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The National Adaptation of Classicism: A Comparative Analysis of Albanian Tragedy and European Models

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of classicism on Albanian dramaturgy, focusing on Etëhem Haxhiademi and Gjergj Fishta, two key playwrights who integrated classical principles within a national literary and theatrical context. While classicism emerged in 17th- and 18th-century Europe, its adaptation in Albanian tragedy followed a unique trajectory shaped by national concerns and socio-political transformations. The paper explores the structural, thematic, stylistic, and linguistic elements that define classical influence in Albanian drama, emphasizing Aristotle’s three unities—unity of time, place, and action—and their role in constructing a compact, morally instructive narrative. A key focus is placed on how tragic themes such as heroism, betrayal, and fate vs. free will are reinterpreted to reflect Albanian historical realities. Furthermore, the study examines dramatic discourse and rhetorical techniques, analyzing how linguistic choices, rhetorical figures, and metrical structures enhance emotional engagement. By integrating oral tradition, folkloric influences, and epic motifs, Albanian tragedy emerges as a hybrid form that bridges European aesthetics with local literary sensibilities. While drawing occasional parallels with European classical drama, the study primarily explores how classicism was adapted to Albanian dramaturgy, embedding national identity and collective memory within a classical framework. Characters often manifest archetypes deeply rooted in the communal psyche, reflecting not only personal fates but the collective struggles of a people. Language, too, plays a central role—blending high poetic diction with regional idioms to create a distinctive tragic register. In doing so, Albanian tragedy creates a unique space within European literature, one that is simultaneously

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rooted in tradition and responsive to historical rupture.

Keywords: Classicism; Albanian Tragedy; Aristotle's Uhree Unities; National Identity; Dramaturgical Adaptation

1. Introduction

Classicism, as a literary and artistic movement, has played a fundamental role in shaping dramatic traditions across Europe, emphasizing formal discipline, balance, and moral instruction. According to Bénichou, "classicist literature is not merely a formal discipline, but an aesthetic structure that reinforces the balance between morality and art"^[1]. Rooted in Aristotelian principles, this aesthetic model influenced theatrical developments from the 17th century onward, where French playwrights such as Jean Racine and Pierre Corneille perfected the structural elegance of tragedy, while Goethe and Schiller employed classical forms to explore complex philosophical dilemmas. Although Albanian literature was historically delayed in adopting these models, the National Renaissance period and the years between the two World Wars (1920–1930) marked a significant turning point, as Albanian writers engaged with European literary movements to shape a national identity.

The pro-classical school of Shkodër, shaped by Franciscan and Jesuit institutions, played a crucial role in integrating classicist aesthetics into Albanian literature^[2]. Prominent figures such as Gjergj Fishta and Ndre Mjeda embraced classical techniques, blending mythological, historical, and folkloric elements to construct a uniquely Albanian dramatic tradition^[3]. Within this intellectual environment, Etëhem Haxhiademi emerged as the most significant playwright to systematically apply the principles of classical dramaturgy in Albanian tragedy. His works, including *Ulisi*, *Akili*, *Aleksandri*, *Skënderbeu*, and *Abeli*, reflect a deliberate effort to adapt European classical structures by integrating them into a historical and cultural Albanian context^[4].

A defining feature of Haxhiademi's tragedies is the strict adherence to Aristotelian unities, where time, place, and action are meticulously controlled to create a compact narrative with strong moral impact. At the same time, his works address themes such as heroism, betrayal, moral conflict, and the tension between fate and free will, positioning them "as part of the classical canon and the Albanian literary tradition"^[5]. Similarly, Gjergj Fishta's dramaturgy, partic-

ularly in *Juda Makabe* and *Hajrija*, represents a synthesis between classical structure and national themes, where tragic conflicts serve as metaphors for the Albanian struggle for identity and self-determination.

Beyond structural and thematic considerations, dramatic discourse and rhetorical style play a vital role in defining classical tragedy. Both Haxhiademi and Fishta employ a highly stylized dramatic language, characterized by solemnity, metrical precision, and rhetorical figures such as antithesis, repetition, and metaphor. Their tragedies reflect an elevated poetic style, balancing classical discipline with elements drawn from oral tradition and epic poetry. As Floresha Dado has observed, this synthesis not only reinforces the dramatic intensity of their works but also "shapes a distinctive literary identity", making Albanian dramaturgy a hybrid form that bridges European aesthetics with indigenous literary sensibilities^[6].

Based on previous studies on the influence of classicism in Albanian dramaturgy, this paper examines the contribution of Etëhem Haxhiademi and Gjergj Fishta to the development of national tragedy and the adaptation of classicist models in Albanian literature. Scholar Sabri Hamiti, in his work *Letërsia moderne shqipe*^[7] (*Modern Albanian Literature*), has analyzed the characteristics of Haxhiademi's tragedies *Juda Makabe* and *Abeli*, emphasizing their classicist treatment of national and moral themes. Similarly, Nysret Krasniqi, in the book *Episteme letrare* (*Literary Episteme*)^[8], and Nebi Islami, in *Historia dhe poetika e dramës shqipe* (1886–1996) (*The History and Poetics of Albanian Drama* (1886–1996))^[9], have examined the influence of classicist structures on Albanian dramaturgy and its development throughout the twentieth century. Furthermore, academic articles published in *Studime mbi autorë e vepra të patrajtuara në letërsinë shqipe* (*Studies on Unexamined Authors and Works in Albanian Literature*) (Institute of Linguistics and Literature, Academy of Albanological Studies, Tirana, 2022)^[10] by researchers Plangarica and Leka have analyzed the significance of Haxhiademi in the history of Albanian literature and the reinterpretation of his work in a contemporary context.

