

PREFACE

Ismail Kadare has garnered an international reputation as Albania's most prominent writer, drawing wide acclaim for his insightful and poignant depictions of the Albanian people and their struggles under a totalitarian government. Scholars have commended Kadare's talent for social commentary and have praised the author's ability to construct trenchant political allegories, which frequently escaped the notice of government censors. Kadare's use of Albanian legend and history to parallel and comment on contemporary issues has been a particularly effective narrative technique. Kadare's prose has also been lauded for its ambitious social vision and staunch rejection of socialist realism. Kadare has contributed more than any other author to the advancement of contemporary Albanian letters, both through his works and through his candid criticism of mediocrity and politically motivated stereotyping.

The thesis entitled *Politics of Freedom: An Analysis of Ismail Kadare's Selected Works* attempts to trace the trajectory of Kadare's development from a young man experiencing the first effects of communist modernization to the subtle, rebellious and agnostic writer

at the end of the dictatorship. This literary and historical analysis attempts to reveal Kadare's works as representing a stubborn and coherent defiance of the dictatorship from *The City without Signs* in 1959 to *The Shadow* at the end of the 1980s. This thesis consists of five chapters and a selected bibliography.

Chapter I: Introduction aims to provide the necessary information concerning the political, social and literary background that prompted Ismail Kadare to write for ethnic and political freedom.

Kadare's attitude to the communist regime as a young writer forms the main focus of **Chapter II: The Writer with a Sign**. His works, *The City without Signs* (1961), *The General of the Dead Army* (1963), *The Monster* (1965) and *The Wedding* (1967) form the centre of this analysis. It is in the works discussed in this chapter that the foundations of Kadare's writing life were laid. *The City without Signs* treats of post-war youth, liberation from traditional roles, and the blights of careerism, corruption and the weakness of the Party to ideological manipulation. In *The General of the Dead Army* Kadare recognizes the co-existence of two Albanias, the modernizing communist present and the traumatized, silenced past, and suggests the need for the nation to move beyond the culture of death. *The*

Monster uses the language of European surrealism to explore the effects of the isolation of Albania and comes to the classic Central European recognition of the inseparability of politics and the private sphere, as the vocabularies of fear and the foreign merge in the imagination of contemporary Albanians. In *The Wedding*, Kadare offers his most propitiatory contribution to the debate about modernity versus tradition.

Kadare's political responsibility in the period of the communist regime is anatomized in **Chapter III: The Chronicler in Stone** through four works. The works are *Chronicle in Stone* (1971), *Winter of Great Solitude* (1973), *Twilight of the Steppe-Gods* (1976) and *The Three- Arched Bridge* (1978). In these works the revision of his origins and his identity as a writer lay the basis for the works of his mature period in which he grapples with the fundamental questions of his existence: the possibility of survival as a writer in the environment of communist modernization, the battle for the existence of the other, "eternal" Albania in a world parallel to the communist present, and the search for the origins of the present in the historical novels dealing with the end of the Byzantine era, the arrival of the Ottomans and the chaotic beginnings of Albanian modernity.

Kadare's political vision at the end of the regime is the main focus of the **Chapter IV: The Palace of Realities** Analyses of *The Palace of Dreams* (1981), *The Shadow* (1985) form the central part of this chapter. Kadare refers to *The Palace of Dreams* as the novel which launched the most ferocious attack on the dictatorship. In recognizing ethnicity to be both a deeply embedded and politically instrumentalised aspect of Albanian identity, *The Palace of Dreams* is as much an assault on Hoxha's state nationalism as it is a satire on totalitarian aspirations for complete control, or a veiled attack on Ottoman, Soviet or Serb imperialism. The critique of the inauthenticity of life under the regime, rather than of the regime itself, is the key to *The Shadow*. **Chapter V** is the **Conclusion** and it sums up the major arguments that remain distributed in the thesis.