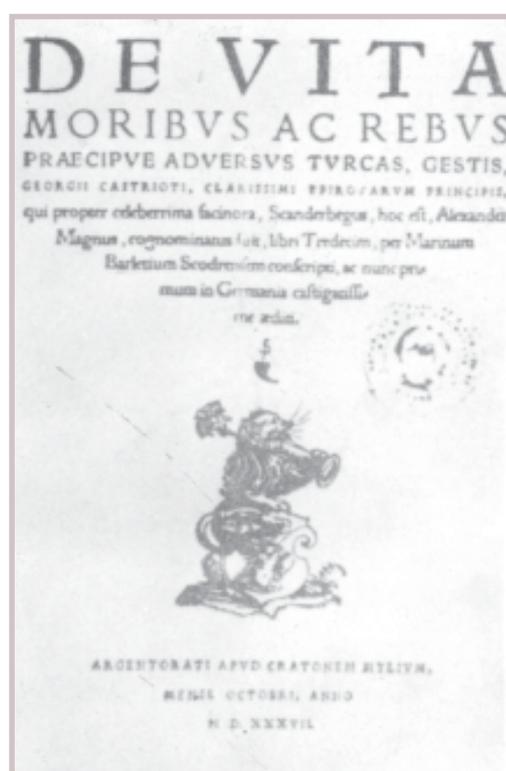
Albania has long been at a cross-road of civilizations and geopolitical interests. From the Illyrian times until Skanderbeg, and continuing after his death under the yoke of the Empire of Sultans, Albanian culture has developed and evolved but was also disrupted routinely. After the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the country fell almost backwards socially and economically. As a result of the Ottoman occupation, leading intellectuals following pace with European humanism, left Albania to settle in the West. Among the intellectual elite who left, many emerged as renowned figures in the humanist world such as Marin Barleti (1460-1513) who in 1510 published *A History of Skanderbeg* in Rome, which was translated into many European languages. Other writers to distinguish themselves outside Albania were Marin Beçikemi (1408-1526), Gjin Gazulli (1400-1455), Leonik Tomeu (1456-1531), M. Maruli (15<sup>th</sup> century) and M. Artioti (1480-1556) who made contributions in various fields of science, art and philosophy.

In the meantime, cultural life in the country underwent a decline. Monuments of material and spiritual culture disappeared under the ruins of war. This drastic change of even religious structure (emerge of muslim religion in occupied regions), in fact, it pushed Albanian culture to survive even under conditions of several centuries of occupation facing the pressures of Islam and the Oriental world, although it did exert a deep and comprehensive influence, but failed to oppress the Albanian patrimonial culture.

The resistance in the cultural field was first expressed through the elaboration of the Albanian language in the area of church texts and publications, mainly of the Catholic confessional region in the North, but also of the Orthodox in the South.

The Protestant reform invigorated hopes for the development of the local language and literary tradition when priest Gjon Buzuku brought the Catholic liturgy into the Albanian language, trying to do for Albanian what Luther did for the German language.

The "Missal" by Gjon Buzuku, published in 1555, is considered to be the first work of written Albanian. The refined level of the



Frontpiece of "History of Skanderbeg" written by Marin Barleti published in Rome in 1510

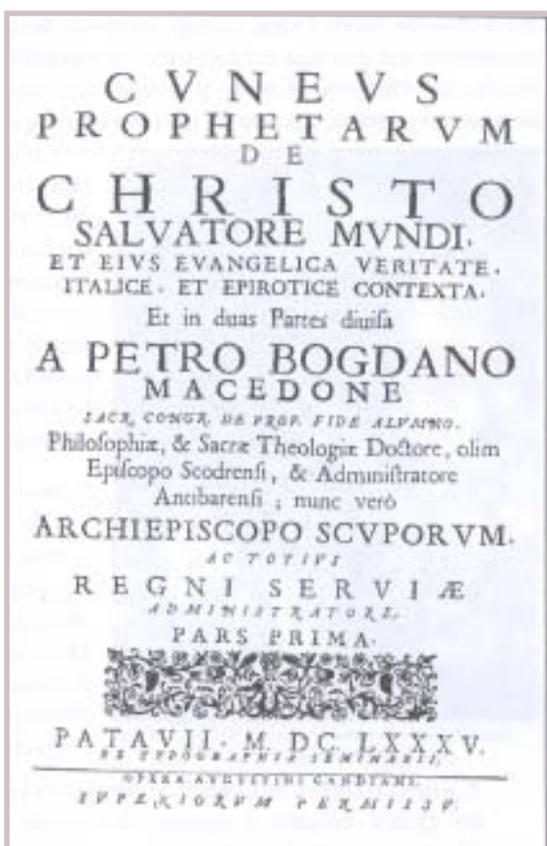
language and the stabilised orthography is a result of an earlier tradition of the presence of Albanian literature.