Taking into account these academic contributions and building on the idea that classicism in Albanian dramaturgy was not simply adopted as an external model but was adapted and reshaped, “integrating universal tragic themes within the historical consciousness and cultural memory of the nation”^[11], this study aims to explore the structural, thematic, and linguistic dimensions of classicism in Albanian dramaturgy. In this regard, the primary focus is on narrative construction, character development, and the role of dramatic discourse. Following this scholarly trajectory, our analysis not only aligns with previous research but further deepens this approach through a more detailed comparison with the models of European classicist tragedy.

2. Methodology

This study employs an interdisciplinary approach to analyze the influence of classicism on Albanian dramaturgy, integrating literary, historical, and cultural analyses. The aim is to examine how aesthetic principles of classicism have been adopted and adapted in Albanian literature, shaping a distinct dramatic tradition. To contextualize these works within early 20th-century Albania, the study analyzes the impact of contemporary cultural and educational movements, particularly the role of the Shkodra pro-classical school in shaping Albanian literary aesthetics. This includes assessing the influence of Franciscan and Jesuit educational institutions on the authors’ intellectual formation and the dissemination of classical ideas.

Although the study is primarily focused on Albanian dramaturgy, it also incorporates selective comparisons with European classical models. This involves identifying parallels and distinctions between Albanian tragedies and works by Jean Racine and Pierre Corneille in France, in terms of structural, thematic, and stylistic elements. However, the emphasis remains on how classicist principles were reinterpreted within the Albanian literary context.

Furthermore, the study examines existing critiques and scholarly perspectives, drawing upon works by Bajram Kosumi, Sabri Hamiti, and other literary scholars. This provides a theoretical and historical foundation for the analysis, while also highlighting various debates and interpretations concerning the role of classicism in Albanian literature.

The research is based on a combination of primary and

secondary sources. Primary sources include original dramatic texts, while secondary sources consist of critical and historical studies on Albanian and European classicism. By integrating these methodologies and incorporating Boileau’s theories on the three unities, this study seeks to offer a comprehensive perspective on how classicism was adopted and transformed in Albanian dramaturgy, contributing to the development of a unique national dramatic tradition.

3. Principles of Classicism and Its Influence on Dramaturgy

Classicism, as a structured literary and artistic movement, emerged from the aesthetic theories of the European Renaissance and Baroque periods, rooted in the revival of ancient Greco-Roman traditions^[12]. One of the most significant contributions to classicism comes from Aristotle, whose work *Poetics* represents the first systematic attempt at a comprehensive literary theory. In this treatise, Aristotle defines tragedy as an imitation (mimesis) of serious and complete action, structured to evoke pity and fear, ultimately leading to catharsis—a purification of emotions in the audience^[1]. This concept became foundational for later dramaturgical developments, as it established tragedy not merely as a dramatic form but as a philosophical and moral experience. The Aristotelian framework influenced both classical Greek drama and its subsequent reinterpretations in European classicism, where the balance between structure, moral reflection, and aesthetic discipline became defining principles. Classical tragedy provides a structured representation of moral and philosophical dilemmas, allowing the audience to reflect on universal conflicts that transcend temporal and cultural boundaries. For this reason, mythological themes are frequently employed in classicist dramaturgy, not only for their narrative richness but also as a means to explore ethical and existential questions.

Horace, in his work *Ars Poetica*, further developed the classicist approach by emphasizing the educational role of drama, arguing that a work should not only entertain but also instruct. This principle was later refined by Nicolas Boileau, one of the leading theorists of French classicism, who, in *Art Poétique* (1674), emphasized “the importance of genre purity and structural discipline in dramaturgy”^[13].

Over time, classicist principles were reinterpreted and

regained significance through neoclassicism, a movement which, although best known for its impact on visual arts and architecture, also played a crucial role in literature. Emerging in the 18th century and further developing in the 19th and 20th centuries, neoclassicism was not merely a mechanical return to the aesthetics of antiquity but rather a refined reworking of classicist rules, taking into account modern sensibilities and contemporary ideologies. As Palmer notes, “Neoclassicism sought not merely to imitate ancient art and literature, but to refine and elevate its principles in accordance with contemporary intellectual currents”^[14]. In this context, neoclassical art and literature aimed to balance tradition with the cultural and philosophical concerns of the time, introducing a more disciplined yet nuanced style.

A fundamental characteristic of neoclassicism in literature is the enrichment of classical themes with moral, political, and historical dimensions, utilizing them as a means to reinforce national and social identity. As Pospíšil observes, “The resurgence of classical forms in literature was not an act of mere revival, but a reconfiguration aimed at reinforcing national identity through the prism of timeless aesthetic and ethical values”^[15]. This is particularly evident in the literature of Central and Eastern European countries, where neoclassicism was often linked to the shaping of a distinct national and cultural identity.

