WRITING THE DICTATORSHIP: REUSE OF MYTH IN ISMAIL KADARE'S NOVELS

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of London South Bank University for the degree of Doctor in Philosophy

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I would like to thank my Directors of Studies, Professor Anna Reading and later Dr Jenny Owen, who were extremely helpful and supportive through the whole process of research. I am also thankful to my supervisor, Dr Suzanne Scafe. Their valuable advice and comments are very much appreciated.

I am also grateful to South Bank University for all academic and technical support during the years of the work.

I also wish to extend my gratitude to John Thompson, a solicitor and ex-Law Lecturer at Kingston University who helped me by proofreading the thesis.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my family; my wife Luciana, my sons Andi and Evi, and my daughter Evisa, for their patience, love and care, which allowed this work to be completed.

ABSTRACT

This study attempts to analyse how and why Kadare reuses myths in his novels *Chronicle in Stone*, *The Bearer of ill Tidings – Islamo nox*, *Agamemnon's Daughter* and *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains*. I will be arguing that the reused myths in these novels predominantly convey a message about Albania at the time during which Kadare wrote the novels. It will be argued that the novels are used to critique the period of Communism and the period immediately after the collapse of Communism, even when they are set in different time periods, and it is through a use of myths and archetypes that Kadare manages this. It was necessary for Kadare to write his criticism of aspects of communist society through the use of the myths, in order for him to escape the censorship of the Communist Party, which required all literary works to conform to socialist realism, and to present a particular ideological view. This idea will be analysed predominantly in the discussions around *Chronicle in Stone*, *The Bearer of ill Tidings – Islamo nox* and *Agamemnon's Daughter*. On the other hand, *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains* was written in the post-Communist period, though Kadare still felt it necessary to investigate the transitional society in Albania through the use of mythical aspects as metaphors.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION: SETTING THE STAGE

I.   Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to describe and analyse Kadare's reuse of myth and to explore how the author has used these to enhance his ideas about life under Communist rule in Albania. Myths were extensively used by Kadare to convey meaning, especially when disguising the meaning of his narrative so as to escape the censorship of the communist regime in his homeland, Albania. The thesis enquires into the effect of the incorporation of mythical themes to the technique and structure of the novel, assuming that both will be radically altered. The thesis is not, however, limited to registering the effects of the myths, but will also establish Kadare's reasons for using myths and will try to evaluate the success of these mythical elements in terms of highlighting 'forbidden' topics during the period of communism in Albania. Ismail Kadare is fuelled by Western European culture and from classical Greek mythology, but his imagination was also fed by the oral stories of his early childhood, especially those he heard from the elders; the mother or the grandmother. Therefore, the way in which the myths are used, reveals aspects of Albanian cultural identity. As Assmann suggests, myth is a founding story and a society's present can be explained as originating from its past using myth (Assmann, 1990: 9-10). Therefore, the thesis will explore how Kadare manages to successfully use myths to describe the situation in Albanian society.

Kadare has won a great number of literary prizes both within Albania and Internationally. In 1994, the Academy of Moral Sciences of France elected Kadare as an outside member. Kadare was awarded The Man Booker International Prize in 2005 for his literary values, and in the same year he was the Prix Mondial Cino Del Duca winner. In 2009 he won the Prince of Asturias Award, one of the most prestigious literary awards in the

World. The French Republic has awarded Kadare the National Order of the Cross of the Legion of Honour and the Officer of the Legion of Honour accolades. Ismail Kadare has also been recognised by the Republic of Albania and has received the Order 'Honour of the Nation' which is awarded by the President of the Republic to individuals for contributions to their field. Kadare has previously also been a candidate for the Nobel Prize for literature. It is these accolades that clearly show that Kadare is a world class author, and therefore his work has never been far from the attention of academics worldwide.

The research that culminated in this thesis began with an analysis of myths, cultural devices and cultural identity construction in Kadare's fiction. My initial concern was solely with the appearance and function of characters in narrative texts. This area of interest arose from an awareness of the intriguing way that the majority of Kadare's texts concerned with identity, almost automatically, drew influences from myths. In the thesis I will be working across disciplines, and will be drawing from literary and cultural theories, anthropology and psychoanalysis.

In this study, the four chosen texts from Kadare's body of work, *Chronicle in Stone* (2008 English Edition), *The Bearer of ill Tidings –Islamo nox* (Sjellësi i fatkeqësisë - Islamo nox (1986 Albanian Edition)), *Beauty Pageant for men in the Accursed Mountains* (Konkurs bukurie për burra në Bjeshkët e Namuna (2009 Albanian Edition)) and *Agamemnon's Daughter* (Vajza e Agamemmnonit (2011 English Edition)) will be the first point of reference when analysing the myths deployed by Kadare in his narrative. *Beauty Pageant for men in the Accursed Mountains* and *The Bearer of ill Tidings –Islamo nox* have never been translated into English, so all the extracts and quotes that are used in the thesis are my own translation from Albanian. The use of the myths in the four novels will be analysed in order to ascertain how Kadare uses them when exploring the cultural identity of his characters. The chosen novels have been understood to explore elements of Albanian identity, and also deal

with the themes of Albanian traditions and myths, as well as portraying aspects of the politics that encompass Albanian life. The myths used by Kadare in the narratives have wide ranging meanings and can be explored in relation to aspects of resistance, transculturation, narcissism, and sacrifice. Through these themes, Kadare has attempted to portray an image of life under communism, and understanding the meaning of these myths as used by Kadare, helps to understand the political and cultural context of the fiction. These novels have mythological elements which are used as symbols that portray the cultural identity. Morgan argues that 'Kadare's mythology […] symbolizes the facticity of ethno-national identity and belonging' (Morgan, 2006: 409). Inevitably also, I have had to move outside of the main chosen texts for analysis and also use ideas from Kadare's other novels in order to show that the themes or techniques which are being analysed are consistent throughout the different works of the author.

I have attempted to include Kadare's texts from a wide variety of times and places, in order to demonstrate that the attack of tyrannical regimes is a defining undertone in all of Kadare's novels and is achieved through a reusing of different types of myths, albeit in greater or lesser concentrations, regardless of the time and place of their conception and setting. I have also borne in mind my strategic aims when selecting theories and examples of particular features; for example, I have included discussions of the characters from *Chronicle in Stone*; *The Bearer of ill Tidings – Islamo Nox*; *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains*; and *Agamemnon's Daughter* which were useful in clarifying a particular point I wished to make regarding cultural identity construction in Kadare's prose, although my use of the texts in which they are featured was originally dictated by the elements of myth, character formations, and cultural politics. As Kadare wrote during communism[1] and his

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[1] Communist Albania 1945-1991: The Albanian Communist Party was established in 8 November 1941. Towards the end of World War 2 (before the liberation of Albania from Nazi German occupation in 1944), the Communist party had gained some control over regions of the country through its Partisan movement. After the

work had to adhere to the norms of Socialist Realism, it is also important to understand how Kadare has been able to implement myth into his socialist realist novels in order to escape the constraints of this politically influenced literary style.

Socialist realism, more than an aesthetic manifestation, was an ideological platform. György Lukács (1963), who was an advocate of the style, argues that socialist realism is the only form of literary style that is capable of recounting the elements working towards socialism, the elements that drive the working class (Lukács, 1963: 53). However, Lukács, who also advocated censorship, largely ignored authors who wrote from the point of view of the proletariat by portraying their struggles. Therefore, Robert Elsie is right when he writes that 'The political message was an essential element for those [writers] who wished to survive. Subjects devoid of any educational value in Marxist terms were considered alien and taboo.' (Elsie, 2005: 164).

The impact of socialist realism is more evident and dramatic in the artistic sense when we concentrate on Albanian literature, especially on the Albanian literature which was created during the second half of the 20th century. The scholar Sabri Hamiti, when classifying the literary phenomena during the decades of the last century, states that during the five decades of communism:

"Socialist realism was codified as a norm, as a unique creative method, having as

its basis literature as the producer of the morale and of the ideology, maintaining

collapse of Nazi Germany and the end of the Second World War, the Communist Party seized the initiative and attacked the nationalist 'Balli Kombëtar' forces which controlled the northern regions of the country. The Battle of Tamara Bridge of 15 January 1945, ended with a crushing defeat of the 'Balli Kombëtar'. Campaigns of oppression against other rival political movements (such as the royalist 'Legaliteti') continued. Through an election held on 2 December 1945 (in which 'enemies of the people', members of former governments during the war, war criminals, could not vote) the Democratic Front, organised by the Communist Party, won all 82 seats in the Parliament. By January 1946 the People's Republic of Albania was declared. Communist rule continued until the first free general elections were held in March 1991. For more information, see: Luan Omari & Stefanaq Pollo. The History of the Socialist Construction of Albania. Tirana: 8 Nëntori Publishing House. 1988. pp. 40-41.

always the ferment of social changes …. Socialist realism did not remain at the level of literary method, but was transformed into a political and social institution, which means that it became a method that would dominate […] It was the time when in a systematic way, efforts are made to graft Soviet literature from within Albania" (Hamiti, 2002: 554-555).

The Albanian socialist realism was reduced to some vulgar manuals full of instructions and pseudo-aesthetic orders, telling writers to refrain from using some styles and compelling the writers to use some other aspects of literature. The Albanian platform of socialist realism is a special and isolated case, a cultural phenomenon based on totalitarian inspiration because the embracing of literary–aesthetic platforms by different writers has been and continues to be an intellectual act performed by their own free will. The doctrine of socialist realism in general and the Albanian version especially was imposed forcefully, and were transformed into an institution that educated the writer, the literary critic and of the reader, turning literature into an aesthetic experience which badly damaged the role of art and literature and especially the real life of the authors. In this context, the aesthetic platform of socialist realism in Albania carried out some brutal interventions in literary cultural production, which sometimes gave rise to a pseudo-literary and mediocre literary output.

It was in these circumstances that Kadare wrote his prose and poetry. In this situation Kadare wrote many novels which are motivated as much from the ancient myth as from the literary reality depicted in his novels. In his very courageous literary work, apart from the most carefully crafted characters of his fiction, there is a third character, the narrator, who can be read in some cases as the implied author, the man who sees a certain reality and transforms it through the use of mythic elements.

II. Theoretical evaluation of 'myth'

In the first place, the thesis intends to discuss the representation of myths in Kadare's novels, in order to understand how Kadare uses myths to manipulate the cultural identity of his characters, but the thesis will also look at the use of the myths in the novels in order to understand how cultural devices have helped Kadare to portray the resistance of the Albanian people through different stages of history. The thesis will suggest that behind the many mythical elements and literary references there lays a constant factor, the attempt to attack dictatorial regimes, which is a key to the meaning of many of Kadare's fictional works. The first step must be to present those theories on the relationship between myths and literature which are assumed in this study and to suggest ways in which myths would alter the form of the novel.

Terence Hawkes in his study *Structuralism and Semiotics* states that 'a myth is always, in its individual telling, located in time; it always refers to events, alleged to have happened a long time ago' (Hawkes, 1977: 42). 'Myth' can refer to archaic forms of perception and experience. Myths are stories which serve to explain and account for natural occurrences, catastrophes and other phenomena with reference to superhuman beings, spirits, demons and magic. According to Schöpflin, 'Myths express and deal with a people's reality postulates about the world' (Schöpflin, 1997: 12). Myths can be used to represent fallacious ideas, illusions and fantasies and antithesis of the truth and human freedom. Early myth is thought to involve human powerlessness in the face of unalterable natural laws and the subordination of reason before the blind uncontrollable forces of the natural environment.

Disappearances, resurrection, even birth myths are important elements of the type that anthropological, psychological and linguistic researchers focus on. Studying myths means searching the way in which people present themselves and their relations with the world in

which they live. One cannot break down and analyse a myth without doing research on the function that the myth performs in the context in which it is placed. Although there are many definitions of the term, it is generally accepted that myths mean more than they seem to and are connected in some way with basic emotions and issues. One of the aims of this thesis will be to see how Kadare reconfigures existing myth and how far he is concerned with returning to the original meaning of the myths.

In literary criticism the historical analysis of the myth is neglected in favour of a structural approach to understanding myths. This is because 'methodologically [the structural approach] is an extremely interesting approach' (Ginzburg, 2013: 36). It is about discovering constants that are generally ideas or forms of ideals in collective thought, such as courage of the hero, purity of the heroine, the inevitable cruelty of the tyrant, madness and genius. But would it be correct to attempt to understand the structure of myth by looking at other myths within it? In fact difficulties never stop appearing and we need to move on to a few problems with the terminology.

The terminology may sometimes be confused when exploring myths, as sometimes myth can mean a number of things. In his methodological essay on the study of themes, Raymond Trousson (1965), did not use the word myth, and instead suggested that characters in literature that have stereotypical traits and conduct stereotypical actions form the themes that are literary traditions. Pierre Brunel reserves the term 'theme' a distinct concept and differentiated it from myth; however he does accept 'that a literary myth may illustrate a theme' (Brunel, 1992: xiv). Alfred Uçi (1982) avoided the problem by highlighting a strong distinction between "myth" and "literary myth" in his work. Hence the word myth was reserved to the meaning of the word in the field of religion which is linked to stories of origin, and literary myth was used for what lies on the borders of literary time and space, in the framework of European cultural tradition (Uçi, 1982: 32-33). Words, stereotypes, and

images can be referred to as myth. However it is not clear whether mythologizing or creating myths is dictated by the nature of myth (a story that can be re-evaluated by entire generations, since it is characterized by ambiguity or multidirectional memory) or by the function that myth plays (stories that may be related to an idea due to their exemplary and explanatory values).

The "ethno-religious" myth is a founder confession, anonymous, collective, and when analysed appears to have strong structural patterns. Roland Barthes's *Mythology* includes a chapter entitled 'The Myth mythology', or 'Myth of Myth'. The title expressed in this way, shows that there is an issue with the meaning of this term. The term "myth" is often loaded with a misinterpreted significance, and Eliade believes that 'our best chance of understanding the structure of mythical thought is to study cultures where myth is a 'living thing', where it constitutes the very ground of the religious life; in other words, where myth, far from indicating a fiction, is considered to reveal the truth par excellence' (Eliade, cited in Allen, 2013: 77). When myth is used in literary text, it retains symbolic saturation; the structure is compressed and attains metaphysical lighting, but loses the original characters and some other aspects. However, its reuse in literature reinvigorates the original.

When approaching myths, one has to look at Barthes' (2009) extensive work on the production of a history of myths. The work of Barthes on mythologies has been extremely influential amongst scholars. Neil Badmington says that *Mythologies* has been inspirational for many authors and books such as Umberto Eco's *Misreading*s, Georges Perec's *Things: A story of the Sixties*, Jean Baudrillards's *The system of Objects*, Rosalind Coward's *Female Desire,* Gilbert Adair's *Myths and Memories*, and Marjorie Garber's *Symptoms of Culture* (Badmington, 2004: x). Barthes held particular contempt for structuralism and distanced himself from theories that claimed to offer the myth through structuralism explanations; what Barthes himself called 'ideological criticism' (Barthes, 2009: x). He critiques the ways of

thinking about the subject as a rational, unified being with a fixed core or true essence, arguing that: "since myth is a type of speech, everything can be a myth provided it is conveyed by discourse' (Barthes, 2009: 131). There is no 'object of its message' but by the way in which 'it utters this message: there are formal limits of myth, there are no 'substantial' ones'' (Barthes, 2009: 131).

Despite his preoccupation with what people can conceive of as very ancient myths, for Barthes 'it is human history which converts reality into speech, and it rules the life and the death of mythical language' (ibid). There is no exploration or even acknowledgement of the historical contexts of myth. Barthes's idea that 'myth is a type of speech' is central to the fact that 'language needs special conditions in order to become myth' that would be developed in a narrative. Barthes sees the myths as a form of discourse where the combination of words produces attributes of the object, and 'every object in the world can pass from a closed, silent existence to an oral state, open to appropriation by society' (ibid). Mythical speech is 'made of a material which has already been worked', since words refer to the attributes of objects rather than to the objects themselves (Barthes, 2009: 133). Barthes concludes that 'myth in fact belongs to the province of general science, coextensive with linguistics, which is semiology' (ibid).

Barthes claims that 'speech of this kind is a message' that exists wherever there is normalisation and domination (ibid). Myth is never total, uniform or smooth but shifting and unstable; if it is exerted on 'modes of writing or of representations'; myth 'can be defined neither by its object nor by its material' (Barthes, 2009: 132). Focusing on myth as a semiological system (under the name of semiology), Barthes says that 'semiology is a science of forms, since it studies significations apart from their content' (Barthes, 2009: 134). McDougall challenges the way Barthes questions 'What is myth today?' (McDougall, 2013: 4). Moreover, given that Barthes observes that the 'other' can only speak the language, he

insists that it is up to the authors to 'here testify in their opposition to the very power of myth' (McDougall, 2013: 4).

In Albanian, the generally used word for myth is *mit*, a word that originates from the Latin and Greek (Late Latin mȳthos and Greek mȳthos), though myths can also be referred to as "bëma". However, "bëma" is rarely used. "Bëma" differs from "mit" in two ways: it has stronger implications to glorious feats or deeds of heroism, and it has moral connotations. In a sense "bëma" describes the mythic story created by the people themselves. The Albanian use of the word "mit" resembles Barthes' notions that 'myth is a type of speech'. Barthes argues that currently there are an 'innumerable other meanings of the word 'myth'' (Barthes, 2009: 131). The theory of Barthes, with which Kadare is familiar, offers an explanation of this. According to Barthes myth is defined 'neither by its object nor by its material, for any material can arbitrarily be endowed with meaning: the arrow which is brought in order to signify a challenge is also a kind of speech' (ibid).

Since Barthes has argued that myth is a type of speech, I will use Barthes' theory to show that the representation of mythical sources of articulated words and texts has been made possible through the reusing of myth in fiction. For Eric Gould (1981), Elizabeth M. Baeten (1996), Patrizia Lombardo, (2010), Rebeca Gould (2012) and many others, Barthes' theory signalled the beginning of the formation of a certain form of construction of mythical elements in novels that is characterised by the rigid parting of traditional theories. Yet, their studies on construction of myth move away from Barthes' interest in the coercive, disciplinary force of cultural taxonomies as it transpires in the section 'Reading and deciphering myth' of his book *Mythologies*. Their main concern is rather with the varieties of archetypes and cultural experiences defined in cultural identity to that ethnicity.

George Schöpflin's proposal that myth should be viewed as perceptions rather than historically validated truths is a kind of invitation 'about the ways in which communities

regard certain propositions as normal and natural' (Schöpflin, 1997: 21). For Schöpflin 'Myths are the sets of simplified beliefs, which may or may not approximate to reality, but which give us a sense of our origins, our identity' (ibid). From this point Shirley F. Staton, in *Literary Theories in Praxis* develops that the myth is 'the central informing power that gives archetypal significance to the ritual and archetypal narrative' (Staton, 1987: 120). This thesis will try to show that a similar pattern of commencement through suffering runs through most of Kadare's novels. Many of his references to myths are concerned with this process of death and heroism, and as Morgan states 'The story of Ismail Kadare represents a stark reminder that engagement can, in some contexts, be a matter of life and death' (Morgan, 2010: 41).

Myths may also imply a specific view of reality and politics. Geoffrye Miles (1999) explains that myths blur the distinction between the spiritual and physical worlds by making the divine human and the human divine (Miles, 1999: 313). Kadare compares them to 'reminiscent of cosmic dust, from which worlds are created and established' (Kadare, 2002: 12). They represent a total harmony between this world and the next, which is why they appeal to Kadare.

Sometimes different myths have the same origin, that is, they are different variants of the same myth. However, in Claude Lévi-Strauss's theory, a myth 'is made up of all its variants' (Lévi-Strauss, 2008: 435). Eric Gould (1981) advances further from his texts published throughout the late 70s and early 80s; which were his comprehensive framework of conceptualising how myth is constructed, re-identified, and potentially disrupted. As he states, 'the work of art is created in order to serve as a message (Gould, 1981: 17). This argument can be linked to his thought where 'art makes the transition from the sacred to the daily', it is an identity tenuously constituted in time – an identity, instituted through stylised reconstruction of myths (Gould, 1981: 171). This argument holds that mythical identity is not a discrete identity, but rather cultural constructions absorbed into the matrices of power by

repetition and representation. In his view, mythical identity is discursively produced identity, producing certain characteristics that are taken as evidence of a cultural essence and an ineluctable difference between cultures. The reuse of myth and its representation in literary work is thus constantly invoked, but the constructions of archetypes and motifs are disciplines of the cultural study that require work.

According to Carl Gustav Jung, 'myths are original revelations of the preconscious psyche, involuntary statements about unconscious psychic happenings' (Jung, 1981: 154). Jung suggests that what we might call the subject of mythic reuse is constituted by reconstruction, and representation. According to Jung the term associated with this reuse is 'archetype' (Jung, 1981: 75). Jung, by referring to Jacob Burckhardt, expands the fundamental concept of archetype and creates synonyms like "primary images", "source images", "prototype" (Jung, 1981: 78-87). This ties in the argument of Eric Gould which is that for all debts to Burckhardt, Jung appears to commit a very important move when, as he asserts, 'today the meaning of the archetype has to do with all the types, being essential characters of permanent situations that always repeated in human life or the collective' (Gould, 1981: 18).

For Jung, "archetype," far from being a modern term 'was already in use before the time of St. Augustine, and was synonymous with "Idea" in the Platonic usage (ibid). Specifically, Jung states that the archetype is often associated with things and places standing for fertility and fruitfulness: the cornucopia, a ploughed field, a garden' (Jung, 1981: 81). Notions of inside and outside begin to break down here, for although we may say these cultural constructions are superimposed on fictional work from without, it is the very representation of that fiction within the existing codes of archetypes that form the idea of the subject, more from outside in, than the other way around.

And if we turn back to Claude Lévi-Strauss' theory of transformation of the only single myth, we understand that 'it seems inevitable that archetype quickens narrative and is open to interpretation' (Gould, 1981: 31). The term that Jung defines as the archetype, generally refers to the symbolic figures, images and situations in which the essential and meaningful elements of human existence, human life or the collective are represented.

Following this concept it becomes difficult to define the primary archetype as the term applies only indirectly to the "representations of collectives" (Jung, 1981: 5). For example, when looking at Kadare's work as a whole, is the myth in *Princess Argjiro* (Princesha Argjiro (2001)), a variant of the '*Mountain Fairy* (Zana e Malit)'? The answer is more complicated when reading Jung who states that the most well-known 'expression of the archetypes is in myth and fairy-tale' (Jung, 1981: 55). According to Jung 'we are dealing with forms that have received a specific stamp and have handed down through long periods of time' (ibid). In a poem written in the 1960s Ismail Kadare transforms the existing myth or legendary figure of the Princess Argjiro by subverting some elements and amplifying others. According to historian Fotaq Andrea, the legendary figure originates from a woman of the 15th century who, along with her child, threw herself from the Gjirokastër Castle so that she may not end up at the hands of the Ottomans (Andrea, 1997: 37). The name of the woman became a legend and she started appearing as a spirit in stories, much like the 'Zana e malit' would appear.

For Lévi-Strauss all of the versions of a myth are similarly 'correct' versions since a myth is made up of all of its variants, whether these be literary or not. Myth is a primary concept from which all of the subsequent literary versions are dependent. It is a totality from which endless literary versions branch out. However, considering myth as a genesis is as pointless as searching for the genesis of a myth. This theoretical background helps to look at

myth as texts with multiple sites of struggle, resistance and contestation, and makes my reading of them more self-consciously polytonal and de-centred.

III.   The myth in the structure of literary works

In *Aeschylus, this Great Loser,* Kadare frequently addresses the inspiration that the Greeks gave to world literature, starting from the inspiration given to the Roman writers, to Dante, Shakespeare, and Goethe and later to Hölderlin, T. Eliot, and Sartre. It is disputable whether Dante's inferno would have existed had there been no influence from the Greek myths of the underworld. Similarly, would Hamlet have existed had Orestes not been an inspirational mythical figure; would there have been a dance of the witches had there been no hymn from the Erinyes? In this novel, Kadare also states that all Ancient Greek literature was fed by Homeric motives, but here, it must not be forgotten that, if we extend the metaphor of the feast, the great poet Homer feasted on a pre-laid table: that of Greek mythology, a common by-product of an ancient nation. The Greeks had created a whole set of earthly divine beings, the immortal and the mortal, history, drama, and passion. These characters 'filled the world from the snow-topped Olympus, to the depths of the sea, the royal courtyards, the deep underworld and the stars on the edge of the Milky Way' (Kadare, 2009: 223).

Pierre Brunel highlights the major role played by literature and the arts in the maintenance of myths, because we say that literature has the power to wear the myth, keeping it alive (Brunel, 1992: 581). Lesley Bolton states that 'literature keeps classical mythology alive' (Bolton, 2002: 259). Let's assume that literature is the only way of preserving the myths. What do we know about Ulysses, without Homer, about Antigones, without Sophocles, about Arjun without Mahabharata? Myth can be found in pre-literary research and also in pre-historical research: it has always wandered. In a similar way that a researcher

begins with history in order to understand pre-history, we need to begin by looking at literature and literary tradition in order to evaluate the original myth. According to Fiona Darroch, 'History can be re-written through fiction using combined mythic discourses of the multiple heritages' (Darroch, 2009: xxiv). The study of myths in literature tends to concentrate on identifying and analysing certain recurrent themes and motifs. Attempts have been made to explain the eternal appeal of some of these themes by reducing them to an archetypal pattern, which we have in common with all people of past generations.

Space, the objects which fill it and time are also be changed. Down to earth reality is used as a contrast, and has little importance by itself. Some objects, those traditionally connected with the myth, will assume far greater importance than they otherwise would. Often a myth will be used for its images which provide a grotesque contrast with reality, the traditional linear time-sequence of the novel will be altered because, once the myth has been seen, the end is implied in the beginning. As a result, there is little room for chance or even development, for myth is based on endless repetition. Change can only occur abruptly, through a character deviating from the myth. Indeed, there is little room for cause and effect because all actions occur in relation to the myth. Generally the flow of time will be dictated by some external rhythm such as the passing of the seasons or days of the week, which of their nature are continually repeated. In most of Kadare's novels this repetition is ritualistic.

Each era has its own favoured myths; its own mythology. In this sense, myths, just as themes, can serve to enrich and colour the narrative of literature. We can talk about the myths of an era, just as we can talk about the themes of that era (Stookey, 2004: 29-33). According to Stookey, 'while creation myths answer the need to understand how life first came into being, myths of the changing ages answer a need to understand the significance of the present era in respect to the past and the future' (Stookey, 2004: 25).