The first known evidence dates from 1332 A.D. and deals with the French Dominican Guglielm Adae, Archbishop of Tivar, who in a report in Latin writes that Albanians use Latin letters *in their books* although their language is quite different from Latin. Of special importance in supporting this argument is a *baptising formula* (Unte paghesont premenit Atit et Birit et spertit senit - the Holy Trinity) of 1462, written in Albanian within a text in Latin by the bishop of Durrës, Pal Engjëlli. Also of importance is a *glossary* with Albanian words recorded in 1497 by Arnold von Harf, a German who had travelled through Albania, and a 14<sup>th</sup> century *fragment from the Bible according to Saint Mathew*, also in Albanian, using Greek letters.

Albanian writings of these centuries would likely have been not only religious texts, but historical chronicles too. They are mentioned by the humanist Marin Barleti who, in his book *“Rrethimi i Shkodrës”* (*The Siege of Shkodër*, 1504), confirms that he has leafed through such chronicles written in the language of the vulgus (in vernacula lingua / language of the people).

Despite the obstacles generated by the Ottoman Counter-reform which was opposed to the development of national languages in Christian religious literature, this process went on uninterrupted. During the 16<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> centuries many great works were published in Albanian regarding the catechisms like: *“E mbësuarë krishterë”* (*Christian Teachings*, 1592) by Lekë Matrënga, *“Doktrina e krishterë”* (*The Christian Doctrine*, 1618) and *“Rituale romanum”*, in 1621 by Pjetër Budi, who was also the first writer of original Albanian prose and poetry. At this time, Frang Bardhi published the first Latin-Albanian dictionary and an essay in Latin as an apology for George Kastriot (1636), while the treaty *“Cuneus Prophetarum”* (*The Band of Prophets*, 1685) by Pjetër Bogdani, the most universal personality of Albanian Middle Ages, was published in the later half of that century.

Bogdani's work is an original theological-philosophical work merging data from various sources, the principal issues of theology and a full biblical history as well as the complicated prob-



Frontispiece of the *“Cuneus Prophetarum”* (*The Band of Prophets*) by Pjetër Bogdani, 1685

lems of scholasticism, cosmogony, astronomy, pedagogy and so on. Bogdani brought the humanist spirit into Albanian culture and praised the role of knowledge and culture in the human life. With his written work in a language of polished style, he marked a turning point in the history of Albanian literature.

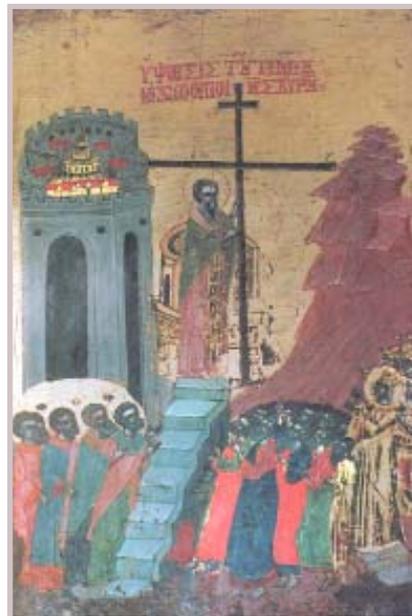
During 18<sup>th</sup> century, the literature of Orthodox and Muslim confessional cultural circles witnessed a greater development. An anonymous author from Elbasan brought a number of sections from the Bible into Albanian, as well as T. H. Filipi, also of Elbasan, who brought the "Dhiata e Vjetër dhe e Re" (The Old and the New Testament). These efforts multiplied in the following century with the 1827 publication of the integral text "Dhiata e Re" (The New Testament) by G. Gjirokastriti and with the big corpus of (Christian) religious translations by Kostandin Kristoforidhi (1830-1895), in both dialects of Albanian. These publications helped in the process of integrating the two dialects into a unified literary language and in setting up the basis for the establishment of the national church of the Albanians with the liturgy in Albanian language.