Although neoclassicism introduced a new dimension to classicism, particularly in its connection to national identity and historical contexts, it did not dismantle the structural discipline of tragedy but rather reinforced it, making it even more suited to the aesthetic and ideological challenges of the time. This tendency was reflected in the continued adherence to fundamental principles of classicist dramaturgy, particularly in the respect for the three unities of tragedy, formulated by Aristotle and later codified by French classicists such as Racine and Corneille.

Unity of place: The dramatic action takes place in a single location to maintain spatial coherence.

Unity of time: Events unfold within a limited time-frame, usually 24 hours, to sustain a fast and realistic pace.

Unity of action: Every element of the text contributes to a single dramatic conflict, avoiding subplots or deviations from the central theme.

These principles aimed to strengthen the credibility of the play, making the dramatic experience more vivid and

engaging for the audience. Additionally, they contributed to the economy of dramatic expression, ensuring that every element of the play served a clear function within its structure.

Beyond structure and thematic focus, “language and dramatic discourse played a fundamental role in shaping the aesthetic and emotional impact of classicist tragedy”^[16]. Classicist dramaturgy employed a highly stylized and rhetorical form of speech, where each line was carefully crafted to heighten dramatic tension and reinforce the play’s moral and philosophical message. Pierre Larthomas argues that “theater relies on a distinct form of discourse”, where dialogue serves not only as a means of exposition but also as a mechanism for fostering the audience’s emotional engagement^[17]. The rhythmic discipline and metrical structure of classicist tragedy enhanced the solemnity of dramatic speech, making it both poetic and functionally expressive.

The structuralist approach defines “dramatic language as a closed system”, where every element functions within an interconnected network of textual and performative code. According to this perspective, each line in a classicist tragedy is not only intended to convey meaning but also to contribute to the aesthetic harmony of the work. The “classicist style of dramaturgy” is based on the use of rhetorical figures such as “anaphora, antithesis, and parallelism”, which create a balanced and aesthetically impactful text^[18]. The analysis of theatrical texts must necessarily examine the relationship between language and performance, as dramatic discourse is not merely a written text but an action on stage. From a semiotic perspective, Ducrot emphasizes that “classicist dramaturgy has a distinct semiotic function”, where spoken language is not only a means of communication but also a mechanism for building dramatic tension and conveying power dynamics between characters^[19]. In this way, the classical dramatic text can be seen as an “aesthetic machine”, operating within a rigid set of principles while simultaneously employing mythological themes to convey universal and timeless narratives.

However, as classical dramaturgy spread beyond its European origins, different literary traditions interpreted and reshaped its principles to reflect their own historical, cultural, and ideological contexts. Within this framework, Albanian playwrights such engaged with classicist models, not merely as a form of artistic imitation, but as a means of constructing

a distinct national literary identity. By examining their works, we can better understand how the core elements of classicism—structural discipline, rhetorical precision, and mythological symbolism—were reinterpreted within the unique sociopolitical and cultural landscape of Albanian literature.

4. Classicism in Albanian Dramaturgy

Although classicism influenced Albanian literature in different periods, its impact was most significant during the National Renaissance, when literary developments intertwined with historical and national transformations. This era played a decisive role in shaping Albanian cultural and literary identity, and within this framework, dramatic literature became a key medium for articulating national concerns and ideological aspirations. Among the leading figures of this period, Etëhem Haxhiademi and Gjergj Fishta stand out as key contributors to classicist dramaturgy, merging elements of mythology, history, and universal themes with the realities of their time. Their works not only adhered to classicist structures but also reinterpreted them within the Albanian literary and cultural context, establishing a bridge between European literary models and national expression.

The National Renaissance marked an era of intellectual awakening and national consolidation, shaping both the material and spiritual life of Albanian society. Literature was not simply an artistic pursuit but a tool for national affirmation, responding to the challenges posed by foreign occupation and internal fragmentation. In this context, historical and patriotic themes dominated Albanian dramaturgy, with authors reconstructing national history through a classicist lens, transforming past events into dramatic narratives of resistance and identity. A distinctive feature of the dramaturgy of this period is the integration of mythological and biblical themes, which, in addition to reflecting Albania's spiritual and cultural heritage, functioned as symbolic and universal narrative mechanisms, reinforcing collective historical consciousness by linking the past with contemporary struggles. In this context, early 20th-century Albanian dramaturgy can be seen as a manifestation of neoclassicism, where the rigorously classicist structure of tragedy is interwoven with a strong national and historical commitment.

Etëhem Haxhiademi is widely regarded as the most

representative figure of Albanian classicist tragedy, integrating the structural principles of classicism in works such as *Pirrua*, *Skënderbeu*, and *Abeli*^[6]. His dramaturgy adheres to the unity of place, time, and action, but beyond its formal structure, his works “explore moral and philosophical dilemmas, making them resonate with European dramatic traditions”^[20]. In *Skënderbeu*, Haxhiademi constructs a tragic hero who embodies idealism, courage, and sacrifice, while in *Pirrua*, he delves into the conflict between personal duty and political responsibility, a theme that parallels classical tragedies. In this way, Haxhiademi follows an approach that aligns with Štědroňová's observation that “Neoclassical literature frequently employed historical and legendary figures as vehicles for national and moral discourse, reinforcing a connection between past grandeur and contemporary aspirations”^[21].

