

THE IMPACT OF FRENCH CULTURE ON FAIK KONICA'S WORK

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In place of a prologue

After an absence of half a century from the pantheon of Albanian culture, Faik Konica, has finally taken his rightful place among the most prominent and deserving figures of Albanian political and artistic thinking of the end of the XIX century and beginning of the XX century. He was destined to live in tumultuous times, when his life-long love – Albania – was dozing, half-dead under the Anatolian reign of ignorance and darkness, which had abrogated every right that guaranteed the preservation of heritage. Throughout his life, he tried to reclaim the centuries lost in the Asian wastelands and to find the most appropriate ways to return Albania to the bosom of its biological mother, to the bosom of Europe. His education in grand European and American centres of culture, his erudition and intellectual courage to address taboos and to face the countless afflictions that had gripped our being and rendered it unsusceptible to the machinations of others enabled him to do this....This was certainly not an easy task and took a heavy toll on Konica, who understood that he could fight his battle only through the force of the essay, by deliberately sacrificing his extraordinary talent for other genres, such as the novel, for which he had an undisputable capacity, as fellow French artists had continuously maintained. The influence of multiple languages and cultures helped him gain a vast wealth of knowledge, as he spent much of his life abroad, (in Greece, Turkey, Italy, Austria, Hungary, Romania, France, Belgium, Switzerland, England, Germany and the United States), yet his extraordinary personality would be influenced, above all, by French culture and language, which Konica mastered as if it were his native language. Luan Starova, who according to Moikom Zeqo¹ is – “the most renowned authority on Konica, whom he spent a lifetime studying”, confirms these facts. He writes that at the Albanian polygraph a great impact has had “the aesthetic formation in French language, acquisition, assimilation of the inherent characteristics of the Gallic spirit, fastidious Voltaire feeling for irony and sarcasm, criticism as the only criterion to achieve to the truth of the Cartesian spirit”².

Education and intellectual formation

As it is known, Faik Konica lived only 7 years in Albania. The primary lessons he got in his birthplace, where some private teachers taught him Turkish and Arabic language. For a year (1884/85) followed the Severian Jesuits college in Shkodër, which at that time can be equated to the good schools in the European level. This affected in his subsequent development, because there he got the basics of the ancient culture and learned the classical languages – Latin and ancient Greek. The mentioned college, devoted special attention to foreign language learning, among which and the French language, which

¹ *Faik Konica* - Vepra 5, “Dudaj” 2001, pp. 392.

² Luan Starova, *Kthimi i Faik Konicës*, “Flaka”, Shkup 2001, f. 40.

entered in Konica's heart since the first lessons. The uniqueness of this school was the avoidance of rote learning and making them capable to think with their own heads, to formulate logical constructs, to develop communication skills, to exercise to debate, to raise issues, to offer the appropriate arguments, to know to defend certain attitudes... Therefore, perhaps exactly in Shkoder happened the great turning, Konica's orientation towards west culture, which will then be strengthened in Istanbul, where he attended the Imperial Lyceum lessons of the Galata Saray, which also had westernize and excellent teachers of French and other great languages. So, in Konica's case happened something strange and wonderful at the same time, because, exactly in the countries which had bedridden the most monstrous bigotry of the oriental type, everything was going in the favor of a stripling, who just a few years later in Balkan became one of the most completed of his time.

Given the age and the development degree of the country from which he came, it would seem natural that this young witty and multiple flair to marveled by the grandeur of the capital of the most powerful empire of the time, perhaps and to begin to suffer the torture of the complex of the low values, especially in circumstances when to him stood with open arms all gates of perspective and success, but he wanted and was born for more than just to make a career as employee in the service of foreign invaders. His aim was the realization of the upper copy of himself, that's why he didn't conjecture so long. Now, he had already felt the smell of the great western culture that culture to which had belonged and belongs naturally also the being and the Albanian language. As a 14 year old (1890) went to Normandy, France and enrolled at the College Lizi (College de Lisiéu). Shortly afterwards he became a pupil at the Karkason's secondary school³ where he surprised his proffesors with universal knowledge in many areas, especially for the languages and cultures for the West and the East, absorbed with the ease of the real genius, for which speak also multiple diplomas that Konica won, for the best written drafting in a fine French, for which he was envied even by his French colleagues.

