

**Belfjore Qose**  
'Hëna e Plotë' Bedër University

Tirana/ Albania

## The function and meaning of dreams in the novel "Albanian Song" by Kasëm Trebeshina

### **Abstract**

*The novel "Albanian Song" by Kasëm Trebeshina, is one of the most important novels in Albanian Literature. The author is widely known as a dissident during the period of dictatorship, a fact that makes his voice unique and trustworthy in the whole Albanian writer's ensemble. The novel "Albanian Song" is mainly based in the Realism Method and represents the ethnical Albanian society. The collective knowledge is one of the main ways to create a canonized society, a society named as 'ethnos', that's why it is important for us to study how dreams are represented in this novel. The society represents its inner world, the spiritual dimension upon what they think and believe about the powers of dreams; as dreams become a way to communicate with the supernatural, or they can predict. On the contrary, stands the Psychoanalysis of the Dreams, represented by Freud and Jung, who give scientific and logical explanations about them. We are going to analyze the dreams in the novel by both of them, so even by looking with curiosity in the perspective of the ethnicity upon then, even if they are only superstitions; and even by the scientific methods. What is of interest for us, is to give importance to every perspective that may help us understand the role of the dreams in the novel. The study will be focused on these issues: Dreams as expression of the fantastic and as a way to create relations with the supernatural, Dreams as prolepsis, Dreams for the devastation of family, Communication through dreams, Dreams in addition to shortages of life, Dreams as a compensation of the forbidden.*

**Keywords:** *Dreams, Ethnicity, Time, Prolepsis, Interpretation.*

## 1- Introduction

Dreams are one of the most important moments of the narration to create the fantastic element in the novel; we have to admit that the importance and frequency of using them in is high. They are important to the novel, because they have an important function for the main story-line, for the composition and for the character's individualities. As the society in which the story happens is an illiterate one and as a consequence the scientific knowledge about the dreams is missing, we see that the main meanings given to the dreams come from superstition and the believe that they can predict. These attributes are given to the dreams in non urban societies, where the missing knowledge creates the field of alternative explanations about the phenomena; they are given spiritual meanings and powers.

Trebeshina in "Albanian Song" shows us the imagination of the folks and the tradition on dreams in Albanian ethnic society, becoming gradually a representation of the spiritual belief of our society on dreams. Dreams can express: privation, pain, non-fulfillment, fear, but in this society dreams can even predict, which in the time figures represent an analepsis or a prolepsis.

The alienated logic used in the novel, considers as dreams, not only the moment we call as dreams in psychology – when we see a dream in our sleep; but even when we are faced many times with a certain condition in which the consuming sadness and melancholia affects on the characters so painfully and powerfully that creates as another reality, which they chose to name as a 'dreamy'. This condition sometimes becomes so powerful that the characters loose the perception on the true reality and the 'dreamy' one they created, as the second becomes more important for them than the first one, because it gradually becomes the reality in which the character lives in. An existentialist discussion would put in question this new realm, which the characters themselves believe to be their new reality; as we notice, the referential systems change, as our conception on what is the truth becomes vague.

## 2-Body: Dreams as expression of the fantastic and as a way to create relations with the supernatural

Though all the history of civilization and the process of knowing the human nature, it is observed that not everything about human nature can be known, achieved, understood with logic and science. From the sociological point of view, the more primitive a society is, the more it interprets the unknown (dreams) with the help of fantastic, imagination and even superstition. At the other hand, the more cultured and educated a society, the more it distances from the spiritual dimension of interpretations. In the novel "Albanian Song" by Kasëm Trebeshina, the reality of live and the mentality of the society, are given with a detailed and typical realism at the same time. The society described in the novel is just beginning the process of urbanization when the way interrupts the normal social development; the dreams are considered to have magical powers and as a way of communication with the supernatural, due to the fact that the society is not informed for the scientific, psychological explanations about them.