Similarly, Gjergj Fishta's dramatic works, particularly *Juda Makabe* and *Hajrija*, maintain classicist structural conventions, constructing conflicts in accordance with classical unity principles. However, Fishta's originality lies in his ability to transform myth “into a compelling allegory for Albanian national identity”^[22]. *Juda Makabe* is not merely a biblical drama but a metaphorical representation of Albania's resistance to oppression, symbolizing historical and ideological struggles. Fishta also integrates classicist influences into his satirical-dramatic poem *Gomari i Babatasit*, where he employs allegory and irony to critique social and political structures. According to critics, this work marks a new phase in Albanian literature, where satire and drama merge as a form of intellectual and cultural resistance^[22].

The play reflects the Albanian socio-political climate of its time, where irony and sarcasm become essential tools for addressing major societal issues. *Gomari i Babatasit* stands as a testament to Fishta's engagement with European literary models, particularly in his use of classical satire to construct a critique of Albanian reality. Albanian dramaturgy of the National Renaissance period was not merely an artistic expression, but an instrument for shaping national consciousness. Figures such as *Skënderbeu*, *Pirrua*, and *Juda Makabe* were not only exalted as national heroes but also became universal symbols of sacrifice, justice, and resilience. Through their works, Etëhem Haxhiademi and Gjergj Fishta successfully merged classicist influences with contemporary concerns, forging a distinct Albanian dramatic identity that

was both rooted in European literary traditions and deeply connected to national aspirations. Their dramaturgy demonstrates how classical structures were not merely imitated but actively reinterpreted, becoming a dynamic means of cultural expression and historical reflection.

5. Classicism in the Tragedies of Etëhem Haxhiademi

5.1. Structure and Themes of Haxhiademi's Tragedies

Etëhem Haxhiademi (1902–1965) remains the most representative figure of Albanian classical tragedy, with a body of work that integrates universal themes and the structural models of classicism. Educated in Germany and influenced by the refined traditions of ancient Greek tragedy and European classicism, he produced a series of dramatic works that adhere to the conventions of classical tragedy while simultaneously imbuing them with a distinct national character. At a time when classical tragedy had already passed its golden age in Europe, Haxhiademi composed seven tragedies: *Ulisi* (1924), *Akili* (1926), *Aleksandri* (1928), *Skënderbeu* (1935), and *Abeli* (1938), all of which reflect rigorous adherence to classical principles, drawing inspiration from ancient mythology, Albanian history, and biblical narrative.

Classicist literature has always maintained a strong connection with mythology, treating it as an inexhaustible source of themes with enduring moral and philosophical value. Myths do not function merely as narrative structures but as mechanisms that adapt and are refunctionalized in different historical contexts. According to Barthes' theory of intertextuality, "every literary text is constructed upon the traces of previous texts, creating an interconnected network where myths are repeated and reshaped to reflect contemporary historical and social contexts"^[23]. In this sense, Haxhiademi's tragedies are not mere reappearances of ancient mythology but rather new reinterpretations, where myths are transformed to address the dilemmas of his time. This is evident, for example, in *Ulisi*, where the Homeric hero is not presented as a distant mythical figure but as a complex character intertwined with familial and moral conflicts, bringing the myth into a more realistic human dimension.

In Haxhiademi's dramaturgy, tragic characters are divided into two main categories: • Heroic figures, who em-

body exemplary virtues and represent a high ethical model.

• Corrupt characters, who symbolize moral decay and are often the instigators of dramatic conflicts.

Through these archetypes, Haxhiademi explores moral dilemmas, the conflict between emotions and duty, and the relationship between fate and personal choice. According to scholar Matraxhiu, he does not place tragedy within a fatalistic framework where everything is determined by destiny; rather, he constructs a drama in which "tragedy arises from within and not from supernatural interventions"^[24]. This tendency is reflected in his treatment of themes such as:

Love and revenge – In *Akili* and *Ulisi*, love often becomes the driving force that ultimately leads to revenge and tragic destruction. While in Greek mythology, such fates often occur as a result of divine intervention, in Haxhiademi's works, these actions are the product of human decisions, emphasizing a character-driven tragedy.

Ethics and morality – The struggle between virtue and vice is present in all his tragedies, placing moral choice at the center of dramatic action.

Fate and free will – Rather than portraying tragedy as dictated by the gods or cosmic forces, Haxhiademi places the burden of tragedy on the individuals and their decisions. This aligns his tragedies with the modern concept of psychological tragedy, where characters are punished not by external forces but by their own mistakes and actions.

One of the defining features of Haxhiademi's tragedies is the meticulous organization of dramatic structure in accordance with classical principles. Following the model of European classicism, his plays are constructed in five acts, with each act serving a distinct function in the development of the dramatic conflict. His dramaturgical structure is firmly grounded in Aristotelian mimesis, where dramatic action is not a mere mechanical reproduction of reality but an artistically organized representation of human experience.

Although Haxhiademi's tragedies often draw from historical and mythological sources, he does not simply retell ancient stories. Instead, he reconstructs these narratives, infusing them with contemporary relevance and universal significance. This tendency to bridge past and present is particularly evident in his use of myth as both a "narrative foundation and a mechanism for philosophical exploration".