In 1894 studied at the renowned University of Montpellier, then at the State University of Dijon, in which he received the level Bachelier es lettre – philosophie (College de France) in Paris, whereas in the end, finished with excellent success Harvard University and in Cambridge – Massachusetts (1912) he received the title of Master for the Literary Arts.

For Faik Konica's education and intellectual formation, as for no other Albanian writer, whole books can be written, because his education and his ascent to the peak never finished. He consciously determined for the status of a lifetime pupil and, till his last breath, he tracked knowledge through libraries, museums and archives of various countries of the world. This was Konica's war: titanic effort that with the light of the mind to lighten the road through which should had gone Albania and Albanians. Other weapons, beside the language and writing, there weren't and, seeing through today's prism, he didn't even needed them. He succeeded that, from distance and almost completely alone, to knock on the awariness of the nation, to wake his vigilance, to orient towards natural qibla... Succeeded, at the same time, to shake from foundations the anachronistic anadollian power and to rip the false veils of the neighbor's kindness, trying to soften further contraction of the trunk of ethnicity, which without these battles, would certainly have been more painful for the decades and generations that came later.

³ Këtë qytet Luan Starova e quan: muze të kulturës mesjetare.

French predecessors of Konica

Now nobody contests the fact that Faik Konica was a figure with an extremely wide erudition and cognitive of the languages and cultures of the most important nations of the globe. Among his numerous knowledges, a part of it is also the excellent knowledge of Colossus literary creativity of universal literature, from the Roman-Greek antiquity up to modernist literary and the European avant-garde, with some of whom had great friendships...

Undoubtedly, the residence and education in different countries left visible traces to our polygraph. They mainly came from the bilateral relations that Konica had with the authors of his generation – representatives of modern literary trends, but this cannot summarize the whole truth, because, in works of a personality such as him, has unending impact knowledgeable layers, from the read books of classics of all the times and world's great and small cultures. In this aspect Konica is a true sea of palimpsests, with a strong Albanian background, which relied on the deep roots of one of the most specific Indo European languages, in which our Renaissance authors had created any literary work, as that of Jeronim de Rada, that aroused the curiosity of the European elite circles...⁴

Only on the basis of these reports that has Faik Konica's work with the works of predecessors and pre-models coming from great European cultures (ancient Greek-Roman literature, literature of the oriental nations, French, English, German, Spanish, Italian literature...) He achieved to enjoy the privilege of a pioneer in many areas of culture and almost in all genres and literary types written in Albanian language. Even, for paradox, even the strictest opponents, besides the tarnishing and shameful denial of the work of Konica, were forced to accept the truth that He, after all was: the first modern and serious critic of Albanian literature; "the first Albanian who fought the pilgrimage verse, that once had occupied Albanian heads, as well as the spotted Turkish-Albanian and Greek-Albanian language – of the so-called *efendëmeve*, *bendenezëve* and *liponave*,- putting in light their comic part"⁵; the first publicist who laid the authentic foundations of the Albanian journalism; the founder and the leader for many years of the best magazine ever published in the Albanian language during the XX century⁶; the first creator who internationalized the imperative of the National Albanian Renaissance; the first Albanian theorist who will give a push to the critical overview of the work of literature; the first Albanian essayist and the founder of the Albanian authentic essay; among the first writers, if not the very first, from whom we have essays dedicated to the world literature...; the linguist and Albanologist who with his original scripts raised Albanian language in the range of capable and skilled languages unfold the most delicate feelings that vivify within the human soul; the first who seriously discussed the unification of common Albanian language...; the first who discovered the Albanian national flag⁷, in the book of the French author Jacques de Lewarde⁸ - "The history of Gjergj

⁴ Jeronim de Radën e kanë krahasuar me Orfeun, Homerin, Eskilin, Danten, Shekspirin... Ja se ç'thanë për të dhe poezinë e tij disa prej klasikëve të letërsisë së përbotshme: *Poezia ka ardhur prej brigjeve tuaja dhe atje duhet të kthehet...* (Lamartini); *Poezi me cilësi të larta romantike...* (Viktor Hygo); *Poezi plot magji dhe freski...* (Frederik Mistral); *Historia do ta quajë De Radën Dante të Shqipërisë...* (Aleksandër Dima - Ati); *Orfe pellazg dhe Homer shqiptar* (Kurt Hasert, prof. gjerman); *Makferson i Shqipërisë* (Myleri, prof. gjerman), kurse Buholci pikëpamjet e tij poetike do t'i quajë: *Të denja për Eskilin dhe për Shekspirin*.