The knowledge is created by the memory we have upon familiar objects and phenomena and the case of the concepts, so the mental visions, makes a problem

because of the discussions it causes and from the formation of a populist memory, which is not objective; a memory made of legends, superstitions, myths etc. (Hume, 2001)

This kind of memory, the collective knowledge is one of the main ways to create a canonized society, a society named as 'ethnos'. Rexhep Ismajli as investigated upon some features for the ethnical Albanians in the series of papers in his work "Ethnicity and Modernity"; he admits that our ethnicity shows some specific features, when the historical and geographic records, are important:

"Our society located and forced to exist and develop in a place with refraction and permanent communications and movements, attendance and devastating passages from the time of the Romans towards Euksinis, through the desolations of the Goths, the ravages of the Crusades, and serious violations, massive ravages of our century; this spiritual life except ancient - Balkan layers, except Indo-European ones, traces of paganism in isolated areas and later developments, shows the stratification of the western and eastern layers, with the seal of the three religions." (Ismajli, 1994)

The realm of the dreams possesses the power to alienate the images, relations, to overthrow, to open new visions, endless compositions, to act free from the time; because it is outside of every normal logic. By breaking the logic, a new world can be remade, with its own regulations, a world which we don't judge, just a remarkable world where everything is possible. If we need a definition for 'dreams' we will refer to this:

"Dreaming is considered mostly as a nice mental activity and close to the personal fantasy and imagination of the individual. In the center of dreaming is putted the evocation of a possible reality, or a mental evocation of a wishful subject, why not even invented by the person." (Zeneli, 2004)

By trying to understand how the dreams are considered in the novel, their narrative function and by trying to touch different interpretations, we spot two ways of studying them. Before we try to make possible interpretations to detect the narrative functions they have in the text, we have to explain the opposition that stands to the interpretation of dreams according to the tradition and the psychoanalytic ways.

"The interpretation of dreams shows the courage to become a part of the old ways and superstitions against the claims of the strict science. Of course it went very far by trying to notice in dreams a messenger of the future, whose disclosure the humans try to achieve in vain with all kind of forbidden means." (Freud, 2005)

### **2.1. Dreams as prolepsis**

Often dreams are considered to have a kind of relation with the supernatural, because they are evocated in a subcontinent condition and the person's creative and imaginative abilities take high stimulations. When we recall the Agamemnon's belief in dreams, we don't as if such a belief is strange for a great strategist of the war, but every one of us remembers how the subject of the poem happens as predicted in the Agamemnon's dream, reinforcing the belief that the dream comes from forces beyond our world. Can this dream be interpreted with the pagan

belief, or it has to do with Freud's clinical results, we avoid a definite answer to this problem, because while we try to understand the fantastic, it is important for our work to describe the beliefs and conceptions of the characters and the given society; without judging their veracity. The characters believe in the dreams, just like in every society with strong superstitions and we notice that they are spotted mostly in women, as they are more afraid from the power of the dreams and the unrevealed future.

"The women were afraid because of a dream Nazenini had seen. – What did she saw? –Qemal asked surprised. – You know... she saw a... a scary thing! I already told you, a scary dream... She wept in her sleep!... – Ah, so she wept? – said Qemal, -don't worry: it means something happy will happen." (Trebeshina, 2001)  
In the Albanian belief it is difficult to define only one source when the dreams come from, this derives from the chaos of the religions and their symbols, the indifference of the people on religions and the absence of the theological cultivation; but they are sure only for this: the dreams can foretell and if we cannot understand them, it is our own incapacity.

In the beginning of the novel, while the history of the family is told, it is mentioned in fear the 'ghost of the lady of the tower', a motive we notice in the whole novel, like a deep, heavy, dreadful melody. This ghost metonymically invokes the murders of the past, the first sins of the family. Abaz, when he sees this ghost in his dream, decides immediately to make a 'tyrbe' (Bektashi shrewd).

"One night Abaz dreamed something white, that turned off the light around him and after that this light complained that they didn't show compassion for her. Maybe she saw that dream because of his concerns, but the next day he decided with the women that they must build a 'tyrbe' near the tower, for the ghost" (Trebeshina, 2011).

Although the character knows nothing about psychology, as he thinks about the dream, he thinks by intuition, that maybe the source of it are his concerns, as psychologists suggest (Orhani, 2004).

Firstly, we notice in this dream, the fact that there appears this certain imaginary shadow, which only in dreams, can enter into a relationship with the living world. In the imaginary world of dreams, and only here, the dead may have contact with the living. And secondly, we see that as usually appears in folklore, shadows require attention, she complains, pretending that her peace depends on the the world of the living. And if we recall the end of the novel, we would be sure that the function of this dream that is given at the beginning is that of a prolepsis, that tells shows the reader what is going to happen.

We are going to focus on another dream, very interesting for our study, which foretells through many signs the death of the character that dreams it, Nazenini, the youngest daughter in law of the family... we are going to loo at the signs given in the text and we will proceed with their significance. This will be a model of many other dreams used in the novel with the same function, so it is a representation of the writer's style in many ways.