In any novel which deals with myth, the role of the individual will be diminished and he will only be seen in relation to the myth, which he can represent, fail to represent, think about or dream about. His actions will not always be accounted for by psychological explanations. Frye states that 'the conclusion that a work of literary art contains a variety or sequence of meanings seems inescapable (Frye, 1957: 72). The reader will be invited to make comparisons between the modern character and the model with the result that the former may often appear inauthentic. The situation becomes more complicated in Kadare's historical novels when characters are aware of their own literary precedents. For Frye it is more of a trend 'to consider the problem of literary meaning as subsidiary to the problems of symbolic logic and semantics' (ibid).

The purpose of this study is to simultaneously create the opportunity to establish a way in which Kadare's novels can be analysed in order to understand the reused myths in them, bearing in mind that the reuse of the myths is a central aspect to the works. 'The strength of many of Kadare's novels, however, lies beyond the affective domain, in political and ethnographic detail, dissection of the process of mythmaking both ancient and contemporary, and a mix of subtle plots and austere, spectral prose that serve as vehicles for the author's literary and political preoccupations' (Cox, 2006: 13).

IV.   The myth in Kadare's work

Ismail Kadare began writing seriously at the early age of twelve. His literary inspirations were fuelled by his early reading of Homer's epics and Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. The lives and stories of the citizens of Kadare's city of birth, Gjirokastra, and the classics by Shakespeare and Homer, have influenced the way in which Kadare structures identities which survive through a strong resistance. Kadare would go on to use these influences when writing

his novels. Kadare's literary ambitions took a fortuitous step when he was seventeen. A poem he wrote at this age won him the first prize in a national competition and he was awarded the opportunity to go to study literature at the Gorki Institute in Moscow. Studying away from his homeland led him to think more about his own national identity. As a result, most of his work has at the forefront an aim of promoting the Albanian identity and continuing its saga, hence making Kadare 'a modern-day rhapsody' (Crawshaw, 2006: 69).

Kadare superimposes supernatural elements into society and history in a similar way to Shakespeare. In that case, where does Kadare place his heroes, and in what context are his stories based? These questions have been frequently raised and many attempts have been made previously to answer them. Kadare's works are primarily the by-product of certain ethical attitudes. Secondly, they are a product of an historical consciousness. Thirdly, the works are influenced by the Albanian landscape. According to Auerbach, a work either speaks for the time during which it was created, or it cannot convey a message at any time (Auerbach, 2013: 324). Kadare has centred his novels on the history of his people by writing about the fate of individuals and all of their social, ethical, political and cultural affiliations. In the first place, for the Albanian reader, the analogies used by Kadare become evident after a close reading of the text, however for the wider audience of his novels, an understanding of some of the themes becomes difficult as a result of the general limited understanding of Albanian cultural context caused by the prolonged isolation of Albania during the Communist Regime. The individual in Kadare's work is a torchbearer of ancient archetypes, but these characters can hardly be defined by understanding the influence of the ancient art in Kadare's prose.

By placing the fate of his protagonists in the hands of the national tragedy, the author has explored through the structure of his works the relationship between the fate of the individual and the fate of the collective. It is evident that in Kadare's work, none of the main

characters have a happy ending. Albanian studies and critiques, or even foreign readings of the novels have spotted the link between the fate of the isolated country during dictatorship, which also affects the fate and freedom of the individuals in the novels. Moreover, Kadare has been unable to distance himself from the sacrificial clichés of giving life for love, and giving up your love for your homeland. These two factors encompass the tragedy of many of the protagonists in his novels, though the entire scope of the tragedies that encompass the body of the work is not limited to these factors. In the entire body of work by Kadare so many of the realities of society and people's life are considered, that it becomes difficult to define the categories within which the narratives occur. The works have also explored philosophical concepts and through a mythical outlook they have attempted to judge the society which the author saw around him at the time of writing (Uçi, 1999: 126). Though, Kadare explores contemporary Albanian society (usually Albanian society during the communist regime of the second half of the 20th Century) through his work, he does this through writing about historical settings. Antiquity becomes an analogy for contemporary society. Myths are constantly used to disguise criticism of the society which had to appear to be perfect for the purposes of the communist propaganda. Therefore myths become a metaphor which allows for discussions of ethics, morality and tradition in the novels.

Kadare's work deals with the most essential issues that society faces, using different eras as models to which these issues can be attached. Great novels open great opportunities for exploring social phenomena from interesting viewpoints. This is a good thing in terms of creative values. However, when attempts are made to categorise the novels, there is a danger that their meaning could be misunderstood and misinterpreted. In Kadare's novels, the excessive references to the national tragedy of Albania can be explained by the large entity of Albanian folk art which has inspired the writer.

During the 1950s, only a few years before Kadare began to publish his work, 'Albanian literature had entered a period which was driven by a general desire to reuse generic narratives instead of creating new stories' (Mato, 1983: 178). According to Mato, this period made it acceptable to reuse subjects, figures and motives from the folklore, legends and myths, something that Kadare became good at doing (ibid). Through the works of Kadare, this period brought back to popular attention the legend of the walling sacrifice, the legend of honour, and the legend of keeping a promise; legends these, that according to Kadare, were created by the Albanian people, despite their popularity throughout the Balkans region (Kadare, 2002: 29-30).

As a writer, one of Ismail Kadare's strengths is his ability to restructure myths into his narrative. Myths have helped Kadare to disguise the political agenda of his novels when writing and publishing under the communist dictatorship. This was a form of resistance through his writing which can be read according to Morgan thusly: 'The story of Ismail Kadare represents a stark reminder that engagement can, in some contexts, be a matter of life and death' (Morgan, 2010: 41). According to Rainey, mythic references, in Kadare's novels 'become dynamic instruments for dealing with the dictatorship and the transitions that followed' (Rainey, 2013: www.full-stop.net).

The use of myth as a form of resistance have appeared in Kadare's novels since his first published novel, *General of the Dead Army* (*Gjenerali i Ushtrisë së Vdekur* (1963)) (his first novel was in fact *City without Adverts* which was written by Kadare in Moscow in 1959, but was prevented from being published in Albania). In *General of the Dead Army*, a priest and a general arrive in Albania in order to look for the remains of soldiers of a fallen army. The novel is full of hatred and irony and the days of the foreigners are spent under the rain moving from one graveyard to the next. In another one of Kadare's novels, *The Siege* (Albanian title *Kështjella* - The Castle (1970)), a Turkish Ottoman commander arrives to

overthrow an Albanian fortress. He and his army spend their days under extreme heat, military attacks and battles, and similarly moving between graveyards. The *General of the Dead Army* digs up the casualties of war, whereas *The Siege* buries those who die in battle. The graveyard theme is presented in both of these novels not as a symbolism of terror but as a symbol for what Kadare felt was the natural conclusion of an occupying war. The message is clear: the occupiers end up in the graveyard. In both of these novels there is a similar opening, with the arrival of the foreigners, and the endings of both novels describe an unglorified ending to their adventures. In *General of the Dead Army* the start and the end are defined by the attempt to find the body of a Colonel, whereas *The Siege* starts and finishes with the walls of the castle. This myth of resistance was an attempt by Kadare to draw parallels between the legendary resistance of the Albanian people from foreign occupiers during its history, and the current resistance which the author felt that had to be shown against the fully indoctrinating communist regime. Similarly, every mythical reference becomes a veiled attack on dictatorial systems.

In his narrative, Kadare juxtaposes one world against another. In his novel *Broken April* (Prilli i Thyer (1980)) the story occurring around the 1930s is placed by Kadare in the context of the code of blood feuds, and the main narrative is focused on the bloody quarrel between two families. In his first novel, *The City Without Adverts* (Qyteti pa Reklama (1959)), which was only published in 2003, he places the themes of fatality and challenge adjacent to each other, due to his pessimism of the socialist realist literature style he had learned during his studies at the Gorki Institute in Moscow. As such, all of Kadare's novels explore the theme of power, and in the narratives life and death are always in the hands of those who hold the power. Foucault states that 'the power relations appear through antagonism' (Foucault, 1982: 217). Amongst this antagonism, Kadare shows the traditions, problems and experiences that define or characterise Albanians. However despite this, his

work is appealing to the foreign reader as much as to Albanians and this is why his work has been continuously translated into many languages. Because of this, Kadare's work becomes timeless and has an element of cultural multi-meaning, that is, the themes in the narrative can be relevant to different cultures at different times. Every narrative in Kadare's work contains at least two different time periods that interlock fully with each other. The first of these is the time period in which the narrative is set, and the other is the time at which Kadare is writing the novel. As such elements of his surrounding events always enter Kadare's narrative even if it is set in a historical period. Or to put this more aptly, Kadare disguises the contemporary events that he is critiquing in his narrative by transposing these events into historical or very often mythical settings. This is why myths are widely used (or re-used) by Kadare in his work. As such, from Kadare's work in general we can read the contemporary political issues in Albania, and so the text transmits the contemporary as well as mythical Albanian cultural identity.

Some of the myths reused by Kadare are similar to those used by other writers of Balkan origin. For example, the myth of the "volunteer" who was immured inside the bridge in order to make a "sacrifice" to the river as used by Kadare in *Three Arched Bridge* (Ura me tri harqe (1978)), was similar to the myth in Ivo Andriç's novel *The Bridge on the Drina* (Na Drini ćuprija (1971) where a small Serb boy taken from his mother as part of the levy of Christian subjects of the Sultan (Devşirme) and separated from her until at the age of 60 decides to order the building of a bridge at a point on the river where he was parted from her. Certainly it can be noticed that neither Ivo Andriç nor Kadare are separated from a society that easily sees itself in the literary heroes, the thoughts and states of mind of whom is described by the two writers. It is clear that, in Kadare's case at least, the myths which are transmitted by cultural memory have played a great role shaping his literature.

Jan Assmann and Rodney Livingstone (2006), in their study *Religion and Cultural Memory: Ten Studies*, provide that: 'The concept of cultural memory corresponds to what Derrida calls "archive" and Bernstein "tradition" and, like them, is indebted to Freud's insights into the psychohistorical dimension and the dynamics of cultural transmissions' (Assmann and Livingstone, 2006: 27). Assmann and Livingstone describe the process through which representation of internal culture became transformed into an explicit dynamic category referred to as an unsolidified movable that shifts and changes in different contexts and times constituted either as "literary text" or a "cultural text" (Assmann and Livingstone, 2006: 205). Accordingly, it was accepted that '… in the world of textual coherence, life with texts is structured very differently…' (Assmann and Livingstone, 2006: 121). The effect of cultural memory to constructing identities is, as Assmann and Livingstone denote, through "tradition" that refers to the 'handing down and receiving as well as the continued existence of what has been received' (Assmann and Livingstone, 2006: 25). Kadare's novels are heavily reliant on representing the Albanian traditions and myths which have been learned by the author through cultural memory, and hence the novels transmit the cultural identity that was previously received by the writer.

This study is important as it brings attention to the interpretation of previously unexamined meanings to most of Kadare's novels. The studies carried out into the work of Ismail Kadare have not been extensive in their analysis of the myths incorporated in these works, so the thesis will be taking an original angle in discussing Kadare's literary universe. A glimpse of both Albanian academic studies and Western studies carried into the work of Kadare reveal the lack of in-depth analysis of many of the issues raised by Kadare in his novels. The work of Albanian academics and Western scholars has not been the same, so there is little similarity in results, and at the same time, interest in comparative studies has only started to become popular recently. In all, although Albanian literature, especially after

1990, offers a wide scope of topics for academic study and debate, there has been a lack of studies regarding the relationship between mythical elements in Kadare's work, or more widely, Albanian literature.

V.   Myth used to express cultural identity

In what follows, I will consider how Kadare's work has historically tended to reflect the mythical Albanian identity. In the thesis I will show how Renate Lachmann's concept of intertextuality as the "memory of literature" will illustrate a clear sense of how cultural disparities were being specifically aligned with cultural identity constructions in fiction during the communist period in Albania, and especially in the work of Kadare who was one of the prominent Albanian writers even at that time, and serve as devices to provide a 'historical narrative of "past" and "present"' (Lachmann, 2008: 303 and Weissberg, 1999: 53). Both Albanian and Western literary critique and other academic disciplines have not paid the deserved respect to the use of myths in Kadare's work. This is clear if we consider the fact that Kadare's work has used myths to draw similarities with the fate of his country. This is also clear if we also take into consideration the fact that the author himself has expressed in autobiographical books and interviews that reusing myths when writing under communism helped him to hide the key aim of his novels: the unmasking of dictatorships of all types, and the strive for human rights and an emancipated society. In a few instances, Kadare has expressly stated his desire to write about the struggle of a people from foreign intervention, and specifically in *Autobiography of the People through Verses* (Autobiografia e Popullit në Vargje (2002)) he has dedicated a few pages to a discussion of the resistance of his people during times of oppression.

It is not a coincidence that Kadare has attracted the attention of foreign readers with the themes about the Albanian way of life that he has explored in his work. From early on, his foreign readers have expressed that they have been introduced to Albania through his work, and have visited the country to experience it at first hand closely after reading at least one of Kadare's novels.

Kadare is not the only Albanian novelist to focus on the cultural identity of the Albanian people. Albanian writers such as those of Naim Frashëri, Andon Zako Çajupi, Aleksandër Stavre Drenova, Faik Konica and later Fan Noli, have greatly focused on promoting Albanian culture and history through their work, and the cultural identity of the characters is an important element of these writers' writings. However, the way in which Kadare has manipulated myths in his narrative is unique.

From the beginning of the twentieth century until the new millennium, Albania has been represented and categorised in Kadare's literary texts as a nation desired by colonial powers, and known for the emigration of its citizens due to wars and social upheavals, such as the Ottoman five hundred year occupation[2] and other Balkan wars, as well as World War I and World War II. During these years the conditions of the cultural and social life of Albanians have been determined and unfocused and the migration of the Albanians to other countries would be identified as a massive exodus in both fiction and media portrayal.

The series of violent expulsions that punctuated the country in 1897,[3] and 1917-1920[4] together with the emergence of Albanian national identity,[5] are frequently seen as providing

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[2] Ottoman occupation of Albania, 1385 – 1912: Following the Battle of Savra in 1385 (during which the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire lent his support to the lord of Durrës in order to defeat his rivals, the Balšić noble family) most of the Albanian chieftains became Ottoman vassals. By 1415 the Ottoman Empire had created garrisons throughout southern Albania. The Ottoman Empire established formal jurisdiction over most of Albania by 1431. The feudal leaders were allowed to hold on to the control of their regions and property; however they had to pay tribute to the Sultan by sending troops and their own sons as hostages to the harem. Ottoman Empire rule over Albanian territories lasted until the declaration of independence in 1912.

[3] Albanian uprisings against the Ottoman Empire brought anarchy to the Albanian-populated lands; this led to the banning of Albanian language books and correspondence, and to the fleeing of many Albanian intellectuals

the background for the emergence of a new construction of cultural identity in literature that took hold as the twentieth century progressed. The myths that they generated thus assumed the status of foundational moments of modern definitions of cultural identity and illustrated the point that cultural and ethnic identity increasingly became the object of cultural and social representation toward the end of the nineteenth century in Albania.

The forerunner to Albanian literature, the folklore, is a form of superstructure through which people have expressed a large proportion of their ideas, so 'the early sources of the folklore are as old as the people' (Sako, Z. A and Haxhihasani, Q. and Fico, A, 1982: 6). These early creations even if fragmented or in the form of rituals, have been kept alive through to the present day. These works of folklore have served as the first inspirational stage for the birth of Albanian literature since cultural memory, which is based on the forms, styles and general expressive tools, is not rigid but through the contribution of groups or individuals, is enriched and crystallises in uninterrupted ways. According to Alfred Uçi, 'the folklore has fed the art of [Albanian] literature', and the folklore's ready format is cultivated by literature (Uçi, 1986: 209). Kadare himself states in *The Autobiography of the People in verses* that verses and the poetic world of his people, were powerful tools in guarding against 'the cultural barbarism, obscurantism and oriental ignorance' (Kadare, 2002: 15). According to Kadare, the Albanian people were never faced with a more different spiritual or ideological situation than when occupied by the Ottomans. Hence, the art and the entire cultural dynamic;

who had been involved in the uprising. (For further information, read: Skendi, S. (1968) *The Albanian National Awakening, 1878–1912*. Princeton and London: Princeton University Press.)

[4] Italy took control of large areas of Albania in June 1917, declaring a protectorate over central and southern Albania however many Albanians continued to fight Italian soldiers until this was overturned in September 1920. The continued fighting led to many people emigrating from the country. (For more information see: Thomas, N. (2001) *Armies in the Balkans, 1914-18*. Oxford: Osprey Publishing.)

[5] The emergence of Albanian National identity as referred to in Albania, 'Rilindja Kombëtare' (The National Awakening) began after the Russo-Turkish War in 1877-1878 which weakened Ottoman power in the Balkan Region and fuelled fears among many Albanians that their lands would be separated into the territory of neighbouring countries. The awakening culminated with the Declaration of Independence in 28th November 1912. (For further information, read: Skendi, S. (1968) *The Albanian National Awakening, 1878–1912*. Princeton and London: Princeton University Press.)

'the myths, philosophy, songs, poems, customs, spiritual climate, and almost every other aspect of Albanian life were unacceptable to the Ottomans' (ibid). However, possibly due to the fear of assimilation, during the centuries of the Ottoman occupation, the Albanian folklore, which was smaller during the pre-Ottoman era, 'grew to the size of a creative universe' (Kadare, 2002: 16).

VI.   Organisation of thesis

In this section I will unpack the structure of my thesis and explain how the thesis will develop. Each chapter of my research retains the notion of Kadare's literature as a body to be traversed, discussing texts by looking at the themes of the myths that have been used by Kadare in order to understand the narrative in relation to memory and cultural identity construction. Below, I give an outline of the contents of the other sections and chapters in the study. Proceeding chronologically, I organise my research in the five chapters and develop its argument in relation to texts written from the mid 1950's until 2010. These chapters also emphasise the epistemological shifts in the history of cultural identity construction in Albanian literature and the politics of ethnic identity presentation and reception.

Chapter 1 will be a literature review, with an exploration of the studies carried out into the works of Kadare by Albanian academics and western scholars and will reveal a lack of intertextual analysis of the myths reworked by Kadare in his narrative. This chapter constitutes an exploration of the scholarly writings which will be used as reference throughout the thesis.

In Chapter 2, I suggest that Kadare's novel *Chronicle in Stone* promotes the myth of the resistance of Albanians. Through an analysis of the 'myth of the city' and related myths, we can gain an understanding of the cultural devices that are drawn from the geography of

Kadare's hometown Gjirokastra, itself. I will also explore how Kadare uses these myths to represent the silent terror that life in Albania during the Communist regime represented. The setting of Gjirokastra during the Second World War becomes an apt place to represent the silent terror of the people and their secret attempts to resist the oppression they are under. The chapter also explores how Kadare constructs the characters in this novel, especially the boy narrator who is used as a tool by Kadare to articulate his own feelings and thoughts into the setting of the narrative.

Chapter 3 examines Kadare's novel *The Bearer of ill Tidings – Islamo nox*, which since its first publication in the literary journal *Nëntori*, was an immediate success, winning the national award for that year and drawing attention due to the themes it explores. I argue that Kadare equates occupiers such as the Ottoman Empire and the Cultural Imposition on the Albanian people historically with the oppression of Albanians during the Communist Regime. Therefore through the way in which Kadare portrays the Ottoman Empire that has affected the cultural identity of Albanians we ultimately get an understanding of what effect the Communist Regime has had on Albanian society. For example, in *The Bearer of ill Tidings – Islamo nox,* Kadare shows how the 'ballkanesha's'' (women from the Balkan) presence and representation is changed through the imposition of the 'ferexhe' (veil) on them. I will argue that this represents an attack on the power that Dictatorships have over people.

With the analysis of Kadare's *Agamemnon's Daughter* (Vajza e Agamemnonit), Chapter 4 will delve into the myths of sacrifice which have been invoked by Kadare in this novel. Furthermore, this chapter focuses on some of the other novels by Kadare that explore other types of sacrifice. Through historical context which will involve a look at the time of the communist regime in Albania, I will explain that Kadare seemed to rewrite the myths of sacrifice so as to show sacrifices carried out in vain. I explain that throughout the thesis that each of Kadare's novels can be read as relating to two time periods: the historical time period

in which the narrative is set, and the time period during which the novel is being written which together with the reworked myths disguise the narrative, in order to allow Kadare to critique his contemporary situation without falling prey to the censure of the Communist Party. The chapter explores the political situation under communism and the real life sacrifices expected of the people that would have inspired the myth of sacrifice.

In **Chapter 5**, I will explore the ways in which Kadare reworks the myth of Narcissus in the novel *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains*. Through the use of themes from the legend of Narcissus and the related myths, I will argue that Kadare manages to explore the impact that the selfish desires of dictatorial regimes and the isolation of society have on cultural identity. The representation of the homosexual man in this novel is a deliberate attempt to criticise the Communist morals and the western lifestyle is represented as a liberated contrast to the isolated Albanian in this novel.

VII.   Aims of the thesis

From the development of this chapter, I have developed certain lines of thought. In a sense, the rest of the thesis would examine the construction of myths in Kadare's prose in greater detail. In order to see where this study has its vision, it is essential that a few important points are understood. In the first place I aim to analyse what the reuse of myth in Kadare's fiction signifies, that is, what Kadare aims to achieve through the use of myths. I will attempt to show that the use of myths is a means of disguising the narrative and the setting of the novels so as to allow the author a freedom to critique the social system of Albania during the Communist Regime (and in general to critique any dictatorial regime).

More specifically, in this introduction, I have attempted to lay out clearly some of the evidence relevant to the finding of appropriate models and theories for predicting mythological elements, and identity representations in prose. This introduction began by establishing the foundations of the study. It explained why Kadare was chosen as an author and stated the aims and objectives of the thesis. The chapter then continued by exploring the theoretical framework in which the thesis will be based. Firstly there was a critical discussion of theories around myth. It was found that there can be a problem with the terminology, as 'myth' can sometimes has different meanings. The fact that myths are generally reused in literature through the use of archetypes was also discussed. The chapter then went on to discuss theories regarding the use of myth in literary work. This led to an analysis of how Kadare has explored the themes of myths in his work generally. Further the chapter discussed briefly how myth has been used in literature to explore cultural identity. The last section of the chapter detailed how the rest of the thesis will be organised. I will now proceed by exploring the framework of studies that have considered, however briefly, the use of mythology in Kadare's novels.

Chapter 1: LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 Introduction

In this literature review chapter, I will be detailing other studies which have, however briefly, discussed Kadare's use of myths in his novels. It has to be said that some critics have mentioned that Kadare uses myths and literary figures. Although there has been little disagreement or controversy among them, each one emphasises a different aspect, probably because each has only touched on the theme incidentally whilst pursuing his own line of enquiry. It is understandable that although some have pointed out the need to see why and how Kadare uses myths, none has offered a comprehensive survey and one has even regarded the attempt as futile. The findings of those who have studied the theme fall into three broad categories: myths as a way of perceiving the world, the adaptation or displacement of myths, and the literary effects of mythical. The work of Ismail Kadare can be split into two stages. The work which began with the publication of his first poetic volume, *Boyhood Inspirations* (Frymëzimet Djaloshare) in 1953 and ended with Kadare leaving Albania in the beginning of the 1990s can be considered as the first stage. The second stage is the work written by the author in Paris and in Tirana after this period. Almost every piece of work written by Kadare which belongs to either of these stages has been scrutinised by critics, academics and members of the media.

Though the work has received acclaim, some of Kadare's novels have produce conflicting views from academics. The studies into Kadare's work which have been carried out by academics from within Albania and the surrounding regions in which ethnic Albanians reside (such as Kosovo, Macedonia etc.) can easily be split into studies about the first stage of works or studies about the second stage. Conversely, studies carried out by Western

European academics cannot very easily be split into such groups. This is largely because most of Kadare's work has been published into foreign languages after the 1990s and foreign academics have not analysed the work written before the 1990s separately from that after this period.

Since Kadare himself has repeated the Albanian proverb 'respect the foreigner' a number of times in his work, in this chapter I will begin by examining the studies of myth and cultural identity carried out into Kadare's work by western academics. One must note that these western academics have played an important role in not only spreading the interest in the work of Kadare world-wide, but also in revealing elements of the Albanian cultural identity to the rest of the world. Albanian academic Fatos Tarifa states that Kadare deserves the deepest respect from all Albanians; however disappointingly 'he is respected more outside of Albanian than in his own country' (Tarifa, 2010: 7). Researchers of Kadare such as Noel Malcolm, Peter Morgan, Anne White, Robert Elsie, Robert Crawshaw, Erica Weitzman, Galia Valtchinova, Rebecca Gould, Piet de Moor etc., will be explored in order to ascertain how they have viewed Kadare's work.

Since the writings about Kadare's work by Albanian academics are plenty, I have decided to choose to examine only the studies which have been based on similar subject matters as those of this dissertation: namely reuse of myths and representation of cultural identity in Kadare's work. It needs to be stressed that the studies of dedicated Kadarean academics such as Jorgo Bulo, Dalan Shapllo, Razi Brahimi, Dilaver Dilaveri, Klara Kodra, Xhevat Llloshi, Perikli Jorgoni, Adriatik Kallulli, Pipi Mitrojorgji, Floresha Dado, Muzafer Xhaxhiu, Abdurrahim Myftiu, Moikom Zeqo, Alfred Uçi, Shaban Sinani, Arshi Pipa, Rexhep Qosja, Fatos Tarifa, Piro Misha, Tefik Çaushi, Bashkim Kuçuku, Ali Xhiku, Vjollca Dibra, Mimoza Çika-Kelmendi, Viola Isufaj, Alfred Kosta and Emine Sadiku, will be highlighted throughout this dissertation, however, in this literature review section I will focus on

analysing the studies of Sinani, Çaushi, Alimani, Velo, Dado, Pipa, Uçi and Sadiku, as academics who have focused on similar points of analysis as this dissertation.

1.2 A review of foreign studies on Kadare's work

It has to be said that though some foreign studies suggest that Kadare's work is mythic in its language and forms of representation, the analysis of the use of myths in Kadare's novels is rare and undeveloped. Most of the foreign studies have focused on the French translation of Kadare's novels; however some academics have considered the English translation from French. Stephen Brown (2000) was the first to acknowledge myths in Kadare's work: 'Kadare restores the past to messy compromise, rumour and confusion but also wishes to reweave it into a different kind of myth - a tragedy of Europe' (Brown, 2000: 392). Brown refers to Kadare's novel *Three Elegies for Kosovo*, (Tri këngë zie për Kosovën (1998)) stating that 'Ismail Kadare's latest book centres on the Battle of Kosovo Field in 1389 and its aftermath. Nearly 600 years later, Slobodan Milošević[6] used a distorted myth of this battle to propel himself to power - and the Balkans into war. Kadare writes in dense, lyrical prose, enlivened by sly wit' (ibid). Certainly the Albanian nation plays an important role in Kadare's novels and short stories where the protagonist, by identifying with an Albanian national identity, becomes aware of a sense of harmony in the universe. Only through understanding his identity can be overcome the restrictions of the present and appreciate the underlying rhythm of the world around him. Brown again touches on the influence of myths and cultural identity to Kadare's works as he says of the novel: 'The uninitiated should be warned. These stories require grounding in the history of the Balkans and medieval Europe'

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[6] 'Milošević is considered one of the most brutal dictators of the twentieth century' (Sullivan, 2012: 9). For further reading see Sullivan, L. K. (2012) *Slobodan Milošević's Yugoslavia*. Minneapolis: Twenty-First Century Books.