Although in the different direction of this trend, the culture of Voskopoja is also to be mentioned. This was a culture that during the 17<sup>th</sup> century became a great hearth of civilization and a metropolis of the Balkan peninsula, with an Academy and a printing press and with personalities like Teodor Kavaljoti, Dh. Haxhiu and Grigor Voskopojari, whose works of knowledge, philology, theology and philosophy built a progressive image of Albania of the time.

Although the literature that evolved in Voskopoja was mainly in the Greek language, the need to erect obstacles to Islamisation made necessary the use of national languages, encouraging the development of national cultures. Walachian and Albanian were also used for the teaching of Greek in the schools of Voskopoja, and books in Walachian were also printed in its printing presses.

The works of Voskopoja writers and scholars have brought in some elements of the ideas of European Enlightenment. The most distinguished of them was Teodor Kavaljoti, the works of whom, according to the notes of the German Albanologist H.E. Thunman, remained largely unpublished. In most part, his writing dealt with issues from almost all branches of philosophy, and shows the influence of Plato, Des Cartes, Malebranche and Leibnitz.

A result of the influence of Islam and the culture of the invader was the emerge in the 18<sup>th</sup> century of a school of a kind of poetry, written in Albanian but in the Arab alphabet. Authors such as N.



"The rising of the cross " fresco from Voskopoja "Dormition of the Virgin" church, 18<sup>th</sup> century

Frakulla, M. Kyçyku, S. Naibi, H.Z. Kamberi, Sh. and D. Frashëri, Sheh Mala, and others dealt with motifs borrowed from Oriental literature, wrote religious texts and poetry in a language suffocated by Orientalisms and developed religious lyric and epic. This school did not have a long life or any specific influence on the later literary developments.

In order to complete the framework of cultural developments of Albania during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, it should be mentioned that this was the period of famous painters Onufri and his son Nikolla (16<sup>th</sup> century) and K. Shpataraku and D. Selenica (18<sup>th</sup> century) who were carrying on the tradition of post-Byzantine religious art, but not without influence from the European Renaissance. However most Muslim religious or cult buildings reflected the Islamic art.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century was a time of national movements in the Balkans, and an organised ideological and literary movement, which was called the Albanian National Renaissance, started to emerge. It was inspired by the ideas of national Romanticism and Enlightenment, which were cultivated among the circles of Albanian scholars mainly émigrés in the old Albanian settlements in Italy and more recent ones in Istanbul, Bucharest, USA, Sophia and Cairo.

The National Renaissance had goals of nurturing Albanian as a language of culture, the organisation of national education and the establishment of a rich and multidisciplinary national culture and literature targeting at the creation of the independent state. These goals gave birth to the school of Albanian Romanticism. It was a typical Balkan Romanticism, imbued with the spirit of national liberation, with the nostalgia of the émigré and the rhetorical pathos of evoking the Albanian of George Kastriot, Skanderbeg. This literary school developed furthest in poetry. Regarding the motifs and poetical forms, its hero was the ethical man, the fighting Albanian, and to a lesser degree the tragic man. It is closely linked with the folklore tradition.

This rich period starts with *"Rapsodi të një poeme arbëreshe"* (*Rhapsody of an Arbëresh Poem*, 1866) by De Rada, followed by *"Përmbledhje të këngëve popullore dhe rapsodi të poemave shqiptare"* (*Collection of Albanian Folk Songs and Rhapsodies of Albanian Poems*, 1871) by Zef Jubani, and *"Bleta shqiptare"* (*Albanian Bee*, 1878) by Thimi Mitko, which became part of the cultural programme of the National Renaissance for strengthening the cultural identity of Albanians.



Jeronim De Rada (1814-1903)

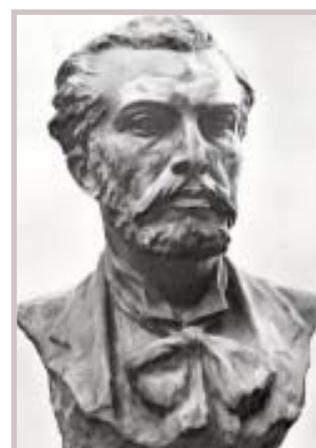
Jeronim De Rada and Naim Frashëri are two of the greatest representatives of Albanian Romanticism in 19<sup>th</sup> century. De Rada (1814-1903), born, educated and died in Italy, was a poet brought up in the climate of European Romanticism. Frashëri (1846-1900), born in Albania, educated at Zosimea of Ioannina, was a romanticist who merged the influence of Eastern poetry, especially Persian, with the spirit of the poetry of Western Romanticism.

