

# Grotesque As Archetype of Poetic State In The Poetry of Frederik Rreshpa

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## Abstract

Frederik Rreshpa, a famous Albanian poet, was born in Shkoder in 1940 and died in 2006. His first literary work, the poetry collection, "Albanian Rhapsody" was published in 1967. He was imprisoned and served 17 years in prison during the communist regime.

After he was released from prison, lived in Tirana and published the volumes "The time has come to die again" - 1994, "Selected lyrics" - 1996, a collection that was announced the best national book of the year, as well the volume of poetry "In solitude" was to be published in 2004.

The focus of the article is on the features of the poetic style specifically on the grotesque as an author's poetic preference that constitutes a special point of view of the author.

The grotesque as an archetype of the poetic state in Rreshpa's poetry is conceived as a way of artistic reflection and as a style of writing. The key function of the metaphor-grotesque is the transfer, within the form of expression, from one context to another context with poetic undertones.

Grotesque is a way of expression or way of presentation in which exaggerated sides are put together in powerful and unexpected contrast, or the most mixed, distorted and isolated forms of reality...

## Methodology

Conception of metaphor-grotesque as a hidden and exaggerated situation will be studied in this paper to discern similarity in form or function from original conception. Nonconformism and aesthetic rejection, both used as means to maintain original spirit in Albanian poetry, constitutes conceptual basis and poetic code of Frederik Rreshpa's.

Through juxtaposition of poetic situations and means of expression we come to conclusion that Rreshpa's poetic contribution remains a precious and unique value in modern Albanian poetry.

Rreshpa's poetry runs through verses and stanzas encoded in multiple keys, which account for the distinguishing feature of his creative style. Structural approaches are combined with each other to create poetry of space. His style is the splendor and luxury of poetic language.

## Grotesque As Archetype of Poetic Expression

Rreshpa's figurative language, rich in poetic images given in grotesque form, conveys and hides a moral truth, an aesthetic and philosophical message, as a particular communication of poetic discourse. Imagery along with the context of Rreshpa's literary discourse represents the analogy between the living things and those lifeless, inseparable bond and unity. The grotesque in Rreshpa's poetry can be viewed in two directions: as a way of conceiving within the system of artistic expression and as a writing style.

The conciseness of the poem makes the metaphor not to be reduced in the linguistic aspect, without distorting the conceptual side of the object or phenomenon.

In Grotesque as an image, setting of objects, things with similar properties such as (winter, rain, snow, moon, night, garden, marble) produce aesthetic, electrifying atmosphere and artistic landscape. In Rreshpa's poetry, as it will be analyzed below by illustrating with real poetic details, we perceive the moves within the structure of expression, from one context to another, passing in a sudden and incredible way. Grotesque, as a poetic style, serves the poet's imagination to bring new messages to the poetic discourse creating aesthetic prompting and new human feelings. It further aims to convince the reader of an argument by absorbing it aesthetically. The use of grotesque is elaborated and operates in forbidden spaces. Creative freedom serves not to suppress censorship; on the other hand, moral-political and philosophical censorship limits the abuse

of freedom. The poet, Rreshpja, seeks ideological freedom as he needs to create the unity of values between the spaces that exists in the correlation of matter-consciousness.

The poet believed that "through the paths of rotten trees / cunning kings fell from the thrones" but life is a great arena of war and triumphs that in "Oh, my field of Korab (area)! Free horizon, boundless sadness!"<sup>1</sup> The brave man was carried down by the streams / the brave was carried up by the song." Under conditions of ideological restriction to poetic freedom we would have a relative introduction of poetic values.

Poetic creativity played an important role to oppose the absurd and to face dictatorship by using allegory, ellipsis, allusion, subtext creating a system of literary imagery.

In the book "The time has come to die again" (1994) by Frederik Rreshpja, we have an arsenal of examples making up the grotesque system of the poet's biography. The poet has consciously multiplied his sufferings. In the poem "Forever" the poet reveals to us through a brilliant metaphor constructed as a system of other figures of rhetoric, the idea of eternity. The short poem opens with the exclamation erupting in the middle of the metaphor like a colorful firecracker in a starry evening: I was the sadness of the world... "O dusk air, enfold us / the time has come to die again, /... But I will come back again in every season I want/ I have been the sadness of the world... " The social context that stimulated the poet constitutes a grotesque gray relief with investigators, guards, communists, spies and loneliness like darkness and nightmare. The poet's sadness is hard to trace. The sad life of the poet is an unusual metaphor. The poet's happy nights have been limited, as they "knock like bells on the branches of memory". The metaphor in the poem "The lunar rain" has an amazing architecture.