(ibid). However, despite touching on the subject, Brown has not looked at Kadare's reuse of myths extensively.

Peter Morgan stresses that 'Kadare in his writing, brings a strong sense of ethnic identity, by presenting for the first time to the international stage, the customs and rituals of his homeland' (Morgan: 2006: 38). Morgan is one of the many academics who have taken a great interest in studying Kadare's work. Though he has not greatly explored the reuse of myths by Kadare in his work, Morgan does stumble onto the topic at times. Morgan says that 'during the sixties Kadare would return to Greek myth in the form of the conflict between Prometheus with Zeus as a political allegory about the interrelationship of creativity and power under communism' (Morgan, 2010: 93). Kadare's work has a dual function, in that they allow him to analyse the time in which the work is set as well as the time in which the author wrote it. Morgan is more interested in the context of the novels which Kadare has written, especially in relation to work written by Kadare during the Communist Regime. In his detailed study entitled 'Kadare: the Author and the Dictatorship 1957-1990' (2010), Peter Morgan clearly takes a focus on analysing how the Communist regime affected Kadare's work, or more specifically, what Kadare's work reveals about the time in which it was written. However, this study, which was also translated in Albanian by Ilir Shameti, and published by Fahri Balliu, the publisher of the anti-communist Newspaper of the 1990s '55', was clearly more of an analysis and critique of the Communist Regime than an actual analysis of the stylistic elements of Kadare's novels. However, the value of this study must not be overlooked. Morgan's study increased the interest in the topic of Kadare's novels, especially because it involved interviews with many other prominent Kadarean academics such as Raxhimi, Misha, Lubonja, Lani, Puto, Çapaliku, Plasari, and even Robert Elsie.

Morgan states in the above mentioned study that Kadare played a prominent role as a dissident writer in communism, and that 'it would be wrong to suggest that he was quiet

during the regime' (Morgan, 2010: 9). Herein, therefore, lays Morgan's aim for his study: he has attempted to introduce Kadare to the world stage by explaining, through reference to Kadare's novels, how this writer managed to resist the influence of Enver Hoxha's regime and write his novels which carried in them undertones that criticised the Party. Morgan contradicts the critiques claiming that Kadare wrote his novels 'in conformity with the political developments in the Communist regime' (ibid). It is through the use of myths, that Kadare has been able to hide his dissidence. For Morgan:

> As elsewhere in his work (such as *The Autobiography of the People in Verse* and *The Palace of Dreams*) Kadare posits an original 'Illyro-Albano-Greek' civilisation of the Balkan Peninsula, which pre-dated the Slav migrations of the following millennium and found expression above all in the epic songs of the Homeric tradition (Morgan, 2010: 97).

Morgan stresses that the way in which Kadare raises 'the complicated ethnic and Balkan issues' in his work, remains an important means for Kadare when representing the Albanian cultural identity. Even though Morgan's essay does not focus on the cultural factors and on how the myths are used in Kadare's prose, he does recognise the Kadare's inspiration from myths and legends.

In Morgan's study, Kadare is presented as the only Albanian writer who is known outside of his country to have 'offered his fellow countrymen the alternative of a more progressive Albania and was one of the only sources offering hope of change. His work was closely linked to the Albanian language, culture and national identity' (Morgan, 2010: 10). According to Morgan in all of Kadare's novels the whole notion of representing ethnic identities is approached differently to the way in which it was done by Soviet novels which

most of the writers in Albania at the time used as a template. This different approach at representing the ethnic identities in his novels, helped make Kadare's work an important element that filled the void of the unrepresented Albanian identity in the Balkan fiction. Morgan looks closely at the unknown elements of Albanian identity historically and also at the details of the identities represented by Kadare, which according to him are simply the 'the representation of Kadare of the national identity.' Morgan states that 'culture is transmitted through language in methods that are unique in the linguistic sense and are difficult to translate' (Morgan, 2010: 38).

One of the most debated topics in the Balkans, the topic of dual identity, is a problem that has been explored by the academic Anne White in her essay 'Kosovo, Ethnic Identity, and 'Border Crossings' in The file on H and Other Novels by Ismail Kadare' (2004). Here White has focused on analysing the identities created by Kadare in his novels, especially those that are affected by situations of border crossings. The political side of perception and the ethnic problems that are caused in the Balkan region as a result of this seem to be the focus of White when exploring the structuring of the identity of the characters in Kadare's novels. Anne White argues 'that although Kadare's work seems full of binary oppositions, his worldview is permeated by a sense of the links or border crossings from one identity to another and the potential for dual identities' (White, 2004: 23).

For Anne White, though Kadare is an Albanian patriot, in *The File on H* he has shown an even handed approach in explaining the use of mirroring legends by the Serbians and the Albanians that have shaped their identities over the ages (White, 2004: 25). White suggests: 'legends are interwoven into Kadare's own novels, which are themselves sometimes cast as legends' (White, 2004: 26). She states that in her opinion Kadare is showing that there is a common shared culture between the Serbs and the Albanians which had begun from the Battle of Kosovo in 1389, and the legends show this. However, even though Kadare is mostly

even-handed and describes the view-point of the Serbs in an equal measure to that of the Albanians, he is doing so in order not to portray biased Albanian radicalism. A reading of his narrative does not really suggest that Albanians and Serbs share similar identities. In fact the even-handed approach, if anything, serves to highlight the differences between these two identities.

In White's argument the issue regarding the time during which Kadare wrote his novels is also an issue. The period of communism under which Kadare wrote, raises the issues of 'elasticity and freedom of interpretation' since according to White, there is enough evidence that can be drawn from Kadare's novels that suggest that he was, to an extent, being dictated on what to write, or not write about by one of the harshest Stalinist regimes in Europe (ibid). In relation to this argument I agree with White, though I would like to add that even though Kadare was restricted in his writing and publishing, he still found the means to express his work, or more importantly to find the space to portray his ideas in his writings. As Crawshaw would say regarding this, Kadare would express his ideas through 'multi-layered text' (Crawshaw, 2011: 95). As I will be explaining throughout this study, this was possible because Kadare always based his novels on mythical stories that would fit the idea he was trying to put across in the narrative. As such, he could hide any critique of the regime he lived under by use of an analogy that compared the situation to an historical or mythological setting. As I have explained already in this study by reference to the novel *The Palace of Dreams*, due to the censorship and close surveillance his work was under, Kadare always used the Ottoman Empire as an analogy for the communist regime when being critical in his work.

Robert Crawshaw states that Kadare's text 'deconstructs the relationship between popular myth embedded in folklore' (Crawshaw, 2011: 94). Crawshaw looks at Kadare's work through a consideration of the concept of multi-layered text or a reflexive

demonstration of the relationships between fiction and history. In his essay, 'Literature, History, Language and Intercultural Understanding: An Approach to the Study of Selfhood and Otherness', Crawshaw examines the many factors that affected the representation of identities in the novel *File on H.* (1981). Amongst them are the factors that have caused conflicts in the moments where the different cultural identities in the Balkans have crossed. These functions act as a system that in Crawshaw's view causes 'the tribal confrontation of languages and cultures' in this part of Europe. Theoretically there are always clashes between neighbouring cultural identities because, according to Michael Argyle, 'people want to find out how their ideas and abilities compare with those of others' (Argyle, 1967: 28). In the novel which Crawshaw considers, whilst songs, traditions and rituals are transmitted over the boundaries of geographical states, it is where each state purports to compare themselves with their neighbours that the problems arise. According to the novel this is because usually the neighbouring countries do not find common elements even where they exist, but rather allow rivalries to emerge. Crawshaw is of the opinion that what Kadare does well in his novels is that he 'mounts an implicit defence of literature's role in relation to history' (Crawshaw, 2011: 94). I agree with this notion since it is clear that Kadare has always looked to explore historical themes in his work.

The problem of the fragmented identities of the people of the Balkans is explored by Crawshaw in another one of his essay, entitled '*The File on H. Metahistory, Literature, Ethnography, Cultural Heritage and the Balkan Borders*'. Through a short historical analysis in relation to the subject matter of *The File on H.* he explores the problems linked to borders historically, but he also looks at the cultural borders which are slightly different to the geographic borders. Whilst considering some of the aspects Kadare uses to construct identity in his novels, such as for example songs, Crawshaw explains that 'in delivery of the songs, the names of places and characters change according to the audience and their heroic subject

matter related to the territorial aspirations of different ethnic groups' (Crawshaw, 2006: 56). According to Crawshaw, the novel *The File on H.* is in the foremost, a representation of the Albanian national identity, despite Kadare's text making it appealing to readers of a wider audience. In his essay he points out that from Kadare's texts it is clearly understood that Albania is an example that shows that 'myths [can be] appropriated as a foundation for national identity' (ibid). However, whilst he admits that the characters of the novel are reflections of ethnic origins, Crawshaw only stops to analyse their links 'to the oral epic' which according to him is seen 'in counterpoint to the ignorant paranoia of the Zog (aka Hoxha) regime' (ibid). However, in this essay, Crawshaw does not go into detail by analysing how these myths are reused by Kadare in his novels.

Many critics, more interested in the ideas behind the myths than in the way Kadare used them, have suggested that they represent Kadare's view of the world. For Galia Valtchinova, the study of myths is a way of discovering what Kadare thought about a variety of topics. Galia Valtchinova says that in Kadare's fiction the reader can easily find all Albanian myths. She argues that Kadare's work is 'among the best of contemporary Albanian literature, in which, […] one can find interpretations of all major Albanian myths' (Valtchinova, 2002: 104). As a result, she concentrates on the relationship between myths, epics and the 'Illyrian roots': 'In 'deconstructing' the unity, epic tradition common to both Slavs and Albanians, as well to Greeks themselves, Kadare proceeds, at the same time, to 'construct' the initial 'Greek Illyrian unity' (112). This approach is limited to registering a few instances of degradations of myths and does not explain how they alter the whole structure of Kadare's novels. It also fails to account for all the other myths which Kadare uses, mainly relating to identity, and for the fact that the Albanian myths invariably come from the distant past. Valtchinova suggests that from Kadare emerges a more powerful myth 'that the Albanians are 'more Greek than the Greeks' themselves, because Albanians are

closer to Homeric society and Homeric ideals' (112). But the problem still remains unresolved: do the myths point directly to cultural problems or do they soften all cultural criticism?

She regards myths as a counterweight to balance Kadare's preoccupation with the Albanian image and achieve some kind of universal application. Myths will contrast with modern reality and neither illustrates nor explains it. She interprets Kadare's interest in the classics as a desire for a more harmonious world-view. Myths in Kadare's novels are, however in her view, only one of many mutually conflicting views rather than a harmonious resolution of conflicts.

Set against this there is the more harmonious view of myths as a means of grasping the true nature of reality. For Erica Weitzman, myths in Kadare's work point in two directions. In her study '*Spectres of Narrative: Ismail Kadare's The General of the Dead Army*', Weitzman considers one of the most translated of Kadare's novels, *The General of the Dead Army* and focuses on the spectrum of its narrative by looking at the novel 'in terms of its ambiguous relationship to national identity and its interrogation of the possibility of national-historical narrative as such' (Weitzman, 2011: 284-285). Weitzman stresses the fact that even though Albania is a small place geographically, and even though it is not a country that plays a big role in the political, economic or social spheres on the world stage, through the reading of Kadare's work, Albania's its history is filled with 'national myths, heroic figures, folkloric practices, and cultural touchstones', all of which 'allow Albanians to obscure internal differences and historical complexities in favour of a clear master narrative' (ibid). Here I think that Weitzman's argument is correct, in as much as Morgan also is of the thought that Albanian identity is complex and hence Kadare is attempting to present it in his novels (Morgan, 2006: 38).

In her essay, *Allegory and the Critique of Sovereignty: Ismail Kadare's Political Theologies*, Rebecca Gould similarly looks at Kadare's novels in order to carry out an analysis of the theme of death, but this time through the angle of sacrifice. Gould takes into consideration the description of the Balkan's myth of sacrifice; namely the 'walling' of living people into the foundations of bridges, something which was said to bring luck to the construction of the structure. As well as looking at Kadare's *The Three Arched Bridge*, Gould also considers Serbian writer Ivo Andrić's classic *The Bridge on the Drina* (1945) which also revolves around a similar theme of sacrifice. According to Gould 'both writers suggest that the search for glory requires sacrifice' (Gould, 2012: 209). Gould stresses that in the novels, *The Three-Arched Bridge*, *The Palace of Dreams*, *The Pyramid*, and *Spring Flowers, Spring Frost,* Kadare investigates the myth of the 'walling' sacrifice in order to explore the ancient elements of Albanian society that actually helped shape the cultural identity to an extent. Nevertheless, Gould argues that from the novels the patriarchal system and the state as represented are always involved in the sacrifices whether directly or symbolically (ibid).

In this respect, Gould judges that in *The Three-Arched Bridge* and *The Pyramid*, 'Sacrifice is rendered most literally' in their narrative, but each of the four novels mentioned above 'structure sacrifice according to this paradigm' (Gould, 2012: 213). Gould offers a detailed analysis of René Girard's scapegoat mechanism to the tension between acceptance and progressivist rejection of scapegoating. Gould reads Kadare's novels as the literary expression of the powerful impact made on the traditional meaning of the sacrifice. Against this traditional reading, she contends that Kadare's novels actually 'suggest that state power sacrifices innocent lives not for any ethical, moral, or even practical reason, but simply because, in the absence of persecution, society would internally implode' (ibid). I share the same views as Gould in relation to this point, since it is clear that she has spotted the typical

elements of sacrifice that Kadare explores in his novels. Since sacrifice is one of the wider issues dealt with by Kadare, I will analyse the theme fully as part of Chapter 5 of this thesis.

Piet de Moor, a Belgian journalist and writer, has focused on the absurdities and the marginal which is hidden behind the histories of dogmatic and totalitarian regimes. In his essay 'A Mask for the Authority' (Eine Maske Fur Die Macht (2006)) he notes the myths which are reused in Kadare's work. Piet de Moor stresses that 'the game without a lead of the vicissitudes of life is an important element of Kadare' (de Moor, 2006: 30). This game of vicissitudes is seen by de Moor in *The Bearer of Ill Tidings – Islamo Nox* (*Sjellësi i Fatkeqësisë - Islamo Nox*) where he notes that the character of Hadji Milet is not simply a messenger of the Ottoman Empire, but a missionary charged with introducing the 'veil' (ferexhe). The author has used here the word 'ferexhe' for 'veil' and I will be analysing the message that Kadare was trying to portray regarding the forced covering of the people by a tyrant in Chapter 3 of this thesis. Moreover, de Moor explains that in the novel 'on first glance it seems like we are faced with an Islamic religious cult of oppression: the people must be purified. However, according to the Ottoman beliefs, the decree [introducing the compulsory wearing of the veil by the women] would turn the Albanian men into pacifists' (ibid). Kadare writes in this novel that: 'When the women are uncovered, men unconsciously become frenzied. There would be less wars and rebellions, because it is a known fact that it is women who stir the troubles of the world, just as it's the moon that stirs the tides' (Kadare 1984: 141). This again suggests a hidden message of control of the people by keeping them quiet through any means.

When de Moor looks at the motifs of ballads and myths which are used in Kadare's novels, I agree with his argument that they are emotional reminiscences. Kadare uses these ballads and myths in order to rebuild what de Moor refers to as 'The unblemished Albania that hides behind the mask or the face of the dictator, the Albania that needs to be

rediscovered by the future generations' (ibid). In different ways the legends and myths transmit clear messages. For example the case of the blood feuds helps to highlight the parallels that exist between the ancient laws of the Canon[7] (Kanun) and the disregard for human rights in dictatorial Albania. Such parallels are seen by de Moor in *Chronicle in Stone*, where the conversations about the executions in Constantinople and about the decapitated heads that are displayed in the city centre in order to terrorise the people, are elements that are empowered by cultural dynamics. The black ladders that surround the decapitated heads simply enforce the symbolism of the imagery.

After almost half a century of absence of critique and serious studies of Albanian literature originating from Western academics, Robert Elsie published his study entitled *An End and a Beginning* (1994). Even though the study is not solely about the work of Kadare – it is an analysis of the wider Albanian literature – it established the opinion that out of all the writers who had written in communist Albania, Kadare was the only different voice. Elsie refers to Kadare as a visible exception that was allowed to 'express some nonconformist point of views or travel abroad' (Elsie, 1994: 17). With this 'freedom', but also due to his talent, Kadare became one of the voices that allowed Albanian literature to become known to a wider audience. According to Elsie, Kadare's prose and poetry is what gives him international fame, that is, it 'paved the way for Kadare's deserved fame outside his homeland' (Elsie, 1994: 19). Elsie stresses that Kadare's novels are a reflection of the socio-political problems encountered by Albanian society at the time of writing, but they also express the views of the writer through mythical or historical settings. This style was a 'safe

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[7] The Canon (The Kanun) is a very old protocol for the Albanian society. The Canon is principally a collection of Albanian traditional laws that regulate all aspects of conduct within one's family, village, clan, with members of other clans, and with strangers. The Canon has been the foundation of Albanian society for centuries. The author of the Canon is Lekë Dukagjini, an Albanian knight and a Catholic prince living about 500 years ago, before Ottomans conquered the Albanian lands. He fought against Ottoman occupiers both under the command of George Kastrioti Scanderbeg, the Albanian national hero and a European figure, and later after his death in 1468. (See Chapter 3 for more information).

cover for [Kadare], and he became a peerless master of the genre' (ibid). However, very little analysis of the use of myths in Kadare's novels was included in Elsie's study.

1.3 A review of Albanian studies

Studies carried out into Kadare's work by Albanian academics have also been brief in exploring the reuse of myths in Kadare's novels and have failed to analyse the meaning and the reasons why the myths were used by Kadare. Myths are full of physical details which can be adapted to the present. They also demonstrate, as Ali Aliu suggests, the repetitiveness of the world, that nature repeats itself endlessly and that everything is always the same (Aliu, 2006: 27). This approach, often used by Aliu, shows the present as an accumulation of past experiences. As a result, Kadare's novels are seen as hovering between two levels: 'the whole universe of Ismail Kadare, established within a time frame of the half century' and within 'the mythical dynamism throughout his creative opus' (Aliu, 2006: 13). The past is the key to the present. Unfortunately the only explanation that Aliu offers is that Kadare 'transforms the Balkan myth' and 'unearths the labyrinth constructed through the centuries' (ibid).

As many myths are related to classical Greek literature, Kadare's use of myths has often been taken as evidence of a classical world-view. He is seen as regarding the world as a harmonious and complete whole where all phenomena are justified and reflect eternal principles. Jakup Mato explains that the richness of the facts, details, and characters that are seen in Kadare's novels, show that Kadare possesses 'a wide knowledge of myths, folklores, legends, historical documents, and the biographies of notable figures' (Mato, 1983: 87). Jakup Mato, with his article *Innovators of Albanian Literature of Socialist Realism* (Risi të Letërsisë Shqiptare të Realizmit Socialist (1983)), has added his arguments to the many critiques written regarding Ismail Kadare's work. Mato a well-known critic at the time when

Kadare wrote during communism, states that 'Kadare's novels, through a myriad of common characters, treat the problem of identity through its multilateralism, and bring rich information and a multitude of aesthetic values,' (Mato, 1983: 49). According to Mato every character with which the protagonist of Kadare's novels interacts 'serves to deepen the problem that arises' (ibid). This suggests that in Kadare's novels ethnic identity and all the other cultural dimensions are fluid. These elements are changeable and create volatile identities within the novel. Mato suggests that Kadare's classicism is a desire to reflect the completeness in the novel.

Even though Mato's study isn't fully dedicated to Kadare's work, the latter's novels take up a prominent role, since Kadare's work is at the core of the study, work with which, by borrowing the term from political reporters of the time, Mato refers to as 'innovative'. Kadare's work, according to Mato, brought a refreshing way at looking at the current situation in Albania. Nevertheless, what Mato touches upon in his study is important as it set the path for other Albanian academics studying Kadare's work to follow. I think that Mato gave his opinion on Kadare by grouping his work with that of other writers who were similar to Kadare only in the respect that they wrote in Albanian and wrote at the same time as him and in fact produced work which was very different to that of Kadare. The important thing, however, is that Kadare was earnestly devoted to representing Albanian identity in his work and Mato identified this in his study, so his study is one of the reasons why other Albanian academics began to look at the representation of identity in Kadare's work after. Yet what he and other Albanian academics after him have failed to analyse is the reuse of the myths in Kadare's work and how these help to shape the literary cultural identity in the novels. The inclusion of references to myth in Kadare's novels, although perhaps evoking an antique atmosphere on occasions, does not necessarily lead to a sense of unity and may often create a sense of disunity. The modern version of the myths, by its emphasis on physical detail, may

appear incongruous, degraded and totally divorced from the harmony of setting in the novel, especially if the myths come from a number of different sources. The many levels may be antagonistic and the writer may use them ironically. Claude Lévi-Strauss, for example, says that 'as a matter of fact, differences are extremely fecund' (Lévi-Strauss, 1979: 20). The mythical levels or differences are not, here, an ideal, but an intermediary between the other two. As will be shown, the myths tend to accumulate round chaotic and fluid situations, unstable moments, and often in opposing pairs. It is therefore easy but dangerous to regard myths as an ideal to which characters should aspire.

Critics have noted that Kadare's method of creating characters pointing to universal themes is analogous to the creation of myths. However, Tefik Çaushi, an Albanian academic, points out that literary roles are often abandoned in Kadare's novels. A critical viewpoint of the main values of some of Kadare's work is considered by Çaushi. In his books, *Kadare between the Mirrors* (Kadareja Përmes Pasyrave (2002)) and *Wordings* (Fjalësi (2004)), Çaushi has proposed that the uniqueness of Kadare 'remains in the field of words and depends on the language that he chooses to use' (Çaushi, 2004: 7). In, *Kadare's Literary Universe* (Universi Letrar i Kadaresë (1993)), Çaushi stops and addresses the values of Kadare's work by looking at the portrayal of the myth of Albanian traditions and customs, such as "the Honour" (Besa) that even raises the dead from the grave. According to Çaushi, Kadare has explored the elements of the 'mythical' Albanian honour firstly through the transformation of the famous Albanian myth of Constantine and Doruntine through the novel *Doruntine* (Kush e Solli Doruntinën (1979)). According to Çaushi, Kadare explored the Albanian code of honour in great detail in this novel, though Kadare also explores elements of the Albanian honour in *Broken April* (1978). However in *Broken April* the Albanian code of 'honour' comes from the impact of the Canon, whereas in *Doruntine*, "honour" is seen by Kadare 'as a precious value of Albanian life' which is derived from ancient values that are

passed on as myths (Çaushi, 1993: 4). Kadare has explored the ancient Albanian 'rite of honour' or as it is known in Albania 'Besa' which relates not just to the honour of the given word but also to the honour in keeping the word. The concept of 'besa' in relation to the given word cannot be translated into other languages directly. In the other languages of the Balkans the word 'besa' exists as a loan word from Albania, since there are usually no other equal words or phrases that can give the same meaning. 'Besa' known in Turkey as arnavut besasi (the Albanian besa) according to Albanian beliefs, is the fundamental virtue inherited from ancestors of Albanians (Elsie, 2001: 35). In *Doruntine* the rite of honour relates to the word given by the main character Konstantin when he promises to his mother to bring home his sister who was married in a distant region, even if he died in the process. Hence even when he died, Konstantin kept the word because even burial did not dissolve his promise as the 'the earth would never receive [him]' until it was fulfilled (Kadare, 1979: 48). 'Besa' or the rite of the given word is related to the biblical sense of the given word: "In the beginning there was the Word" (Endresen, 2010: 248). Before the existence of writing, contracts, there was simply the given word. This rite, which took the religious implications, was observed seriously amongst Albanians. The binding word, the honour, was judged under the jurisdiction of the highest authority, the Canon. All relationships within the same kindred, tribe, parish, and with outsiders were bound with the given word. 'Besa' is a moral testament of Albanians with mythological roots. The Canon stated that 'the word is a pardon', that which is promised must be carried out (Gjeçov, 1989: 114). Çaushi believes that Kadare aims to promote the best social character values of the Albanian people through his work. According to Çaushi's study, Kadare is a writer who 'has attempted to highlight the ancient roots of the Albanian nation, its battles and challenges to survive, its cultural values, the disasters that have befallen it, and the resilience that is shown through the nations attempts' to stand back in its feet after it was pushed down (Çaushi, 1993: 178).

However, even though Çaushi's study could be classed as an attempt to analyse Kadare's work critically, it must be stressed that it is a confined study, and it only surveys a part of Kadare's work, the work which was publish before and up to the year 1990. Çaushi himself explains that the fact that Kadare left Albania to claim political asylum in France in 1990 suggested that the author had not fully escaped from communist censure (Çaushi, 1993: 4). As such, Çaushi's study has its flaws and limitations regarding time period considered, but it does have its merits because it draws attention to Kadare's work at a time when he had just emigrated to France and the prominent critics of literature in Albania had begun to turn their attention to other authors.

An attempt at focusing more widely with the work of Kadare, or more accurately, an attempt to envisage the work in relation to a global literary system, was undertaken by Alimani. In his study *The Four Ks* (Katër K (2004)), Alimani, somewhat favourably, sees the work of Kadare in a similar sphere to those of Kawabata, Kafka and Kundera. According to Alimani he has compared Kadare to these writers because they all share similar backgrounds that have shaped their creativity:

'Kawabata, surrounded all of his life by tragedy, loneliness and growing up an orphan, wrote his poems whilst always feeling himself to be inept. Kafka saw everything as a total impossibility, or even fantasy. Kundera seems to still say to himself: "I was about to forget that God laughs when he sees me thinking". And wherever he is, Kadare takes with him Albania, his arsenal of tragedy, and shapes it into unique and universal [novels]' (Alimani, 2004: 6).

The Kadarean universe is overloaded with parabolas, stories, symbols, fables, comments, and countless themes that argue Albanian's European identity, that explore through cultural

memory the Albanian ethnic identity issues. The rituals and traditions are the other element that concerns Kadare in his work.