⁵ Jup Kastrati, *Faik Konica*, Gjonlekaj Publishing Company, New York 1995, f. 70.

⁶ Nuk ka gati asnjë studiues që nuk e pranon të vërtetën se *ALBANIA* e Konicës ishte revista më complete e kohës, si për shkak të programit të saj me tërë kombëtar, si për shkak të shkrimeve të larmishme, si për shkak të bashkëpunësorëve shqiptarë e të huaj, si për shkak të shkrimeve në më shumë gjuhë (shqip, frëngjisht e turqisht...).

⁷ Faiku këtë e thotë më 15 shtator 1901, në artikullin e tij "*Flamuri kombëtar i Shqiptarëve*".

⁸ Në veprën "*Skënderbeu në historiografinë frënge*" (f. 42-66), të botuar nga Instituti Albanologjik i Prishtinës, në vitin 2001, studiuesi i shquar Ymer Jaka, Zhak de Lavardenin (përkthyesin frëng të veprës së Barletit, që në sh. XVII) e konsideron njeriun i cili e popullarizoi më së shumti në botën perëndimore figurën e heroit tonë kombëtar, duke hedhur kësaj dritë dhe mbi të kaluarën e lashtë të njërit prej kombeve më autoktonë të gadishullit ballkanik.

Kastrioti, called Scanderbeg, the king of Albania”, where, among other things, was said: “Scanderbeg flags, which were all red, had a black two headed eagle...” the first who writes about the traditional culture of the Albanians of Greece...; one of the founders of Albanian novelistic; the first, who in 1906, promises to accompany the books of Albanian literature with criticism⁹; the first who raised his voice in defense of the outstanding Albanologist Norbert Jokl, who was chased by the German Nazis; the first who published Leibniz thoughts about Albanian language¹⁰; the first who popularized at the right level many foreign Albanologists and their precious work; the first who spoke about the continuous of the cases in our language¹¹; he first who spoke about the existence of Pjeter Budi’s work “Speculum confessionis” (1621), which, according to J. Kastrati, revealed in the Mazarine Library in Paris¹²; the initiator of the compilation of the first geographical map of Albania by the famous geographer Elisee Reclus; according to Noli: “Konica discovered and affirmed Albanians of the couple of Kristoforidh, Mitko, Fishta and Zako¹³ and, anyhow was one of most persistent of the propagators, cultivators, and conductors of the pro-Western (European) mental movement to Albanians.

But, let’s leave for a moment the work of countless initiatives of Faik Konica and return to the issue of relations and mutual influences that he has had with the European academics of his time.

Of course, there is no way that, from a considerable distance of time and after the physical absence of Konica to assume what he should have known from the treasure of classic values of different cultures and countries. Obviously, it can not be built an accurate chart of the read books or absorbed knowledge from any creator of another cultural time and space, but, in Faik Konica’s case our assumptions about the presence of sparks and the elements of the works of pre-models within his works, more or less, find support in the similarities that has his work with those great literary European works, that after all made our polygraph to be what it is today in the Albanian culture and literature, and, why not, also in the European culture and literature, to which he also contributed as much as he could.

We will start from the French literature, which Faik Konica knew as if he was a French, since ancient epics of XI century, created in the popular French language; since the literature of court and the troubadour’s romances of the time; since the considerable pagan literature; since the parodies and pastourelles¹⁴ full of humor and irony; since chivalrous novels with the adventures of the XII century; since the allegorical and ideological poetry of the XIII century; when confronted for life or death the medieval darkness with the light of the great European Renaissance humanism; since the critical spirit of the uncategorized scripts of the representatives of French Renaissance – Montaigne and Rabelais; since the works of the rationalist authors of classicism; who appreciated the controlled fantasy which vanquished to the reason and logic and that respected as soldiers the rules and discipline...; since the subjectivity of the romantic art and the return at the inner world of the individual; since the realistic tendencies of Sent Beve, Jean Florian, Maupassant, Ipolit Ten and Balzac; since the naturalism of Zola and the cult of Flaubert’s form; since the lapurlartism of Teofil Gotje, symbolism of Baudelaire; decadentism of Rembo, Verlen and Mallarme; from the surrealism of Aragon, Breton and Éluard, that aimed the disclosure of subcutaneous in art up to numerous modern trends the authors