*De Rada* wrote a cycle of epical-lyrical poems in the style of Albanian rhapsodies: “*Këngët e Milosaos*” (*The Songs of Milosao*, 1836), “*Serafina Topia*”(1839), and “*Skënderbeu i pafat*” (*Unlucky Scanderbeg*, 1872-1874), with the ambition of creating the national epos for the century of Skanderbeg.

Following the traces of Herder, De Rada raised the love for folk songs in his poetry and painted it in ethnographic colours. His works reflect Albanian life with its characteristic customs and mentalities, and the Albanian drama of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, when the indomitable folk of Albania fell to the Ottoman yoke. The conflict between the happiness of the individual and the tragedy of the nation, the scenes by the riversides, women gathering wheat in the fields, the man going to war and the wife embroidering his belt, all represented with a delicate lyrical feeling – this is the poetry of this romantic poet who grew up in the political climate of the national movement of Albanians and in the literary climate of Calabrian Romanticism.

*Naim Frashëri* wrote a masterpiece pastoral poem “*Bagëti e bujqësia*” (*Livestock and Agriculture*, 1886), a collection of philosophical, patriotic and love lyrics “*Lulet e verës*” (*Summer Flowers*, 1890), an epic poem of Skanderbeg “*Histori e Skënderbeut*” (*The History of Skanderbeg*, 1898), a religious epic poem “*Qerbelaja*” (1898), two poems in Greek “*O Eros*” (O’ Love) and “*O alithis pothos ton skipetaron*” (*The True Desire of Albanians*), along with numerous lyrics in Persian such as “*Tehajlat*” (*The Dream*) and many erudite works in Albanian. He is recognised as the greatest national poet of Albanians.

Frashëri established modern lyrics in Albanian poetry. In the spirit of “*Bucolics*” and “*Georgics*” of Vergil, in his “*Bagëti e bujqësia*” (*Livestock and Agriculture or Shepherds and Farmers*) he sang to the works of the land tiller and shepherd by writing probably the best ever written hymn for Albania and expressing the nostalgia of the émigré poet and the pride of being Albanian. It can be seen through his lyrics that although living in the heart of the Ottoman Empire, in Istanbul, he felt so deeply about the fate of his fatherland. The longing for his birthplace, the mountains and fields of Albania, the graves of his ancestors, the memories of his childhood, fed for two centuries the Albanians whenever the lived.



Naim Frashëri (1846-1900) known as the Albanian National Poet

Spiritual by nature and a member of the Bektashi (muslsum)sect, Frashëri was a metaphysical poet, one who fused his lyrical meditations, Hellenistic mystique with ancient, Oriental and Islamic mystique. Being in the crossroads of Eastern and Western philosophical and poetical traditions, Frashëri blends them with each other, but without suppressing his Albanian nature. The Western culture and civilization determined the illuminist underlay of the work of Frashëri, Eastern civilization its philosophical-mystical underlay, while the Albanian world the backbone of his work. But one should single out the French Revolution spirit in his work as well. Knowing the French language and being an admirer of Voltaire and Rousseau as a thinker and as a poet like Lamartine, Frashëri envisaged the future of his nation to be similar to the countries of Western Europe as he wrote “to rise from the side of the sunset”. The romanticism of Frashëri at this point does not differ from the Greek or Turkish Romanticism, as they can all trace their roots to France.

Naim Frashëri is one of the founders of the national literature of the Albanians and of the national literary language. He raised Albanian to a modern language of culture, evolving it in the model of the popular Albanian speech.

The inner world of the romantic hero with its vehement feelings is brought to Albanian Romanticism by the poetry of Zef Serembe. The poetry of Ndre Mjeda and A. Z. Çajupi, who lived at the end of the Renaissance period, bear the signs of disintegration in the artistic system of Romanticism in Albanian literature.

A.Z. Çajupi (1866-1930), is a rustic poet, a type of a folk bard, called the Mistral of Albania. He brought the comedy of customs and the tragedy of historical themes to Albanian literature. From a student at a French college in Alexandria, to a graduate in Law from the University of Geneva, Çajupi gained a great knowledge of French literature and was among the first to bring the La Fontaine fables into the Albanian language. These efforts opened the way to the translation and adoption of other works of world literature into Albanian, which has been and remains one of the major ways of communication of Albanians with world culture.

With the establishment of the Albanian state (1912), the romantic school that had been conceived from the ground of the national movement, lost its historical base. The national idea gave way to the human idea and new tendencies and styles appeared in the development of Albanian literature.