When parallelising the four worlds of the writers he is comparing in his study, Alimani states that Kadare's strength in comparison to the others is that the Albanian writer's novels radiate an internal freedom that Kadare seemed to possess (Alimani, 2004: 195). In this angle, Kadare is a prominent sketcher of drama. According to Alimani, just like Macbeth, Kadare's work has a heat that radiates up until it is read by the reader. It is this play that has been a great source of inspiration for Kadare and according to Alimani 'Kadare attempts to create a modern work of Shakespeare' (Alimani, 2004: 196). When reading Kadare, what appears as Macbethian can be construed as a drama for all of humanity and this is also true in his recreation in different novels of Prometheus, and of a Troy that does not fall.

Alfred Uçi declares that Kadare has, along with the historical themes in his novels, invoked themes derived from mythology and legend, and he uses these themes to show the antiquity of the Albanian people. According to Uçi, this has a huge importance in Kadare's work, but many nuances of 'ambiguity of the figures of folklore cannot be detected and understood, unless the direct links with the folk mythology is ignored' (Uçi, 1982: 226). However, Uçi believes that when transplanting the folklore with mythological origin into his novel, the author must not change it arbitrarily. The academic uses the novel *Doruntine* as an example. Uçi states that Kadare has included unnecessary elements in this novel and the style of the narrative, which is based on quest or detective novels, is the wrong choice for the theme being focused on. Though I agree with the general ideas that Uçi has about this novel, I disagree with his conclusion as to its style. It is wrong to suggest that the style of the narrative affects the themes that the novel is exploring.

It is generally accepted that *Doruntine*, just like many other novels by Kadare, explores the myth of sacrifice; in this case it is the sacrifice of a daughter who marries far

away from her family in order to help the social status of her family. The idea behind this form of sacrifice seems to be that nothing can last unless it is 'spiritualised', unless it is carried out through a sacrifice (Eliade, 2005: 549). Though this novel has been criticised because of the incest which Kadare has included in the narrative, I do not believe that this unnecessary element takes away from the exploration of the 'honour' which has been important to Albanian society. The 'unnecessary' details of the incest that have been added to the ballad in this novel, were part of the attempt by Kadare to explore the ancient pagan religious beliefs that he delves into throughout this novel (Çaushi, 1993: 202). After all, since Kadare aims to give a detailed account of the time period during which the ballad – and therefore his novel – is set, he would have seen it necessary to highlight elements of incest that he believes were taking place in those ancient settings, so it would be harsh to criticise the writer for attempting to be realistic in his narrative. It would seem that Uçi's criticism of this is mostly levelled at Kadare, because of the time in which it was written. Communist morality required that the art produced as part of the Socialist Realism should not include seedy elements, so Uçi would have been compelled to criticise the incest in *Doruntine*. According to Viola Isufaj, Kadare's novel 'highlights the richness of the unknown past thanks to an intelligent deportation into the heart of antiquity' and therefore the writer has been fully focused on authenticating the setting and the likely events of the ancient time, even if this led to a deviation from the storyline of the ballade in which the novel was based in (Isufaj, 2013: 88). In any way, the simple fact that Kadare is writing about something immoral such as incest in his novel, it is a sign of indifference directed at the communist attempt to control even the morality of society. Kadare is showing that a society can be immoral at times, dictatorships cannot control everything.

As it has become clear from the analysis of other studies into Kadare's novels, there has not been a clear focus on analysing the reuse of myths by the Albanian author. I will

argue that analysing the meaning of the myths reused by Kadare will help to understand the real meaning behind the narratives of the novels. Therefore an analysis of the myths becomes essential. This study will continue by exploring some theories relating to myths and archetypes in literature.

1.4 Conclusion

In this chapter the previous studies carried out into the work of Kadare were discussed. It can be concluded that neither foreign academics nor scholars of Albanian origin have been preoccupied in extensively discussing and analysing the reuse of myths in Kadare's novels. As has already been stressed in this thesis, understanding the myths that are used by Kadare is important to understand the underlying meaning of the narrative, especially since Kadare has mostly used myths and historical settings as a veil which allowed him to attack the Communist Regime and all dictatorial regimes in general. Through analysing the work of other critics, this chapter concludes that myth in Kadare's work ultimately means a structural principle of literary form and that the most mythical works will return to such forms. As a result, the presence of myths and literary figures will transform the novel in which they appear and can be used in many ways.

Kadare's novels may be used to draw unflattering parallels with modern life or, paradoxically, to ennoble it and they may clarify characters whose true personality is ill-defined, in the process of formation, or who represent ideas. Also they are a way of welding together narrative and meaning; and they may represent the imagination of a character without using his own language. Although they may represent intrusions by the narrator, they may sometimes reduce the role of the creative imagination, and they affect all aspects of the structure and technique of the novel.

In exploring the opinions and writings of many academics that have analysed the work of Kadare, firstly I explored the studies carried out by foreign academics (non-Albanian academics) through translations of Kadare's work, mainly into the English language. Most of the analysis reveals that Kadare writes his novels so that they represent two different time periods, one which is inspired by mythology, fables and history, and becomes the actual setting of the narrative, and the other time period which relates to the time when Kadare wrote the texts and becomes visible through a deeper reading of the text. This method allows Kadare to write about the trauma, problems and social aspects that Albanians were facing during Communism, as well as representing a view of the Albanian identity that would not have been favoured by the Communist Regime. The chapter explores some of the points to which academics such as Peter Morgan, Anne White, Robert Crawshaw, Galia Valtchinova, Erica Weitzman, Rebecca Gould, Piet de Moor agree in relation to Kadare, but also highlights their difference in opinion. The chapter has also looked at the opinions of Albanian academics by looking at articles, studies and books which have explored Kadare's novels. However in both cases it was found that none of the studies to date have rigorously analysed how the reused myths in Kadare's novels affect representation of cultural identity of the characters. Therefore, this thesis proposes to look at an almost unexplored aspect of Kadare's work.

The state of criticism on the mythical tendency in Kadare is confused because most critics have made only incidental comments on the subject. Although there is no clear pattern, the following issues have emerged: What connection do myths and cultural memory have with the description of nature? Are the myths and cultural memory used for social criticism or to balance it? Are myths merely one point of view in a diverse world, a half-way-stage between this world and the next or a state of ideal harmony to which man must aspire? Do they ennoble or degrade, and what connection do they have with tragedy and comedy in

Kadare? Do the distance between the real and the mythical levels lead to irony or a serene and detached tolerance?

To these questions may be added the following: Can Kadare's mythical technique be described in such a way as to account for all his writing, or must each reference be treated separately? What myths does he use, and do they have any common factor? Is there any development in his use of myths and literary figures, and if there is, does it have any connection with Kadare's ideas? Are myths referred to in Kadare's ideas about the novel?

In order to answer these questions each of the chosen novels will be taken separately and analysed during the ensuing chapters.

Chapter 2:   CHRONICLE IN STONE

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will be exploring Kadare's novel *Chronicle in Stone*,[8] as this is a novel where Kadare employs representation of myths to portray a story that has rich cultural memory implications. I will be showing that through the novel we can see that memory is multidirectional and that cultural memory is derived from many, sometimes conflicting, sources. However, I will suggest that the use of myths by Kadare in his novels help to explore cultural memory whilst serving to disguise the critique of elements of society under the communist regime.

I will begin this chapter by exploring the novel *Chronicle in Stone* which is the novel in which the rest of the chapter will focus. The section will give an overview of the myths and themes treated in the novel and will explore the background behind these themes. Here I will begin by showing that, the way in which an author's work structures myths and explores the cultural memory of his people, becomes an important aspect of the work; hence these concepts can be found in Kadare's work.

I will then discuss how Kadare began to portray the city so as to connote Albania under communism. The chapter will explore the archetype of the destruction of civilisations as depicted in *Chronicle in Stone* and will also consider the relevance of the 'mythical trope of the colour black' in the novel. Furthermore I will explore the mythical element of blindness and also the mythical concepts of the 'hija' (ghost) and dark magic 'magjia'.

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[8] Though the novel was originally published in Albanian in 1977, this thesis has been considering the English translation published by Text Publishing in 2008.

2.2 Cultural identity in *Chronicle in Stone*

Chronicle in Stone is set in Gjirokastër, a city in the South of Albania, and portrays the situation of the city during the Second World War. The novel is a story narrated by a young boy who describes the human drama surrounding him at all times, activating linguistic intonations, visual structure, phraseology and vocabulary that are typical for mythological materials: the mourning rituals, celebrations, curses, dreams, and magic. The use of the following vocabulary is frequent: luck, curse, ghosts, intuition, warning signs, myths, legends, terror, disease, evil, monsters, ballads, treachery, bad water, sacrifice, burying, hypnotic, trance, sinister, psychic distress, mourning, corpses, etc. This in itself gives the narrative a mythological feel.

Essentially, the young autobiographical protagonist is poised at the outset of life, with two missions to perform: to survey the city of Gjirokastër and its society, distinguishing the true cultural values from traditional ones; and, in the light of the new knowledge of the city's surroundings, to school himself. In this novel, the narrative intertwines history and traditions, and explores life and death from an Albanian point of view. Ismail Kadare portrays a childhood, probably his own, in the middle of a people who are victims of continuous occupation from foreign powers.

Kadare involves the boy narrator in a mental walk through the overwhelmed streets of the city, making him a decentred object, decoding the images in his mental order and then, conveying those images to the reader. These 'counter-memory' signposts lost or hidden cultural practices are brought to the readers' attention by the cultural memory narratives in which Kadare focuses in the novel through a light of hereditary soundings of history (Foucault, 1980: 111-116).

Chronicle in Stone is not only the most successful of Kadare's works, but also the one which allows a wide range of interpretation because of its ambiguous structure and meaning, (Bulo, 1980: 35). Here multifarious elements, cultural, social, historical, political, and ideological, mingle to make a unique intertextual space. Because of this, reviews and criticism of this text have constructed a huge diversity of interpretations. Before beginning to offer my own reading, I shall briefly present what has been argued around this richly ambiguous work. From the article of the French author Michel Métais (1973) to the contemporary book reviews of Ymer Jaka in *Albanian-French Literary Connections* (Lidhjet letrare shqiptare-frënge) (1978), most critics regarded this text as a 'tale of the city', and praised the story which constructs female and male characters based on the romantic view which identifies dynamics of cultural memory with the nature of the city (Peterson, 2007: online).

V. H. Debidour (1973), who was the first to criticise the novel. Thereafter, in the 1990s, the majority of criticism of *Chronicle in Stone* was preoccupied with historical concerns, notably challenging the conclusion in which the Ottoman past is discovered by foreign powers during World War II. For Peterson, 'the townspeople's varied reactions to being occupied first by the Italians, then by the Greeks (and then the Italians, and then the Greeks, and then the Italians, ad infinitum), and finally the Germans are too realistic to be treated as merely fiction' (Peterson, 2007: online). It is evident that we, as readers, understand far more than is apparent to the characters in this novel. The whole novel is framed by fear, the formless fear of a character trapped in a hostile world which critics only partly understand.

Chronicle in Stone is also a novel in which Kadare presents a female point of view. He describes the gossip of the women that took place during the war time when constructing the female characters. While the narrative focuses on the influence of the past on Albanian

identity, 'a worthy addition to the rich literary landscape of World War II' and 'portrayal of an ancient city at the mercy of foreign powers' it is evident that cultural identity is also a by-product of construction of cultural memory forms (Peterson, 2007: online).

As the novel was written in the communist period, the cultural identity represented by Kadare in *Chronicle in Stone* has been done so through many subtle forms, especially through the use of mythical elements. One important element that has been employed is what I will refer to as the myth of the labyrinth (something which will be explored in more detail later on in this chapter. Through this novel, Kadare seems to blame the city, Gjirokastra, for all the crimes of one of its sons (Enver Hoxha, leader of the Communist Party of Albania, who was born in Gjirokastra). Therefore the novel uses the 'city' in highlighting its message. In *Chronicle in Stone* Gjirokastra is described thusly:

> It was a strange city, and seemed to have been cast up in the valley one winter's night like some prehistoric creature that was now clawing its way up the mountainside. Everything in the city was old and made of stone, from the streets and fountains to the roofs of the sprawling age-old houses covered with grey slates like gigantic scales. It was hard to believe that under this powerful carapace the tender flesh of life survived and reproduced. (Kadare, 2008: 7).

The description of the city as a 'prehistoric creature' crawling up the mountainside in this introduction to the novel already sets the tone for the incorporation of the mythical elements that will be intertwined in the narrative. The city is described as a singular stone creature, so all life in the city is an offspring of this stone creature.

On first account, then, the city is the 'overworked Albanian soil' which the Albanian-American critic Arshi Pipa sees addressed by so many Albanian writers, part of this being

dreary life of the Albanian (Pipa, 1991: 56). Pipa writes of the "eagerness" of Albanian literature to describe the Albanian setting into which a distinctive brand of Albanian identity suffusing cultural life in all parts where Albanians live could be placed. Pipa is suggesting that the Albanian literature has been quick to write about an Albanian identity which has been shaped by struggles. The Albanian setting therefore becomes a mythical setting, just as Gjirokastër does in *Chronicle in Stone*. Noel Malcolm talks about these "myths" and later states that it is wrong "to imply that everything so labelled is false or absurd; some of these myths rested on serious historical arguments" (Malcolm, 2002: 72). This is a common critical perspective which, as if to mirror this literary Albanian identity likewise permeates critical discussion of these fictions (Pipa, 1991: 32). In terms of Kadare's fictions, of course, such a perspective had been painted as Byron and Kockel stated, 'Kadare is interested in continuums whether they concern Balkan culture or human nature in general' (Byron and Kockel, 2009: 72).

Of the literature of Kadare's birthplace, Gjirokastër, Segel commented on Kadare's fictions confirming a dreary realism which failed to allow the reader any perfection from the enervating life of the city (Segel, 2008: 19). So pervasive is this view that it is clearly an easy critical inheritance to accept and commentators on Kadare, such as Pipa and Malcolm, seem to have done so wholesale. When reviewing Albanian identity in Kadare's work, Elsie concentrates on the metaphor of the city of Gjirokastër (Elsie, 2004: 298). This is, to Elsie, a city where even street names seem to signify a piercing, unavoidable cultural domination of the physical and historical environment, its dismal meteorology matching its grim physical appearance and its equally depressing cultural memories fulfilled with the fear of 'occupation during World War II' (Elsie, 2004: 297). Anne White further suggests that the city and its surroundings, from cultural identity to object relations, represent a very specific 'fate that Kadare, as a child, was terrified of for himself' (White, 2004: 39). This may be the case, and

the comparison between cultural and physical environment is valid, but whether this "fate" exclusively fits the critical images of the city in Kadare's novel is another matter.

2.3 Configuration of myth through fantasies

The fantasies of the boy narrator visibly expand under the impact of the texts he reads, the gossip he hears and the city that surrounds him. The narrator in the novel is surrounded by fairy tales, legends, and always particularly desires visiting his maternal grandfather who he refers to as 'Babazoti' and who owns a small private library of books which the boy is interested in reading. The boy narrator is therefore inspired by the world of the books and the words that he overhears from the educated people surrounding him, the information that he derives from these create some images, which involve creating imaginary locations. Kadare describes Babazoti's Turkish books thusly:

> 'The thick books lay in the trunk, piled one on top of the other, an endless
>
> swarm of Arabic letters waiting to carry me off and reveal secrets and
>
> mysteries, for only Arabic letters knew the path to the mysteries, just as
>
> ants know the holes and fissures underground.' (Kadare, 2008: 31)

The mention of 'secrets' and 'mysteries' that the books carry, is a reference to the mythical elements by which Kadare himself is inspired by. Here, the metaphor of the Arabic letter described as ants, in itself is an imagery. In the lines following the above mentioned quote, the boy narrator asks his grandfather if he can also read ants seeing as he can understand the ant-like Arabic letters (ibid). The metaphor is therefore extended and reference is made to

entomomancy, a mythical concept of predicting the future by reading the patterns of insect movements.

Faye, who has read and studied Kadare's work from early on, writes that 'the child Kadare had by the age of ten, already read the files 'H' [the works of Homer]', and had also began to read Shakespeare (Faye, 2005: 5). The stories he read in his childhood would have had a great impact on his style, though we can also see that other secret influencers to Kadare's writing have been other writers he has read later on in his life, such as Aeschylus and Gogol. Moreover, from *Invitation to the Studio*, we learn that at the age of 11, Kadare first began writing, and that this desire to write was inspired by the architecture of his home, especially the cellar which was divided into two inter-connected sections, what Kadare called the 'Big Lady' and the 'Small Lady'. It was the layout of his home that inspired his creativity and it is exactly with this architecture that he begins the first chapter of *Chronicle in Stone*. According to Kadare himself, it was his home and his city which inspired him as much as the books that he read when he was young.

In *Chronicle in Stone*, the boy narrator, who is portrayed as being vigilant and always listening to the conversations of the grown-ups around him, is described as being ready to absorb with curiosity every artistic and literary element he encounters. The author discusses this in *Dialogue with Alain Bosquet* where he maintains that a 'Hidden Kingdom lays beside every one of us. However, though it has many entrances, only few of us can enter it as nobody allows us to approach it. I curse my limitations as a person, because they do not allow me to transcend into it' (Kadare, 1996: 57). When trying to understand the age of the boy narrator in *Chronicle in Stone*, it is necessary to look both at his biological age through looking at the way he acts in the narrative, but it is also necessary to understand the mental age of this character as this appears to be much more mature than the first. Therefore it is essential to distinguish between the age of what is essentially the boy character as a person in

the narrative, and the boy character as a device used by Kadare that is beyond such concepts as biological age. In this case therefore, the boy narrator is a puppet in the hands of Kadare, a method for the author to portray his own personal views into the narrative. The character of the boy narrator is however wrapped up with the childishness in his behaviour, and this is probably a projection of how Kadare remembers himself to have acted in a similar age. For example in one passage the child's naivety and curiosity leads him to ask his grandfather for a cigarette: '"Babazoti," I would whisper, "roll me one too,"' (Kadare, 2008: 31). It is this same child who stumbles upon *Macbeth*: 'Finally I found one that had on its opening page the words "ghost", "witches", "first murderer" and even "second murderer"' (Kadare, 2008: 38). It is from this point on therefore that *Macbeth* plays a role in the theme of *Chronicle in Stone,* where magic, witches and murder are prevalent. It is as if Kadare is introducing the book from which he has re-written some of the themes that feature heavily in his novel.

The boy narrator's childhood is somewhat unique to experience, since the factors which affect the experience of the child's life are diverse and constantly changing. The child is growing up in the time of war, in a period when his city is experiencing multiple occupations, killings, and morbidity, and an influx of foreign arrivals. The city itself is facing a transitional period in which anything or nothing at all could occur. The words 'the end of the world' can often be heard. The city is left stateless, and this denotes a lack of laws and sanctions, so the occupying foreign armies could enter and do anything they wanted until they were ousted by a rival foreign military unit. The war is a drama played out in front of the boy, who is a spectator to what is occurring. He watches as the Greek, Italian, and German soldiers who occupied Gjirokastra brought many types of customs, traditions, items, clothes, and mannerisms that for the ancient city in which the boy resided, resembled a foreign body, a bringer of a killer infection. The dramatic panorama and backdrop to the narrative remains tragic as the terror of the wartime setting cannot be forgotten with fear becoming a co-

inhabitant of the city. The coloration of the city changes after every battle, the grey of the ruined buildings and the black worn by the people in mourning appear as symbolisms of the death that has occurred (Mehmeti, 1980: 356). The consciousness of the citizens also seems to change with each occurrence during the occupations: the class war, the mixing with foreign races and venereal diseases. Every fear for the inhabitants awakens mythical occurrences that become 'reality' to life in the city: Çeço Kaili's daughter's beard; Mane Voce's oldest son's bulging eyes; the house made of fibres built by the Italians; the brothel, again opened by the Italians; and even the marriage of the hermaphrodite. These events alerted the citizens of Gjirokastra that something was happening, and their mentality was shaken from its foundations, the law of their customs - or more accurately their soul - was being torn.

Chronicle in Stone also shows that new "myths" and legends are created and are spread through gossip. In a way, Kadare here requires his readers to open up subconsciously during the era of communist isolation. Kadare aims to do this by describing the chaos he witnessed around him in his country. The magic, gossip and all of the other forms of remnants of the medieval period were rife in the setting of *Chronicle in Stone,* so that the city has becomes so 'sick' that the boy narrator 'couldn't understand how a city could be ill.' (Kadare, 2008: 25). Alfred Uçi states that 'a dark world cannot exist without a dark mythology', without a machine that produces the inflated gossip (Uçi, 1982: 369). In *Chronicle in Stone* this gossip producing machine is represented by the characters who would start rumours in order to suit their own personal or political agendas. Through this Kadare clearly shows how important the spreading of planted gossip was in order for the dictatorship to take hold of the minds of the subjects. Hence Kadare uses his novel in order to unmask the type of thinking that allowed the spreading of the Party gossip amongst the people during the communist regime.

It is interesting to mention that this phenomenon has become a recurring theme in Kadare's various works. He pays attention to the problem of how mythologizing forms are created, or to be clearer, Kadare seems to focus on how gossip is created, what are the forces that create it and what are their interests in creating the gossip, or what is the effect of the gossip, namely how does it become a 'myth'. In the novels *The General of the Dead Army* (Gjenerali i Ushtrisë së Vdekur (1963)); *The Wedding* (Dasma (1968)); and *Chronicle in Stone* this problem is clearly evident. In *November of a Capital City* (Nëntori i një Kryeqyteti (1975)); *The Three Arched Bridge* (Ura me Tri Harqe (1978)) or even in *Equanimity* (Gjakftohtësia) (1980) and a few other similar novels, this becomes an important issue which Kadare fully focuses on. It is enough to understand the scene in *November of a Capital City* where the gossip oversteps all obstacles to spread freely: 'The legend of the bombing of the city slid along day and night like a snail, through the neighbourhoods, between the buildings, around the back of barricades, through squares full of the dead, and even where no man could pass through' (Kadare, 1975: 83). Kadare also adds the words 'mythical ecstasy' to add further to his extended metaphor and states that 'under their feet, like quick small animals or snails that slid around endlessly, raced the fears, gossip, prophecies, Arabian proverb and Latin proverbs…' (ibid). All of these devices mentioned by the author in the extracts suggest that gossip can spread new ideas that become myths in themselves. Hence, here, Kadare is further adding to the argument that the dimension of cultural memory support 'myths'.

In *Chronicle in Stone*, Kadare turns every myth with a set meaning about the situation of the City into a proverb in itself amongst the metaphors in the narrative, in order to hide his true intentions. For Barthes 'myths tend towards proverbs' (Barthes, 2009: 154). Kadare employs the proverb 'The snakes were getting ready to hibernate underground' (Kadare, 2008: 30) meaning that a winter (or dangerous time) was approaching. The dangers which were approaching also appear in the actions and attitudes of some of the citizens of

Gjirokastra in the narrative, who begin to express radical thoughts and ideas. In relation to this, Kadare mentions the word "mysticism", later has the character Isa ask Javer: 'have you ever read Jung?' and finally through a newspaper in the narrative writes that 'Magic is in some sense part of a nation's traditional folklore.' (Kadare, 2008: 25 & 26). The word 'mysticism', the mention of Jung and the explanation regarding magic clarifies Kadare's idea that new beliefs or ideas were spreading. This helps to equate the events during the narrative with the situation in communist Albania at the time in which the novel was written. Kadare seems to believe that it is important to highlight the way in which the gossip and ideas of the Party are spread during the isolation of Albania under communism so that his reader (initially predominantly an Albanian living under communism) can understand the concept of the isolation of his nation better.

At the start of chapter 2 of *Chronicle in Stone* Kadare, through the autobiographical child narrator, invokes a description of his childhood hobbies in a way in which they allow him to explore the isolation in Albania during communism. Kadare describes the children's swapping of foreign stamps, which betrays a desire for escape to other countries. Through the description of the stamp-swapping, Kadare explores a whole geography of nations that can become possible destinations where one could escape the chaos in the city of Gjirokastra: 'I'll give you France and Canada, give me Luxemburg' (Kadare, 2008: 12). This description of the game by Kadare by the use of the gossip can be understood to symbolise the desire of the Albanian people to escape from the communist isolation because they had grown disillusioned with in life. The use of the gossip reflects the point that gossip is a kind of 'myth making', and Kadare's uses both the gossip to foreshadow the future.

2.4 The city as labyrinth of the mythic

A key feature of Kadare's description of the environment of Gjirokastra in *Chronicle in Stone* is his identification of the mythic. His decipherment of the city from the objects and architecture of the urban complex and his consideration of the forms of experience encountered therein, fundamentally combine to unmask the historical city as the labyrinthine site of the mythic. The labyrinth was a prominent setting in ancient Greek myth - most famously Daedalus designed the elaborate structure at Knossos for King Minos in order to house the half man and half bull creature, the Minotaur. The labyrinth therefore was a complex structure which held mythical creatures, and facilitated mythical feats. Kadare describes the city of Gjirokastra in a similar way in *Chronicle in Stone*: 'The place was said to be full of mysterious crannies, catacombs and labyrinths you could never find your way out of' (Kadare, 2008: 110).

In his writing on Gjirokastra, Kadare seeks to map out his early life, to chart his childhood experiences in the labyrinth that is the urban setting. He gives memory and his past life (the temporal, the historical) spatial representation. Memory itself is represented as 'city-like'. The dense networks of streets and alley-ways are like the knotted, intertwined threads of memory. The open spaces of the urban environment are like overlooked places. Gjirokastra is formed in, and gives form to, memory. The city itself, just like the labyrinth, becomes the medium for mythic space.

Chronicle in Stone functions as a 'memory text' and reflects the idea of *loci* and *imagines* so as reconstructing cultural identity from cultural memory (Radstone, 2000:1-22). The idea, which came to Kadare at the age of 23 whilst studying at the Gorki Institute in the Soviet Union, arose after a conversation with his student friends whilst at the village of Peredelkino one cold afternoon of Russian winter alerted him to the need of writing about his

city of birth. Kadare began to remember the streets, the buildings, the architecture of the city, and created an image of the city in his first draft notes. This idea, scribbled on a few notes of paper, became the basis for the novel that grew into *Chronicle in Stone*. Kadare deploys his text in order to reconstruct Albanian cultural identity, and a reading of *Chronicle in Stone*, makes it clear that Kadare has utilised the chronicle which he had memorised, and this chronicle has become a moment in time where cultural memory brings the past to life, a past the author remembers from his early childhood.

Kadare dedicates the novel to the traditions, characteristics, rituals, customs and mannerism of the people of his town. Looking past the tinge of nostalgia that encompasses its tone, a reading of the novel also reveals that Kadare has focused on deliberately choosing the city as a setting for his novel in order to write about the struggles faced by Albanian society. In *Dialogue with Alain Bosquet* Kadare, when speaking about his literature in general, emphasises that 'the fragility of the work… [can be found in] the discipline of the art' and the literature is 'the freest spirit in the World' (Kadare, 1996: 48-57). In this context, we can refute the notion of Albanian academic Arshi Pipa, who believes that Kadare has crucified his own city with his work since 'the aureole of infamy which the author creates around his own city, reminds one of the circles in Dante's Inferno, which condemned Dante's own Florentines' (Pipa, 1999: 37). Kadare, like Dante before him, has brought judgement upon the evil where it existed, however this is allowed to the writer in order for him to hit out against aspects of society he does not like. The fact that Kadare has synthesised the spectre of a small city with all of the nuances of life through cultural memory, also refutes the terrifying idea that the author hates his city of birth and the work is nothing more than a sadistic attempt to attack the place where he grew up.