⁹ Jup Kastrati, *Faik Konica*, Gjonlekaj Publishing Company, New York 1995, f. 286.

¹⁰ Po aty, f. 268.

¹¹ Po aty, f. 265.

¹² Po aty, f. 261.

¹³ Faik Konica, *SHQIPËRIA Kopshti Shkëmbor i Evropës Juglindore*, Buzuku, Shkup 1991, f. 17.

¹⁴ Pastorela (fr. *pastourelle*) është vjershë e dialoguar mesjetare, brenda zhanrit të lirikës obortare, që zakonisht mbështetet në motivin e takimit të kalorësit me çobaneshën...

of which also affected significantly in the sense and literary culture of Faik Konica, to this erudite who devoted his life to the reading...

According to all the signs and references that he mentions in his scripts, Faik Konica knew European literature in covetousness levels, especially the great English literature. He had read with great love the works of Shakespeare and Francis Bacon, of this first essayist of English literature; the essays and satires of Dryden and Alexander Pope which today still retain their former freshness; meaningful critics of Samuel Johnson which resulted to be earlier than the time of this author...; the satires and novels of Henry Fielding, that disclosed vanity, lies and the hypocrisy of the time...; anticlerical satires and the allegoric novel of Jonathan Swift...; the modern essays of Joseph Addison and Richard Steele; interesting essayistic writings of David Hume and Charles Lamb; innovative essays with unmatched erudition of William Hazlitt, the author who wrote about Shakespeare's works...and who saw with a very critical eye the developments of his time...; essayistic works of Thomas Henry Huxley which were misunderstood by many of his contemporaries... and essays with inobservant effects of Mathew Arnold, who, same as Faik Konica, disdained provincialism and categorized people of the society of his time in: barbarians, philistines and simple mob...

Based on what was said above, can be concluded that Faik Konica couldn't and did not want to avoid the pressure of impacts of the giant European literature, part of which was also himself. He is known as a passionate reader of masterpieces of the world literature¹⁵, which had enriched it with aesthetic pearls of Shakespeare and Byron, of Dante and Cervantes, of Goethe and Dostoyevsky, of Thomas More and Erasmus Rotterdam... However, it is the spirit of French culture and the great French literature the one that most naturally interlaced with the Albanian's purity temperament of Faik Konica and that is felt in almost all of his literary and essayistic works of him, as an intertextual element, as non variant, as a reminiscent, as a dialogism with the past, as a presence of the familiarity...

A study that would focus on intertextual elements in Faik Konica's work, would certainly lighten his pre-model flows within his creativity and this would only increase the value of the "Albanian Voltaire" and probably would even have ranked him among the pre-announcers of the post-modernity. Floresha Dado also emphasizes this, in her interesting study with the title: "Intertextual overview in the work of Faik Konica", where among others is written: "Starting from Kristeva's assertion, that the text is not an isolated object, but a compilation of the cultural textuality, also Konica's work can be seen in relation to other texts, that belong to a context like this. His literary writings include ideological structures that were expressed and realized in the society of the time, through various lectures, realized also in journalistic and his other scripts".¹⁶

Let's see more concretely what links Faik Konica with some of the colossus of the French literature and what common features have his literary and journalistic writings with their works?

- **With Francois Rabelais** (1494-1553) makes him close/similar the passion to ancient culture and languages, thirst for knowledge, hatred to severity and to barbarism¹⁷, the long satirical prose, the writings with critical spirit about politics and religion, the parody, long titles of the works..., ¹⁸ uncategorized works in genres, masterful use of the language, vulgar expressions, the elements of paradox, erudition of the work...;

¹⁵ Ishte Konica ai që ia sugjeroi dhe e bindi Nolin t'i futet përkthimit në shqip të disa kryeveprave të letërsisë botërore...

