

## THE USE OF ART AND CULTURE BY POLITICS IN A TOTALITARIAN STATE. (ALBANIA)

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### Abstract

From ancient times up to contemporary the subjective and affective aspect of literature has been considered to be subtle aspects, but at the same time the most important mean to achieve and retain the power. The political power that came into force in Albania, after 1944, as any other authoritarian power, used the aesthetics as a mean to control the masses. The relation of aesthetics to politics, in these times can be seen through a twofold point of view: On one hand there is the politicizing of art and on the other hand the struggle to aestheticize the politics.

The writer and the artist in general was not any more an individual with a specific education, or with a notable culture or talent. The artist was anyone who was sufficiently indoctrinated and was to some extents talented, and who could put on the ideology an artistic veil.

By employing as a base the deformation of the aesthetical and philosophical ideas of Hegel, which mystify and instrumentalize art as a didactic and moral mean, art was actually used as an effective mean of propaganda.

The publishing of literary periodicals, opening exhibitions, giving prizes etc., were all activities which aimed to create the idea that art had a quantitative and qualitative improvement and that it even was in the borders of geniality. In reality the art of this epoch, was mainly an artistic mediocrity, but a very effective propaganda. Many artists, who were appraised for their art, actually were praised for the effective propaganda in their works.

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**Keywords:** Art, aesthetic, conformism, ideologies, substitution, obligation, entropy

### Introduction

Literature has often been seen as one of the most efficient ways to synthesize ideas, indefinite values or specific ideologies, becoming an issue of debate for its specific nature and the reports it builds with the historical and life time. All the literary works were created by people who belong to a certain cultural and political ethnicity and to a certain time period, and at the same time these people have a certain position in the hierarchy of the society. More than an uninterested activity, the literary work is the product of an act which holds specific values, which are closely related even to other dominating, outsider forces.

From ancient times up to contemporary the subjective and affective aspect of literature has been considered to be subtle aspects, but at the same time the most important mean to achieve and retain the power. Foucault again and again emphasized that: *power is not a substance that can be accumulated and owned by the State or by a leader, nor a purely repressive device, but a continuous productive process, tightly connected to subjectivity throughout the whole social body.* (Foucault 1980)

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aesthetics to politics, in these times can be seen through a twofold point of view: On one hand there is the politicizing of art and on the other hand the struggle to aestheticize the politics.

Under the gown of a high appreciation for the art, it was required to attach a great importance to different creative fields and to artists, offering them suitable financial conditions to complete the artistic works. Art because of its specific nature needs financial support, and sometimes the artist makes custom-made artworks or artworks whose topics are predetermined. Such a phenomenon has been known since the Greek and Roman Antiquity, but also during the Middle Ages or the Renaissance, when the clerics used to finance the artists. Even the contemporary art is related to both the market demand and to the criteria set by the critique the art world.

Notwithstanding, *"the protectorate"* of the communist state to the art, was of a different kind. Art during this period was under the control of small groups of people who belonged to the partial system, and who did not have any artistic skill, nor a rich cultural background.

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Prohibiting writers of the tradition, with who they did not share the same political ideas or who were against homogeneity, even to the stylistic homogeneity, made art remain in the hands of people who little knew about art and its specificity.

In general, religion is considered to be an efficient mean to be used by the politics. Nevertheless, the communist country very soon prohibited the religion, considering it as unacceptable. This mean was cleverly substituted by the art, giving it the role that religion had to play in legitimizing the power.

Most of the objects of worships were destroyed, or were converted to the so-called 'cultural houses', to accentuate this substitute even more. The substitute was obvious even in discourse or terminology; for The Association of Writers was said that it was the Temple of art, for the specificity of the word in art it was said that it was the Holy Word.

Religion had often used the anesthetization in its rituals and communicative models with people, and such a thing had always resulted effective. Learning from the utilization of the aesthetic aspect to lure masses by religion, it was decided that religion would be substituted by art and art would be used by politics as the best mean to lure the masses. It seems like manipulating art was easier than manipulating religion.