The main direction taken by Albanian literature between the two World Wars was realism, but it also bore aspects of a belated sentimentalism (F. Postoli), and remnants of romanticism.

Gjergj Fishta (1871-1940), wrote a poem of national epos breadth "*Lahuta e malësisë*" (*The Highland Lute*) in which, with a romanticising spirit and a high patriotic pathos, he depicts the struggles of Northern mountaineers against Slav onslaughts.



Gjergj Fishta and Asdreni (below) Lasgush Pogradeci and Ernest Koliqi (above). Photo by Marubi.

With this work he is considered as the greatest epic poet of the Albanians. A Franciscan priest, erudite and a member of the Italian Academy, Gjergj Fishta is a multifaceted personality of Albanian culture: epical and lyrical poet, publicist and satirist, dramatist and translator, and active participant in Albanian cultural and political life between the two World Wars.

His major work, *The Highland Lute* of 17,000 verses and written in the spirit of the historical and legendary epos, is a reflection of the Albanian life and mentality. It is a poetic mosaic of historic and legendary traditions and customs of the highlands. Fishta's poem is distinguished by its vast linguistic wealth, and richness of the popular speech of the highlands, the live and infinite phraseology and the diversity of clear syntax constructions, which give vitality and strength to the poetic expression.

The poetic collections "*Mrizi i Zanave*" (*The Fairies' Mead*) with patriotic verse and "*Vallja e Parrizit*" (*Paris's Dance*) with verses of a religious spirit, present Fishta as a refined lyrical poet, while his other works "*Anzat e Parnasit*" (*Parnassus' Anises*) and "*Gomari i Babatasit*" (*Babatas' Donkey*) present him as an unrepeatable satirical poet. In the field of drama, "*Juda Makabe*" and "*Ifigjenia n' Aulli*" may be mentioned along his tragedies with biblical and ancient mythology themes.

Albanian literature between the two wars did not lack manifestations of sentimentalism (F. Postoli, M. Grameno) and of belated classicism, especially in drama (E. Haxhiademi). Manifestations of the modern trends of impressionism, symbolism and so forth, were isolated phenomena in the works of some writers (Migjeni, Poradeci, and Asdreni), that did not succeed in forming a school. Deep changes were seen in the system of genres; prose (Migjeni, Fan Noli, Faik Konica, Ernest Koliqi, Mitrush Kuteli, etc.) drama and satire (Gjergj Fishta, Kristo Floqi) developed parallel to poetry.

The typical representative of realism was *Millesh Gjergj Nikolla*, known as *Migjeni* (1913-1938). His poetry "*Vargjet e lira*" (*Free Verse*, 1936) is one of the diamonds of Albanian literature of all time. His prose is permeated by a severe realism on the misery and tragic position of the individual in the society of the time. The characters of his works are people from the lowest strata of Albanian society.

Some of Migjeni's stories are novels in miniature and their themes represent the conflict of the individual with institutions and the patriarchal and conservative morality. The rebellious nature of Migjeni's talent broke the traditionalism of Albanian poetry and prose by bringing a new style and forms in poetry and narrative. He is one of the greatest reformers of Albanian literature, the first great modern Albanian writer.

*Lasgush Poradeci* (1899-1987) was a poetical talent of a different nature. He was a lyrical poet who wrote a soft and warm poetry, but with a deep thinking and a charming musicality "*Vallja e yjeve*" (*The Dance of Stars*, 1933) and "*Ylli i zemrës*" (*The Star of Heart*, 1937).

*Fan S. Noli* (1882-1965) is one of the most versatile figures — a distinguished Poet, historian, dramatist, aesthete and musicologist, publicist, translator master of the Albanian language, and finally a statesman and diplomat. He is the genius of Albanian culture of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and probably of all the time. Born in Qytezë, in Edrene region, he did odd jobs in his youth to earn a living. In 1906 he went to the U.S.A where he played a role in bringing together the Albanian societies in the "Vatra" federation and two years later he was ordained priest. He initiated the idea of an autocephalous Albanian Orthodox Church, independent of the Greek Orthodox Church, which he established in 1922. He also supported the activity of the armed units and uprisings of 1910 to 1912.

After the proclamation of Independence, Noli returned to Albania in 1913 and offered his contribution to the national government of Vlora. During the period of 1920-1924 he expressed his views about how the Albanian State should be organized and of implementing an internal and foreign policy based on the principles of Western democracy. With this vision, he became the leader of Albanian opposition. From 1920 to 1924 he was the leader of the opposition in parliament and after the June Revolution he became the head of the Democratic government which soon failed mainly because of Ahmet Zogu (future king) political manoeuvres.