¹⁶ *Konferencë shkencore për Faik Konicën*, ASHA e Kosovës & ASH e Shqipërisë, Prishtinë 2006, f. 53.

¹⁷ Konica njihet për reagimet e ashpra ndaj luftës së Vlorës (1920) dhe jo vetëm ndaj saj...

¹⁸ Titujt e veprave të Rablesë, si: *Vëprat dhe bëmat e tmerrshme dhe lemeritëse të shumëdëgjuarit Pantagruel, të ribashkuara sipas mjeshtrit Alcofrybas Nasierit*, të kujtojnë disa tituj të gjatë e shpjegues të veprave të Faik Konicës. Sipas Kadaresë, edhe heronjtë e prozave narrative të Konicës janë të ngjashëm me ata të kryeveprës së Rablesë.

- **With François Marie Arouet –Voltaire**¹⁹ (1694-1778) – the intellect, formation in the spirit of the Jesuits..., the feeling of superiority over others, the chasing by the anachronistic regime, the spirit of freedom, the contempt of the cemented greatness in the mind of the masses, fiery spirit of controversies, the challenge of the old principles of valuation, the truth, tolerance, powerful satires that display the putrefaction of the time, the uninterrupted work..., the struggle for the free thought, secularism, struggle against religious fanaticism, the writing ability of cluttered thoughts with an understandable and ordinary language, conciseness and precision in expression...;

- **With Henry Beyle - Stendhal** (1783-1842) – the simple and clear style, escape from pathetic romanticism, deep knowledge of history, the habit of using various pseudonyms, the early arrival in literature...;

- **With Alfred-Victor de Vigny** (1797-1863) – novels with autobiographic notes, new trends in art, the lack of productivity...;

- **With Victor-Marie Hugo** (1802-1885) – sharp political satires, the use of grotesque as a “weapon” against the existing disharmony, the concept over the literature as a tribune (where debated about moral, politics and historical problems), the escape from artificial heroes, the art with national, social and humanitarian mission, rapprochement of cultures...;

- **With Prosper Mérimé** (1803-1870) – concisenes, the sense of irony and paradox; antipatheticalness, scepticism, knowledge of history, voyages through different countries in the world, the use of pseudonyms, the successful novels, eye of the realist, the perfect French language...;

- **With Charles-Augustin de Sainte-Beuve** (1804-1869) – the sense of critic and romantic spirit...;

- **With Gérard de Nerval** (1808-1855) – the passion for the genre of the essay, the inner concern and the features of some works that stand between reality and dream;

- **With Théophile Gautier** (1811-1872) – the impossibility of categorizing...; literary criticism, the profession of a journalist and editor, contrary of utilitarian literature and the constant dissemination of the autonomy of art;

- **With Gustave Flaubert** (1821-1880) – realistic and modern spirit, beauty of style and the capability of observation, conciseness, the critical attitude towards the writings, the hard work that literary work requires – slow writing²⁰;

- **With Charles Baudelair** (1821-1867) – the spirit of modernity, titanic work, perfection, the active participation in cultural and literary life of his time, irony of hypocrisy and the lack of intellectual creative ability²¹, critical writings and essays, the impact on successor creators...;

- **With Jules Vallès** (1832-1885) – the courageous journalism²², the shocking rebellion...;

- **With Émile Zola** (1840-1902) – explosion of the talent since a young age, the engaged literature, the productive and military journalism, the unmatched intellectual courage²³, the lively temperament and the

¹⁹ Në shkrimin e tij me titull: *VOLTERI SHQIPTAR*, Namik Resuli, që më 1941, kur Konica ishte akoma në mesin e të gjallëve, shkruajti: “Nga atdheu i Voltaire-it Konitza trashëgoi edhe një cilësi tjetër: humorin; rreptësinë e mprehtësinë e ironisë e të sarkazmit, ‘esprit’-in’. Në çdo luftë që ai rrahu, doli gjithnjë ngadhnjenës vetëm për hir të këtij ‘esprit’-i; ai i përkuli, i shpartalloi armiqtë vetëm e vetëm me armën me të rrezikshme që natyra i fali, me sarkazmin, me talljen e përbuzjen”.