Although collecting on the memories and the interesting events lived by the boy, who is essentially a projection of his own youth, together with the mosaic of the architecture,

values, traditions of the city, the author seems to have valued these so highly that he has immortalised them in his art. *Chronicle in Stone* is only the first part of the texts written by Kadare about his place of birth, with the novel *Issues of Madness* (Çështje të Marrëzisë (2005)) continuing to use Gjirokastra as the setting for the narrative. In the introduction to the original Albanian version of the novel, Kadare muses: 'it seems as if the city is raised in built to awaken great ideas' (Kadare, 1971: 6). He later adds the following:

> The more I learned the secret of the art of writing, the more I realised that it had been lucky that I grew up in this unique city, that I had heard the explanations for the world from the mouths of these wise old women who wore black…' (Kadare, 1971: 6-7).

Kadare here credits the city for his inspiration and alludes to the mythical figures he was surrounded with when growing up, namely the 'old crones' (who he refers to as *plakat e jetës*), the century old women who seem to echo the Moirai or the Graeae of Ancient Greek mythology. According to the writer the 'old crones' were the cherry on his cake, since he could use them to transmit the tales that have passed on as legends. Radstone's statement that 'people shape and are shaped by memory' explains the importance of the *plakat e jetës*, who left their houses rarely but, through the use of cosmology, predicted everything that would occur to the city and its people. The art of culture wavers in front of the prophetic power of these unique beings that also seem remind one of Homer's Oracles of Delphi in Greek mythology. These women, located in Gjirokastra, and only a few tens of kilometres away from the isle of Corfu and not far from the Greek border, are the Albanian version of the oracles. The novel suggests that Kadare felt adulation, confusion and phobia towards these old women, he himself states that he is 'frightened from the beauty, divinity of prophecies of

life' (Kadare, 1996: 45). Therefore, when it came to writing about the old women, there is a struggle within Kadare between conflicting ideas that sometimes compete and at other times coexist in order to continue their function as a useful mnemonic for readers. Kadare describes the old crones thusly:

> "[The old crones] were aged women who could never be surprised or frightened by anything anymore. They had long since stopped going out of their houses, for they found the world boring. To them even major events like epidemics, floods and wars were only repetitions of what they had seen before. They had already been old ladies in the thirties, under the monarchy, and even before, under the republic in the mid-twenties. In fact, they were old during the First World War and even before, at the turn of the century." (Kadare, 2008: 24).

As the passage suggests the 'old crones' seem to have always been old, and it would have appeared, as if they had been ever-present in the city of Gjirokastra. The physical description of these ancient beings also makes them appear more like mythical creatures than human beings:

> "These crones were very robust, all nerve and bone, even though they ate very little and smoked and drank coffee all day long […]The crones had very little flesh on their bones, and few vulnerable spots. Their bodies were like corpses ready for embalming, from which all innards likely to rot had already been removed. Superfluous emotions like curiosity, fear and lust for gossip or excitement had been shed along with the useless flesh and excess

fat." (ibid).

This description of these almost skeletal beings reinforces the fact that the old crones serve as reused archetypes of the mythical Moirai or the Graeae. These old crones are therefore feared but respected by the population of Gjirokastra in *Chronicle in Stone*. Kadare himself plays the role of a child and he is himself listening to the words that are being spoken. To him these are profane, astonishing words, but words that are meaningful in life. These words would have entered Kadare's subconscious after he heard them in his youth and would have been reworked in his memory until Kadare was ready to 'attempt to rediscover beneath them the primitive text of a discourse sustained', and he would retell the words through his narrative, as such the cultural memory would be transmitted. Foucault suggests that 'it is no longer a task of knowledge to dig out the ancient Word...; its job now is to fabricate a language' (Foucault, 2003: 37). However, this writer is of the opinion that even though Kadare defeated the conflicts within him and described the prophetic conversations of the old women with a frightening beauty in his narrative, the old women still appear in a troubled state in the novel, and they will remain to be enigmatic as characters in the mind of the readers, as if they are above-human. It is these beings that echo mythology that are found within the labyrinth that is the city of Gjirokastra.

But why does Gjirokastra become a labyrinth in Kadare's novel? The answer lays in the fact that Gjirokastra in *Chronicle in Stone* is a representation of the whole of Albania under Communism. Just as the Minotaur guarded the labyrinth, at the time of writing Albania had become a type of panopticon, with intelligence officials given the duty to watch the Albanian society for the Communist Party.

The way in which society under the Communist Regime functioned, reminds of Foucault's writings on the panopticon. Foucault brings us to a similar field to that of Barthes.

Punishment in a dictatorial regime based on a system of power is open and can be brought on the public discourse. The type of system based on discipline that is discussed by Foucault seems to operate in the same way as myth, or in some instances, seem to make use of myths. Discipline seems to have a narrower focus and is mainly tasked in naturalising some specific types of moral systems inside its subjects. Hence it takes the form of surveillance and becomes an open form of the system of power. When discussing Foucault's ideas on the panopticon, Elmer highlights a depiction of surveillance; 'a subjectivation of power, as instilled in prisoners who architecturally speaking must assume ubiquitous surveillance, that they may be under inspection at any time, night or day' (Elmer, 2012: 23). A dictatorial system is similar to the panopticon. The system of fear that is created helps to create the belief amongst the subjects that the Dictator is always watching. Myth, just like gossip, can be used to create a system of regulation. In Kadare's novel *Chronicle in Stone* a central feature of a system of control is the fact that the citizens of Gjirokastra have no ability to communicate with each other freely. Inside the system controlled by the dictatorship, the inability to communicate is represented in Kadare's narrative in *Chronicle in Stone*. Kadare's text, both in its narrative structure and in its narrative content allows the reader to interact with the surveillance in a way in which the surveillance becomes a tool used openly. As such, the author's hidden meaning becomes clear because the narrative helps to create the public discourse of the surveillance by the dictatorship. This method of making the reader aware about the issue of surveillance occurs in the way in which Kadare's text creates analogous situations that represent the reality of constant surveillance. The city, Gjirokastra, is loaded with the full system of fear so it becomes a panopticon in the writer's narrative. The system of fear created by the reality of the Second World War represents the system of fear taking root in communist Albania at the time when the writer wrote the novel. The city is described as a labyrinth, because the labyrinth with its meticulous design and order, together with its

closed nature (it is difficult to escape the labyrinth), is a good symbol for the system of fear. Kadare puts the lives and destinies of the people of the city in a form of isolation, or in a condition similar to those of prisoners in closed cell, because he knows that through darkness and loneliness, silence and emptiness, it is easy to exert total control. It is this control of the dictatorship over the people that Kadare is ultimately trying to portray in the novel. For Foucault 'in this closed cell, this temporary sepulchre, the myths of resurrection arise easily enough. After night and silence, [there is] the regenerated life' (Foucault, 1977: 239). The city of Gjirokastra will regenerate itself after the war, Kadare when writing the novel was hoping that Albania would be resurrected after the end of communism.

2.5 Archetype of the collapse of a civilization

According to Greek mythology, the Trojan Horse, conceptualised by Odysseus and built by Epeius was made out of wood and was hollow on the inside so as to fit thirty Greek soldiers. The Greeks offered the wooden horse to the Trojans as a gift to Athena, as they had stolen the Palladium and the spy Sinon made sure that the Trojans would accept the gift. The Greek soldiers who were hidden within the wooden horse came out in the night and burned the city of Troy.

In *Chronicle in Stone*, within the periphery of the city of Gjirokastra, 'a new guest had arrived […] lying flat at the city's door, almost invisible', so that 'if it weren't for the absence of the cows and haystacks, you might not have even noticed it was there' and 'thousands of astonished eyes observed it without fully realising that it was there'; an aerodrome had been built (Kadare, 2008: 36). Out of nowhere this perplexing but seemingly-innocent structure seemed to suggest that 'war preparations' were up and running (ibid). The aerodrome looked lonely, magnificent and within it planes flew in and out of the city. These descriptions of the

aerodrome remind of the mythical Trojan Horse, which was also a tool that opened an invisible door allowing the Greek soldiers to enter the city and destroy it.

The aerodrome is a parallel to the wooden horse both in the way it first appears and in its function: 'Now, stretched out over the whole length of the plain, incomprehensible and threatening, it perplexed everyone.' (Kadare, 2008: 36). Understandably the new form of the Trojan Horse in the novel had to fit in with the times. The author merges the classical form of deception (the Trojan Horse) with contemporary creation, this aerodrome, that seemed to invite the aeroplanes that fly into and away from the city.

The ancient myth is transformed by expanding it into a new modern narrative. The merger of the Trojan Horse with the aerodrome, that extends to the length of the field, realises the metaphor of the monster. The Trojan Horse has been turned into a monster that has the same function in a new historical setting. The wooden horse in *Chronicle in Stone* (the aerodrome) has its roots in mythology but its appearance is modern. The planes therefore bring the soldiers to the city, and they are the mechanism for destruction, just as the Trojan Horse was the bringer of destruction to Troy. We can see this function when Kadare describes the bombing of the city from the air:

'It was a Sunday, nine in the morning. On that October day near mid-century, the ancient city, pounded countless times through the ages by catapult and cannon, shell and battering ram, was attacked from the sky for the first time.' (Kadare, 2008: 55)

Whereas the occupation from the foreign armies seemed to have been without casualties, the building of the aerodrome invited the planes, and these began the destruction of the city. Similarly, the same can be seen when the first plane falls over the city:

'It was white and in its wake a long and fatal plume spread majestically in the wind. It was falling across the sky, and the plane, with its pilot who would be dead in a few seconds, drifted steadily down and disappeared over the horizon. An explosion ripped the air. (Kadare, 2008: 65).

It becomes evident that the fear in the city now intensified as a result of the propaganda that required the further isolation of the city, the propaganda that categorised everything foreign as dangerous. The fear intensified because the city could now be taken from the air. Kadare uses the aeroplane and the airport not just as a reworking of the myth of the Trojan Horse, but he also uses the reworked myth to convey his message and forewarn of the future isolation that Albania would endure during communism.

The Trojan Horse (the aerodrome) is the archetype for treachery. Its placing on the outskirts of the city is an element borrowed from the original Greek myth. The city's function in the narrative is its desirability. It is coveted by the foreign powers, the tyrants of the world. It is not the first time that in a Kadarean novel, a city is sieged, and the inhabitants put up a stand. The fictional city that is constantly occupied in *The Drums of the Rain* (Kasnecet e Shiut), Vlora in *The Winter of Great Loneliness* (Dimri i Vetmisë së madhe), Tirana in *The Monster* (Përbindëshi (1965)) and in *November of a Capital City* (Nëntori i një Kryeqyteti), and Gjirokastra in *The Three-arched Bridge* (Ura me tri Harqe). The city seems to invite destruction and its enemies' thirst cannot be quenched: the Ottomans think up the cruellest devilry to defeat the fortress in *The Drums of the Rain*; the soviet commander Zheleznov desires Vlora in *The Winter of Great Loneliness*; the men in the belly of Odise K.'s horse dream of entering the city and killing its inhabitants in *The Monster* (Përbindëshi); and in a more comical situation, the communists blame the architects of the city in *Wrong Dinner*

(Darka e Gabuar) for the failure of their plan. In *Chronicle in Stone* 'our city had never seen such apocalyptic scenes before' (Kadare, 2008: 93). The wild desire to destroy the city in *Chronicle in Stone* seems to be unreasonable. It seems that Kadare is trying to portray the idea of the Albanian Communist Party that almost everyone is the enemy, and that the foreigner should be feared. It represented the recurring policy created in the Communist Dictatorship of enforced self-isolation and fear of 'enemies'. 'The greatest ability for recurring politics is based on hatred' (Champseix, 2009: 37). In the novel, the people inside the modern wooden horses are not an unknown mystery, they betray their presence. The people of the ground show their hatred towards them:

'The crowds of people filling the streets and squares began to move. A throng raced towards the northern edge of the city, where the plane must have crashed. Those who stayed behind came to their windows or climbed up courtyard walls and onto rooftops to watch the crowd, which had passed Varosh Street and was now streaming into Zalli Street […] At last the horde arrived. It was a truly unbelievable sight. Aqif Kashahu, drenched in sweat, with his eyes bulging and hair over his eyes, was in the lead. He held aloft a cold, wax-like, off-white object. In the streets there was pandemonium. "It's a man's arm!" "The pilot's arm." "The arm of an Englishman. The arm was all that was left." "The hand that dropped the bombs."' (Kadare, 1971: 133).

Kadare in *Chronicle in Stone*, suggest that the communist propaganda would have encouraged people to believe that the aeroplanes that flew in and out of the airport, and that bombarded the city from the air, together with the people that stood inside these planes and

controlled the airport, had the same intention as the Greek soldiers who hid in the wooden horse in the myth. The foreigners all aimed to enter the city and burn it:

> 'I spent the whole morning watching everything that was happening at the aerodrome: the planes landing, the way they formed up, the patterns they made on the field.' (Kadare, 2008: 69).

Desires for the destruction of cities then would fill the dreams of the children who would be amazed at the constant arrival and departure of the planes at the airport. The character Ilir begins to think like this, and expresses this in a conversation with the boy narrator:

> '"Isn't it terrific?" he said. "Now we have our own planes." "It'll be great!" I said. "We're formidable now, we really are. We'll bomb other cities just like they've been bombing us." "They'd better watch out!"' (Kadare, 2008: 69).

The function of reusing this tool of destruction (the wooden horse) by adapting it to more contemporary settings is to serve as a reminder in the narrative and as a warning that the risk for destruction is present at any time. Under the Communist Regime, the propaganda aimed to have the people ready for war at any time, any day could be a possible invasion. Fifty years of communism, especially when Albania entered a period of isolation by breaking off allegiances with their allies in the communist camp,[9] helped to feed the paranoid idea that

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[9] On 13 September 1968, Albania, who had been a founding member, left the Warsaw Pact after a political dispute with Russia. The Albanian Communist Party had grown disillusioned with the leadership of Khrushov (over what it believed was Soviet Revisionism) and sided with Maoist China in the Sino-Soviet conflicts of the 1960s. As a result, Russia ended its military cooperation with Albania. As it no longer so a benefit to the

almost everyone was preparing to invade Albania. This is why Kadare places a 'Trojan horse' in his narrative. It is a bleak parody of the paranoid belief that just as during the Second World War, the foreign powers would try to destroy Albania after entering the country inconspicuously. Kadare subverts the intentions and the meanings of the original myth.

2.6 The colour 'black' and the element of 'blindness'

As if to describe the darkness of the situation in which his novel is set, Kadare uses the colour black as an adjective on exactly 70 occasions in *Chronicle in Stone*, mostly when describing items of clothing worn by the characters. The image of the 'black dress' is an unmistakable reference back to the Grandmother, whose trademark was a dress similar to the one depicted. Readers and observers alike are prompted, as the image falls within their field of vision, to draw comparison between past and present, between the original configuration of the city and its weaker imitation, between the pretty dresses of the young ladies and the 'old women dressed in black' that symbolises the pain of those lost in the war (Kadare, 2008: 14). As Zyhdi Dervishi has explained, 'the symbolism of the black dress' is effective and quite obvious; the situation during World War II always required placing under the auspices of pain and black (Dervishi, 2008: 45). Like the Grandmother's black dress, 'the black cape' that the foreigner wore over the shoulders' acts as a commentary on the historical events to which it bears witness (Kadare, 2008: 95-96).

Warsaw Pact, Albania ended their membership. To make matters worse, by 1978, China broke off all trade relations with Albania, bringing to an end the informal Sino-Albanian alliance, and leaving Albanian in complete isolation. The breakdown in relations had begun in the early 1970s when certain aspects of Chinese policy together with the visit of US President Nixon to China and the Chinese announcement of the 'Three Worlds Theory' led the Albanian Communist Party to denounce China for supporting 'American imperialism' and abandoning the proletarian internationalism.

The significance of *the black dress* and of *the black cape* is not limited to an implicit authorial criticism of the cultural structures of World War II. Most significantly in the context of the present study, the recurring references to *the black dress* and *the black cape* in the novel simultaneously represent a reflexive commentary on the uses which the Kadarean text makes of excessive or unexpected references to mythological meaning. By providing the reader with a simple image of the old men and women in the street, the text testifies to the signifying power of those excessive references to the mythical element found in many other Kadarean novels considered in this study.

In the opening dialog with his friend, the boy narrator gives to the reader a clear chance to gain his or her first impressions of the setting through accurate description. The mothers in law, which Kadare called '*katenxhikas*' are walking in the city dressed in long black dresses (Kadare, 2008: 14). Kako Pino and the other old women characters in the novel appear dressed in black clothes similar to the priest, and the peasants are also dressed in black, so the narrator thinks that 'soon their black cloaks would darken the streets' (Kadare, 2008: 18). The 'black shawls', 'black woollen cloaks', 'black cape', 'black scarves', 'black headscarves', 'black boots' all are materially constructed throughout the novel as symbol of the horrors of World War II. Dervishi explores that in the Albanian cultural tradition 'in every occasion the colour black serves as a signifier for mysterious occurrences' (Dervishi, 2008: 188). Dervishi suggests that the symbolism is very closely related to the symbolism of black clothes in many cultures where they epitomise the presence of 'bad spirits'. Victor Witter Turner (1920-1983) a British cultural anthropologist best known for his work on symbols in his collection of writing *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* states that 'the black spirits were invoked to slay an enemy' (Turner, 1967: 84).

In Albanian tradition, colour was an integral part of the substance and being of everything in life. The colour of something was a clue to the substance or heart of the matter

(Dervishi, 2005: 97). The colour 'black' in *Chronicle in Stone* is more than a simple coloration of the clothing of the characters. Its use in the novel is multi-layered and comes from 'multidirectional memory' (Rothberg, 2009). 'Black' is used to describe the clothing of the old ladies, but at the same time it is also used to describe the situation in which the city and the people find themselves. The colour 'black' also completes the synonym of the apocalypse - the 'end of the world' that is repeated countless times in the novel - and represents the whole atmosphere of the setting of the novel. Kadare begins the use of the colour black with 'the black water' that falls from the sky and floods the underground cistern of the house (Kadare, 2008: 10). This 'black water', used in the novel to describe and forewarn the events that would occur in the near future, is accompanied by 'the dark, soundless tank' of the cistern that would take the falling raindrops captive (Kadare, 2008: 8). The colour 'black' is used as a function of the 'end of the world'. The same colour is used to describe the times in which the novel is set in: '*bad times, dearie, we're living in a time of trouble and treachery*' (Kadare, 2008: 10). It is also used to describe the forthcoming war. In this context, Kadare brings the reader's attention to the butcher's where the slaughtered animals are 'hanging on hooks, some with their legs up, some with them down.' (Kadare, 2008: 15). In the same passage, Kadare describes the visit of the boy narrator and his friend to the slaughterhouse and uses the word 'slaughter', which also refers to the fate of people during wars (ibid). The water gushing out of 'a black rubber intestine' to wash the 'bloody' floor of the slaughterhouse indicates that the coming events are becoming more alarming, the 'end of the world' is approaching and everyone should be 'prepared for a new type of slaughter' (Kadare, 2008: 15).

The slaughter referred to the approaching war. The slaughterhouse had become a metaphor for the conflict that would begin soon. In the slaughterhouse the peasants, 'dressed in thick black wool cloaks' were 'bending over the backs of the animals, clutching them by

their wool', willing to take the new souls and to hand them over to 'the slaughterers, with their white coats' (Kadare, 1971: 17).

The colour black signifies fear. The whole narrative epitomises a setting of constant fear. Kadare has purposefully uses the setting of Second World War Gjirokastra to explore a society in fear. This society in fear is however a representation of timeless fear; the colour black becomes a signifier of the constant terror of life under communism.

Amongst the use of the colour black and the darkness, Kadare introduces proverbs linked to eyesight for his readers. In this context Kadare describes the losing of eyesight as the losing of light, and therefore a descent into darkness; 'Vehip Qorri, the town poet, must have just that kind of liquid blackness in his eye sockets' (Kadare, 2008: 14). And so, to the narrator, losing your eyesight is comparable to the blackness of death, and the boy is shocked by a neighbour's curse 'May your eyes burst from their sockets!' (Kadare, 2008: 15).

Kadare himself feared being blinded by the communist regimes attempts to dictate what writers should be writing. It is interesting that when the boy goes to the cinema, he uses a piece of round glass, which he has supposedly found among his grandmothers possessions, to look from afar. The narrative does not describe the boy snooping amongst his grandmother's belongings, but the glass is obviously the type which has the ability to enlarge far-away objects and would have been derived from binoculars. In *Invitation to the Studio*, the author explains: 'from the time of my childhood I distinctly remember my grandmother's advice in relation to mirrors. There were a few rules that stated that the mirror must not be looked at in certain hours of the day' (Kadare, 2004: 36).

In *Chronicle in Stone*, after leaving the cinema with his eye numb from the effect of the glass he used to see the film close-up, the boy becomes anxious about his eyesight becoming limited. For Kadare himself, it is not clear when he had the need to wear glasses and when he actually did wear them, but it is clear from the fact that he always wears

spectacles that his eyesight has had the need of lenses from early on. The boy narrator in *Chronicle in Stone* alludes to the process of vision as a human mystery: 'I was obsessed by the mystery of blindness, which I feared more than anything else.' (Kadare, 2008: 14). The boy narrator further mentions his fear of blindness in another passage:

> 'Once our toilet was blocked, and the dark hole of the drain looked to me like a blind eye. That must be how eyes get stopped up, I said to myself. The flow of light, with all those sights dissolved in it, can't get through the eye sockets, and that must be what blindness is.' (Kadare, 2008: 14).

The blind eye is described here as a 'dark hole' which does not allow the flow of light through. Therefore, blindness, just as the colour black, represents emptiness. For the boy narrator in the novel, the blindness, just as the black clothing, symbolises death, because to him life is not desirable without functioning eyes. Here death is paralleled with darkness, the fear that arises when you cannot see, and the terror that the black clothes signify. To see things is to feel alive in the world; the author sees the fate of blindness as equal to death. In the novel, the boy narrator states:

> 'Sight. What an inexplicable thing! I turn my head towards the lower sections of the city and my eyes, like two great pumps, start sucking in the light with all those images of roofs, chimneys, a few lone fig trees, streets, passers-by. Can they feel me sucking them in? I close my eyes. The flow stops. I open them. It starts again.' (ibid).

After many attempts, Kadare finally finds a compromise with his own subconscious. Kadare describes the physical element of blindness, and through this he finds a complex explanation for his fear that calms it somewhat. It is arguable therefore that through his narrative, Kadare has found peace with himself. If seen through the angle of Rothberg's theory of multidirectional memory, we are reminded of Arendt's work *The Origin of Totalitarianism* (1951). From Rothberg we learn that in writing her work, Arendt used two methods; the method of watching the world around her closely in order to survey what the others could not see, and the technique of remaining blind and not seeing anything impacting the surroundings. This second method led to a realisation that can be found in *Chronicle in Stone* too: the fear of losing the ability to see (or not seeing) the things around us. Therefore just as the boy narrator is tormented by the dilemma of blindness, of tragedy and of death, he is also tormented by the mystery of vision.

Kadare's use of the element of blindness here is an attempt to signify another fear. He is exploring the concept of his own fear of not writing what he is actually seeing around him during the communist regime. This would mean that the author becomes blind and only writes what is seen through the 'eyes' of the Communist Party. The fear of ending up writing blindly pushes the writer to develop new techniques of structuring his narratives so that he can continue to write what he sees with his own eyes, but still escape the censure of the Communist Party.

2.7 "Hija" and "magjia" in *Chronicle in Stone*

Chronicle in Stone also invokes motives of dark magic and ghosts in the narrative to symbolise the terror of the events that are unfolding. For example, passages such as 'the magic had stolen our power of speech'; 'somewhere something moves and a shadow, a half-

seen face, comes near and your knees buckle'; and 'some insane fury grips you and your limbs feel free and your voice booms like thunder and you cry out, you charge the ghost'; together with the nightmares that are etched into the architecture of the city of Gjirokastra, represent the saddening fact of life in Albania (Kadare, 2008: 26). Since myth is a synthesis of values, and transmits messages to societies of different eras, we must understand what the intended meanings are for the mythical elements of ghosts and of magic as used in *Chronicle in Stone*.

In *Chronicle in Stone* the awakening of the ghosts foretells of the return of fear, the terror that arrives from the unknown, from the mysterious, from that which causes the chaos in the city, and sleeps on the minds of the isolated people. The motive of the ghosts first revolves around the character of Llukan: 'It was Llukan, whom people called The Shadow [or ghost]' (Kadare, 2008: 16). Llukan was the person who entered and exited from every prison of the governments that would come and end. This reveals the intention of the author for referring to ghosts in the narrative. Kadare knows that the ghosts in Macbeth appeared around the castle, and here the ghosts would reappear in the dark shadows, in the prisons from whence Llukan came and went. This character who is career criminal is the ever slippery ghost that spends his time in the fortress prison of the city. However, later on, the 'ghost' in the novel is represented by the boyfriend of Aqif Kashahu's daughter: 'For some time now there had been rumours that someone, or rather, some ghost, had been going down into the neighbourhood wells at night' (Kadare, 2008: 105-106). The young man has become obsessed in finding the body of his lover, who has presumably been thrown down a well by her own family once it becomes clear that she has become pregnant out of wedlock. In all, ghosts appear everywhere; in the dreams of the people, in caves, in places where the people would hide to escape the bombardments, and even in the cistern: 'shadows mingled in the cistern' (Kadare, 2008: 14).

Robert Elsie stresses that 'ghosts' in the Albanian mythology and folklore are usually demonic figures (Elsie, 2001: 114). Though of course the term 'ghost' (Albanian: hija) could also relate to undefined phantom or the spirits of the dead. The word "Hija" is a feminine word in Albanian and the ghosts are often seen as feminine beings in Albanian mythology. Elsie explains that the 'hija' would sometimes refer to different types of beings in different regions of Albania (ibid). According to Elsie, in the Shalë region (Kosovo) 'The hija had to spend the first night with the dead body it arose from, but was then free to leave the grave and wander about, usually visiting the places where the person in question had once lived' (ibid). In the regions surrounding Gjirokastra, and also in Kadare's novels, the "hija" is a figure associated with nightmares. In fact the use of the 'hija' in Kadare's novels seems to represent one of Gjirokastra's most famous sons; the Communist Party leader and Albanian dictator Enver Hoxha.