The experience of the defeated 1924 revolution inspired him for a cycle of lyrics with biblical motifs, included in the book "*Album*". In 1947 he published in English the study "*Beethoven and the French Revolution*". He translated many liturgical books and works of world class writers such as Khayyam, Shakespeare, Ibsen, de Cervantes and others into Albanian language by enriching the expressive power of Albanian language. With his poetry, non-fiction, scientific and religious prose, as well as with his translations, Noli has played a fundamental role in the development of modern Albanian. After travelling in Europe as a political émigré, in 1932 he settled for good in the USA, where he died.

Distinguished writers of short prose of this period were Ernest Koliqi (1903-1975), Mitrush Kuteli (1907-1967) and Faik Konica (1875-1942). Koliqi wrote subtle prose, full of colouring from his town of Shkodra, "*Tregtar flamujsh*", (*Trader of Flags*, 1935). Kuteli was a magician of the Albanian language, a writer that cultivated the folk style of narration into a charming prose, "*Net shqiptare*" (*Albanian Nights*, 1938), "*Ago Jakupi*" (1943) and "*Kapllan aga i Shaban Shpatës*" (*Kapllan Aga of Shaban Shpata*, 1944).



Migjeni (Millesh Gjergj Nikolla 1911- 1938)



Fan S. Noli (1882-1965)

*Faik Konica* is the master who gave Albanian prose a modern image, and the intellectual that brought the proper Western mentality to Albanian culture. He was born in Konica, a small Albanian town, which following the decisions of the London Conference of 1913, remained with Greece. He came from a renowned family, inheriting the title of Bey and the conscience of belonging to the elite, which he manifested strongly in his life and work. He enrolled for one year at the Jesuit college of Shkodra, then the Imperial Lyceum in Istanbul before studying literature and philosophy at Dijon University in France, and completing his higher studies at Harvard University, where, in 1912, he earned a Master's degree (Master of Arts). Erudite, knowledgeable in all major European languages and some Eastern ones, a friend of Guillaume Apollinaire, he was called "a walking encyclopaedia". He became the model of Western intellect for Albanian culture. Since his youth he was dedicated to the national movement, but contrary to the mythical, idealising and romanticising feeling of the Renaissance, he brought the spirit of criticism.



Faik Konica (1875-1942)

He established the "*Albania*" magazine (Brussels 1897-1900, London 1902-1909), that became the most important Albanian press of the Renaissance. Publicist, essayist, poet, prose writer, translator and literary critic, he, among others, is the author of the studies "*L'Albanie et les turcs*" (*Albania and the Turks*, Paris 1895), "*Memoire sur le mouvement national albanais*" (Thesis on the Albanian National Movement, Brussels, 1899), of novels "*Një ambasadë e Zulluve në Paris*" (*An Embassy of the Zulu in Paris*, 1922) and "*Doktor Gjilpëra*" (*Doctor the Needle*, 1924), as well as of the historical-cultural work "*Albania — the Rock Garden of South-Eastern Europe*" published posthumously in Massachusetts in 1957. The two novels of Konica share the satirical spirit and the allegoric expression of the conflict between knowledge and ignorance, between the backward Oriental mentality and modern Western mentality. Both his non-fiction writings and fiction prose are a model of the elaborated literary Albanian and of an elegant style.

He spent the last years of his life (1926-1939) as the ambassador of the Albanian Kingdom to Washington, where he died in 1942. His remains were brought to Albania recently.

The literature of the Albanians of Italy in the period between the two wars continued the tradition of the romanticist school of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Zef Skiro (1865-1927) through his work "*Kthimi*" (*Return* 1913), "*Te dheu i huaj*" (*In Foreign Soil*, 1940), wanted to recover the historical memory of Albanians who had emigrated since the 15<sup>th</sup> century after the death of Skanderbeg.

During the Anti-fascist Struggle of the Albanian people (1939-1944), a literature of anti-fascist resistance developed, founded illegally through the press of the Communist Party of Albania. The products of this literature were mainly non-fiction writings, literary sketches and texts of partisan songs. Its authors were anti-fascist fighters of the youngest generation (Shevqet Musaraj, Aleks Çaçi, Fatmir Gjata, Kolë Jakova, Qamil Buxheli).

After World War II, Albanian literature witnessed a massive development. The main feature of literature and arts of this period was their ideologically oriented development and the elaboration of all genres, especially of novel, which despite of the lack of any tradition came to the front of the literary process.

