ABSTRACT:

The distinction between the high and low culture is almost extinguished in contemporary literature; postmodernist writers tend to mix together the features of low and high culture through double encoding. In Albanian contemporary literature, this phenomenon can be found in the following novels: Goja e botës (The Mouth of the World), Las varrezas by Zija Çela, Duel (The Duel) by Agron Tufa, Triumfi i Gjergj Elez Alisë (Triumph of George Elez Aliu), Triumfi i dytë i Gjergj Elez Alisë (The second triumph of George Elez Aliu) by Ridvan Dibra, Ëndrra e sandaleve me gurë Swarovski (The dream of sandals with Swarovski stones) by Met Dervishi, Yjet nuk vishen kështu (Stars do not dress like this) by Elvira Dones, etc.

The first level of reading (the semantic one) is easier to be analyzed in terms of building structures. This is explained by the fact that textual strategies most often are simple and repetitive. The most common ways of "wandering" the first level of encoding are: a) Enigma that requires solution b) Erotic / pornographic motive, c) Poetics of scandal, d) Folk traits, etc. These features usually intertwined together, bringing the book closer to the reader.

Key words: double encoding, textual strategies, semantic reading level, enigma, Eros, folk, etc.

The purpose of the study

This paper aims to analyze some of the most effective ways used in Albanian contemporary novels to entertain the implicit reader. Involvement of erotic scenes, folk references, hermeneutic code, etc., brings the reader closer to the literary text. Our effort is to clarify reasons why a postmodernist novel can be simultaneously elitist and best-seller at the same time. These two indications (that at first glance seem like contrasting or opposing each other), come by a predominant feature in contemporary literature, which is double encoding.

Introduction

The distinction between the high and low culture is usually extinguished in contemporary art, which deliberately intermingles their features. This lineament is mainly found in postmodern works (or even in heterogeneous works, which stand in the midst of modernism and postmodernism). Umberto Eco clarifies that double-encoding is one of the most obvious signs of postmodernist literature; thanks to it the literary books gain readability.

In fact Umberto Eco clearly explains what Charles Jencks had first asserted in terms of architectural structure. According to him: “Postmodern building (...) is one that speaks on at least to two levels at once; to the architects and a concerned minority who care about specifically architectural meaning, and to the public at large, or the local inhabitants, who care about other issues concerned with the comfort, traditional building and a way of life” (Jenks, 1981: 6) He added that postmodern work of art simultaneously addresses an elite minority audience through high-art codes as well as a mass audience through folk codes” (Jencks, 1986, 14-15). Linda Hutcheon shares the
same idea when she states that: “Postmodernism is academic and popular as well as elitist and perceptible” (Hutcheon, 2005: 44). As a result, postmodern writer addresses his work to elite and mass reader at once, using double encoding. Moreover Umberto Eco underline that such texts present two reading levels. These levels imply two types of readers: semantic and semiotic one. Postmodernist writers prefer the former, but entertain the latter.

In conclusion, it is important to add that postmodern practice of writing creates two reading levels, thanks to two levels of discourse:

a) First level (semantic one), is related to the story, climax, enigma, drama, etc.
b) Second level (semiotic one) is related to the textual techniques, narrative strategies, linguistic attributes, intertextuality, pastiche, metafiction, fabulation, etc.

The aim of this paper is to analyze the first level of text reading. Textual strategies used in order to "achieve" attention of semantic reader most often are simple and repetitive.

The most common ways of "wandering" the first level of double-encoding in Albanian contemporary literature are:

a) Through enigma that requires a solution (hermeneutic code).
b) Erotic / pornographic motive; aesthetic use of scandal’s poetic.
c) Folk references, etc.

These features sometimes are outlined separately in different literary works and other times interlaced together in the same literary book.

a. Hermeneutic code. The novels of Zija Çela, are generally built on the concept of the hermeneutic code, which can be summed up in the efforts to find the killer of Juli Just in the novel The Mouth of the World (Goja e botës), or revealing the mystery of Dinosha in the novel Las varrezas, etc. In the novel The Mouth of the World, the receiver witnesses a murder and the rest of the narrative line is devoted to determining the questions that are raised by the initial scene of violence. The narrative line is considered to be an attempt to answer who and why questions. This is the main axis of the story which “fuels” the curiosity of the first level reader. This means that during the horizontal reading this novel might seem similar to a detective story, oriented towards finding the culprit, or consumption of the mystery. But does the hermeneutic code make this novel a yellow book? The answer is no, because the novel ends without explaining the enigma.