The simple simile of "poplars like black monks" leaves, makes room for the conception of the concrete with the abstract "blue wave mermaid, / tears flowing on the sleeping face of the legend", or where: "concealed behind the trees somewhere eavesdrops, / the old killer "sadness" in synchrony with a figurative parallelism building the grotesque in the metaphorical system in order to give this romantic nocturne full of colors and sparkles

The metaphors in Rreshpja' poetry is understood by those who have good reading skills due to deep artistic refinement, natural and sudden poetic spirit, as a sign of modernity after the 90s.

..... "An autumn comes with no migration of birds!

May a god come, put his hand on the seasons!"<sup>2</sup>

Unlike the metaphorical life in general, as articulation of everyday life found in many poets, in Rreshpja we find the splendor that appears as a divine light in the world of feelings.

"The sadness of the snow falls from the trees / the valley with the moon painted / and the deer of the wind wail in pain / with the icy horns broken ...

"This fall passed away/ another day went by..."<sup>3</sup>

The universality of sense, space and time, the concrete and the abstract, the beautiful and the ugly, the tragic and absurd action, are given in four verses. Four verses include an aesthetic information system: fallen trees, sad snow, valley with moon painted, wind deer, their pain, grief, broken horns, icy horns; grotesque style or pattern. Modern poetry with subtlety and conciseness, where little is written and much is said.

The poet's trend after the 90s is to create such a metaphor freed from the simple message, from the ideology as an arranged urge, towards a new explosion as a natural conception, as a need for aesthetic communication, as a poet who approaches the human world to say in a grotesque way, that of the unexpressed, the unseen, the unknown, towards the modernity of Albanian poetry.

## **II - Aesthetic rejection as a personal attitude of the poet.**

Rejection relies on persuasion and persuasion on argument, because the poet has been nailed to the triangle: imposition-acceptance-rejection. This refusal for the poet was a constant update in joy, in sorrow, in love.

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<sup>1</sup> Rreshpja, Frederik: Seeking Ithaka. Poem. Prince, Tiranë 2016, p. 126

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p 129

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p 129

Aesthetic refusal is achieved by literary means and in particular, the grotesque. Rejection falls into the category of negative aesthetics, because it relies on the denial, the negation of those categories that elevate man's dignity, his loneliness.

The poet as a social being was forced by socio-aesthetic factors which act on the creative consciousness and realize pacts for reflective undertakings of life specifically: I am a gypsy of rains and storms/... "My fate as a sword follows me everywhere."<sup>5</sup> The grotesque of the poet's "duralumin" fate, which currently travels sadly through the poetic Iliad he has built. "Roses die at dusk... but loneliness awaits me at the gate" loneliness for the poet was worse than death itself "The moon torn with the teeth of loneliness/ / Screams like a wild at the gate / the star of my fortune cried in the window...."<sup>6</sup>

In the poem "Rally for Enver Hoxha" the author anticipates as an oracle the future of his Republic. Crowds of servile and ignorant people will give rise to despotic leaders. "But there will come a day when his bronze / crowd will cruelly tear it to pieces. / And, will carve for the curse / the bronze of a new dictator "... on this land that survived through war and sacrifice over the centuries. Democracy according to the poet appeared too late. "... You call me / but your call came to me too late! ...throw two handfuls of night/ on my disobedient head" ...

4 Ibid, p131

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p 157

The poetic subject lies in grotesque aesthetic areas, in the border between life and death, laughing and having fun with death as if it were a hobby. The few peaceful days of the poet are haunted as in a dream. "The sparks of dreams woke me up /the world hides under rain, turns into the spirit of water / what makes you sparkle so far away?" It is a fantastic poetic imagery like graceful rejection. The moon for the poet appears as a symbol of disloyalty. "Ah, the moon that killed me / there under the twilight tree!"<sup>7</sup>

Rreshpja brought new poetic conceptions when literature was controlled by the communist state. His strong character refused to channel his creative energy into ideological prefabrication.

"The black charioteer through time / lashes the fall with a whip" The poet had crossed ideological limits and had fully gone into the heavenly realm of poetry. "A mother statue is hidden in every stone."<sup>10</sup>

He elevated poetry to high tones, to extremes, to the epic of simple things that are in front of us and we do not conceive them as such. He managed to reveal the properties of being and natural phenomena from the unbelievable and beyond the ordinary. Rreshpja's grotesque-metaphor arises as the spark of a sacred moment of creative power that can be called poetic snapshot of the world.