“Once Naze saw a dream, there was a lake and she was covered with white lilies. Then, the flowers seemed like they were swimming over the water, the light of the moon seemed like gold and there was a road that went up from the surface of the water and went. .. To the sky! She took a flower in her hands, a flower yet not in blow and it then she fell, she fell from the lake. Like walking on a path she began her way to the moon, an unexplored way of sadness and loneliness. She saw Aziz down, and she noticed how sad he was, from down there. He saw her with saddened eyes.” (Trebeshina, 2011)

Many symbols and analogies used on the next event: the way to heaven - analogous to the raising the soul to heaven after death, other times mentioned in the novel, rupture of bud flowers - analogy with the rupture of the Nazenin unwritten life. The flower itself is a symbolic representation of the character, it is a lyric symbol used frequently in the novel. The narrator is very tender with this character, her fate is tragic, because just when she believes she found her happiness by marrying the man she loved, everything will be completely opposite of what every one expects, she will die in childbirth.

The symbolic structure of this dream, is a model we find throughout the novel and of course the signs are understandable for the reader; as they are used many times and repeated, just like the dreams for the devastation of the family.

## **2. 2. *Dreams for the devastation of family***

As prophetic dreams are common for this society, if one knows the explanations of them, mostly in this novel are used to give signals for the devastation of the family because of a curse; and to remind them of past sins, which definitely will one day be revenged. Obviously this is not a Freudian explanation of dreams in the classic sense, because we don't see the embodiment of forbidden desires or needs, however, a reading which includes the unconscious, it would be more efficient, because unconscious fears are expressed in these passages from past, the fears from the family curse; which the characters do not even dare to mention in their lives, just like the euphemism “he who is away from us” is believed to keep away the devil, because of not pronouncing his name.

Qerime sees a dream that even herself calls it as fatal: “With these thoughts she slept ... Then she heard that the door of the corridor opened... then silence ... maybe it was her ears fault... No!... In the hallway she heard light steps... steps ... Who was it? ... It seemed to her that she saw in her dream a woman dressed in black and... nothing else! However, the dream had been terrible! She tried to remember... A black woman, just like her!... And then ... Why was that dream so scary?” (Trebeshina, 2011)

The next day the family will take serious actions to tame the persecution of the dead woman's ghost. Throughout the whole novel the ghost doesn't leave in peace the family. We can say that the culmination of the whole narration on this 'curse' will be the last chapter of the novel, when Qerime will be the only person left alive from the family, with a baby in her arms. Dressed in black, she is now alike her ancestor's ghost. The fear for the devastation of the family represents the fear that everyone has about its future, but we can say that for this certain family it has turned into a phobia “The general state of Fear does not necessarily appear in phobias. People,

whose whole life is surrounded by agoraphobia, can be free. It is accepted that some phobia: fear of spaces, fear of railways etc., are acquired in adulthood.” (Freud, 2009)

Even Freud, who stands for the opposite of the folks belief that dreams can predict, at one point he admits, that maybe the person sees in a dream what he projects in his subconscious about the future. The most powerful sign expressed by dreams in the novel is the identification of the character (Qerime) with the black ghost of her ancestor. And even in this case, as well as in other cases, nobody in the family is allowed to talk about these items. Freud in “Totem and Taboo” describes how the pagan societies had a taboo about mentioning the dead; the articulation itself was a taboo, because they believed word had power upon the reality. (Freud, 2006)

### **2. 3. Communication through dreams**

Worlds and their relationships have infinite communications in dreams, there are no limits on the partition living - dead, no partition between past - present – future, there are no rules, everything flows according to logic, desired... feared... it does not matter, everything can happen in it. As it is known in Albanian superstitions, if a dead appears to someone in a dream, he wants something, he has a pledge that will doesn't let him rest in the afterworld, and the dream is the only possible way of communication. In the novel “Albanian song” family ancestors appear in dreams to seek a relative in order not to be alone. In all cases where the deceased appears for this reason, a relative dies and the predictive power of the dream is fulfilled.

We name this form of the structure of building the subject through prolepses, “motive” in analogy with Vladimir Propp, who calls “motive” the simple schematization of a narrow instance of event:

“The sign of the motive is its figurative monomial schematization; such are the further non-diffraction elements of low mythology and tales. For example - a father has three sons - is a motive, a stepdaughter leaves from home - is a motive etc... “ (Propp, 2004)

The first to dream such a dream is Abaz, who dreams his father that tells him that he will take his firstborn son, Musa, in his world, which has gone in Spain as a volunteer in the civil war and dies there in battle. This is a warning about the death of Musa, the dead call on the living.