The most popular type of novel was the novel of socialist realism of historical character, (with main writers like Jakov Xoxa, Sterjo

Spasse); novels with a simple composition, open poetics and a philosophical themes (with writers like Ismail Kadare, Petro Marko) as well as the satirical novels (with writers like Dritëro Agolli, Qamil Buxheli).

In the long run short story and novel were developed also by Dh. Shuteriqi, Naum Prifti, Zija Çela, Tedor. Laço, Dhimetër Xhuvani, Nasi Lera and others, and poetry mainly by Ismail Kadare, Dritëro Agolli, Fatos Arapi, Xhevahir Spahiu, Mimoza Ahmeti and others.

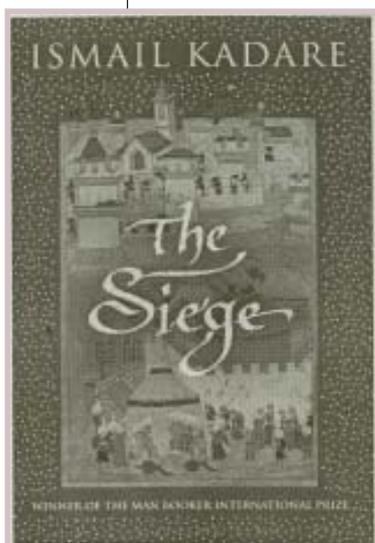
Drama like *"Toka jonë"* (*Our land*, 1955) by Kol Jakova, and comedy such as Spiro Çomora's *"Karnavalet e Korçës"* (*The Carnival of Korça*, 1961) developed, but to a lesser degree.

The literature of this period (1945-1990) developed within the framework of socialist realism, the only direction allowed by official policy and similar to this one developed in USSR (Soviet Union). But beyond this framework, powerful talents created works with an implicit feeling of opposition and with universal significance.

The disident trend in literature was expressed in different forms in the works and public attitudes. Sejfulla Maleshovase (1900-1971) is the first disident (known as Lame Kodra). He distinguished himself in 1946 for his ideas toward democracy, freedom and traditional culture having a pro-western trend. Kasëm Trebeshina wrote *"pro-memoire"* to Dictator Enver Hoxha in 1953 accusing the government and the Party for killing the freedom and democracy. Mehmet Myftiu was the only one supported openly Trebeshina and declared the arrest of Trebeshina as "non justice". The disidents were either imprisoned, exiled in remote areas or banned from writing until 1990.

Many figures of note in Albanian intellectual life fled the country before or during the communist takeover: Ernest Koliqi (1903-1975), Mehdi bey Frashëri (1874-1963), Mid'hat bey Frashëri (1880-1949) and Karl Gurakuqi (1895-1971) to Italy, Branko Merxhani (1894-1981) to Turkey, and left-wing writer Tajar Zavalani (1903-1966) to Britain

Writers of the Scutarine Catholic school suffered particularly. Mehmet Shehu, in a public address in Shkodra on 28 January 1945, had called the Catholic stronghold a 'nest of reaction' and warned that church leaders would receive their 'just' rewards before the people's court. Playwright Ndre Zadeja (1891-1945), poet Lazër Shantoja (1892-1945), poet Bernardin Palaj (1894-1947), novelist Anton Harapi (1888-1946) and publicist Gjon Shllaku (1907-1946) were executed. Poet and archbishop Vinçenc Prennushi (1885-1949) died in prison after gruesome torture, as did prose writer and publisher Dom Ndoc Nikaj (1864-1951), the father of twentieth-century Gheg prose. Other intellectuals of note to be executed included Arbëresh publisher Terenzio Tocci (1880-1945), editor Nebil Çika (1893-1944), Bektashi writer Baba Ali Tomori (1900-1947) and poet Manush Peshkëpia (1910-1951).