From the beginning of *Chronicle in Stone*, we see references to the myths of the "hija". The city itself seems to have the spectre of a ghost laying over it. Gjirokastra is described as a 'strange city ... cast up in the valley one winter's night like some prehistoric creature', with 'the winter night' and 'shadows' as well as 'water, fog and wind' wrapping the entire city as 'the countless drops roll down the sloping roof, hurtling to earth to turn to mist that would rise against the high, white sky' (Kadare, 2008: 8-9). The shadowy description of the city at times makes the setting seem haunted. The "hija" moves around, creating 'shifting shapes' 'as in a nightmare' (ibid). This "hija", is a ghost that haunts the boy narrator, but also functions as a collective vision. Ghosts are seen by everyone and feature in the conversations of all citizens of Gjirokastra. Stephen Feuchtwang states that 'In stories ghosts are usually singular. But in their collective state they touch on history. Being in a temporal zone between that of life and transcendence, they are as myth to history' (Feuchtwang, 2010: 142). Not only are these ghosts appearing in the narrative to add to the

terror that is increasing as more people die in the war, they also represent the looming shadow of the Communist Party that will soon haunt Albania during its 50 year regime.

In understanding the fear that is caused by the appearance of the "hija", not least because the appearance of this "hija" seems to be a punishment to reprove the wrongs done by somebody at some time before, it becomes evident that the appearance of the 'hija' added to the chaos in Gjirokastra at the time. The "Hija" would soon reappear in Albania with its powers of internment, shootings, detentions, and oppression of opponents. In Albanian society during Communism, almost everyone experience the fear from the shadow cast over them by the dictator. Here the terror of the 'hija' represents the real life horrors Kadare is aware of. The content of the myth is open 'fables can borrow elements from social life' (Gould, 1981: 139).

The "hija" would naturally employ its propaganda in furthering its cause, converting the ideas, situation, opinions in its own favour. The propaganda of the state machine functioned like magic. Magic stems from early pagan beliefs but in different forms the concept of magic has existed in some forms in myths and tales of all ages. Magic (Albanian: *magjia*) is prominent in the Albanian mythology and has different connotations in different regions. In Kosova the word is even used to describe those who do magic. Therefore "magjia" can relate to a figure in Albanian mythology who according to Elsie is 'an old evil woman or an old hag who can do people harm by wishing them bad luck' (Elsie, 2001: 164). The "magjia" appeared in many short myths, in which the old had (magjia) usually cursed the young bride out of bitter jealousy. Similarly, in the regions around Gjirokastra, the word has negative implications and doing 'magji' relates to cursing or damning people, and never relates to performance of miracles. In this sense, the propaganda of the 'hija' communist government is a curse.

In *Chronicle in Stone* all of the events that occur to frighten people, were believed by the people to occur because of 'magic', but chapter XVIII of the novel, highlights the reason why Kadare used magic in the novel. In the front yard of his house, the narrator and his family find the dead body of Maksut, with a note lying next to him. The narrator's father takes the note to read, but instead of them finding the 'magic' they were anticipating to find inside the note, they simply realised the paper was a propaganda note by the Communist Party: 'It read: "This is how spies will die." In that handwriting I knew so well, the letters tilted forward as if leaning into wind and rain. It was Javer's hand.' (Kadare, 2008: 154). Hence we begin to understand that all of the occurrences in the novel that had previously been attributed to magic were actually due to the communists. Though the novel does not explicitly condemn the role of the communists during the war, a close reading reveals a disdain on the part of Kadare. Kadare forewarns through the novel of the arrival of the communists in power through the use of this propaganda, and that this 'magic' would ultimately control the people through fear.

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter has explored Kadare's reuse of myths in *Chronicle in Stone*. Analysing this novel it becomes clear to understand that memory is multidirectional. However Kadare's novels inspired often by his own life (in the case of *Chronicle in Stone* his childhood) or draw from Albanian myths which are a source of the cultural memory. In *Chronicle in Stone* in particular the myths employed by the author centre around the Greek myth of the labyrinth – which in this case is the city of Gjirokastra. Gjirokastra becomes a labyrinth of the mythic and becomes a space into which Kadare can easily intertwine the motives of the myths. The

chapter, through analysis of the mythical concepts invoked by Kadare in *Chronicle in Stone*, has begun to explore the reason for the use of the myths and their meaning in the narrative. Here I have found that Kadare may have found it difficult to completely escape from the censorship of the Communist Party ideology, so he has employed myths to help him write about topical points in society under communism. Therefore the meaning of every myth invoked by Kadare here relates to aspects of the communist regime that controlled Albania at the time when the novel was written.

The role of the main characters in *Chronicle in Stone* helps in the creation of the mythical themes. They live in a city in which human beings are citizens frightened by a world which is full of contradictions. In the early period they refuse to accept this world and sink into dreams in which hell and darkness are frequent images. For each level of reality an appropriate language is needed, and particular myths are used to distinguish between subjective states and objective situations. Such imagery enables the subjective states to be treated economically and comprehensibly. The universe no longer seems frightening but often merely farcical and grotesque and is often portrayed in purely literary terms.

The chapter began by exploring the main themes in *Chronicle in Stone* and explores the configuration of the mythic in the novel. It then proceeds by exploring the myth of the labyrinth. It found that the city of Gjirokastra was used as a setting of mythical space and represents the whole of Albania under communism. The chapter then describes the archetype of the destruction of a civilisation. Here Kadare draws from the myth of the Trojan Horse to represent the communist paranoia that all the foreign powers were poised to invade Albania during the 1970s. Furthermore, the chapter continues with an analysis of the portrayal of the mythical trope of the colour black in the novel. It was found that Kadare used this to depict fear and misfortune. The fear that is rife in the city of Gjirokastra is a parallel of the fear of the people under the communist regime. The mythical element of blindness is also explored

in this section of the chapter. It is found that Kadare is afraid of being blind; that is, he feared not writing that which he saw around him. He feared being blinded by the censorship of literature under the communist regime. The chapter furthermore explores how the mythical concept of the 'hija' (ghost) relates to Enver Hoxha, the Albanian Communist Party Leader who would haunt Albania during the 1970s, and how dark magic 'magjia' is a parallel of the communist propaganda that keeps Albania under fear. The thesis will now proceed by analysing Kadare's *The Bearer of ill Tidings – Islamo nox*, which draws heavily from the Greek myths about Hermes.

Chapter 3: THE BEARER OF ILL TIDINGS – ISLAMO NOX

3.1 Introduction

Kadare's novel *The Bearer of ill Tidings – Islamo nox* heavily reuses the myth of Hermes, by introducing a character – Hadji Millet – who is a messenger of the Ottoman Empire. This chapter will attempt to analyse aspects of this myth by considering why Kadare chose to employ it. I have chosen to look at *The Bearer of ill Tidings – Islamo nox*, as the novel is set in the period of the Ottoman Empire (a historical setting Kadare has often used as an analogy for dictatorships), and since this book is essentially a complete historical context book dealing with a curious subject: the forcing of the veil (ferexhe) by the Ferexhe Ferman (Sultan's decree) on a female group called the 'ballkanesha" (women from Balkan countries). I will argue that Kadare's description of the Ottoman Empire as a dictatorial regime imposing its will on its subjects represents the Communist Party that aimed to do the same during its 50 year reign in Albania. It is evident from all his novels relating to the Ottoman Empire, that Kadare blames the Ottoman Empire for Albania's issues. By extension it will be argued that Kadare blames Communism for the modern problems in the country. Therefore *The Bearer of ill Tidings – Islamo nox* is relevant to my thesis because it traverses some of the terrain covered in the study.

In Ancient Greek mythology, Hermes is an Olympian god and a son of Zeus. As a result of his traits as a quick and cunning being, he became the messenger of the gods and often traversed into the mortals' world in order to deliver messages from the other gods. In Homer's *Iliad*, Hermes is often referred to as a 'bringer of good tidings'. In Kadare's novel this mythological character is adapted as Hadji Millet, who is employed by the Ottoman state to deliver the ferexhe (veil) to the western Balkan reaches of the empire. The title of the novel

itself alludes to a reversal of the title given to Hermes in the Iliad (see further below). In Kadare's novel, the 'ill tidings' of which Hadji Millet is the bearer are the ferexhe which his caravan is carrying. The chapter will explore the metaphor which Kadare is using the ferexhe to symbolise. However, it will be argued that the use of the ferexhe in Kadare's novel has no religious connotations. As will be explained further below, the imposition of the ferexhe on the women who were forced to wear it is simply a symbol of tools of oppression utilized on a group of people. Cyril Glassé says that 'While modesty is a religious prescription, the wearing of a veil is not a religious requirement of Islam, but a matter of cultural milieu' (Glassé, 2003: 468). The hijab is an invention of the 14th century, and it has no real basis in the Koran. In the Koran, "hijab" comes from the root "hjb", which refers not to an object, but an action: wearing a headscarf, pulling down a curtain or screen or reducing light so as to prevent others from prying or looking in' (Ibrahim, 2008: 14). Kadare used the topic of the ferexhe to express his dislike of authoritarian regimes that impose repressive policies on their subjects. When he wrote *The Bearer of ill Tidings – Islamo nox*[10] in 1984, Kadare focuses on the ferexhe's journey through the Balkans. The novel introduces the idea of a 'forceful changing' of the millet (people) through the orders of the Sultan. As the main character, Hadji Milet undertakes the duty to become the bearer of the Sultan's decree by travelling the lands of the Ottoman Empire and introducing the ferexhe in them, he meets the beautiful females from the Balkan countries, who Kadare calls 'ballkanesha', as he brings the veil to their lands.

Written as a historical novel, and concentrating on failure, and the 'forbidden', the book portrays the darker aspects of life under a timeless authoritarian regime. If one takes a look beyond the terrain and landscape of the story, *The Bearer of ill Tidings – Islamo nox*

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[10] The version of the novel which has been analysed in this thesis, is the version included in an anthology of Kadare's works entitled *The Time of Writings* (Koha e Shkrimeve), which was published in Tirana in 1986. The quotes in English used in the thesis are my own translation.

actually presents a rich amalgam of the manipulative authority of tyrants, and the power of politics, and so seems to echo life under the Communist Regime in Albania. I will argue that this was Kadare's clear intention.

Thus, in this chapter, I want to examine the significance and reason for the reuse of the myth of Hermes, and how Kadare uses the stereotype of this mythical being to further his aim when writing a novel that deals with the power of the tyrant over the people. In so doing, it will become clear that the novel uses the Ottoman Empire as a metaphor for criticising the communist regime which was in power at the time of its writing. Firstly, I will begin in this chapter by exploring the impact of the Ottoman Empire's Cultural Imposition to Albanian society as depicted in *The Bearer of ill Tidings – Islamo nox*. I will argue that according to the novel Albanians resisted the Ottoman Empire's attempts to affect the cultural identity of the people. I will then focus the rest of the chapter by looking closely at the character of Hadji Milet. I will begin by looking at the significance of the reused of the mythical character of Hermes (who is represented by Hadji Milet) in *The Bearer of ill Tidings – Islamo nox*. I will then continue the chapter by looking at the significance of the name chosen by Kadare for this character. I will argue that the name is a good representation of the character and gives clues about his function in the narrative, since the name Hadji ('pilgrimage') Milet ('people'), represents the characters function as the messenger of the Ottoman Empire to the people of the Empire. Lastly, I will explore the significance of the ferexhe which is described in the novel as a bringer of darkness. I will argue that the ferexhe represents a means of keeping the people under control.

3.2 Cultural Imposition as described in Kadare's novels

In Kadare's novels cultural imposition is narrated often under historical circumstances of brutal adversity; it is represented as a practice of cultural colonialism, subjugation of peoples who themselves display acts of social resistance. In many ways the historical settings were analogies for the social situation in Communist Albania. Whilst referring to the thresholds that are created from 'power around social "truth"' and whilst including Kadare in the group of writers who have a strong focus on 'the anti-Stalinist fiction', Marcel-Cornis Pope states that the Albanian writer's novels served as 'vehicles of cultural and "moral resistance"' (Cornis-Pope, 2004: 40). In this way, Kadare's texts are a type of resistance against the communist dictatorship; and against all types of dictatorships. In an interview with an Albanian newspaper at the time, *The Voice of Youth* ("*Zëri i Rinisë*"), Kadare stated that 'Stability became a favoured motif of [Albanian] literature' (Kadare, 1973: 3). In these texts, one can read and understand how men and women perform in different ways in order to resist the different cultural imposition phenomena that impact on their society. A comprehensive understanding of the relationship of Kadare's texts within specific historical and cultural contexts is well served by definitions of cultural resistance. Cultural resistance according to Michael Morgan and Susan Leggett is linked to cultural devices and discourses laid by different historical forms that are marginalised by contemporary society (Morgan and Leggett, 1996: 132).

Kadare used cultural imposition through analogies, in order to use, to bring closer, and combine two or more real time periods into a single fictional period that draws from the elements of these. *The Palace of Dreams* (Pallati i Ëndërrave), *The Pyramid* (Piramida), *The Blind Firman* (Qorrfermani) etc., have been presented by the merging and combining of time periods through analogy. The narrative in *The Palace of Dreams* relates to the past, however

in it, the time period in which Kadare wrote the novel is also represented. The forced ideologies, the constant surveillance, the terror and the anxiety of tyrannical occupiers, as well as the political cleansing campaigns, phenomena these which are characteristic of the communist regime which ruled Albania during the time in which the novel was written, are central to *The Palace of Dreams*, however they are metaphorically cloaked as historical occurrences under the rule of the Ottoman Empire in the setting of the narrative. An analysis of Kadare's novel, *Three Elegies for Kosovo* (1998) reveals Kadare's belief that the Ottoman Empire is to blame for the problems in the Balkan region, including Albania's issues. This idea also permeates in all of the other novels relating to the Ottoman Empire. At first glance this would seem as an excuse for the Communist Regime: Albania's issues were blamed on others. However, if we consider that the Ottoman Empire is the symbol for all authoritarian regimes, and especially the Communist Party of Albania, Kadare also seems to be blaming Communism for the modern issues in Albania.

All of Kadare's books are linked to each other. Hence out of *The Palace of Dreams* grew the idea for *The Blind Firman*, which describes the resistance of people with 'enchanted eyes'. Myths about blindness have existed for centuries and grew from ignorance about the condition and nature of blindness. As was explored in the previous chapter, Kadare constantly reused the mythical trope of blindness in his novels. In *The Palace of Dreams*, Kadare mentions 'the blind couple', hence giving us his typical campaign against liberals. Kadare himself, when speaking about *The Palace of Dreams* in Branka Bogavac's book *Dialogues in Paris* clarifies:

'When I arrived at the middle of this book, I realised that it was hell and I continued to describe the real hell, which relates to dreams. In this hell, somebody had remembered to steal the dreams from humanity in order to

control humanity in its sleep, and in a way, bureaucrats control our dreams. This is a book dedicated to anxiety, misery, disgust, dictatorship' (Kadare, 270).

The Bearer of ill Tidings – Islamo nox is a continuation of this group of novels. Here, Kadare describes the 'life' and 'fate' of the 'ballkanesha', who would be forced to wear the ferexhe, which was celebrated in the Ottoman Empire territories as an eminent symbol of oppression. When we are first introduced to the 'ballkanesha', they are normal girls of the western part of the Ottoman Empire: Albanians, Greeks, Serbs, Romanians, Bosnians, Bulgarians and Hungarians. The first intriguing thing we learn about them is that 'none would escape… Upon reaching thirteen years of age, all of them, without exception, would be covered' ('*Asnjë s'do të shpëtojë... Trembëdhjet vjeç e lartë, të gjitha, pa pë rjashtim, do të mbuloheni*') (Kadare, 1986: 140). This effect is magnified when Kadare describes the uncovered girls from the perspective of the women in Hadji Milet's country:

> 'He had heard that throughout the summer, the women's workshops in all of the ten cities had been preparing the ferexhe. It was said that evil murmurs accompanied the cutting and the sewing of the black material from which the ferexhe were being made. "Let these European ballkanesha suffer. They had been uncovered until now, and have probably mocked us. But now their end has come. Enough have they roamed like rampant mares; they will now see what it is like to have their faces covered by the ferexhe."'
> ('Kishte dëgjuar se gjithë verën punishtet e grave të dhjetë qyteteve ishin marrë me to. Thuhej se një murmurimë ligësie shoqëronte prerjen dhe qepjen e copes së zezë prej të cilës përgatiteshin ferexhetë. Le të vuanin

edhe ato ballkaneshat, evropjankat. Kishin qenë gjer tani të zbuluara, ishin tallur ndoshta me to. Po tani u kishte ardhur fundi. Mjaft kishin harbuar si pelat, tani do ta shihnin ç'do të thoshte t kishe fytyrën nën ferexhe..')

(Kadare, 1986: 128).

Here, Kadare is describing the jealousy and spite of the women from Hadji Millet's country towards the ballkanesha who are described as being free. The phrase 'roamed liked rampant mares' ('harbuar si pelat') suggests that the freedom enjoyed by the ballkanesha is too broad. This seems to further Kadare's idea that authoritarian regimes indoctrinate their subjects with the idea that excessive freedom should not be desirable. In another related passage, Kadare illustrates Hadji Milet's about the covering thus:

'If the ballkanesha did not get him, surely their curses would - he thought to himself as he observed the large chimneys of the cities he was leaving behind. Underneath them, in the twelve languages of the Balkans, all the discussions would surely centre on the covering. There had been a solar eclipse, a lunar eclipse, and now a third type of eclipse was taking place, that of the women. The whole world was astonished'

('Po në mos e arritshin ato, mallkimi i tyre do ta arrinte. Kështu mendonte, ndërsa me shpirt të vrarë vështronte tymtarët e qyteteve që mbeteshin pas. Nën ta, në dymbëdhjetë gjuhët e Ballkanit tirrej e tirrej me siguri i njëjti hall: mbulimi. Kishte pasur eklips të diellit e eklips të hënës dhe tani po ndodhte i treti eklips, ai i grave. Bota e tërë po çmeritej.') (Kadare, 1986: 151).

A preliminary reading of this passage further highlights Kadare's aim further. The covering of the ballkanesha is described as an 'eclipse' of the women. 'Eclipse' quite obviously relates to a darkening or a blocking of a light. As was described in the previous chapter, Kadare seems to metaphorise lack of freedom with a lack of light. Therefore, here again Kadare is alluding to the loss of freedom of the subjects of the authoritarian regime.

The ferexhe is not the only symbol of Cultural Imposition described by Kadare in *The Bearer of ill Tidings – Islamo nox.* In a passage towards the beginning of Hadji Millet's journey through the Balkans, Kadare describes the scenery thus:

'Then he heard the first set of bells and he understood his anxiety. It was the Churches with their great imposing crosses on top that transmitted the anxiety to him from afar. It was the first time he was seeing churches… Then he spotted the minarets that shone opposite the churches and his heart warmed a little.'

('Pastaj dalloi kambanoret e para dhe e kuptoi pse. Ishin kishat me kryqin sipër tyre që dërgonin nga larg atë turbullim. Ishte hera e parë që shikonte kisha... Pastaj ai dalloi minaret që çoheshin përballë kishave dhe zemra i erdhi disi në vend.') (Kadare, 1986: 134).

It is obvious that Hadji Millet is not only shocked at seeing churches, but is also shocked to see the mosques standing close to the churches. The proximity of the two different places of worship is used as a symbol of Cultural Imposition. The following passage form the novel makes this point even clearer:

'The Great Sultan had thought of everything. Close to every church, he had

built a mosque, so that the new bride [the mosque] could challenge the old

widow [the church], until it completely overtook its place. Oh, these

workings of the state, he said to himself.'

('Padishahu i madh, i kishte menduar të gjitha. Pranë çdo kishe kishte

ngritur xhaminë, në mënyrë që të luftonte nusja e re me gërdallën e vjetër,

gjersa ta rrënonte krejt. Eh, punët e shtetit, tha me vete ai.') (Kadare, 1986:

134).

Kadare uses the places of worship of the two major religions predominantly found in the

Balkans to further the metaphor of the Cultural Imposition. The building of the mosques next

to the churches is described as a 'working of the state' ('punët e shtetit'). Kadare is

suggesting that the authoritarian regime, through Cultural Imposition, is able to affect the

methods of worship of the subjects. This is another reference to life under the Communist

Regime in Albania. In 1967 the Communist Government banned all religious practices,[11] so

to Kadare it was clear that the dictatorship sought to even affect the method of worship of the

people.

Further examples of references to cultural imposition can be seen in the way in which

Kadare ambiguously describes the cultural identity of his characters. For example, the first

appearance of the character of 'fytyrëgjati' (the man with a long face) in *The Bearer of ill

Tidings – Islamo nox* is curious. The identity of the character is represented in such a way that

it is full of ambiguity. When Hadji Milet meets 'fytyrëgjati' he initially cannot determine

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[11] The Communist Government in Albanian began a relentless campaign against religion which culminated in the 1960s. By 1967 the Party either closed down or converted into other uses all churches, mosques, monasteries, and other places of worship. By May of the same year, all 2,169 places of worship in Albania had been relinquished by the religious organisation. The religious organisations themselves where no longer officially recognised by the state. Openly preaching religious doctrine became a punishable crime under what was referred to as the 'only atheist country of the world'.

whether the figure is a 'Turk' or a Balkan citizen. Similarly there is also an uncertain element about 'hanxhiu's' (the innkeeper's) identity. The ambiguity of these character's identities suggests that the Ottoman Empire has already massively imposed its will on the region, and its policies had led to a change in the subjects living there. The arrival of the ferexhe is not the beginning; it seems to represent the final step of total domination of a group of people.

Furthermore, the storekeeper's androgyny of name and the uniform he wears, make him incoherent for the reader in the scene when Hadji Milet is about to submit the 'ferexhe' to him, and so, identity as an emphasis instituted through a language and narrative repetition fails to function in the storekeeper's case. His cultural outfit brings the effect of double casting which disrupts the notion of a fixed and singular identity. This can be put on by either the use of language or behaviour aspects of the character. Even before Hadji Milet is certain of the storekeeper's ability to speak the Turkish language, he is struck by the storekeeper's behaviour of counting veils and signing in a hesitating way: "the storekeeper after counting the veils looked with care at the bill and only then did he sign" ('Magazinieri, pasi numëroi ferexhetë, vështroi me kujdes faturën dhe hodhi nënshkrimin poshtë saj.') (Kadare, 1986: 142). By not describing the storekeeper's appearance or his clothing, Kadare makes sure that the storekeeper's identity is not bound by the cultural role assigned to him. Thus, from the first appearance, identity becomes a role within which not just single but double, even multiple options are available. As Lynn Spigel and Michael Curtin have shown, the theme of double 'allows to represent the unrepresentable', so multiplying the appearance of the storekeeper by offering the readers not one but two figurines seems to be a way of representing a character which would have otherwise had no representation (Spigel and Curtin, 1997: 100-101).

Nevertheless, even if it is the storekeeper's indeterminate identity which actually arouses his curiosity, Hadji Milet wants to determine the storekeeper's cultural obscurity

because he believes that knowing it will define him in terms of their official's strict rules and will thus let him know to act accordingly. The storekeeper's mannerism, therefore make Hadji Milet guess that he has debatable identity. The storekeeper is an agent of the state in one of the outposts situated far from the centre of the Ottoman Empire and, under the guise of Kadare's narrative; he represents the Cultural Imposition of the state, not only through his outer appearance, but also through his submissiveness to other state officials. This is the literary forms of presentation that Kadare selects, where on the one hand; it means that this form is to 'literal meaning, structure or unity', on the other hand, this means additional terms, expressive of that purpose that binds with external nature (Frye, 1957: 81). Northop Frye states that, 'In discursive writing what is said tends to approximate, ideally to become identified with, what is meant' (Frye, 1957: 81). In Kadare's text it is ironically constructed.

Instead of these characterisations, the 'ballkanesha' are constructed to be attractive to Hadji Milet, whereas they loathe his appearance. Hadji Milet's appearance immediately identifies him as a 'Turk' and more specifically as a 'Turkish Official': ''Turk, Turk,' he again heard them say to one another. It seemed they were saying: 'look at this Turk!' Or they were saying 'let's go quickly, the Turk is watching us' (""Turk", "Turk", dëgjoi ai prapë të thoshin me njëra-tjetrën. Siç dukej po thoshin: "shikojeni këtë Turk!" Ose: "ikni shpejt se po na shikon turku") (Kadare, 1986: 136). The official Turkish uniform that Hadji Millet is wearing would seem to make him the target of loathing. It is clear that the subject has had enough of the authority and any official becomes a symbol of the dictatorial regime and is therefore hated by the subjects.

Kadare better exemplifies Frye's idea when he uses the 'ferexhe' as a tool that "what it says" is always different in kind or degree from "what it means" (Frye, 1957: 81). The 'ferexhe' is seen here as a Cultural Imposition, as an investment in the meticulous description of material objects, where, it in fact serves as a tool of dividing and conquering the subjects.

As one of the aims of a dictatorial regime, the division of the subjects is represented by this object through Kadare's narrative. The ferexhe's aim is to act as a tool of oppression in the narrative. John K. Cox in his essay *What's behind the veil? The Ottoman fiction of Ismail Kadare*, explores some of Kadare's thematic concerns in his work. Cox, among other Kadare's thematic issues, considers the construction of the Albanian national identity, the historical experience of the Balkan peoples in the Ottoman Empire and the role of women in traditional societies. Cox's study looks in detail at the theme of the veil in Kadare's fiction. Even though he describes the portrayal of the veil in the novels and its historical links, Cox does not go into detail concerning the implication of the veil and the meaning of it in the context of the time during which Kadare wrote the novel. For Cox:

'The purpose of veiling, whether it originates in pre-Islamic tradition, certain interpretations of the Koran, or political considerations, purports to emphasize women's distinctiveness, and to hold them separate from men or from public life. The veil, therefore, relates to the kind of physical isolation called for in the institution of purdah, a Persian term indicating the domestic confinement of women, their isolation behind curtains or in separate rooms' (Cox, 2006).

As Cox suggests, the ferexhe is derived from cultural practices of isolating the women from the men. It is therefore a symbol of Cultural Imposition, and this is the reason why Kadare used it as such in *The Bearer of ill Tidings – Islamo nox*.