As Nebi Islami argues, Haxhiademi does not use myth in a direct and unaltered manner, but rather transforms it

into a vehicle for expressing profound social and existential messages^[25]. For instance, in *Ulisi*, the Homeric hero is reinterpreted through a contemporary lens, shifting from a mythical figure to a deeply human character, entangled in familial and moral conflicts. The mythic hero becomes a symbol of an individual who suffers the consequences of his own actions. Conflict in Haxhiademi's tragedies is not driven by divine fatalism but rather by the psychological struggles of the characters themselves. This internalized tragedy is vividly conveyed through powerful dialogues and monologues, exposing the depths of human emotion and passion. The following verses exemplify this intensity:

"Mbasi, qëpar' un kot prej 'tij u shava, / Prandaj dhe un me harkun tënd e vrava" (After I was humiliated by him in vain, / I took your bow and killed him in return)^[26].

The tragedy *Akili* is built upon the myth of vengeance and its consequences, depicting not only external conflicts but also the internal emotional turmoil that leads characters toward their tragic fate. The play unfolds in the Trojan camp, where Priam seeks revenge against Achilles for Hector's death, creating a dramatic conflict where "human beings become victims of their own passions and conflicting emotions".

In this context, the love story between Achilles and Polyxena serves as an essential element in the drama's development, placing the hero in a moral dilemma and highlighting the clash between emotion and duty. In this work, Haxhiademi adheres strictly to the classical rules of tragedy, respecting Aristotle's three unities—time, place, and action—to construct a coherent and balanced dramatic plot.

Similarly, *Abeli* represents one of the most distinctive examples of Albanian classicism, where the biblical myth is transformed into a dramatic structure that raises moral and social dilemmas. In this play, the biblical story of fratricide is not depicted as a divinely determined event but as the result of familial and emotional tensions, reflecting human passions such as greed, jealousy, and ambition. Following the Aristotelian model of tragedy, the play is constructed in five acts, intensifying the drama through complex dialogues and introspective monologues that reveal the psychological depth of the characters. Haxhiademi makes the myth more intricate by giving it a socio-political dimension, transforming Abel's fate from a divine decree to the direct result of familial

relationships. The dialogue between Abel and his parents reveals his awareness of unequal treatment and foreshadows the tragic outcome:

"Ndëgjo, o Ev', nga çunat t'on' të dy, Abeli muë ma shum' më hyn' në sy." (Listen, Eve, of our two sons, it is Abel who stands out to me the most)

Given the political and social instability of Albania in 1938, the play can also be read as a reflection on the consequences of internal conflicts and national divisions. Through mimesis, Haxhiademi reshapes the myth to align with the concerns of his era, "transforming *Abeli* into a universal tragedy that bridges tradition and modernity"^[27].

Haxhiademi's commitment to classical form is particularly evident in *Skënderbeu*, where the national hero is not only portrayed as an idealized figure of justice and unity but also as an archetype of moral and political leadership. The play's central conflict revolves around the moral dilemma of forgiving Moisi, who betrayed Skënderbeu, a theme Haxhiademi treats with dramatic intensity, emphasizing the moral reconstruction of the central figure.

By depicting forgiveness not merely as a religious act but as a reflection of the Albanian ethical code of honor (*besa*), the play resonates deeply with national values. As Aurel Plasari notes, "Forgiveness is not merely a religious act, but an act that reflects the Albanian ethical code of honor"^[7]. This moral complexity is illustrated in *Skënderbeu*'s final decision, where national interest is placed above personal resentment, reinforcing his role as a leader who embodies both justice and unity.

5.2. Dramatic Discourse and Stylistic Figures

A crucial aspect in the analysis of Haxhiademi's tragedies is his dramatic discourse, which adheres to classical principles of clarity, solemnity, and balance between dialogue and stage action. According to Xhevat Lloshi, the linguistic organization of a dramatic work operates on two levels: the primary level, which involves the syntagmatic and paradigmatic construction of the text, and the secondary level, which extends throughout the entire work, "creating an interwoven system where stylistic elements interact to shape the overall meaning of the text"^[28]. This principle is particularly significant in Haxhiademi's tragedies, where dialogue

structure and lexical choices serve to enhance the solemnity and emotional equilibrium of the play. Haxhiademi adheres to the principles of classicist dramatic discourse regarding the clarity of expression and controlled emotional delivery. His works do not feature excessively long speeches filled with uncontrolled emotion; instead, his words and phrases are carefully measured to create a composed and solemn impact. This approach aligns with the classical tragedy principle that art should not be a direct reflection of harsh reality but rather a refined aesthetic representation. He employs “a disciplined and polished language, structured in measured verse, adhering to classical tragedy’s demands for harmony and symmetry”. The structure of his dialogues and monologues serves both character development and dramatic tension, conveying moral and philosophical messages. Furthermore, he avoids complex sentence structures and excessive rhetoric, following the model of Greek and French classical tragedy, where discourse functions as a means to advance conflict and accentuate the emotions of the characters.