Despite the fact that the narration goes on through self-declaration of the potential defendants, the end of the story reveals neither the guilty parties nor the reasons why the crime happened. The story does not reach the climax with the final revelation of all diegetic truths; none of the "loose ends" of the story are tied, because narrative line ends with deliberate evasions of the truth and suspended answers about the committed crime.

On the other hand, in the novel Las varrezas, the main character, Dinosha, is characterized at the very beginning as Magna Dea, a life-giving goddess. The mystery of her begins with a miracle; she saves from the "extinction" of the "common lot" (death) all residents of Kukunam: “At the savior’s home, much like a deity’s temple, the needy knocked night and day (...) any of her fellow people, the elders and children, men and women, boys and girls, in their final minutes had Dinosha right next to them. She performed the rite together with her husband, and because of fear of failure, did not allow herself to change it a bit” (Çela, 2005; 35). Semantic units; deity’s temple, savior, ritual, needy, put the image on a level of divine worship. In this way, Kukunami takes shape of a wildlife sanctuary where the pre-Christian cult of worship of the great goddess is continuously maintained.

The warning about the death (murder) of Dinosha comes through an escalating rise. Some details, that are not so important, are given but in fact they serve as semantic keys to understand what happens next. The death of Dinosha comes from indifference and the insensitivity of the people of Kukunami, the people she had sacrificed during all her life.
Meanwhile, the mystery of life-giving powers of Dinosha seem to be vanished by her death, hence the hermeneutic code "is enriched" by the dilemma how speculative human being can be. This means that although the first reading addresses to semantic reader, the latter is supposed to be in a high cultural level. He is required to be able to cope with the frustration that comes from an unresolved narrative intrigue.

b) The poetic of scandal. Albanian contemporary novels frequently use the poetic of scandal. The novels written after the decline of communism tend to break strong taboos, mainly through aesthetic approach of sexual relations. One of the best ways to ensure readability from a heterogeneous audience is related to the inclusion in the literary work of Eros in the consumption process through sexual intercourse. In many cases, these relationships are totally defoliated from the romantic “habiliment”. The huge presence of sexual relationship in Albanian contemporary literature is explained by a "potential hunger" related to the complete absence of these motives in literature before the 90s. The presence of erotic scenes (even pornographic ones) in postmodernist novels is inextricable linked to rapid changes in society. Abundant freedom "gained" after the decline of communism alienated some of the most important features of the Albanian society. Ultimately, values and the identity of a society are cultural configurations which change through times. Even the unconscious has a cultural configuration. As Kaja Silverman states in The Subject of semiotics, the unconscious is built through repression, while the forces of oppression are cultural. These forces sometimes are strong and aggressive towards the unconscious repression of phenomenon considered to be a taboo, and sometimes more flexible.

The years 90s are characterized by a chaotic movement in Albanian culture, values and social identity. When the totalitarian system fell, the Albanians were totally disoriented, at the crossroad of how-s and why-s. The fallacy of equalization of the old with the evil and everything new with the good one brought a shocking devaluation of human values. The new society sometimes is labelled as libidinosus or lusty society (Açka, 2006: 26) with the meaning of the society that recognizes sex as an attribute, exchange it just like exchanging goods. However despite the tendency of contemporary writers to break taboos by establishing sexual scenes in central location in contemporary art, it is important to underline that poetic of the concept of scandal is considered to be not just an attribute of literary texts, but also an attribute of the recipients. Readers perception during the process of text decodification is very important to create the scandal or extinguish it. We must not forget that the social function of works written in this way is to change / develop / open healthy discussions on taboo issues. The tension between society (who does not want to be open-minded on one side) and the tendency of provocative appearance of the books itself, expands the poetics of scandal. Without this tension these works might not be characterized as "outrageous".

In European contemporary literature, erotic or pornographic novels have their established literary life. In most of cases they do not even tend to be a phenomenon; they do not open broad issues of discussions, because social tension between the reader and the book has faded away.

Contemporary literature written in Albania, tends to materialize sex as modus operandi, and in spite of how much erotic they are, such novels are not yet classified as a literary type. Hence, erotic or pornographic novels as a literary type in itself, are not yet convincingly shaped in Albanian literary context. However, breaking taboos (literary and social) proclivity in literary works is related with the different traits that gets sexual relationship; passion love, rape, homosexual relations, child abuse, prostitution, etc.