"I am sad /your roses remained in my hands like wounds."<sup>11</sup>

His ideas full of equivocations and ambiguities that brought modern spirit and brilliant lyricism were mysterious for the time: "I hear the wind blowing through my words / which quickly turned green". Intense aesthetic emotional experience at the highest rate, images being transmitted and transformed from the concrete to the abstract are presented through these verses.

"I myself sorrow over my destiny...", and later he claims that "... I explain to the birds/ that I am a man with no nest"<sup>12</sup>

"The moon above the river draws /... The roses of dead trees"<sup>13</sup>

## Death As A Symbol of Aesthetic Rejection

Death is a symbol of aesthetic refusal, but it is active, an active evil, as people say: evil is made up of forty feet. For the author the inanimate things walk "A dead oak tree walks through the forest", the dead also work for the unfortunate author "stone by stone pile is growing"

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p 169

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p 166

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p 169

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p 133

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p 138

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p 163

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p 171

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, p 194

Even the white snow glinting on the ground for the author it looks like shroud "for a grand dead"<sup>14</sup> The grotesque is concerned with the infinity of feeling like a sad soul vibrating and gazing from an unimaginable position, from the pitfall of the dark of death. Happiness for the poet was something that does not exist when he claims that "breakfast dies in his hands".<sup>15</sup>

Sometimes the author relies on imagery of religious origin "the doors of ghosts open and the Illyrian gods come out /... and the roses shut in their grief".<sup>16</sup> Communication with dead mother, as the poet's only life hope, is given through a grotesque prosopopoeia and in biblical rhetoric is addressed: "My lady, how will I manage without you in this world /... A few things you have to keep in mind / now you are gone!"<sup>17</sup>

Shocking poetic situations, from the simple to the unimaginable, he asks for the help of the dead, in which world is the poet?

In that world, along with the mother where he just tells her to take care of him, or in this world where he still seeks help from the dead mother by giving her immortality, eternity!

A grotesque lies between dream and reality, transcendent and infinite. The poet lives with his grief, as the refusal of this world. Therefore, the moment that he regains his freedom exactly when his handcuffs are removed, he states his refusal "the time has come for me to die again", because even later, until the end of his life, sadness followed the poet "grief is there, at the gate."<sup>19</sup>

In the verse "The wind sways the sorrow of the flowers", the author creates the configuration from the shadow, from nothing, from the echo, that "the real creator does not utter the noise itself, the crack, but its echo, its cause"<sup>20</sup>

Another aspect of the grotesque in Reshpa's poetry is the unfinished, the eternal that "if the future and the past are infinite, we will not really have a time"<sup>21</sup>

The two pillars on which the grotesque is supported are loneliness as a result of the context of the author's life and pain because of the misfortunes that have accompanied him all over the life. These clearly appear in the poet's immensity and everyday life. The verses obtained are aesthetic synthesis of high validity.

Poetic leaps from the ordinary to the extraordinary communicate as a space of mythical dimensions, where the author wants to be "a small child who has been crying for thousands of years, and the agony for the poet travels on the black horse of sorrow."

"Reshpa's art is sanctifying: from the examples of severe hatred are drawn lessons of love, from the rubbish of disappointments are raised noble, new illusions up to heaven"

*The researcher V. Grace brings arguments from the evaluations on Reshpa's poetry: "Hans Joacim Lankest, ... Frederik Reshpa's work is poetry of high quality, European caliber "Robert Elsie: "... since his youth Reshpa has been a shocking poet "Henri Izrael, American publisher: "... It is a striking poetry, with a mastery that we Americans lack", Ivanovo, Russian critic: "We have Pushkin, Yesenin and Albanians should be proud to have such a poet." Leo de Rua, French critic: "I was shocked by this man who contains a Balkan genius, which is the birthplace of art," Ismail Kadare: "Frederik Reshpa is one of the best poets in Albania".*

## Conclusion

Through the confrontation of poetic situations and means of expression we reach the conclusion that the poetic contribution of the Albanian writer, Frederik Reshpa, remains a valuable and unique value in modern Albanian literature. Time poured out on Him, in all its ferocity, but he succeeded and deserved immortality, like the meteor that fades leaving behind the bright continuum, the poetic splendor.

## Reference:

1. Reshpa, Frederik: Seeking Ithaka. Poem. Prince, Tiranë 2016, p. 126
2. <sup>20</sup>Jorge Luis Borges. Inkuizicionet e tjera. Vepra e përmbledhur, f. 113
3. 21. Virion Graçi, Researcher, Academy of Albanological Studies, Tirana. Article, Century
4. Newspaper, 22/05/2006
5. 22. Anton Pashku. Comunicimi poetic. Jeta e Re, nr.4. Prishtinë, 1996, f.610