3.3 Narrative transformations in the Hadji Milet's monologue

"A bearer of ill tidings" for first time is seen in Part 18 of *Plutus* (Wealth), an Ancient Greek comedy by the playwright Aristophanes, in a conversation between Cario and Hermes, who was the cleverest of the Olympian gods, and messenger to all the other gods. Hence from the title of *The Bearer of ill Tidings – Islamo nox* (Sjellësi i fatkeqësisë - Islamo nox), the reader is presented with a mythological link, which is transformed to denote an official or messenger of the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire who is tasked with the spreading of the Fermans (Orders) of the totalitarian regime. This is the role of Hadji Milet, the messenger of *The Bearer of ill Tidings – Islamo nox*. Kadare's Hermes, this "bearer of ill tidings" in *The Bearer of ill Tidings – Islamo nox*, by losing the initiative, and freedom of the original mythical character, returns not in the form of a self-supporting story or even through a narrative structured around his mythology, but as a multifaceted figure. However, at the same time, the character of Hadji Milet continues to be a tragic hero, especially after realising that the policy he had been supporting was flawed. Though, through this, Hadji Milet is not confined by a predestined fate, something that would make him entrusted with the 'mission' and is what characterises Aristophanes' Hermes. We need to distinguish, therefore, between the way we accept this satirical, almost banal use of the myth of Hermes, to the way we accept the use of all the other myths used by Kadare. Hadji Millet is an almost comical character as a result of his ignorance:

> 'What surprised Hadji Milet as never before in his life was their
> appearance... *Female eyes*, he said to himself three or four times as if
> becoming conscious of what he was seeing, *women's and girl's yes*.'

('Ajo që e befasoi si asgjë tjetër në jetë gjer atëherë Haxhiun, ishte

pamja e tyre… Sy grash, tha dy-tri herë me vete, si të donte të bëhej i

ndërgjegjshëm për atë që po shihte. Sy grash e vajzash.') (Kadare,

1986: 135).

The Hermes of *The Bearer of ill Tidings – Islamo nox* (Hadji Milet), starts off blind, in the

metaphorical sense of the word. He is an ignorant messenger, just as all other messengers who

carry out the bidding of tyrants. At the beginning of the narrative, Hadji Milet was loyal to his

task and cared little about anything else; however the reality he began to witness cured his

blindness:

'Awestruck, he could not take his eyes off of them. So this is what the

ballkanesha were like. The dark murmuring of the thousands of tanned

women of his country approached his mind like a black cloud.'

('I magjepsur ai s'i hiqte dot sytë prej tyre. Ja pra si ishin

ballkaneshat. Murmurima e errët, zymtane e mijëra grave të zeshkëta

të vendit të tij i afrohej kujtesës si një re e zezë') (Kadare, 1986: 135).

The figure of "a bearer of ill tidings" is a multifaceted figure that collects many different

viewpoints into the one character. The banal side of the character is shown thusly:

'Allah, Allah, Hadji Milet again said to himself, What world was this

where the gaze of the men and women wandered freely, in the same

space, without offending one-another, look, like now for example, his

dark brown eyes wandered amongst the light childlike gazes'

('Allah, allah, ia bëri prapë me vete Haxhi Mileti. Ç'ishte kjo botë

kështu, ku vështrimet e grave e të burrave vërtiteshin lirshëm, në të

njëjtën hapësirë, pa dëbuar njër-tjetrin, ja si tani, sytë e tij të errët,

ngjyrëkafe, midis vë shtrimeve të çelëta fëmijnore.') (Kadare, 1986:

136).

The many different points of view that are joined in the character of Hadji Milet act harmoniously in Kadare's novel, representing the viewpoints of a society in transition. At the same time a new restructuring of the myth of "a bearer of ill tidings" was needed, in order for the story of Hermes to make sense in the setting of the narrative of *The Bearer of ill Tidings – Islamo nox*. In other words, myth has a logical purpose; the filling of the gaps with signs, the explanation of the origin of its own terms, which are seemingly arbitrarily selected and then the reaching of an answer regarding the understanding of the present through its origins, or understanding the meaning behind the words. The fact that myth uses aspects from the nature, society, other legends and so on, for the purpose of its logic, does not necessarily mean that the solution lies somewhere outside of myth. The meaning of myth is not only non-exhaustive, but it becomes more complex and more multi-layered as time goes on. Some elements that reveal anxiety and fear felt when living in a dictatorial totalitarian doctrine are codified within the figure of Hadji Milet. Many of these elements are invoked in the narrative when Hadji Milet thinks of darkness, isolation from the sun, covering of the sky, and the metaphors of the ferexhe that will be covering the women: '...he thought about which part of the sky would soon be covered by the ferexhes he held in his caravan' ('mendoi se ç'pjesë të qiellit do të zinin vallë ferexhetë që ai kishte në dengje, sikur të qepeshin njëra pas tjetrës') (Kadare, 1986: 133).

In *The Bearer of ill Tidings – Islamo nox*, the same hidden meaning is also revealed by the juxtaposition of the political nightmare created in Albania during the period of communism within the figure of Hadji Milet. Hadji Milet has been created by Kadare as a retransformed Hermes, by taking some of his attributes, such as the chosen traveller, loyal, and personal agent and bearer of messages for Zeus, the leader of the gods, who in this case is also the dictator, the personification of force and psychological terror imposed on the people, the personification of the incitement of the darkness upon the world and of the claim that everything is perfect and achieved only in dictatorship, all of these specially created to keep people oppressed:

> 'It was really good that with them [the ferexhe] you could not cover
> the sun, or the seas or any other natural beauty in the world.
> Otherwise... otherwise what?'
> ('Vërtet, shyqyr që me to s'mbuloheshin as qielli, as deti dhe asgjë
> tjetër e bukur që kishte bota. Përndryshe… cfarë "përndryshe"?')
> (Kadare, 1986: 142).

Hadji Milet's monologue incorporates his reflection, the thought process falls outside of the mythical expression. The monologue turns the act of telling into a process of reflection, reasoning, into self-examination:

> 'People were saddened when roses withered, or lilies dried; the people
> were upset because they would be gone for a few months. But what if
> it was said to them: come and mourn these roses, because this is their

last ever season, Allah has decided not to plant anymore anywhere on Earth, what would happen?

('Trishtoheshin njerëzit kur vyshkeshin trëndafilat, apo thahashin zambakët, pikëlloheshin se do të mungonin disa muaj. Po sikur t'u thoshin: ejani t'i qani kë ta trëndafila, se kjo është stina e tyre e fundit, allahu vendosi të mos i mbijë më mbi dhé, ç'do të bëhej?,) (Kadare, 1986: 151).

The new situation created in *The Bearer of ill Tidings – Islamo nox*, is based on the agreement that Hermes has with the people, or in this case, the agreement that Hadji Milet has, to protect them from the sun. The metaphor constructed to signify the disappearance of the only remaining beauty in the world, the withering of the roses and lilies, and also their complete disappearance, requires a more universal understanding. In order for the meaning of the reused myth to be universalised, Hermes' hat, a wide hat made of straw, that was supposed to protect passengers from the sun and was an important element of ancient myth, is replaced by the ferexhe in Kadare's novel. Apart from the appearance of Hadji Milet in Hermes' form as an official (Hadji Milet was the entrusted transporter of the Empire, and had the authority to delivering messages or artefacts to all of the Sultan's lands), light is shed on the unknown and elusive side of his character. The existences of such different sides to his character become apparent from the first line of the novel: 'Never on the eve of travelling had Hadji Milet received so many wishes of "Bon voyage!" ('Asnjëherë në prag të ndonjë udhëtimi Haxhi Miletit nuk i kishin thënë kaq shumë "udha mbarë!"') (Kadare, 1986: 127). In Kadare's novel, it is Hadji Milet who recounts the unexpected and the unbelievable, revealing a sharp contrast between appearance and essence, between fear and distrust for the task he was charged with completing. Because of the depth of language used in the novel, the narrative resembles a

codified confession: 'So this is how things had gone. There couldn't be two separate bodies of law in the Empire, nor can there be two types of women... *Oh Great God*, he said to himself, and this interior squeal was loaded with admiration, and fear, and the repentance of a sinner' ('Ja kështu kishin ndodhur punët. S'mund të kishte dy lloj ligjesh në perandori, as dy lloj grash… O zot i madh, ia bënte me vete ai dhe kjo klithmë e ti e brendshme ishte edhe admirim, edhe frikë, edhe pendim mëkatari') (Kadare, 1986: 129 and 135).

'The signifying metaphorical function marks the emergence of a new narrative.' (Gould, 1981: 49). The process of altering mythic structures resonate the equivalences of the real world with the created world. In *The Bearer of ill Tidings – Islamo nox*, Hadji Milet is not presented with the same confident persona he had during his earlier missions. In fact, he is surprisingly characterised by fear of destruction, frightened by the belief that one day somebody would find out his true feelings about his mission to deliver the *ferexhes* and the punishment would be unavoidable:

> 'Now it seemed as if he desire and hated them at the same time, without even understanding himself why the confusion arose... Cold sweat covered his forehead and he said to himself: *I'm not feeling well, no. Such a thing has never happened to me before*'
> ('Po në mos e arritshin ato, mallkimi i tyre do ta arrinte. Kështu mendonte, ndërsa me shpirt të vrarë vështronte tymtarët e qyteteve që mbeteshin pas. Nën ta, në dymbëdhjetë gjuhët e Ballkanit tirrej e tirrej me siguri i njëjti hall: mbulimi. Kishte pasur eklips të diellit e eklips të hënës dhe tani po ndodhte i treti eklips, ai i grave. Bota e tërë po çmeritej.') (Kadare, 1986: 19-140).

This is paranoia of the shadow of the crime that Hadji Milet is committing with his own hands during the mission that was supposed to keep the regime he served alive, and which in an ignorant manner was supposed to culminate in the covering of the light of the people so as to present revolutionary thoughts. Hadji Milet has created the anxiety himself by starting to convince himself that by covering the ballkanesha with the *ferexhes* he would be freed from their haunting gazes. In fact the opposite happens. His obsession with these beautiful free women increases the more he thinks about the fact that he has helped to completely cover them from now on. Though these thoughts scare him, and he is encompassed by an internal struggle. Hadji Milet now realises his own end. He is destined to end in the same way as all those who waver in obeying the orders of a dictatorship. Dictatorships are unforgiving, especially when a simple messenger like Hadji Milet defies them.

The fantasy element is created by Kadare through the existence of a dream, where Hadji Milet could not rid himself of 'a yellow moon which scratched the back of the Marmara sea into a wound. He woke up two or three times from it, he would exclaim "may God help me!"' ('një hënë e verdhëqë gërryente si plagë shpinën e detit Marmara. Uzgjua dy-tri here, tha "më ruajtë zoti!"') ('(Kadare, 1986: 149). Seeing his homeland in his dreams, frightens Hadji Milet because he is reminded of the regime he is starting to doubt. It is Hadji Milet's change of mind that alters his character from that of Hermes. His realisation that his mission is not worth completing is a blow to the Ottoman Empire. Their propaganda has not worked if their own trusted officials turn their back on the cause. In many ways this is a parallel of Kadare's own role as a writer in communist Albania. There is no evidence to suggest that Kadare was ever a supporter of the Communist Party, but as a writer his novels would have been seen by the Party as a tool to help them spread their propaganda to the people. However just as Hadji Milet turned his back on his mission of spreading the ferexhe, Kadare shunned the socialist realism in Albania.

3.4 Archetypes through labelling and function of characters

Naming characters in literature is not random. Names are conventions of ideas. Through them the reader understands some of the personality traits of the characters and is given a clue about the role of the character in the narrative. A character name can be associated with a previous real, literary or mythological character. Designations in modern literature take a particular value. This features independently from human characters, to return the names of the symbols without breaking down which cannot penetrate into their psychological universe.

According to Rene Welleck and Austin Warren the easiest method of characterisation is naming. Every naming is a form of livening, animation, individualisation of the character (Welleck and Warren, 1993: 208). In *The Bearer of ill Tidings – Islamo nox* (Sjellësi i fatkeqësisë - Islamo nox), the naming of the characters is linked to the idea of Cultural Imposition. This is especially true of the protagonist, Hadji Milet. According to Cox:

> 'Hadji Milet is the only character in this long tale who is developed in any detail. That the decree on veiling places him in such spiritual and, ultimately, physical danger reminds one of the perils experienced by the many other Kadare characters for conformity or simply the misfortune of being "in the wrong place at the wrong time." Ottoman despotism, like other dictatorships, exacts a steep price from its hangers-on, middlemen, and factotums—in short, from average subjects or citizens' (Cox, 2006: 9).

The name and surname of the character in a novel is a dynamic in itself. According to Isabel Roche 'the inscription of the historical name carries with it a decidedly referential function'. (Roche, 2007: 109). Foucault uses the term 'stratified history' and 'history of non-formal

knowledge' to converge and connote the subject and the character within socio-historical context (Foucault, 2003: x). According to Foucault:

> ... it is, in relation to man, the Other: the Other that is not only a brother but a twin, born, not of man, nor in man, but beside him and at the same time, in an identical newness in an unavoidable duality. This obscure space so readily interpreted as an abyssal region in man's nature, or as a uniquely impregnable fortress in his history, is linked to him in an entirely different way; it is both exterior to him and indispensable to him: in one sense, the shadow cast by man as he emerged in the field of knowledge; in another, the blind, stain by which it is possible to know him (Foucault, 2003: 356).

The mnemonic device is used to highlight the character's links with his fate and the historical verdict of his mission. As it will be explained below, there is a reason why Kadare calls him 'Hadji' and gives him the surname Milet (Millet).

The name Kadare uses in this novel, Hadji Millet or as spelled in Turkish: Hacı Milet, (although the first spelling better captures the original title in Albanian: Haxhi Milet [Hadzhi-Milet]) is itself an archetypical name for the role that the character plays in the narrative. Some brief analysis reveals its dynamics. The name 'Hadji' is a popular name among believers in Islam, and has religious meaning; according to the *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, it is a name given to a Muslim who has made a pilgrimage to Mecca, and can also be used as a title (CALD, 2008: 647). The name 'Hadji' has been used in literature of origin from outside the Ottoman Empire before. While Hadji Milet is the name of the Turkish character in Kadare's novel, *Hadji Murat* (or alternatively Hadji Murad), was the title character in a short novel written by Leo Tolstoy between 1896 and 1904, and published

posthumously in 1912 (though not in full until 1917). In Tolstoy's novel, Hadji Murat was an Avar rebel commander who, for reasons of personal revenge, forges an uneasy alliance with the Russians he had been fighting. Kadare who studied in Moscow was likely to have read Tolstoy's novel and the name could have inspired him.

Today, the term "millet" means "people" in Turkish and it has also adopted the same meaning in Albanian. It also retains its use as a religious and ethnic classification; it can also be used colloquially to classify people belonging to a particular group (not necessarily religious or ethnic), such as kadın milleti ("all women"). However the word "Milet" used by Kadare goes to the origins of the word itself, since Millet is a term for the confessional communities in the Ottoman Empire. It refers to the separate legal courts pertaining to "personal law" under which communities (Muslim Sharia, Christian Canon law and Jewish Halakha law abiding) were allowed to rule themselves under their own system (Inalxhik, 1995: 65). After the Ottoman Tanzimat (1839–76) reforms, the term was used for legally protected religious minority groups, similar to the way other countries use the word 'nation'. According to Inalxhik the word Millet comes from the Arabic word millah (ملة) and literally means "nation" (Inalxhik, 1995: 54). The Millet system of Islamic law has been called an early example of 'pre-modern religious pluralism' (Sachedina, 2001:77).

The Ottoman Empire organised the people according to Islamic principles, i.e. around the term millet, which refers to "the people of the book" that is Jews, Christians and Muslims (Karpat, 2002: 73). According to Karpat, the secular power of the sultan was prior to his religious duties as the Caliph, or the head of the Muslim community (Karpat, 2002: 73). He was assigned to provide justice to all subjects, since he was the ruler of a large population of non-Muslims as well as Muslims, which covered all communities in the Empire, and granted specific protection, rights and privileges to the communities recognized as millets (ibid).

The name Hadji Milet therefore refers to someone who goes on a pilgrimage to the millet (the people), a bearer of a message. The name is fitting for a messenger of the Ottoman State, who is ordered to deliver the devices (the ferexhe) that would make the Sultan's decree possible. It is also a fitting name for a character who is an archetype of Hermes. Further, just like Hadji Murat, who reluctantly betrayed his own misgivings and forged an uneasy alliance with the Russians, Hadji Milet ultimately begins to have misgivings regarding his own mission and ultimately betrays the policies of the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, the name of the protagonist suggests that he has an archetypical role in the narrative.

In *The Bearer of ill Tidings – Islamo nox,* one day on his journey to the Balkans, Hadji Milet is depicted in the novel as happening upon a group of females who dressed differently from the females in his country and sing along and play freely. No one was interrupting them. Their beauty and freedom made him uneasy. By not wearing the ferexhe they lived a free experience. However their freedom was not unproblematic since it attracted the attention of the Sultan and the danger of oppression that came under the Ferman (Decree issued by the Sultan). The landscape in the novel serves to provide a safe space against the danger which bound the females not wearing the ferexhe together. It also functioned in the novel as the place to describe where change can be identified clearly, imitating all the little vanities which the female sex was 'normally' free to enjoy. The undressed ballkanesha representing femininity in the Ottoman Empire was problematic not just because females under the Ferman rules and regulations had to be forced to dress the ferexhe, but because it also implies non-dominant, non-authoritative, and even rebelling behaviour.

At the middle of his mission as The Bearer, Hadji Milet breaks the Ferman, follows the journey towards a self-imposed identity and becomes a 'thought rebel' (his thoughts and feelings are contrary to the ideas of the state), begins to dislike the mission he performed, and changes his behaviour. He dared to walk forth in front of the ballkanesha, by no means

known for their tolerance of any form of diversity. Thus, his order-breaking behaviour was spent perfecting techniques for balancing his real world, and hence making it impossible to still feel proud of the mission he has just completed. However the authorities reacted with outrage punishing him with imprisonment. His life became his destiny since he ended up regretting the imposition of the ferexhe on females from the Balkans. Hadji Milet therefore becomes a character that represents what happens when an official of totalitarian regimes disobeys his orders. Through *The Bearer of ill Tidings – Islamo nox*, it is clear that Kadare reminds us of the sanctions that the Communist Party would impose on those who became 'enemies of the state'.

Hadji Milet is obviously one of the first officials to prove that 'the veil was an insistent reminder of the differing codes of propriety governing women's appearance in public' (Roberts, 2007:93). His hesitation also proves that sometimes it has nothing to do with religion, and most of all with tradition. In his thoughts (which form parts of the chapters of the story), Hadji Milet describes his double cultured influence and the gap between reality and fantasy, between his authoritative presence as an official on a mission and his desire as a man with human feelings. Mary Roberts stated that the veil was 'a potent symbol of the harem' (Roberts, 2007:93).

According to Alain Grosrichard, Harem (Turkish, from Arabic حرم ḥaram 'forbidden place; sacrosanct, sanctum', related to حريم ḥarīm a sacred inviolable place; female members of the family' and حرام ḥarām, 'forbidden; sacred') 'is essential to despotic power' and refers to the sphere of women in what is usually a polygynous household and their enclosed quarters which are forbidden to men (Grosrichard, 1998: 146). It originated in the Near East and is typically associated in the Western world with the Ottoman Empire. Women from Hadji Milet's country in *The Bearer of ill Tidings – Islamo nox* who wore the ferexhe are Muslim, the ballkanesha did not wear the ferexhe and therefore this would suggest that the

'ballkanesha' are not Muslim. However this is not the case, and it would be wrong to equate the ferexhe in the novel with the Islamic religion, as this was not Kadare's intention. Many Muslim women living in Albania during the time of the Ottoman Empire did not wear a veil to cover themselves, conversely women who observed other religions such as Catholicism, wore a ferexhe after the Sultan's Ferman made it compulsory. Similarly, Leila Ahmed claims that the veil appears to have been occasionally in use among all the peoples of the area, from the Greeks to the Persians, most of who were not Muslim (Ahmed, 1992: 55). It becomes clear therefore that not only did the ferexhe not have religions implications in Albania, but that its use in the novel by Kadare has a completely different function. This brings us back to the archetypical function of Hadji Milet's character. This official of the dictatorial state comes to realise the truth, and becomes opposed to the further oppression of the people. In a way, he ends up sacrificing himself by making a stand against the authoritarian regime, become a man of the millet (people).

3.5 The archetype

As an invariant, a stable element, a specific trait is developed in a typical Kadarean character, in which the human traits of a particular era are juxtaposed with the general timeless traits, the timeless face of the archetype, in the meaning of its original sources, but also those repeatable. His archetype also has the meaning given by Northop Frye: a typical image, as a symbol that intertwines works and literature (Frye, 1957: 71). The character, Hadji Milet is in a crisis of degradation due to the fear of self-destruction. In *The Bearer of ill Tidings – Islamo nox*, Hadji Milet is suffocated by the requirements of a beastly totalitarian regime. The violent psychological pressure of the totalitarian regime had deformed Hadji Milet, so that he imagined even his wife in an unnatural state as he imagined her covered in a ferexhe.

The thoughts of Hadji Milet seem to be comprehensively mythical: he acts and thinks through analogies and comparisons. When Hadji Milet thinks in a quiet moment as he looks at the 'ballkanesha', 'If only you knew what these mules are carrying' ('Sikur ta dinit ju ç'kanë ato mushka') (Kadare, 1986: 135), Hadji Milet quietly answered to himself: 'So this is what the ballkanesha were like. The dark murmuring of the thousands of tanned women of his country approached his mind like a black cloud.' ('Ja pra si ishin ballkaneshat. Murmurima e errët, zymtane e mijëra grave të zeshkëta të vendit të tij i afrohej kujtesës si një re e zezë') (Kadare, 1986: 135). Hadji Milet, who remembers the women of his country fully covered and embellished with dark colours, is appalled by the appearance of the 'ballkanesha'. He explains in the narrative 'What world was this where the gaze of the men and women wandered freely, in the same space,' ('Ç'ishte kjo botë kështu, ku vështrimet e grave e të burrave vërtiteshin lirshëm, në të njëjtën hapësirë,') (Kadare, 1986: 136).' Hadji Milet seems to consider that his caravan was such a magnificent entity in terms of its power that even the oracles of Delphi or the caste of the prophets, or the ancient Magi were small and laughable in comparison. However, he begins to have his doubts as the appearances of the girls of the Balkans strike him full of awe:

'They were girls with their hair combed differently from one another,
with their necks and feet uncovered, and more importantly with their
eyes not covered by anything'
('Ishin gra dhe vajza me flokë të krehur ndryshe nga një ra-tjetra, me
qafë dhe këmbë të zbuluara, dhe kryesorjame sy të pazënë nga asgjë
(Kadare, 1986: 135).

This was partly a convention borrowed from his memory to accommodate the decision of his final judgment. Finally Hadji Milet made significant use of his memory to establish the cross-cultural aspect of the situation.

Nevertheless, Hadji Milet's adopted memory was an act not so much of defiance as of submission to a cultural connotation which he felt was futile to distance himself from. Kadare's character is characterised by non-detailed descriptions of his personality, or his state of consciousness. Bret Mathew Funk in his essay *Writing Three-Dimensional Characters* (2005) considers this as an acceptable method for novels where the events are more important than the characters. According to Funk, some of the traits of this character are: a) he has no past, b) he is often unaccompanied, c) he is characterised by minimal physical and emotional traits, d) may be archetypal (Funk, 2005: 86). In Particular, the character of Hadji Milet undergoes a grotesque metamorphosis; this can be seen to have occurred due to the realities outside of his control. The world, in which he finds himself, full of the Ballkanesha, ends up maddening him. We conclude this in the novel, when Hadji Milet's death in prison highlights the fact that his arrest was made in secret, such that the family for weeks and months was unsure of his fate, similar to the arrests during communism. When the guard found him dead Kadare's narrative style explains clearly that he killed himself to escape further tortures:

> 'Hadji Milet died at the end of the winter, before the worst tortures began. The guard who first found his corpse was scared. He thought that it wasn't Hadji Milet, but an imposter had been put in his place in the cell. In fact from the head it looked like a woman to the guard. Then when the guard turned the body around, he recognised him. It was Hadji Milet, but he had covered his head and part of his face with a black headscarf, tied in the way women tied their Ferexhe'

('Haxhi Mileti vdiq në të dalë të dimrit, pa i filluar torturat e mëdha. Gardiani që e gjetinë mëngjes kufomën e tij në fillim u tremb. Kujtoi se nuk qe aid he se në qeli i kishin future në vend të tij një të panjohur, madje në krye iu duk si grua. Pastaj, kur e rrutulloi trupin, e njohu. Ishte ai, vetëm se e kishte mbuluar kokën dhe një pjesë të fytyrës me një shami të zezë, lidhur në atë mënyrë siç lidhin ferexhenë grate.') (Kadare, 1986: 157).

The ending of Hadji Milet's life may have been undignified as he killed himself in his own cell and it may also have seemed insignificant at first, due to the fact that the guard could not even recognise his dead body at first, but the death in the end was a clear message sent to the authorities. By wearing the makeshift ferexhe in the last moments of his life Hadji Milet managed to successfully deliver a message that he had turned from being an official bringing a burden for the people into a cause. In his last moments, Hadji Milet clearly thought about his opposition to the wearing of the ferexhe, which he saw as unnatural, and he sent a message about the significance of the converting of female Christians and Muslim, including the females from the Balkans who he believed were naturally born to have and enjoy freedom. It is as if he was saying that the covering of the face was for the dead, the living should roam free and uncovered. Hadji Milet's last defiant act provoked the anger of the Totalitarian Empire, as he insisted that both the covering of the women and the preventing of their freedom was an aberration and 'unnatural'. This conversion of Hadji Milet's opinions beliefs in the end, represents the belief of Kadare that everyone is capable of realising the truth and turning their backs on a totalitarian regime, even if they were implicated in its policies previously. There can be absolution for everyone.

3.6 Return of 'Hell' and 'Inferno'

According to Kadare, the creation of the feeling of fatality in the people is one of the most successful weapons of the totalitarian systems. The Ottoman Empire recycled the ghastliest myths from antiquity whilst imposing the penal system. Kadare uses the word 'renovative', for something which deserves to be called 'reactionary'; in other words, the policies of these totalitarian systems represent a return of the inferno into the lives of people (Kadare, 2009: 502). *The Bearer of ill Tidings – Islamo nox* is full of signs of the psychic and spiritual infection of the people by totalitarian regimes.

In *The Bearer of ill Tidings – Islamo nox*, 'hell' and 'inferno' become Kadare's tactical tools of mythical representation. *The Bearer of ill Tidings – Islamo nox*'s discontinuous narrative reveals the process of 'remembering' and 'arranging' a mnemonic device, as 'the usual dialogical process involved in remembering'. Lachmann states that 'the most significant in this respect is the art of memory originating in the ancient discipline of mnemotechnics.' (Lachmann, 2008: 301). According to Lachmann 'Mnemotechnics has a legendary source' and it works 'as a prescription for acts of recollection, conceals an ancient myth narrating the development of the art of memory' (Lachmann, 2008: 301-302). For Lachmann 'writing in its mnemonic dimension has some affinities to this art, concerning the concept of memory and the role that images play in procedures of recollection and remembering' (ibid).