“He came to me and said” I'm bored alone. I don't have anyone to talk with. Send me Musa...I said unto him “Musa is not here!” he said “I know, I know, he is with me already from some days! You are not well!... You became sad... I am going...” (Trebeshina, 2011)

Even within the dream the self-consciousness of the fact that such dreams are related to reality is awake, terrified Abaz is terrified and his father understands it that his father “You became sad...I am going...”

Likewise his deceased speaks to Abaz in his dream: “He woke up (attention: he calls it deliberately waking) surprised when his wife approached him smiling... apparently she had talked with Musa!... He opened his eyes and couldn't understand

where he was.” (Trebeschina, 2011)

Yet again a dead person of his family appears in his dream, but now it is his wife, Asime, which still talks to him about death, a death already occurred that warns other deaths. It is only talked about death, even by dead people and in fact all this is not something nonexistent – all the family disappears.

#### **2. 4. Dreams in addition to shortages of life**

Psychology recognizes and argues the fact, that for many reasons the dreams fulfill the shortages of man in life. His crushed dreams – impossible or not allowed, are not such in the dream world. Everything is reborn and modeled according to our desire and it expresses the fantasy and the spiritual inner world of everyone. The character most affected by these dreams is Nuredin, which because of the unfulfillment of his love for Feride no longer sees the life as before, life has no more colors for him and living itself becomes a burden. His relationship with dreams is contradictory because they help him to suffer the painful reality creating him the illusion that his love is fulfilled and in the same time he doesn't desire these dreams as they don't allow him to live without the memory of his love, which has a very tragic fate herself. Of course, in this kind of dreaming day-dreaming is included, accepted even by psychology. Let's mention on of these cases of day-dreaming: “He closed his eyes and Feride was there again: in the scent of the harvested clover, in the song of the cranes in distance, in the forest that couldn't be seen on the other side of the hill...There where they had been together.” (Trebeschina, 2011) But once the dreaming ends, all the remembrance of the happy past brings him to a very heavy condition. “He wanted to enter the forest, but suddenly fell on his face in the poplar forest and started to cry bitterly as he didn't have hope about nothing and...He couldn't live like this.” (Trebeschina, 2011) As stated in Freudism, remembrance of the beautiful past in the moments of a disappointing present is extremely aggravating in the human psyche. Nuredin's true wish is not to dream about Feride and her beauty as this would simply pain him and he would remember how hopeless their love was – he wished for oblivion. “To sleep...to sleep...and never wake up...Or to be erased once the life was finished and to finally fall into oblivion...” (Trebeschina, 2011)

Jung in his advanced studies “Freud and Psychoanalysis” thinks than in these cases “Dream seems to be more than a symbolic presentation of its idea about life in general and about moral principles, on which it tries to inspire and according to which tries to live in order to achieve happiness.” (Jung, 2003)

Nuredin reaches the point when he can't distinguish the dreams from the reality. He dreams of a place where these things wouldn't happen and where the people where happy. In his dreams he looks always a desert and a shadow. The desert is the representation of a different world, far away of the one that made him so desperate and a place where different laws and ethics take place. The shadow is a representation of his beloved Feride. Just like Propp mentions in the “Morphology of the Folktale” (Propp, 2004), the ‘magic tool’ that in tales makes everything possible, the dream world in Trebeschina's novel resembles to this tool, it is the only way to make things possible.

## 2. 5. *Dreams as a compensation of the forbidden*

It may seem that dreams of this classification can be categorized as well in the second category, but we make a similar classification based on the ideas of Freud and Jung in which not each compensation is based on something impossible. Freud explains the idea generally and illustrates it in his book "Totem and Taboo". The greatest taboos presented by Freud have to deal with the terrorizing idea of the incest. In the novel exists an attraction between the two characters, Qerime and Abazim, which are brother and sister in law in a double bound, two sisters are married with two brothers. The attraction act in a different way to them because Abaz had an vague memory of young Qerime, which he seemed to love, but for the reason of the age he married her sister, Asime, a pain that was left to him for the whole life, but which he never expressed. In the counterpart, Qerime had another relationship. Her husband died when she was very young (in the novel it is said that she doesn't even remember the time when she was married) and her desires where suppressed but not vanished.