"The Siege" by Ismail Kadare, Winner of the Man Booker International Prize, 2005

Among the many other writers and intellectuals who were arrested and imprisoned during the witch hunts after the Second World War were noted playwrights Kristo Floqi (1873-1951) and Etëhem Haxhiademi (1902-1965), Muslim writer and publisher Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu (1878-1952), minister of education Mirash Ivanaj (1891-1953) and poet Gjergj Bubani (1899-1954), all of whom died in prison; short story writer Mitrush Kuteli (1907-1967), novelist Petro Marko (1913-1991), poet Sejfulla Malëshova (1901-1971), short story writer Musine Kokalari (1917-1983), poet and scholar Arshi Pipa (1920-1997), Bektashi poet Ibrahim Hasnaj (1912-1995), poet Nexhat Hakiu (1917-1978), poet Andrea Varfi (1914-1992), translators Jusuf Vroni (1916-2001) and Pashko Gjeci (b. 1918), novelist Mustafa Greblleshi (1922-1986), publicist Dionis Miçaço, poet Kudret Kokoshi (1907-1991), novelist and editor Andon S. Frashëri (1892-1965), humorist and indefatigable translator Mid'hat Araniti (1912-1992), linguist Selman Riza (1909-1988), critic Filip Fishta (1904-1973), folklorists Donat Kurti (1903-1969) and Stavro Frashëri (1900-1965) of Kavaja, and writer Lazër Radi (1916-1998) who was released in 1991 after an incredible forty-six years of prison and internment.

Apart from the dissidents, there were also Kadare, Minush Jero, Koço Kosta, and others who tried to bring innovative ideas within socialist realism method.

Ismail Kadare, (b. 1936) defied the limitations of the time and enriched Albanian literature with forms and motifs that integrate it into the modern streams of world literature. The work of Kadare represents an artistic encyclopaedia of Albanian life, a broad compilation of historical and contemporary events, experienced with a philosophical attitude, sometimes expressed openly and at other times akin to the speech of Aesop. The philosophy, beliefs, dramas, historical and cultural traditions of Albanians, filtered through the artistic thinking of the writer are represented in Kadare's work as an expression of the national identity and vitality of the intangible culture of his own people and as a factor in the people's resistance and survival.

Kadare creates a modern prose making wide use of historical analogies, parables and word associations, national legends and mythology. His work has an open poetics, which emanates from the intertwining of times, levels of artistic speech and the real with the unreal, and from the uneven nature of composition. Kadare's work brings a characteristic Mediterranean, Balkan flavour, and enriches it with the coloration of an area typical for its ethno-cultural distinctness. Starting from the epic world of medieval legends and ballads, the prose of Kadare overcomes time and distance and brings to resonance the medieval artistic conscience and mentality with those of our time. The



Ismail Kadare awarded the "Prince of Asturias", 2009

message of Kadare's prose and poetry simultaneously gains historical depth and a universal humane note through a deep creative elaboration of the richness of ancient folk traditions.

Kadare, a writer with a strong critical conscience, has not only raised poetry with the spiritual values of his nation, but has also castigated outdated traditions, old mentalities, provincial psychology and many backward life conventions of Albanian society. His works like "General of the dead army", "The Siege", "The bridge with three arches" and so on are well known and accepted as world masterpieces and translated in majority of languages of the world.

His political exile to France in 1990, at a time when democratic processes had just began in Albania, gave an impulse to these processes. Kadare's work enjoys wide popularity and has been translated in all major languages. Kadare has been praised internationally as one of the most distinguished contemporary writers of world literature and has won several major awards.

Kadare is currently the most eminent representative of Albanian culture in the world.

Dritëro Agolli (b. 1931) is a lyrical poet and satirical writer, who has brought the freshness of a spontaneous meditative inspiration to poetry, and the subtle popular humour in his works.

Among other noted poets in Albania during the last two decades of the twentieth century, of whom we note a dramatic rise in the number of talented female poets, are: Jorgo Bllaci, Visar Zhiti, Koçi Petriti, Frederik Rreshpja, Ndoc Papeleka, Xhevahir Spahiu, Mimoza Ahmeti, Natasha Lako, Bardhyl Londo, Rudolf Marku, Preç Zogaj, Flutura Aça, Luljeta Lleshanaku, Lindita Arapi, Gert Pashaj, Ervin Hatibi etc..

Albanian literature in Albanian lands in Kosova and Western Macedonia is represented by many names (E. Mekuli, A. Pashku, A. Podrimja, R. Kelmendi, R. Qosja, D. Mehmeti, M. Isaku etc.). Although it developed in a different political and cultural context, even after World War II it maintained links with the mother culture and brought into art the national and human dramas and ravages of the individuals in those lands.

There has not been any organized literary movement in the Albanian Diaspora in Europe after World War II. The most notable Albanian author in Europe during this time is M. Camaj (1925-1992). In his poetry and prose he tries to uncover the identity roots of the Albanian émigré.

In the 18 years of transition of post-Communist society, Albanian literature is experiencing the advantages of its opening to the world, but also the problems that are faced in such conditions by the culture of any nation to preserve its own identity.

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