Soon the painting started having as a central theme the substitution of the church saints with hero-saints of social realism. If the paintings of religion presented saints who sacrificed for the sake of their religious belief, the paintings of social realism presented the new saints who would die for the sake of the party and the political ideal. Saints were substituted by the trinity image of the worker, the soldier and the hick. The paintings in which the Jesus Christ was talking to people were substituted with the image of the leader who talks to the members of the party or to common people, persuading them about the holy word of the party. For example as in the compositional painting: *"Knee to knee with the people. As in the biblical paintings, the most cultivated genre was the Figural Composition, which has in its bases a specific, set subject, and which does not need the viewer to recompose the painting it his mind, and especially which is able to fulfill massive evocations"* (Mema 2002: 120, my translation).

In particular the caption which accompanied the work was an obvious propaganda. For example: *The voice of the mass, The party was established, We break the siege, Handing out the land patents* etc.

In Albania the substitution of religion by art, was accompanied by the substitution of art by propaganda. At the same time there was an assault on all the people who could be inculcated as collaborators and part of the church, and also on the art proponents, the so-called bourgeois or '*degenerate artists*'. This accusation is identical to the one that the Nazi party did in 1937, against the works of all artists who did not uphold it. (Stollman 1978: 43)

The totalitarian powers, let them be left-winged or right-winged, in the tendency to attack real art and in the struggle to use it, are more similar than different to one-another.

By employing as a base the deformation of the aesthetical and philosophical ideas of Hegel, which mystify and instrumentalize art as a didactic and moral mean, art was actually used as an effective mean of propaganda.

The publishing of literary periodicals, opening exhibitions, giving prizes etc., were all activities which aimed to create the idea that art had a quantitative and qualitative improvement and that it even was in the borders of geniality. In reality the art of this epoch, was mainly an artistic mediocrity, but a very effective propaganda. Many artists, who were appraised for their art, actually were praised for the effective propaganda in their works.

The art is characterized by specific codes and conventions which remain as such, in relation to the artistic tradition. Departing from it means losing continuity. Massivism and conformism specifically makes especially an artist lose the ability to create different, individual experiences. This phenomenon is what Nietzsche considers as *the dissolve of the individual in the plain generality, which stands for the mob, the raddle which approaches the vulgarity* (Ferri 2002: 172, my translation).

In literature, the writers created works which had a form that induced the emotions of the public, with a murky pathos and powerful energy. The subjects and narrations were merely simple, not complicated and built the myths of the new ideals which were repetitive and were presented as eternal. Some of these ideals were collectivism, the glorious past, and the sacrifices during war, the omnipower of the leader etc.

The art, noticeable for its specificity, which offers subjective and unique perception of the reality, was transmuted into an activity which offered to the mind of a person congealed models and ideas, which were not at all belonging to life. The works were similar to one another both for their thematic and for the way of constructing figures.

Figures such as the partisan who gives his life for the homeland, the labourer and the farmer that go to work and their only aim is to build the socialism are permanent and given as per the artistic models by using the narrative fantasy, designed in certain unusual realities and with the presence of simulation devised theatrical rituals.

Just like the obligatory homogeneity in politics, it happens even in art. You can feel the opposition to pluralism, the need and the assessment of different innovations, individuality, and sensuality, free and creative imagination. It is against the difference in style, as in every field of life.

The required homogeneity, the obligation to go in one direction lead to obligated entropy. By pressing men against Each Other, total terror destroys the space between say. (Arendt, 1973: 356).

Recognizing the value and absolute weight of art, by transforming the art into propaganda it was aimed the mass indoctrination. A series of links controlled the theatre, the literature, the painting, radio-TV, so through the attraction that the art had and the artistic veil to induce and topopagandize the only ideology. Art was used to hide what really happened.

Crowds gathered to the sound of songs devoted to the party or the leader but since it the sound was beautiful, the tune remained in your mind. They staged theatre's plays that often were interrupted by shootings' of the characters that would articulate slogans and later the mass driven from the character's words would pass on cheering. The combination of art

and propaganda in the theatre was the most visible and effective due to the specificity of the theatre that has direct contact with masses of individuals simultaneously.

The Autocratic governs support the propaganda, to indoctrinate the mass. After the '44 the ones that took power built an entire system of effective propaganda for the masses. Art with the special attraction that has is the most appropriate and influential to transmit the propaganda behind it, and people became disoriented and get engaged by organizations that involve them in their in their structures indoctrinating them and thus they became part of the mechanism.

Art has the ability to expose and through it to implement his intense influence on people. Exactly "the value exposure" was used by the propaganda to be successful. In many cases we do not talk about politicized art, but for propaganda build mimicking the aesthetic models.

