

ISMAIL KADARE'S THE PYRAMID AS A MULTI-LAYERED ALLEGORY OF TOTALITARIANISM

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Abstract

Kadare's novel, *The Pyramid*, presents the reader with a many-faceted literary account of the phenomenon of totalitarianism. The Albanian writer's favourite theme of totalitarianism, which has made his name world-famous to readers of political fiction, attains its fullest exposition in this novel, as it is approached from different standpoints and explored through a variety of artistic means that bring to light not only the outer trappings, but, first and foremost, the essential structure and inner workings of totalitarianism as a system. Kadare puts to the service of this ambitious task an impressive array of modern literary techniques such as, among others, the deliberate use of an anachronistic diction, the employment of archetypal characters, a symbolical time-frame, the symbolical reification of ideas, doctrines and practices, etc. The result is a complex allegory which yields layer upon layer of signification, depending on the expectations of the reader, which in their turn are conditioned to a large extent by the reader's background. Thus, as we will show in detail during the course of our analysis, besides its universal dimension that attracts readers that might have never heard of Albania, let alone its obscure totalitarian history, *The Pyramid*, underneath the exotic facade of its ancient setting, contains a faithful allegorical picture of communist Albania, which, understandably, is what constitutes the principal object of attention for the average Albanian reader. It is this multi-layered semantic structure that gives to Kadare's antitotalitarian allegory of the Pyramid an inexhaustible capacity to communicate with a heterogenous readership that is not bound by a common framework of references and expectations.

Keywords: totalitarianism, allegory, symbol, reader, universal, diction, archetype, character, level, time-frame.