

THE SOCIAL AND THEORETICAL IMPORTANCE OF STUDYING THE IMAGE OF OTHERING



Comparative Literature

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Abstract

The theme *Image of Othering in Albanian literature of the 20th century*, from both a theoretical and practical view is very interesting in 20th-century Albanian literature. In Albanian studies, the field of imagology is essentially unaltered. In actuality, this subject has not received enough scientific attention even in foreign studies. The three authors with the most citations on the subject—Joep Leerssen, Manfred Beller, and Hugo Dyserinck—remain to this day the only ones with an unmatched level of commitment. It should be emphasized that earlier publications are primarily of a historical or theoretical nature, while current imagology research suffers from serious shortcomings. In light of the circumstances, the imaging scientific thinking environment desperately needs new concepts, theories, and analyses.

INTRODUCTION

As you know, the study of “images“ and “mirages“ has at the time been violently attacked by René Wellek and some of his followers respectively epigones, in the context of the French-American fight between comparatists, concerning our methods of research. Exactly the interdisciplinary possibilities and ambitions of imagology, he did not like at all. For him this was “rather a study of public opinion useful, for instance, to a program director in the Voice of America. “Or more in earnest: It was “national psychology, sociology...“and so on. As a matter of fact, he did not want to recognize the legitimacy of such research as part of a larger concept of the study of literature. The basis of these negative statements was lying, of course, in Russian Formalism and in the principles of New Criticism and the so-called “intrinsic study of literature.”¹

MULTIDISCIPLINARITY AS THE BASIS OF IMAGOLOGY

The fact that imageology was treated like an illegal child at its inception is undeniable. Its idea and concept were what initially shed light on previously gracious literary spaces. The study nature of imageology, whether from world literature, comparative to theoretical and methodological spectrum, opened up in communication in itself and other areas of scientific thought. One of the first people to experience this explosion in literature was Rene Wellek.

¹ Dyserinck, Hugo: ‘Imagology and the Problem of Ethnic Identity.’ In: Intercultural Studies, no.1, 2003. Op: <http://www.intercultural-studies.org/ICS1/Dyserinck.shtml>. 11 September 2007.

Since he had already established the empire of literary thought, he awaited the study's originality with skepticism, and the nature of his disagreement with it was entwined with the image. Indeed, the literary research with which imageology worked, as Hugo Dyserinck would say, "imagology working with literature (i.e. literary research matter) did not only become, in the long run, the research province par excellence of all comparative literature, but moreover it became a special field promising to form a bridge to other human sciences, in order to solve problems the importance of which indeed "depassé la seule littérature."²

The truth went even further than merely "solving problems," indicating that imageology was not entering the field of literary thought, in particular, with the goal of performing some sort of charitable act; rather, its nature is profoundly and fundamentally creative. Imagery, at the same time, witnessed the chosen power of its understanding to build new spirit within the literary universe and not only, as we will see from this study on the image of *othering* in 20th-century literature among Albanians.

In the first place, literary criticism (in this case, Albanian literature) and the theory and history of Albanian literature in relation to the conclusions of Albanian literature of the 20th century will yield different results from research and analyses in the field of imageology in connection and exchange with many other sub-disciplines, on the theoretical and methodological level of literature. In other words, the imageological analysis of the literary representation of the foreign *othering* in this case will open new vistas for literary thought while also raising many questions about earlier assumptions.

However, in this situation, imaging will provide us with more study options than just 'literary problems'. With situations, figures, characters, and even literary meditations and ruminations as phenomena and processes of literary thought, this direction will open up yet another possibility in the nature of Albanian literature, which is directly related to the topic and its meaning. Despite not yet being challenged in terms of the artistic value of comparative or world literature, imageology will be the source of the next explosion in communication and intense exchange of artistic appeal.

This work can be used by readers who speak Albanian and others to further their theoretical or practical understanding of imageology. Even in this regard, this study will be a beneficial innovation that will contribute to the ongoing academic studies of literature in general and artistic literature in particular, as well as the shaping of its relationships with humanities and social sciences.

But a special indirect challenge of this study will also be for the studies of Albanian literature and its development, especially in the field of research, interpretation and analysis, which, on one side of the fence, has created the boring standard of a dry theory plastered with a theoretical and hermetic phraseology, mostly a 'dishonest borrowing' of phrases transformed into

² Ibidem, p.3

a standard of incommunicable study and on the other side of the fence it serves as an opposite mirror, which is overtaken by ideological judgment and the inescapable shadow of the social-realistic approach.