Art becomes perception in distraction, getting away by his specifics he takes on the hardest and most important task where it can mobilize the masses "(Benjamin 1998 [1923]: 158).

Benjamin writes: Self human alienation has reached such a degree to taste the aesthetic pleasure in first order, the extermination of his own, this is how it is with the esthetical that the fascism practice, the communism responds to it by politicizing the art. Aesthetization of the self-destruction to the human being is noticeable in the way that the struggle class becomes a repeated theme of literary subjects.

The architecture is also one of the areas that have an aesthetic nature, but it was also put on political function. Since the earliest times, constructions such as pyramids, temples, palaces, mausoleums, cathedrals, are objects where are combined the aesthetics and the aim to reflect the power.

What characterizes the entire architecture of authoritarian systems is Monumentalism, which symbolizes the illusion of solidarity, strength and sustainability. Monumentalism, on the other hand, although it requires an Enormous Amount of Collective Labour, is basically a personal project. (Mandoki, 2003: 65).

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In Albania were built several buildings of granite and marble, often destroying significant buildings of the past culture. These buildings have an obvious symmetry, cold and lifeless, but very large in size and compact as are the Pyramid, the Palace of Culture, and the Palace of Congresses, which had no connection with the tradition until that moment, but intended to show the power – govern strength, and to touch upon the individual pride. Monumentalism was manifested even on the size of the paintings and sculptures dedicated to the figure of the leader, thus, further emphasizing the pettiness or the smallness of the individual and the emotions of fear. Monumentalism was used to hide instability and the irrationality of what was happening.

### **Conclusion- Aesthetization of politic**

The more effective strategy of imposition is the way which through teasing the personal emotions leads to certain political decisions of the individual.

The political sphere is not completely based on rational arguments, not even in the authority of the leader. It calls the need of pathos which produces hegemony in the nation and ruling class consensus. The rhetoric was the typical weapon in all authoritarian regimes and democracy it is combined with aesthetics through formal elements such as rhythm, repetition of the same word or phrase, image, etc. Through these the level of Pathos gets increased, which channels the emotions towards the appointed political decisions.

The speeches of communist leaders, in many cases were characterized by the veil of figurative expression, but it had nothing to do with aesthesis, but their trying to manipulate not only the masses, but even the elite by presenting their ideology as the only one and inevitable, and as result of the evolution and as the much sought answer.

Aesthetization of politics and making it visible through stressing the Pathos has been necessary and is evident in every society, but in the authoritarian governments is of another

kind. Benjamin for this relation would say: All Efforts to render Aesthetic politics culminate in one thing, war. (Benjamin 1996 [1923]: 158)

Large parts of the works of art, paintings, literature, Sculpture, architecture, theatre, are the central themes of liberation struggle. War appears aestheticized making readers believe that "it was beautiful" as was called for the first time by Marinetti in the manifesto of the colonial war in Ethiopia, while death was the grandest, not highlighting the too terrible consequences that it has for all people.

It is aestheticized the past war, but it is aestheticized even the preparations for what may come. It happens what is called by Stollman: aestheticization of military. It is aestheticized the military march, the marching of the army in front of people does not appear as a threat, but beautiful to see. The army marched in front of people in military parades as a monumental massiveness, structured as a strict geometry, mimicking the aesthetic effects. It was theatrically realized, mimicking the war; battle tanks, hand on hands battle, dancing gymnastics, marches with horses and dogs: all were attempts to aestheticize the war.

Size of monumentalism in architecture also appeared in festive ceremonies, the parades for 1<sup>st</sup> May, the parades on the day of liberty, where the strength of collective identity is confronted the individuality. You can see the aesthesis at membership meetings or communist leaders meeting with people, care for lighting, reverberation voice, uniforms, the presence of children with traditional costume giving flowers, pronounced presence of festive colours, mostly red. Melting and simultaneous use of certain elements of architecture, the presence of sculptures, music, poetry, theatrical elements, was used to create whole that would influence the effectiveness of the "rituals" of power.

This kind of aesthetic which has been used since the earliest times in pagan rituals, then in the important religious ceremonies and the presentation ceremonies of any kind of power in time, it resulted to have the effectiveness in that period. In this case we cannot talk about politicized art, but attempt of aesthetic politics.

The politicized art and the aesthetic politic had created what could be called a beautiful illusion but a complete lie. Art was made part of the politics, but not in the sense to smooth it, but in the sense to be used as a tool.

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