The dialogues in Haxhiademi’s tragedies are not merely tools for exposition or plot development; they also reflect the characters’ internal states, often built on profound contemplation and introspection. This characteristic aligns with Pierre Larthomas’ assertion that “theater requires dramatic discourse to be clear and functional for stage interpretation”^[29]. In Haxhiademi’s dramatic works, dialogues serve multiple functions: they accelerate dramatic action while simultaneously building the emotional tension of the characters. In their construction, the author employs a rich stylistic framework, where every stylistic element reinforces the dramatic message. One of the most frequent figures of speech in his discourse is antithesis, which plays a key role in developing the internal conflict of the characters. This is clearly seen in *Abeli*, where the contrast between Abel’s moral purity and Cain’s spiritual darkness is central to the drama’s development:

“Me gjith’ këte’ njeriu gjersa të vdesi / Të mira e të liga do të presi.” (p. 24) (Despite all this, as long as man lives, / He shall endure both good and evil.)

This verse highlights the contrast between unavoidable fate and human action, reflecting one of the fundamental principles of classical tragedy. Furthermore, in *Pirrua*, the use of

gradation in the description of the protagonist creates a powerful dramatic effect, intensifying the audience’s emotions and shaping the perception of other characters, emphasizing Pyrrhus’ exceptional nature:

“I shkrepëtin fytyra kur shikon, / I zbardhëllon gjith’ trupi kur kalon.” (His face sparkles when he looks, / His entire body glows as he walks.)

One of the most striking features of Haxhiademi’s language and style is his use of epithets, particularly metaphorical epithets, which not only enrich the poetic expression but also contribute to the dramatic atmosphere and character depth. In his tragedies, adjectives do not merely serve as descriptive markers; rather, they function as tools for conveying the emotional stance of characters and influencing the reader’s or spectator’s perception. This stylistic approach aligns with the classical tradition, where epithets played a vital role in structuring verse and reinforcing poetic expressiveness. In this context, Haxhiademi employs epithets with remarkable density, as seen in *Akili*, where phrases such as “Akil’ i frikshëm” (*the fearsome Achilles*) and “Trojanët qi kan’rruë fatbardhë” (*the Trojans who lived a fortunate fate*) emphasize the grandeur of the protagonists. Similarly, in *Abeli*, through the epithets “engjëjt e pafajshëm” (*innocent angels*) and “fjalët më të frikshme” (*the most terrifying words*), he constructs a sharp contrast between good and evil. Thus, epithets in Haxhiademi’s works are not merely ornamental stylistic elements but powerful devices for reinforcing dramatic tension and psychological characterization.

Haxhiademi’s language is characterized by lexical purity and clarity, based on a refined literary variant, with noticeable influences from the Elbasan dialect. This linguistic structure directly influences the effectiveness of dramatic discourse, making it fluid and comprehensible. Furthermore, his tragedies are constructed in disciplined verse, often in eleven-syllable lines, which provide the work with a consistent rhythm and a distinctive solemnity. Couplet rhyme and classical metrical patterns create an internal musicality, intensifying the expressive power of the dialogues and enhancing the audience’s emotional engagement. As noted by Xhuvani, Haxhiademi’s verse represents a pentapodic iambic structure, which “flows beautifully and harmoniously,” demonstrating a masterful command of dramatic discourse construction^[30].

6. Classical Elements in Fishta's Dramatic Works

6.1. The Structure and Themes of Fishta's Tragedies

Gjergj Fishta, one of the most significant figures in Albanian literature, successfully adopted and adapted classical elements of tragedy in his dramatic works, integrating them with historical and national realities. His tragedy *Juda Makabe* stands as one of his most powerful dramatic compositions, where he masterfully interweaves classical tragedy with a strong historical and national vision. According to Hamiti, this tragedy “follows a clear classical structure, in which the dramatic world is built on three fundamental pillars: heroism, betrayal, and the cosmic dimension of national fate”^[31]. *Juda*, the protagonist, is depicted as a tragic hero burdened with a predetermined fate, while Alkimi's betrayal further reinforces the fatalistic nature of the play.

Fishta structures his tragedies in accordance with the classical three unities:

Unity of Action: The events focus on *Juda's* struggle and Alkimi's betrayal, avoiding unnecessary subplots.

Unity of Time: The tragedy unfolds within a limited time frame, covering the preparations for battle and the betrayal that leads to *Juda's* downfall.

Unity of Place: The action takes place in two distinct locations—the Jewish camp and the battlefield.

At the heart of the tragedy lies the conflict between *Juda Makabe* and Alkimi, where *Juda* symbolizes the spirit of sacrifice and national idealism, whereas Alkimi embodies corruption and treachery. The play's powerful dialogues and *Juda's* monologues emphasize the inescapable fate of a heroic figure who, despite his efforts, remains bound to his tragic destiny:

*“Vëllezër, tradhtarë po kemi,
Se një mendje e një zemër
Të gjithë sot s'po jemi...” (Brothers, we have
traitors among us,
For we no longer think and feel as one...)*^[32].

Fishta merges *Juda's* biblical heroism with the national struggles of Albanians following the 1913 London Conference. The clash between betrayal and patriotism reflects the internal tensions within Albanian society, while the triad of

language, faith, and homeland emerges as the dramatic core of the work.