There will often be completely different conclusions from what has been presented by the study and the opinion of the external, foreign, or local criticism towards the work in many points of view of the elaboration of *othering*, especially in Ismail Kadare. The same can be said about Luan Starova, whose work leads to conclusions that are entirely at odds with what is actually written for his novels. Starova's work and artistic literature have a disagreement. This disagreement is not minor.

What will be unique about Agolli's work is the way that *The Communism of Himself with othering*, and subsequently with the dead world, carries meaning in a transcendental adaptation of thought to *The Communism of Himself with the zoomorphic world*, that is, with *othering* beyond humankind. Of course, Petro Marko will surprise readers with the 'discovery of the gaps' and unexpected thematic and ideological flaws, up to the characters' incomplete 'creation' or 'miscreation,' while on the other hand, interventions will be met with brutal dictatorship in the creator's conscience, which is evident and how an evil shadow follows the creator everywhere, until such spiritual and psychic deformities, the author's work would suffer irreparable consequences that would need to be explained to school readers.

It should be emphasized that literature is an axial foundation for the formation and creation of the image of *othering* if we take the long-term impact of literary influence into account. As a result, they are inherent and unavoidable in shaping how people perceive *othering* through the characters, circumstances, phenomena, and events in literary works that cover a broad and deep range in various temporal and spatial relations, even though it is challenging to quantify the size of such conclusions using empirical techniques. Why the end, then? The fictional world is the reader's strong, immediate representation of *othering* and for the *othering*. And this connection, as well as its shaping and influence, will be global.

IMAGEOLOGY AS PART OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

According to Oxford's dictionary of literary terms, "Comparative literature is , the combined study of similar literary works written in different languages, which stresses the points of connection between literary products of two or more cultures, as distinct from the sometimes narrow and exclusive perspective of *ENG. LIT. or similar approaches based on one national * CANON. Advocates of comparative literature maintain that there is, despite the obvious disadvantages, much to be gained from studying literary works in translation."³

³ Baldick, Ch. (2002). *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*. US: Oxford University Press, p. 47. [http://armytage.net/pdsdata/%5BChris_Baldick%5D_The_Concise_Oxford_Dictionary_of_L\(BookFi.org\).pdf](http://armytage.net/pdsdata/%5BChris_Baldick%5D_The_Concise_Oxford_Dictionary_of_L(BookFi.org).pdf)

In other words, comparative literature is an academic field that deals with the study of literature and cultural expression beyond geographical and disciplinary linguistic boundaries.

Similar to how international relations studies function, comparative literature uses languages and artistic traditions to understand cultures ‘from the inside.’ Comparative literature is most frequently done with works in different languages, but it can also be done with works in the same language if they come from different countries or cultures where that language is spoken. Researchers Dominic Thomas and Ali Behdad emphasize the following in the book *A companion to comparative literature*, among others, as follows: “Comparative Literature historically has been structured as a discipline around a tension between two forces that seem to work in opposite directions: on the one hand, a concern with overcoming the barriers of national culture and literature and reliance on the nineteenth-century notion of world literature as a concert of the world’s literary traditions and, on the other, a concerted effort to consolidate the idea of Europe in literary and cultural terms, to be distinguished formally, and once and for all, from all other societies and their literary and cultural creativity. At the same time that the discipline has provided openings to a consideration of a multiplicity of literary cultures, it has also participated in the solidification of a world literary system in which the collective cultures of “the West” have functioned as the center, the interpreter, and the point of reference for all others.”⁴

Comparative literature's analysis of other disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, such as philosophy, history, politics, art, and science, is one of its distinctive intercultural and transnational activities. Comparative literature focuses on the interdisciplinary fields of cultural and social products of the ‘economy’, with particular emphasis on cultural and political movements, historical changes, religious diversity, urban and exotic public spaces, international relations and public policies, and science. This is in contrast to other forms of literary studies such as literature history, theory, and literary criticism. Comparative literature is more closely related to knowledge in the interdisciplinary areas of sociology, anthropology, history, culture, and translation studies. The terms comparative literature and world literature are sometimes used to refer to the same discipline. In the United States, where there are comparative literature majors or programs, the term ‘comparative literature’ is most frequently used. In this regard, author David Ferris discusses comparison in his essay *Why compare* the task of comparison is one that has its roots in the context of the world. Despite the current trend to view the comparative component of comparative literature as if the terms ‘world’ and ‘comparative’ are so similar that there is no real way to distinguish between them, since one is translated as the other, because they are so similar to one another, it is not a task that belongs to the world. Because it broadens the scope of what can be compared while maintaining the same comparative methodology as before, this translation highlights the need for comparative literature to evolve into world literature.⁵