Generally due to marginalized relationship with sex in the Albanian context, a considerable number of works feature a huge tension which comes from strained sexual relations (sexual
punishment). Thus, for example, the novel *Stars do not dress like that* by Elvira Dones, can rightly be regarded as a provocative show of all distortions that sex gets in a society unprepared for the grand opening. Rape, prostitution appear as forms of feminine punishment in a harsh masculine world. Through detailed transgressions of violent sexual relationships, a stifling atmosphere is created, which prevents undisturbedly reading of the text. The text is loaded with explicit details of sex scenes, which creates a natural sense of confession. Traits of natural narration double the sensation of shock experienced during the reception. The emotional concussion provoked during the reading of the book, is likely to function as a glove toss to masculine society. The presence of many rape scenes within the work, aims towards the exhibition of masculine egos, in a society which suffers not only political, but also human values transition. This means that the reception of the work is built on a "gender reading." The book emphatically provokes the women (connecting her emotionally with the sexual rape pain). Meanwhile, to "educate" the male readers, this book is likely to create a sense of being uncomfortable (shame), fueled by the belonging to the same gender.

The relationship between "seduction" and "sexual act" does not appear in Albanian literature with the same emotional tension. The reasons for this social neutralization are not only related to "the fading" of the phenomenon, but also to the fact that literature can denaturalize the subject, and consequently "neutralize" it. Erotic scenes appeared in most of the contemporary works written after the 90s [for example *Little Red Riding Hood comes with the 10 o'clock train* (*Kësulkujja vjen me trenin e dhjetës*) by Rudolf Marku, *Hallucinative Woman* (*Gruaja haluçinante*) by Mimoza Ahmeti, *The Dream of Sandals with Swarovsky Stones* (*Ndërra e sandaleve me gurë Swarovski*) by Met Dervishi, *Ten days which did not concuss the world* (*Dhjetë ditë që nuk tronditën botën*) by Aurel Plasari, *The Duel* (*Dueli*) by Agron Tufa, *Stars do not dress like this* (*Yjet nuk vishen kështu*) by Elvira Dones, *Tale with internationals* (*Përrallë me ndërkombëtarë*) by Ylljet Aliçka, etc.].

The distance is augmented from the repetition of "scandalous" content and the tension between the reader and the text is diminished or extinguished. The involving of sexual relationship in modernist and postmodernist novels, aroused curiosity about the metamorphosis of transforming the taboo into a work of art and this process brought the reader closer to the books.

Aesthetic traits of literature help in the neutralization of very sensitive or even intolerant issues in Albanian society, like homosexuality and bisexuality. Thus, for example *Otello, Arap of Vlora* (*Otello, arapi i Vlorës*) by Ben Blushi legitimates homosexual relationship, which starts for the protagonist as a violent sexual discharge (rape) and ends as his own lifestyle. On this aesthetic wrap, scenes of rape in the work are given through a poetic language, which defamiliarize the content. As a result, the rape scenes in *Stars do not Dress like this* by Elvira Dones create a more powerful emotional stream, a continuous anxiety and dismay comparing with *Otello, Arap of Vlora* by Ben Blushi. Because of the fact that the horrendous scenes are neutralized by the use of poetic language in Blushi’s novel, they are received as less shocking.

Another novel by this same author, *Living on an island* (*Të jetosh në ishull*), is weaved on poetic of "scandal" too; it caused huge non-literary debates, which returned it in an absolute best seller for several years. The novel brought many long discussions about religious, historical, social features of Albanian (while a fictional work should be assessed by literary conventions only). The central topic was the controversy about Albanian identity (which has stirred a long dissension between two prominent figures in Albanian literature, Ismail Kadare and Rexhep Qosja). Like Barthes suggests, the social function of literature is to transform the thought into "value". According to him the society tries to "virtually" institutionalize the risk that comes from the thought; and language really helps to fulfill this process. The "provocative" language is easily accepted in literature, it is also easily legitimized by literary institutions (the "language scandals" are well known from Rimbaud to Ionesco; they all passed without causing any problem). While in the case of "provocative thought", this kind of flexibility can...
be neither expected nor intended: in such cases the scandal - according Roland Barthes, is complete. The provocative thought novels can raise huge debates and cause a huge tension swirl, because the thought is considered to be dangerous and with great impact at the implicit reader. The involvement of conflict topics in the literary work is a main feature of Ben Blushi’s writing style. In the novel Otello, Arap of Vlora, there are thoughts that normally should start huge discussions. The novel addresses issues such as solving global economic issues, attitude towards murder, the dividing line between right and wrong, etc. The arguments used could pave the path for creation of debates. Unequivocal articulation of ideas such as: (...) on the altar of the world economy is written with blood letters: "Less people, more food, more diseases, less people. Those who plan the growth of the world population knew that this was the way it should be done therefore they inspire wars, death, guns and drugs" (Blushi, 2009: 184), etc. These explicit opinions should cause social tension. In fact such matters do not provoke scandal, although they are quite "strong" and "transgressive". The lack of social tension is related to the indifference of Albanian readers concerning global politic issues. This means that in the minds of the recipients these topics function as "blaring scandals". This phenomenon is explained by the fact that such hot topics are consumed as units of cultural pragmatics.