Another significant, albeit unfinished, tragedy by Fishta, *Hajrija*, demonstrates a profound influence of the myth of Medea in shaping its tragic conflict. According to Zorba, although Fishta was well acquainted with the versions of Medea's story by Euripides and Seneca, he transforms the narrative from a mythological setting into a tangible Albanian reality, turning *Hajrija* into a character that embodies the tragedy of women in a patriarchal and oppressive society^[33]. In a manner similar to Medea, *Hajrija* faces great injustices and sees revenge as the only way to restore her dignity. However, unlike her mythological counterpart, *Hajrija's* actions are not driven by jealousy, but rather by a profound sense of injustice and violence inflicted upon her family. Her tragedy transcends personal suffering, becoming an act of defiance against a corrupt and merciless system. Fishta portrays *Hajrija* as a tragic figure who does not appear in the early acts, a technique that creates a powerful dramatic effect, heightening the emotional impact of her later entrance. This method is similar to that used by Molière in *Tartuffe*, where the main character appears late in the third act, increasing suspense and audience anticipation. However, while Molière employs this technique for comic tension, Fishta utilizes it to build tragic intensity, deepening the dramatic impact of his character. The classical elements of this tragedy are evident in:

Tragic conflict: The clash between *Hajrija* and society reflects a universal struggle between the individual and oppressive circumstances.

The construction of catharsis: Although the work remains unfinished, the tragedy suggests an inevitable conclusion, where *Hajrija* attains liberation through self-sacrifice, a distinct characteristic of classical tragedy.

Dramatic dialogue: As in major classical tragedies, powerful dialogues serve to intensify emotional tension and deepen the conflict between traditional values and individual freedom.

A defining feature of Fishta's tragedies is the fusion of fate with heroic action, where the central characters often face inescapable forces, whether at a social or historical level. Both *Juda Makabe* and *Hajrija* are doomed to follow a tragic path, where their sacrifices do not lead to salvation but serve as moments of reflection for society.

6.2. Dramatic Discourse and Stylistic Techniques in Fishta's Works

Gjergj Fishta's dramatic discourse is deeply rooted in classical poetic traditions, where meter, rhythm, and stylistic figures play a central role in intensifying dramatic tension and character development. His use of octosyllabic verse and solemn declamation connects his tragedies to Greek and Roman traditions, "while themes of betrayal, sacrifice, and fate align them with Romantic tragedies"^[34].

In *Juda Makabe*, the dramatic discourse relies on rhythmic verses and a poetic structure that amplifies the emotional impact of key scenes. In this tragedy, Alkimi, as Juda's antagonist, embodies treachery and materialistic pragmatism, a contrast highlighted in his statement: "Atdheu është

*"O Perëndi, a ndjeve?
Tradhëtarët na lanë pa atdhe,
E Ti rri e gjuan me rrufe
Lisat nëpër male kot..."* (p. 3)

A key element in Fishta's dramatic discourse is the use of antithesis and contrasts to heighten dramatic tension. This is evident in the confrontations between central characters, where heroes symbolize high moral values, while antagonists embody vice and destruction. In addition to antithesis, Fishta frequently employs metaphoric epithets to enhance characterization and construct the dramatic atmosphere.

In *Juda Makabe*, for instance, the epithets "i pamëshirshmi Alkimi" (the merciless Alkimi) and "Juda i ndritur" (the enlightened Juda) reinforce the contrast between protagonist and antagonist, giving the verse a powerful expressive force. Another key stylistic device that Fishta masters is dramatic escalation, where the intensification of imagery and events creates a strong emotional and dramatic effect. This method of structuring dramatic speech is comparable to classical Greek tragedy, where the rhythm and weight of words directly influence the audience's emotional response. Unlike the solemn tone of his tragedies, in his satirical poem-comedy *Gomari i Babatasit*, Fishta abandons the epic tone and constructs a dramatic discourse infused with satire and grotesque imagery. The play follows a classical comic structure, where the conflict unfolds in a clear linear fashion, incorporating grotesque elements and irony to critique Albanian social and political reality.

gjithkund ku barku është plot." (The homeland is wherever the stomach is full.) This stark contrast between Alkimi's cynical realism and Juda's idealistic sacrifice is reinforced through highly structured dialogues, rich in rhetorical devices such as anaphora and antithesis, which lend solemnity and emotional depth to the verse:

*"Jo, Alkimi i marrë nuk leu
Me ja hangër kryet atdheu."
(No, the mad Alkimi was not born
To devour the homeland's head.)*

The culmination of dramatic tension is reached in the final curse, where the discourse takes on a cosmic and fatalistic dimension. Here, the poet expresses deep historical injustice, linking the betrayal of the nation's cause to its tragic fate:

*(Oh God, did You hear?
The traitors left us without a homeland,
And You sit, striking with lightning
Pointless trees in the mountains...)*

According to Kosumi, Fishta's "satirical discourse does not adhere to a uniform structure" but fluctuates between epic narration, lyrical expression, and dramatic dialogue", creating a hybrid text that "moves between prose, satirical verse, and rhetorical declamation"^[35].