²⁰ Konica shkruante gjithashtu ngadalë, tamam sipas këshillës së famshme të Horacit: *festina lente*.

²¹ Në kujtimet e tij për Konicën, Petër Minari (shqiptar i Amerikës) shkruan: „Ishte i pamëshirshëm ndaj të paditurve...” (Faik Konica, *Veptra* 5, Dudaj, Tiranë 2001, f. 423).

²² Zh. Valesi njihet me fjalimin interesant, të lexuar mbi varrin e Bodlerit, ku nuk la pa përmendur asnjë të metë të vetme të mbretit të simbolizmit evropian, sikur ia rendiste gjërat në një ndejë të zakonshme kafeneshe.

²³ Më 1898, E. Zola botoi në gazetën “*L’Aurore*” letërën e hapur dërguar presidentit francez Félix Faure, me titullin bombë: “AKUZOJ”, që ngriti peshë gjithë opinionin publik francez, sepse nxorri në shesh qëllimet shoviniste e antisemitiste të aferës Drajfus... Për këtë, Anatol France

inexhaustible energy which he put in defense of his attitudes on social phenomena...;

- **With Stephan Mallarmé** (1842-1898) – the definitive separation from the old, supreme care on use of the language, the conception of literary work as an autonomous being – separated from the author, anticlerical attitude, religious tolerance, conciseness of expression, the passion for journalism...;

- **With Anatole France** (1844-1924) – the irony, humor, allegory, skepticism, the critical attitude towards social shortcomings, inverted structure of the novel (interruptions, the change of genre, disproportions...), the crossing from realistic discourse to the ruinous discourse of irony...; the presence of the elements of essay in novel...;

- **With Paul Valéry** (1871-1945) – the genre of essay and their comprehensive thematic..., the visible impact from Mallarmé...;

- **With Alfred Jarry** (1873-1907) – the passion for continuous reading, rebellious and revolted character, ridiculousness and cynicism towards the society of the time, the satire and black humor, the element of grotesque²⁴;

- **With Remy de Gourmont**²⁵ – the direction of literary magazines, the impact of Montaigne, interest in languages, literary-theoretical point of views etc., etc.

Konica and Apollinaire

In some areas, Konica had trend and identical affinities also with other key creators of the European avant-garde, but anyhow his most interesting relation was the one with Guillaume Apollinaire (Wilhelm Apollinaris de Kostrovitzky) (1880-1918) – the author of the important collections “Calligrammes” and “Alcohols”, published at the time of the flowering of European surrealism.

The meeting of Konica with Apollinaire was in London, in 1903 and continued for many years, until the Albanian polygraph abandoned Europe entirely and moved to the United States of America. About the interesting rapports of these prominent creators Albanian readers have learned from the work of the professor Luan Starova “*A European friendship*”, for which Ismail Kadare says that it is: “*One of the most special works of our culture...*,” since it is about: “*for Faik Konica and Guillaume Apollinaire, the first considered as one of the princes of Albanian letters, and the second as one of the leaders of the modern French poetry*”²⁶.

Because of the nature of this study..., in the following we will bring just some of the passions and the same or similar preoccupations that approached these two colossi of the literature of that time, as we also did for Konica’s rapports with other prominent French academics.

Konica and Apollinaire were two foreigners who had came to France to follow the best schools and then to realize their dreams, that of course, came together at some points and differed in many other points. The first one came from the submissive Albania under the Ottoman heel..., and the second was born in Rome, from an Italian father and a Polish mother. Both were very attached to the French culture and language which they perfected and made it a writing language²⁷; both directed a literary magazine – Apollinaire the magazine

e quajti: “Njëriu që në një moment përfaqësoi ndërgjegjen njerëzore”.

²⁴ Në studimin e Alfred Uçit: *Faik Konica - ekscentriku* (Konferencë shkencore për Faik Konicën..., f. 39) thuhet: “Në duam t’u afrohem i aftësive të veçanta krijuese artistike (të F. Konicës - shënim yni), do të na duhet të përmendnim mjeshtrinë e tij për ta përdorur me një spontanitet gjuhësor të habitshëm groteskun, që është dhe cilësia kryesore e tij, që e afron me modelet e letërsisë moderne evropiane”.