⁴Ali Behdad and Dominic Thomas. *A companion to comparative literature*. (UK: Wiley-Blackwell 1st edition, 2011), p. 6.

⁵Ibidem, pp.35-36.

Like literature in general, Comparative literature is the study of all literature within its scope, including literature from all nations, all time periods, all languages, all genres, and all other arts. Hugo Dyserinck, who is renowned for his extraordinary contribution to imageology, also known as historical hermeneutics, emphasizes the issue of the origins of comparative literature and imageology. He separately helped shape both the national image and the image for *othering*. In response to the debate over literary comparison, he said: “comparatism originated from the idea that as a consequence of the diversity and plurality of the European national literatures and cultures, problems of literary (but also of other) kinds sprang up which showed, on the one side, conflicts and antagonisms and on the other the possibilities to surmount them; these were problems that should be tackled in the interest of the coexistence of the European national respectively tribal entities (called nations, peoples, linguistic communities, or otherwise).”⁶

Edward W. Said contributed significantly in this direction as well. Said is renowned for his textual analysis model, which changed the way academics studying literary theory, literary criticism, and Middle Eastern studies talked about their fields. He described the historical context of comparative literature, noting that from long before World War II until the early 1970s, the main tradition of comparative literature studies in Europe and the United States was typically dominated by a style of study that is now all but extinct. Indeed, Said believed that knowledge, as opposed to criticism, was the primary characteristic of this older style. Erich Auerbach and Leo Spitzer, two outstanding German comparatists who sought asylum in America due to their great contributions to comparative literature, were also greatly appreciated by him.

According to Said, the concept of comparative literature represented not only the universality and level of understanding that philologists had about language families, but also the calm, crisis-free environment of a nearly perfect world. He discovers that Romania, specifically, is what makes the world of great scholars like Karl Vossler and De Sanctis understandable and provides a center for the great grouping of literatures produced worldwide; Romania supports Europe, just as (in a strangely retrograde way) the Church and the Holy Roman Empire guarantee the integrity of important European literatures. Its and other scholarly works on comparative literature's conception of European or Western literary history is fundamentally idealistic and, in an ad hoc manner, Hegelian. He persisted in elaborating on Dante's supreme significance to Spitzer, Vossler, Curtius, Auerbach, and others.

Accordingly, Said reasoned, to discuss comparative literature was to discuss the interactions between various literary genres. He asserts without equivocation that the idea of Europe and the United States as the centers of the world was present in academic work on comparative literature, not only because of their respective political affiliations but also because their literatures were those that were more worthy of study.

⁶Dyserinck, Hugo: ‘Imagology and the Problem of Ethnic Identity.’ In: Intercultural Studies, no.1, 2003. Op: <http://www.intercultural-studies.org/ICS1/Dyserinck.shtml>. 11 September 2007. P. 1.

CONCLUSION

The researchers Manfred Beller and Joep Leerssen made a significant contribution to understanding one of the factors contributing to the value of imaging and its work. They believed that there are two clear explanations for the increase in theoretical essays on imaging, its techniques, and definitions. "First, different humanities disciplines are interested in how we represent others, other peoples and nations; this complex subject will inevitably raise research questions and topics across many disciplines and specializations," the statement reads. Obviously, this was a crucial intervention that will endure because the ethnic and national types, which are already well-established in the state, cannot be defeated.

Although it is its production, this consolidation represents the freshness of globalism even from a perspective point of view because it can exist independently of the power of capital, from which it has imposed communication and exchange. Instead, it can exist independently of respecting the diversity of sovereign states, which it will inevitably have imposed, as well as taking care of the planet's global climate. No matter how minor the impact of the diversity of states within globalization, it will be essential to the overall operation. The beauty of the human race, whose humanity is rooted in the diversity of its races, ethnicities, languages, religions, and cultures, would be destroyed by any other conclusion.

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