This constant shift in stylistic registers highlights the dynamism of the work, which does not follow a strictly dramatic plot but instead functions as a satirical mirror of contemporary political and social issues. Fishta skillfully blends classical comedic techniques with social satire, crafting absurd situations that serve as reflections of contemporary society. The structure of the play adheres to classical comedic principles, where the conflict between characters of different social backgrounds leads to an ironic and entertaining resolution, maintaining the unity of action. The grotesque nature of the work and the use of colloquial language bring it closer to Molière's tradition, particularly in the way characters are caricatured to expose social vices. This is evident in the following lines:

*"E gomari, ma i mençur se zotnia,
I njoh problemet e vendit tonë, sa dinia!"
(And the donkey, wiser than its master,
Knows the problems of our land as well as the*

scholars!)

Through irony, Fishta emphasizes the absurdity of Albanian political and social reality, mocking hypocrisy, corruption, and the incompetence of the ruling elite. Much Similar to Aristophanes' and Molière's classical comedies, Fishta's characters are built on recognizable stereotypes, serving as satirical critiques of Albanian society.

Fishta's dramatic discourse represents a fusion of classical elements with a deep awareness of Albanian reality. While in his tragedies, he maintains solemnity and metrical discipline to construct a drama rich in emotional and philosophical depth, in his comedies, he employs grotesque and irony to highlight the contradictions of his society. This makes Fishta one of the most significant figures in Albanian dramaturgy, who, through exceptional linguistic and stylistic mastery, provides a compelling artistic reflection of his time.

7. Results

The study highlights the complex interplay between classical dramatic principles and Albanian national identity, as reflected in the works of Etëhem Haxhiademi and Gjergj Fishta. By examining the structural, thematic, and stylistic dimensions of their tragedies, the findings confirm that both authors effectively integrated Aristotle's unities of time, place, and action into their dramatic compositions. Haxhiademi adhered strictly to classical form, emphasizing moral dilemmas, heroism, and personal sacrifice, while Fishta combined classical structures with national allegories, biblical motifs, and satirical elements. The research further demonstrates that Albanian dramaturgy of the early 20th century was not merely an imitation of European models but an adaptation that infused classical tragedy with contemporary social and political concerns.

Additionally, the study identifies significant stylistic techniques employed in these tragedies, particularly the use of antithesis, metaphorical epithets, and dramatic escalation. These elements reinforced the emotional intensity and ideological depth of the works. The analysis of dramatic discourse also reveals that while Haxhiademi's tragedies maintained a solemn and elevated tone, Fishta's satirical play *Gomari i Babatasit* subverted classical conventions through irony and grotesque humor to critique societal issues.

8. Discussion

The findings support the argument that classicism in Albanian dramaturgy was more than a literary aesthetic; it was a vehicle for expressing national identity, historical reflection, and ideological critique. While European classicist traditions, particularly those of Racine, Corneille, and Schiller, influenced the formal aspects of these works, Haxhiademi and Fishta infused them with distinctly Albanian themes. Their plays reflect historical consciousness, engaging with national struggles, moral values, and the philosophical tension between fate and free will. Haxhiademi's tragedies align closely with classical Greek and French models, employing strict structural discipline and exploring ethical dilemmas through tragic figures. His focus on fate, sacrifice, and duty aligns with classical tragic archetypes, yet his characters resonate with contemporary Albanian realities. Conversely, Fishta's dramaturgy, particularly in *Juda Makabe*, modifies classical tragedy by embedding it within the context of Albanian historical and political struggles. His use of biblical themes as national allegories represents an innovative adaptation of classicist principles. Furthermore, the study underscores the role of dramatic discourse in shaping these tragedies. Haxhiademi's use of balanced, rhetorical language and metrical precision reflects the disciplined nature of classical tragedy, while Fishta's dynamic shifts between lyrical, epic, and satirical registers illustrate his stylistic versatility. These findings suggest that classicism in Albanian dramaturgy was not static but an evolving form that accommodated national and ideological reinterpretations.

9. Conclusions

This study confirms that early 20th-century Albanian dramaturgy, as embodied by Haxhiademi and Fishta, represents a unique adaptation of classicist principles. This period is linked with the emergence of new narratives that explored the virtues and vices of Albanian society. These narratives often delved into the complexities of cultural and moral transformation, portraying a society caught between tradition and modernity, reality and imagination^[36]. While Haxhiademi adhered more strictly to the European classicist model, Fishta intertwined it with biblical, epic, and satirical elements to reflect Albania's historical and social challenges. Through structural, thematic, and linguistic analysis, it was observed

that classicism was not merely adopted as an aesthetic form but as a means to articulate a literary and national identity.

Their works demonstrate that Albanian classicist tragedy was not a mechanical reproduction of European models but an active process of literary reconfiguration, where Aristotle's three unities served as tools to construct a narrative that embodied the concerns of the time. Haxhiademi's tragedies focus on the moral and ethical dilemmas of the individual, while Fishta's works establish a dialogue between national history and religious mythology.

In a broader context, the influence of classicism on Albanian dramaturgy did not end with these authors but continued to evolve through later literary movements. Future research may explore how this influence was transformed or challenged by modernism and socialist realism in the mid-20th century.

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Conceptualization, V.K.; methodology, M.S.; validation, M.S., E.R.; formal analysis, E.R.; investigation, V.K., M.S.; resources, V.K.; writing—original draft preparation, V.K.; writing—review and editing, M.S., E.R.; visualization, M.S.; supervision, V.K. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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