²⁵ Sipas L. Starovës (*Kthimi i Faik Konicës...*, f. 33-34), shkrimet teoriko-letrare të Konicës janë “nxitur prej veprës së Remi de Gurmonit, sidomos prej veprave të tij më të rëndësishme “*Kultura e ideve*” (*Merkur de Frans, Paris 1910*) dhe “*Estetika e gjuhës frenge*” (*Merkur de France, Paris 1915*)”.

²⁶ Luan Starova, *Një miqësi evropiane*, “Onufri”, Tiranë 2001, f. 5 (parathënie e I. Kadesës).

²⁷ Apolineri vuante nga kompleksi pse nuk ishte francez, prandaj ndryshoi dhe emrin dhe hoqi dorë nga gjuha e tij biologjike... në favor të

“The feast of Aesop” (La Festin d’Ezope), and Konica the magazine “Albania”, that pretty much affected in the intellectual, aesthetic and political thinking of their time; both liked the same literary trends (separately surrealism) and impacted at each other – Konica at the same time is Maecenas of Apollinaire and is impacted by him. “The similarity with Apollinaire’s prose is striking, that much that is imposed on us the thought that Faik Konica for a long time has been under the impact of this very prominent French author”.²⁸ For example: “Dr. Gjilpëra” (Dr. Needle) reveals the roots of the drama of Mamurras” (1924), is written according to the taste and aesthetic affinities of Guillaume Apollinaire...²⁹

Konica and Montaigne – surprise of coincidences

By browsing in parallel Konica’s works and works for Konica and some of the works of his French descendants, caught my eye the great similarities between the biographies, preoccupations and features of the works of the Albanian polygraph and Michel Eyquem de Montaigne (1533-1592), this typical thinker of the Renaissance, with whom starts the genre of essay; this skeptic who mocked the state and church institutions and the scientific and literary anti-values; this remarkable French prose writer of the XVI century, in the work of whom: “... is also spoken about Scanderbeg”.³⁰

The following biographical data about constitute the most convincing evidence that between the lives and works of Konica and Montaigne really has a striking similarity, that seems to go beyond the limits of coincidence.

Montaigne came to life at a time full of wars and racial and religious schism. He was an atypical creator, academic with a special personality, with an unsatisfied nature and uncategorized features. Was a perfect ambassador of Bordeaux and aimed the independence of the political movement. Besides the three famous books with essays, also wrote interesting journey descriptions – the travel diary (Journal de voyage) which was published in the XVIII century. The essay was the raiment that exactly fit the silhouette of Montaigne’s soul, who with his life wrote about the western culture. It constitutes the mainstay of the French and European Renaissance and had a significant impact of the philosophy in literature. His challenges have preserved the freshness and still continue to be read. They are against violence and slavery and are permeated with emphasized notes of skepticism and distrust in the existing reality, since Montaigne accompanied during his lifetime the spirit of doubt that for many consists one of the key features of a complete intellectual.³¹ The genre of essay gave him the feeling of freedom and action, because he liked to write out of the schemas and rules. His literary challenges came out visibly from the framework of the literary-philosophical system. Influenced by Plutarch, Erasmus and Machiavelli..., Montaigne also wrote epistolary essays – some as dialogues with himself. Essays written in a language that corresponded to the tinges of his thoughts that were supported on the life experience. He was aware that left behind an open work, as all great academics of modern times who perceive the reader as a co-author of their works. He was a passionate reader of the old texts which served him as a supporting point of personal experience. Despised static portraits and surrendered to the process of constant change... According to the care for the forms was a typical classicist. Montaigne’s

frëngjishtes, ndërkaq Konica ynë, sipas asaj që na thotë profesor L. Starova, nuk e ndjek këshillën e Apolinerit që ta braktisë shqipen për të shkruar vetëm në frëngjishte që do t’i siguronte famë evropiane. Ai qe përcaktuar për mision tjetër jetësor ndaj dhe me revistën ALBANIA, këtë “enciklopedi shqiptare” synonte: “*Te mbahët ë te ritët Kombesia. Te lërohet ë te xbukurohet Ghuha, së Ghuha eshte shenimi i Kombesise...*”.

