

The transposition of narrative texts onto the Albanian theatrical stage as a sign of departure from socialist realism's schematic aesthetics

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Abstract

This study explores the phenomenon of adapting narrative texts to the Albanian theatrical stage as a signifier of artistic departure from the rigid schematism of socialist realism. Adopting a postmodern perspective on Albanian theatre, the paper focuses on the growing tendency to stage texts that were not originally written for performance—works drawn from the broader literary tradition, current events, history, folklore, art, science, and, notably, from well-established Albanian narrative literature. Although this phenomenon has been thoroughly explored in the context of European theatre studies over the past decades, it remains largely uncharted within Albanian scholarship. Aside from sporadic efforts by a handful of researchers, no comprehensive study has addressed the scope of this trend or proposed a systematic framework for its analysis within dramaturgical and performative systems. The allure of the novel and narrative forms more broadly also captured the post-World War II Albanian stage. This attraction invites deeper inquiry into how a phenomenon, extensively interpreted by global theatre scholars as a reaction to avant-garde experimentation, found a non-coincidental manifestation in Albanian theatre—an art form tightly bound to the schematic literature of socialist realism. By situating the phenomenon within its socio-political context, this research demonstrates that the selection of narrative literary material for theatrical performance often served as a strategic exit from the constraints of ideologically-driven dramaturgy. The choice to stage texts beyond conventional dramatic boundaries—particularly from the novel—functioned as a subtle mechanism of evasion from ideological censorship, offering Albanian theatre a renewed creative vitality. The anthropological perspective on theatre, which examines the complex interplay between text, stage reality, and performance, along with a semiotic analysis of narrative-based theatrical production, enables us to view these adaptations as new semiotic organisms. Through this lens, we trace the migration of signifying concepts from one literary structure to another, revealing their role in shaping new layers of theatrical meaning.

Keywords: narrative transposition, socialist realism, postmodern perspective, theatrical adaptation, semiotic analysis