c) Folk references. Folk references have an important function in shaping the first level discourse in postmodern novels. The Triumph of George Elez Alia (Triumfi i Gjergj Elez Alisë), The Second Triumph of George Elez Alia (Triumfi i dytë i Gjergj Elez Alisë), as the titles suggest, follow this textual practice. ‘Legendary ballad of George Elez Alia (folk code) communicates with the genre of the novel (as high code)’. (Ferlushkaj, 2012, 165) Also in the novel The Mouth of the World by Zija Çela, first coding is not ‘fueled’ only by hermeneutic code (enigma solving), but also from a rich oral tradition, which comes through activation (and the parody) with folk expressions. These expressions can be classified as following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proverbs</th>
<th>Folk expressions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Bad dog brings the wolf into the fold” (“Qeni i keq ta sjell ujkun në vathë”).</td>
<td>Get here and see Istanbul with the meaning of something impossible (Hip këtu e shih Stambollin).</td>
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<tr>
<td>“When the ship is sunk, the captain is expected to be sunk too” (Kur i mbjet gjemia, pritet të mbjet dhe kapiteni).</td>
<td>When the priest carries the can (Kërcen prifti nga belaja).</td>
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<td>He behaves like a bear with soar head (Ta plaste buzën ai njeri)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bread and salt, good heart and euros” (“Bukë, kripë, zemër dhe euro”).</td>
<td>Beat the hell out of him (Ia bëra turinjtë përshesh).</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>He is shooting the bull (Po çepkat si pula në pleh).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Out of frying pan into the fire (Ra nga shiu në breshër).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Not touched by a single hair (As me gisht nuk më ka prekur).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Let it just be there! It does not cost a thing (Kot le të jetë aty, bukë për të ngrënë nuk na kërkon).</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scared through the night like a rabbit in a bush (I shkoi nata, si lepurit në ferrë).</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Think twice before you speak (Matet shtatë herë e pret një herë). (Çela, 2010; 125)</td>
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In the novel The Duel (Duelli) by Agron Tufa, creative dialogues (according Mikhail Bakhtin's terminology) follow the model of folk songs. Formally, these dialogue are enriched with dramatic changes (abrupt switching of dialogue between She / Chorus). Semantically, the dialogue is built on the concept of "double voices", through which speakers adopt each other's words: “She: Lucky bride; what holds in her hand? / Chorus: Lucky bride; what holds in her hand? / She: Two red apples and a blood red rose. / Chorus: Two red apples and a blood red rose. (Tufa, 2007: 97)

The concept of "double voices" is also mentioned by B. Rampton, in his essay on language breakthroughs. B. Rampton highlights that speaker B can use the discourse of the speaker A, in order
to "intertwine a new semantic intention" (Rampton, 2006: 137). The semantic purpose of dramatic dialogue (between her and the chorus), is the emphasis of two leveled play.
a) the explicit erotic game between the bride and the oldman lover (see: in bride’s hand, a rose and apples)
b) the implicit linguistic game, between vigilant oldwoman and the corus (who parodize the erotic game). The dialogue with double voices, sets the play (explicit and implicit one) to a double level, through the phenomenon of voice echo.

Conclusions

It is important to underline that the activation of double encoding in Albanian contemporary novels raises the question whether massive public is interested in art, or perhaps, it is the art which approaches to the mass reader? The answer of course, is clear. On one hand, literature gets closer to the reader. It feeds the naïve recipients with interesting subjects and easy literary techniques, which can easily be “consumed”. Consequently, no receiver is felt excluded from the semantic of the text; they can decode textual games in the surface level and enjoy them.
The first level of reading (which might be considered as surface level) is an easy challenge for the implicit receiver, hence he enjoys the success during the decodification process. Erotic and pornographic scenes, language and thought scandals, folk references, hermenutic code, enigma solving are some of the most successful techniques in the process of entertainment of the first level reader.

On the other hand narration strategies, collage techniques, intertextuality, parody, pastiche, metafiction, etc., address to professional recipients. As a conclusion in postmodernist works, the concept of arc-receivers (as an archetypal abstraction of the readings from real receivers) is very evasive, precisely because of the extreme changes in the recipient's perception of naïve and model readers. These changes lead to difficulties in creation of an axial abstraction (which is identical to each reader), thus making postmodernist novels best-sellers and elistist at the same time.

Bibliography