²⁸ Luan Starova, *Kthimi i Faik Konicës*, “Flaka”, Shkup 2001, f. 80.

²⁹ Po aty, f. 85.

³⁰ Ymer Jaka, *Skënderbeu në historiografinë frënge*, Instituti Albanologjik, Prishtinë 2001, f. 13.

³¹ Sipas Montenjit: vetëm budallenjtë janë të sigurt dhe nuk dyshojnë, konstatim ky të cilin një studiues kroat e lidh me vargun e Dantes: *Sa jo të dij, - t’ dyshoj më vjen më mirë.* (Ferri, XI, 93)

essays had sounder throughout Europe, especially in the XVII and XIX century...

Such was Montaigne, similar to Faik Konica as two water drops of a single river, because our polygraph also came to life in the Albanian divided world in regional and religious aspect; He also was an atypical creator – special in literature and in his political philosophy; He also had the essay as his raiment and wrote with his life about the Albanian and European culture; He was a special academic and personality too, with unsatisfied nature and uncategorized features, passionate reader of old texts, creator of literary essays and beyond every existing framework and schema, which still nowadays are paradoxically fresh and constitute the essence of the Albanian literature of Renaissance; He wrote epistolary essays too, that according to professor L. Starova, constitute the most realized part of his work, remove Albania...; He also cultivated the language that corresponded to the tinges of his thoughts and left behind an open literary work that is permeated with emphasized notes of skepticism and distrust in the existing reality; Konica also was an ambassador who preferred the independence of political movement³² and was against violence and slavery, Konica also was doubtful as Montaigne and trusted nobody when it came to Albania... etc., etc.

As we can see, the coincidences and the events that bring together the two well-known creators who separate almost 5 whole centuries and who had even the same lifespan (Konica lived 62, Montaigne 59 years) have no ending. Maybe the whole life and creative similarities between Konica and Montaigne derive from their formation at similar schools: Faik Konica started to meet the world in the Jesuit College of Shkodra, that practiced pedagogy "...resembling to that of Montaigne, according to which more important is the pupil's head to be modeled to think, rather than to be filled with knowledge..."³³.

Conclusion

With his feats and literary and journalistic works, Konica remains a very original and unique personality. Read and absorbed a lot, but also cared about the identity lines. He didn't have an idol, and pre-model, because knew more than one language, more than one literature³⁴ and more than one culture. However, in his work most notable are synthesized the cultural values of the French literature, those values that made him be a little bit Rabelais, a little bit Voltaire, a little bit Mallarme...³⁵ and a little more Apollinaire and Montaigne.

For Konica: *"The French language was the most precise language in the world; it preserves so superior the natural order and expresses the thoughts exactly the way they arise in soul; it is the language with a universal vocation that for Konica would become a kind of 'the second mental homeland, not rarely and the first', a language that should enable him finding his true and genuine homeland! The French language will help him to find his destiny, to stamp his own identity and not at all to blur it. For him French language will be a kind of dialoguous instrument between his native language and other languages"*³⁶.

To the researchers of Montaigne and Konica could not escape the fact that the essayistic works of these two authors of two different times have been the bases on which set up the modern literature: the European driven by Montaigne and the Albanian driven by Konica. Both lived in times when the thought about phenomena and various occurrences should have been said unequivocally and without euphemisms and when the critical spirit was the only weapon that could dissolve the cultivated fogs with a system in the minds of wide popular masses, easily manipulated. In the context of their essays can be opened the parentheses on the

³² Gjatë karrierës diplomatike në SHBA Konica thoshte se është ambasador i kombit, jo i mbretit...

³³ Luan Starova, *Kthimi i Faik Konicës*, "Flaka", Shkup 2001, f. 132.

³⁴ Ishte Konica ai që ia sugjeroi Nolit përkthimet e kolosëve të letërsisë botërore...

³⁵ Sipas profesor Luan Starovës, Mallarmeja mbeti idhulli dhe ai që e fascinoi Konicën...

³⁶ Po aty, f. 228-229.

interesting topic of erudition as literature and the literature as erudition, because in this aspect both authors are creators and masters of using the quotations – authors of works as a result of read books. As such, they come with contemporary literary works structures.