"In the cases where psychosexual needs of the woman to get married and have a family are needed to get fulfilled, she is always warned about the premature end of the relationship." (Freud, 2006) This desire became stronger to her when she is obligated from the socio-economical conditions of the period to live in the same house with the sister and the brother in law; they would made a regular family life and wouldn't care for her suppressed desires. This situation become weird when the sister of Qerime, before death, leaves the will that Abaz and Qerime should get married. For our society this is an extraordinary taboo. Qerime is ashamed from this will and it becomes a source of pain and isolation from the entire world. Abaz from the counterpart sees her like a random body and in addition his sexual desire for Qerime is very low. All the pressure from these situations is manifested to her dreams, where in one of her dreams she imagines the sexual act of the zoophile. This is catastrophic as she sleeps in the same room with the children's. These concerns become frequent like a symptom and she does not accept her sexual desire from the suppression of the Super Ego. "The symptom is a sign of the lack of pleasure, results from a process of suppression. The suppression comes out of the Ego and with the order of the Super Ego does not accept the passion that exists on him." (Freud, 2009) From the other part Qerime has an second complex towards Abaz, beyond the sexual desire which make the relationship more possessive. Qerime is suppressed completely to Abaz and she even sees with admiration everything he does. This comes from the Theory of the types, whom Freud cites mostly in his works. "... they are so afraid of the temptation that the man will be incorporated in the figure of an elder woman, maybe in reality not of his mother, but a woman who is like his wife." And Qerime has created the model of the husband from Abaz, because she was orphan and when Abaz married her sister she was a child. Although the suppressions, Qerime realize the ideal marriage that she dreamed for a long time " She got undressed and goes to him like she was drunk... This seemed like a dream". The sexual act with seemed like a dream to Qerime, forbidden and impossible to her.



### 3- Conclusions

In the end of this study upon dreams on the novel "Albanian Song" by Kasëm Trebeshina, we observed that many interpretations are given to the dreams; according to the belief and superstition of the ethnicity as well as according to the modern psychology. The importance of the role of dreams in the novel refers to the structural composing of the text, because in many part of the novel, dreams are prolepsis to the reader of what is going to happen next. At the same time, they are important because they describe the worldview of the author and his novel, by expressing how the ethnical Albanian society considers the dreams. The realm of the dreams possesses the power to alienate the images, relations, to overthrow, to open new visions, endless compositions, to act free from the time; because this world is outside of every normal logic. By breaking the logic, a new world can be remade, with its own regulations, a world which we don't judge, just a remarkable world where everything is possible. That is why the dreams are important to express the style and originality of the author himself. The methods we have used to study the dreams and their function or meanings in the novel are influenced by the ways the narrator used and actualized them in the novel, that's why we have divided the study in many parts. Semiotic, Structuralism, Psychology, Psychoanalysis are combined to understand better and deeper the role of the dreams in Trebeshina's novel.

**REFERENCES**

- Trebeschina, Kasëm (2011), *Albanian Song*, (Vol. I) Tirana: Globus R.
- Trebeschina, Kasëm (2011), *Albanian Song*, (Vol. II) Tirana: Globus R.
- Trebeschina, Kasëm (2011), *Albanian Song*, (Vol. III) Tirana: Globus R.
- Trebeschina, Kasëm (2011), *Albanian Song*, (Vol. IV) Tirana: Globus R.
- Trebeschina, Kasëm (2011), *Albanian Song*, (Vol. V) Tirana: Globus R.
- Hume, David (2001), *Empiricism and the limits of knowledge*, Stanford: Stanford University Editions.
- Ismajli, Rexhep (1994), *Ethnicity and Modernity*, Peja: Dukagjini Editions.
- Orhani, Zenel (2004), *Mental images, Imagination and Fantasy*, Tirana: Ada Editions.
- Freud, Sigmund (2005), *On Arts and Literature*, Translated by: G. Karakashi, H. Luli, R. Hida, Tirana: Fan Noli Editions.
- Freud, Sigmund (2009), *Fear*, Translated by: M. Mushi, R. Hida, Tirana: Fan Noli Editions.
- Freud, Sigmund (2006), *Totem and Taboo*, Translated by Myfit Mushi, Tirana: Fan Noli Editions.
- Propp, Vladimir (2004), *Morphology of the Folktale*, Translated by Agron Tufa, Tirana: Aleph Editions.
- Jung, Carl Gustav (2003), *Freud and Psychoanalysis*, Translated by Dritan Koka, Tirana: D. T. Editions.