Kadare's literary tactics are what make *The Bearer of ill Tidings – Islamo nox* function subversively and culturally as a literary history. In the text, myths as cultural dynamics of symbolic forms and mnemonic devices can be mutated, exchanged, hybridised. This hybrid form then creates a space of representation to contravene traditional boundaries

between fictional, poetic, prosaic and historical narrative forms and techniques. As Lachmann states:

> Several key concepts which helped to shape various styles of memoria could be seen as originating in mythical tale: forgetting and remembering (as mechanisms that establish a culture); the storing of knowledge (as a tradition's strategy for survival); the need for cultural experience to be preserved by a bearer (of memory) as witness or as text. The myth anticipates the competition in mnemotechnics between writing and image, and the copresence of the working of memory and death (Lachmann, 2008: 302).

The travelling between these territories, the cross-cultural connotation between form and meaning are central to the book's journey of identity. *The Bearer of ill Tidings – Islamo nox*'s hybridity allows the narrative to construct a mnemonic image of characters with fluid identities that fantastically transforms at will under different circumstances.

Kadare's 'ballkanesha', after being forced to wear the ferexhe, take on different roles while also paradoxically refusing the very possibility of a complete change in their self-perceived identity. This representation allows the 'ballkanesha' to conjugate a collective subjectivity that contests the hegemony of dominant culture within literary text construction. According to Frye 'in literature the standards of outward meaning are secondary, for literary works do not pretend to describe or assert, and hence are not true, not false' (Frye, 1957: 74). Rather than speaking from a firm platform of identity, Kadare's constructions of outward meaning interrogates the mechanisms of cultural identity representation. From the perspective of Hadji Milet, who is a thirty year old Turkish caravan driver for the Supply

Department of the eyh-ül-Islam, the government office that represented the highest religious authority in the Ottoman Empire (c. 14th -19th centuries)[12] it seems 'the primary literary aim of producing a structure of words for its own sake' (Frye, 1957: 74). Thus, his construction of cultural identity for figures like the 'ballkanesha' is one of the most intriguing characterisations in *The Bearer of ill Tidings – Islamo nox*.

On the other hand, in representing the character of the 'ballkanesha' amid his insistent use of power, irony and grotesque, Kadare opts instead to represent a resourcefulness of subjectivity and constructed identity. Kadare gives the 'ballkanesha' the potential dimension and cultural freedom from the historically assigned cultural formations which censor present and future identity possibilities. Instead of focusing on the journey of Hadji Milet's caravan, which was ordered to make stops in eighteen cities, as the first of many to deliver the means of imposing the ferexhe on the 'ballkanesha', the novel instead focuses on explaining the adverse effects of the veiling of European women.

Many have read Kadare's vacillation between female constructions as a form of mutating challenge to patriarchy. In this sense, I agree with John K. Cox for whom Kadare's gripping tale is 'both dramatic and highly atmospheric', not a unification of identities: 'Ultimately, an understanding of the phenomenon of veiling involves more than just attempts at weighing one's freedom of choice in clothing against the power of tradition or patriarchy' (Cox, 2006). What Kadare is therefore resisting with the tradition of the 'ballkanesha' is the general conception about women in the Ottoman Empire. His contextualisation plays with cultural identity, breaking down conventional oppositions and constructing them into a matter of dynamic cultural role-playing. Cox argues that Kadare's answer to these oppositions and ambiguities is 'imperative to examine a phenomenon on its own terms – the use of the veil

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[12] Read more: Islam and the Secular State in Turkey in Balim, Ç. (1995) *Turkey: Political, Social and Economic Challenges in The 1990s*. Leiden and New York: BRILL. P. 91.

can show us ways its wearers find it advantageous or adaptable to their own needs (Cox, 2006). Cox then prescribed it in the form of a culturalism for authoritarian purposes.

Hence the meaning of the dressing of the women with the ferexhe can be understood to show the Cultural Imposition of the Ottoman Empire. The change of clothing by force reflects a political storm and due to this, the function of the ferexhe and of all of the other symbols is a warning of the suffering, misunderstanding, pain, torture absurdity, and above all the 'hell' being imposed on the people of Albania by another totalitarian regime, the communist dictatorship under which Kadare wrote the novel.

3.7 The ferexhe as the bringer of darkness to the light

In *The Bearer of ill Tidings – Islamo nox* Kadare employs dark humour combined with the tragic shock to suggest that the 'ferexhe' is a symbol of darkness overpowering the light. Hadji Milet's ignorance, as described by Kadare, leads the character to believe that 'it was impossible to see any uncovered women in public anywhere in the Empire' ('Haxhi Mileti as që e kishte ditur më parë se kishte vise në perandoori ku gratë dilnin pa ferexhe…') (Kadare, 1986: 129). For Hadji Millet, the reality was that women were the covered gender, as this was the easiest way to control them. In a way the women who Hadji Millet was used to were covered by darkness. Here Kadare draws the elements form the classical Greek myth of creation and restructures them. These mythical elements linked to day and night (or light and darkness), explain the function of the ferexhe as a tool of the novel. We first see this from the whispers of the women who are sewing the ferexhes before they are ready for exportation. Kadare states in the novel: It was said that evil murmurs accompanied the cutting and the sewing of the black material from which the ferexhe were being made. "Let these European ballkanesha suffer. They had been uncovered until now, and have probably mocked us. But

now their end has come.' ('Thuhej se një murmurimë ligësie shoqëronte prerjen dhe qepjen e copes së zezë prej të cilës përgatiteshin ferexhetë. Le të vuanin edhe ato ballkaneshat, evropjankat. Kishin qenë gjer tani të zbuluara, ishin tallur ndoshta me to. Po tani u kishte ardhur fundi.') (Kadare, 1986: 128). Kadare here introduces the notion of the ferexhe as an approaching darkness. The light which here represents the freedom of the ballkanesha is covered by the ferexhe, the bringer of darkness. This metaphor is further extended elsewhere, when Hadji Milet wonders 'which part of the sky [the ferexhes] will cover' (ç'pjesë të qiellit do të zinin vallë ferexhetë') and when he imagines an eclipse of the women (Kadare, 1986: 133 and 151).

Further on, Kadare continues to reuse elements of the Greek myth of creation, where he states through Hadji Millet: 'it was the same as imagining the world with only day and no night. However Allah had made the world with half day and half of night. Similarly, He had made people half covered and half uncovered.' ('Ishte njëlloj si ta mendoje botën vetëm me ditë, pa natë. Po Allahu të tillë e kishte bërë botën, gjysëm të zbuluar, gjysëm të mbuluar.') (Kadare, 1986: 128). In the Greek myth of creation, as summed up by Weigel, 'in the beginning there was only Chaos, an empty void. Then Erebus slept with Night, who gave birth to Ether, the heavenly light, and to Day the earthly light. Later Night alone produced Doom, Fate, Death, Sleep, Dreams, Nemesis, and others that come to man out of darkness (Weigel, 2007: 48-49). Kadare seems to have reused this myth through metaphors. The ferexhe are made of black cloth, and their sole purpose is to cover, so they were the darkness approaching the ballkanesha. For Kadare the ferexhe is the tool that creates a distinction between the light and the dark.

If we try to understand the meaning of the myth, as derived from the original myth which has been restructured by Kadare in *The Bearer of ill Tidings – Islamo nox*, we notice a few recurring elements: darkness, command, the ferman, (Kadare, 1984: 138-139). These

elements are reworked by Kadare in order to create the archetypical image, keeping the same meaning, but altering the structure.

The myth is a synthesis that creates the entirety of the meaning. Nevertheless the myth may be transformed, and its content may be changed. However myth undertakes these changes in order to survive. The important elements in its structure must not be lost, or the structure may be replaced by another. The restructuring or reworking of the archetypical image by Ismail Kadare, is carried out in order for the image to be translated into the modern language. Since myth is words, then Kadare almost speaks in myth. The mythical elements are the metaphors he uses in order to write about the Communist regime without falling foul of their censure.

In *The Bearer of ill Tidings – Islamo nox*, the theme of freedom of humanity is developed in contrast to the chaotic reality:

> 'So it is said that the doors between neighbouring yards must remain
>
> open day and night, in order for the women and girls to move freely
>
> between properties when their movement in the streets is restricted'
>
> ('thuhet se tani do t'i lënë çelur ditë e natë arkapijjat, në mënyrë që
>
> gratë e vajzat të qarkulllojnë të zbuluara nëpër to, kur t'u ndalohet ecja
>
> nëpër rrugë.') (Kadare, 1986: 146).

The demand imposed on all the females over thirteen and the ruthless hunting of the people who refused the orders of the authority create a 'dark' chaos that itself is symbolised by the colour of these pieces of cloth used for covering. Kadare suggests that this chaos is created by mental oppression, and the presence of an absolute ruthless Authority, as well as

misinformation of the people. The Power of the authority is strengthened as the people are covered, that is kept isolated from the outside world.

For Kadare, the darkness brought by the ferexhe symbolises the isolated world of the communist dictatorship under which he lived most of his life. According to Kadare it can be understood that the covering of the people or the keeping of them in darkness is the main method employed by a successful totalitarian state. The communist regime used darkness to create isolation, and through isolation it built its own propaganda and communist morals. In the novel, Kadare used the ferexhe to symbolise the darkness, whereas the ballkanesha or the women of the Balkans symbolised the light. The ferexhe, this approaching darkness, forewarns of the coming of communism, and the ballkanesha, these free people, are soon to be ensnared by the darkness.

3.8 Conclusion

The significance of reading the works of Kadare to explore the meaning of the reused myths in the novels is related to its potential for organising cultural tradition in pursuit of shared and transmitted knowledge generation to generation, from oral tales to written fiction work. Two particular conclusions follow from this: firstly, that the significance of reused myths as a representation of cultural identity in Kadare's texts varies infinitely; secondly, that it has to be considered in parallel with other potential and dimensional dynamics of culture for ethnic identity construction, including historical connotations, and cross-cultural effects. In *The Bearer of ill Tidings – Islamo nox* there are many such bases, making the relations between cultures multidimensional and enabling the different relationships to balance each other.

The chapter can conclude that through the reuse of the archetype of Hermes in the novel, Kadare equates Cultural Imposition initiated by dictatorial regimes, and more

specifically in this case, the Cultural Imposition of the ferexhe by the Ottoman Empire, to the policies of control created by the Communist Party of Albania at the time of the writing of the novel. Kadare himself has many times stated that the Ottoman Empire is a good analogy for the communist dictatorship, and he has therefore used the Ottoman Empire to represent the communist dictatorship in his novels. Therefore, just as in *Chronicle in Stone*, the significance of the reused myths in *The Bearer of ill Tidings – Islamo nox* relates to the authors desire to critique the communist regime he lived under whilst at the same time escaping the literary censorship. The ferexhe, the artefact which would allow the Ottoman Empire to cover the women in the western Balkans and therefore apply the final stage of the control of the area, is the symbol of the Cultural Imposition of the Ottomans.

In this chapter, I firstly considered the way in which the author depicted the Cultural Imposition under the Ottoman Empire. The chapter concludes here that according to the novel, the people in the Balkans and specifically the Albanians resisted well under the Ottoman Empire's attempts to impose cultural chances on the people. Through this, Kadare was sending a message that Albanians could again resist the communist regime they lived under. It was then apt to focus on the how Kadare has reused the myth of Hermes (as a bearer of ill tidings) to create Hadji Milet's character. Through the fact that Hadji Milet in *The Bearer of ill Tidings – Islamo nox* realises that the mission he was tasked in completing is not the glorious policy he had at first thought and ultimately sacrifices himself by going against the orders of the Sultan, Kadare has suggested that absolution was available for all of the officials of communist Albania who would have been working to further their propaganda, so long as they realised the truth of the situation. The next section of the chapter developed on this discussion by focusing on the archetypical construction of the character of Hadji Milet. I looked at how the name of the character was so chosen by Kadare to signify the character traits. Ultimately Hadji Milet means 'pilgrimage to the people', not only does this name

represent his role as the messenger of the Sultan, but it also foretells his final betrayal of the mission as he becomes one of the people. Finally, I have looked at how Kadare reuses the Greek myth of creation to depict the role of the ferexhe as the bringer of darkness to the world. I have shown that the ferexhe is used by Kadare as a representation of the control of the people during any dictatorship, but especially a reference to the communist regime he was living under. In the next chapter, I will analyse how Kadare portrays themes of sacrifice and reuses the mythical story of Agamemnon's sacrifice in the novel, *Agamemnon's Daughter*.

Chapter 4: AGAMEMNON'S DAUGHTER

4.1 Introduction

Following on from the three preceding chapters, Chapter 4 is primarily designed to investigate the representation of the myth of sacrifice by looking at the mythical elements and archetypes invoked by Kadare in *Agamemnon's Daughter*. As the penultimate analytical chapter of this study, this chapter focuses on a novel which was written by Kadare around the time of the death of communist party leader, Enver Hoxha. Due the fact that *Agamemnon's Daughter* was more explicitly critical of the society in Communist Albania than other books written by Kadare at the time, and would not only have been refused publication, but also led to the author being sanctioned by the regime, the manuscript was smuggled out of the country in manuscript form. The novel was finally published in Paris in 2003[13] as a French translation by Tedi Papavrami.

The novel is set in the period of communism and Kadare uses myths less subtly as he attacks the life under the regime. The narrative in *Agamemnon's Daughter* revolves around the fact that the narrator's lover Suzana is forced by her father, who is an elite member of the Communist Party to stop seeing the narrator, who is a news anchor with known anti-communist ideas. In keeping Suzana away from the narrator, Suzana's father is furthering his own political ambitions as he rise to the top of the Communist Party, so his daughter's love and happiness is sacrificed for his own career. Therefore the mythical theme of sacrifice is prevalent in the novel, though 'sacrifice' is explored through many different angles.

Just as in all of Kadare's other novels, in *Agamemnon's Daughter*, the use of myths and mythical themes is very prominent once again. However, in this novel the myths are not

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[13] The version of the novel that was considered during the writing of this thesis is the 2011 print, published by Arcade Publishing.

used to directly hide the point of the author. As will become apparent from the discussion that follows, Kadare criticises aspects of the Albanian society under the Communist Regime so blatantly, that the criticism is openly compared to mythical themes in the novel. This is in contrast to the other novels which have been analysed in this thesis where the whole purpose of reusing the mythical elements or themes in the novel was to form a veiled attack against the regime. It is not entirely clear why Kadare decide to write a novel which openly criticised the Communist Government in the mid-1980, but according to the introduction of the English-translated version of the novel, these 'dangerous manuscripts' were smuggled to Paris and were 'intended to allow Kadare's publisher, in the event of the writer's natural or "accidental" death, to declare that a previously unknown portion of his work would be published quickly' (Kadare 2011: 3). Again it is unclear if Kadare had any reason to suspect that his life was under threat when he wrote the novel, but he was clearly preparing so that 'the revelation of the tone and content of the unpublished works would make it much harder for the Communist propaganda machine to bend Kadare's work and posthumous image to its own ends' (ibid). Despite the unconcealed attacks on the Communist Regime, the author is still using mythical elements as analogies, something which had become a core element of his writing style. An analysis of the myths which are used by Kadare here is still essential in revealing more detail about what the writer is criticising.

The mythical and literary references which will be considered in this chapter are all presented from the narrator's point of view and are incidental to the structure and meaning of the novel. All the characters are grouped round him and there is not a single one who does not meet and influence him in some way: the secondary characters only exist so that the narrator can see them. As most of them are seen through a veil of mythical references, and as the narrator is never described from outside, it is reasonable to suggest that the viewpoints of the narrator and the implied narrator are very close. The literary references are the shadow

which the narrator casts over the novel, which is narrated as he would like it to be with reference to myths as analogies.

Thus, with a key emphasis upon the ethnographic, politico-cultural-context of outflow, such discourse analyses naturally leads to an examination of the structural roots of injustice in historical as well as contemporary context; and indeed, Kadare uses myth too, to significant literary effect when exploring themes which are arguably amongst some of the most important in contemporary Albanian identity. What also becomes apparent here is the importance of geographical demarcations of movement in cultural convergences. As will become apparent in this chapter, cultural identity increasingly achieves some notable and distinctive expressions as a cultural message decoded with myth and identity construction. Kadare's novel *Agamemnon's Daughter* certainly reflects this.

Chapter 5 begins with an introduction to the archetype of the sacrificer and daughter's sacrifice and the context around Kadare's *Agamemnon's Daughter*. I will then explore the significance of the mythical trope of emptiness and argue that it represented the increasing influence of communist ideology. Moreover I will analyse the theme of sacrifice which is the essential element of this novel, and also look at the way in which Kadare uses archetypes to create different effects in this novel. The chapter will finish with an examination of sacrifice as a political act under the communist regime.

4.2 Archetypes of the sacrificer and sacrificed daughter

In his style of writing, Kadare typically returns to historical times, exploring the myths and their elements as important concepts of comparative theory within the narrative. It is clear that Kadare intertwines the elements of National culture with mythology originating from other places around the world. The events in *Agamemnon's Daughter* mirror other stories

from different epochs, though the core of these stories is mythology itself. The author, it seems, is spurred by a spirit of universal mythology, in order to give the story and characters a type of "aesthetic consciousness". Naturally, the archetype of Iphigenia is uniquely identified, and even though the name is changed to Suzana through the role that this character plays in the narrative, it is clear that this same archetype appears in Kadare's novel.

An archetype can achieve conditional universalism, but not by being conditioned to a single view or by returning us to an origin (because the core meaning once made clear, is continuously absent) (Gould, 1981:35). The archetype can do this by suggesting that he is always open to interpretation. Myth as a transmittal form of an archetypal meaning is not objective fact, nor a focus of the whole or a primordial informative image, nor a matter of knowledge obtained, but a theorem, a disclosure of understanding which convinces us to its logic. The act of interpretation needs to be analysed for its function in equipping the symbols with archetypal values. According to Gould, language is the most powerful symbolic order of the conscious and the subconscious (Gould, 1981:35). Understanding myths is a prerequisite of understanding the narrative of *Agamemnon's Daughter*, since the voice of the characters suggests the hidden meanings, the unexpressed intentions, making the character itself the explorer of the hidden meaning. Through the recreation of the archetype of the tyrant of all eras, the sacrifice for power is universalised.

The recreated mythical element of sacrifice in *Agamemnon's Daughter*, is brought through stories which have been conveyed by cultural memory. The concept of cultural memory comprises the 'body of reusable texts, images, and rituals specific to each society in each epoch' (Assmann, 1995: 132). Kadare's novels convey cultural memory through the use of the themes of sacrifice as this is 'defined as referring to founding myths of an absolute past' (ibid). These rites of sacrifice which are explored in the novel reflect the common practice of cultural memory in Albania.

Agamemnon's Daughter reflects sacrifice through a shocking love story that is suddenly thrust within the mechanisms of the cold machine of the state. Carol Herman reads the novel as a modern reworking of an ancient sacrificial ritual. She states that the novel revolves around the main character's realisation that 'Suzana's sacrifice of their love for her father's success, recalls [the sacrifice] of Agamemnon's daughter Iphigenia' (Herman, 2006: 10). *Agamemnon's Daughter* is therefore intertwined with the history of the Trojan War. Kadare states that the Commander of the Greek army, Agamemnon, sacrifices his own daughter, Iphigenia, so that he could ask for the ultimate sacrifice from his army: 'If the supreme leader Agamemnon had sacrificed his own daughter that meant that there would be no pity for anyone else either. The axe's blade was already smeared with blood . . .' (Kadare, 2011: 57). Moreover, *Agamemnon's Daughter* presents us with another example borrowed from political sacrifice. Kadare writes through the narrator, who is a moderate anti-conformist TV journalist, that Stalin's son was 'sacrificed': 'Had not Stalin sacrificed his own son Yakov to ... in order to ... to be able to say that his own son . . . had to share the same destiny. .. the same fate ... as any Russian soldier?' (Kadare, 2011: 42). Kadare has reflected these stories in his novel. In the narrative plot, Suzana, the narrator's lover, is faced with a distressing ultimatum over which it appears that she has no real choice. She must give up her affair with the narrator for the sake of her father's political career. Suzana, who is the daughter of one of the leaders of the ruling regime, is endangering her father's political ambitions through her relationship with the narrator, and therefore her feelings must be sacrificed. At first glance the sacrifice looks simple; in fact it is Suzana herself who offers the sacrifice in order to please her father. However the sacrifice is complicated in the mind of the narrator. Whilst he is sitting in the main stand during the May Day Parade, Suzana's sacrifice awakens a terrible comparison in his mind. Suzana's sacrifice reminds him of Agamemnon's gest in Ancient Greek mythology. He is reminded that the Greek king offered his own

daughter as sacrifice to Artemis in order to appease the goddess of the hunt, wild animals, wilderness, and childbirth, before his army began their campaign to seize the city of Troy. Suzana's father has done the same thing after all. He has decided to kill Suzana's heart in order to advance his career in the shadows of the dictator. What makes it worse though, and adds to the narrator's sense of foreboding, is the fact that Agamemnon's sacrifice was futile, so the termination of his relationship with Suzana may also be a pointless gesture.

The narrator - who remains nameless throughout the whole novel - is being eaten away by Suzana's gesture of self-sacrifice. As a result he begins to wonder why she had to be sacrificed in the first place. This is where the link to the myth of Iphigenia (Agamemnon's daughter) comes into play. The narrator thinks of the reasons for why Iphigenia had to be sacrificed. According to the ancient myth, it had become apparent that Artemis was livid with Agamemnon after his soldiers killed a pregnant hare, so had caused Agamemnon's ships to drown when they set sail for Troy. Sacrificing Iphigenia was a gesture to appease Artemis. There are different versions of the myth, however most of the earliest versions state that Agamemnon proceeded to sacrifice his daughter after being told that this would be the best course of action.[14]

Through Suzana's role as the main female protagonist of the novel, Kadare has blended the reality of everyday life of Albanians at the time. Every so often the narrative brings out dogmas, stereotypes and patterns of Albanian life under communism through the character of Suzana. For example, the red dress that Suzana begins to wear symbolises her conversion or submission to the Party ideals. It is also a symbol of her sacrifice. Suzana is not only forced to stop her love affair, but she is under pressure to change the way she dresses.

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[14] Other versions of the myth suggest that Iphigenia was taken by Artemis to Tauris in Crimea and used a deer or goat to take her place during the sacrifice.

The red colour not only a metaphor for her submission to the red of communism, but also a metaphor for the blood that was spilled by her sacrifice.

The ritual of Suzana's sacrifice seems to express a type of grotesque image, with mythological origins. However the narrative at first raises an ambiguous meaning: is Suzana the heroine or the victim of society? The time in which the novel is set, that is, the communist period during which the events of the narrative take place, is crucial. Cultural identity is composed of elements that are affected by the social uncertainty, social drama, the unravelling of social order. The creativity of a writer does not occur instantaneously; it is clearly fed by the experience he has gained, and from his knowledge of earlier events. According to Schopenhauer the entire society of the time plays a role in the creation of 'morality' and it is 'a knowledge of it [that] will be the foundation of morals' (Schopenhauer, 1995: 130). Morals are how one perceives everything around him and they are the standard with which a person measures society, therefore there is circularity in the concepts. Similarly cultural memory shapes the work of a writer, but the narrative also transmits the cultural identity. As such, despite his desire to escape the conformism, Kadare uses the character of Suzana to create the scenario of a perfect affair with the narrator, but then multi-layers the character by making it so that she submits to her father's will by ending her relationship. Through this, Kadare invokes the archetype of the tyrant that has one key element: sacrifice for the sake of power. Almost inadvertently Kadare has therefore eased some of the aspects of conformation to the communist ideals into Suzana's character.

In his study, *Morphology of the Folktale*, Vladimir Propp explains that repeatability of the functions of the characters is amazing. Therefore it is the function of the characters that needs to be understood first and foremost. Propp reminds us that, 'we are aware of the fact that the repetition of functions by various characters was long ago observed in myths and beliefs' (Propp, 1928: 20). According to Propp, 'Function is understood as an act of a

character, defined from the point of view of its significance for the course of the action'. (Propp, 1928: 21). The function of Agamemnon in *Agamemnon's Daughter* is the same as that of the ancient leader of the Greeks in the original myth, regardless that it is carried out by a) another character: (Suzana's father, The Heir) and b) by other means: (the Heir sacrifices the love and happiness of his daughter). Just as in the ancient myth these functions are the stimulus for the main parts of the novel. In *Agamemnon's Daughter*, the archetype of the tyrant arrives through the character of the Heir, Suzana's father. The characteristics of Agamemnon (king and commander, warmonger, imposer of iron discipline, violence and terror) the relationships between Agamemnon and the other commander, Achilles (stubborn quarrels between leaders), other elements (strengthening of the leadership position) and the relationship between these different characteristics, are related to the deep structure of the myth that is organized in the subject of *Agamemnon's Daughter*.

These characteristics also characterise the ex-Prime Minister of Albania Mehmet Shehu,[15] and the events in the years 1980-1981 in communist Albania, are organised and restructured into the narrative. From the unification of the elements of the character of Agamemnon with the ex-Prime Minister of Albania, creates the original character of the Heir in the novel:

> "...The serried ranks of the procession stretched out into the far distance. The
> only thing missing was a portrait of Agamemnon. Of Comrade Agamemnon
> MacAtreus, member of the Politburo, grand master of all sacrifices after him.
> As the founder and classic example of his kind, he presumably knew better

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[15] At the time when the novel was written, Mehmet Shehu was the Prime Minister of Albania and the second in command (after Communist Party leader and dictator, Ever Hoxha). Mehmet Shehu is widely known to have sacrificed the way in which his children lived their lives in order to further his own political agenda.

than anyone else how the springs and levers of this affair had been set.

(Kadare, 2011: 56).

Here, the comparison between The Heir and Agamemnon are made clear. The passage suggests that the march of the May Day Parade was only missing a portrait of The Heir, and the picture of the marching Greek Soldiers with the painting of Agamemnon after Iphigenia's sacrifice, would have been complete.

The continued class war waged by the Communist Government, just as the Trojan War, required the sacrificing of the leader's daughter. As the fate of the director of the broadcasting corporation in Agamemnon's Daughter showed, nobody was exempt from the cleansing initiated by the Party. In order for the people to accept their own fate, somebody close to the leadership would need to be ritualistically sacrificed. Kadare's use of the archetype of Iphigenia reveals much about life under the Communist Regime in Albania, when everyone was expected to sacrifice every aspect of their life for the glory of the party. As will be discussed later on in the chapter, Communism could only survive in Albania by asking the subjects to sacrifice their freedoms and needs. As such, in *Agamemnon's Daughter*, Suzana, the reused archetype of Iphigenia represents the sacrifice of ordinary Albanian people living under the Communist Regime in Albania.

4.3 The mythical trope of emptiness

Figures of 'emptiness' in *Agamemnon's Daughter* serve to represent the changeability in the narrator's identity. The emptiness is described in terms of chaos, and ironically, according to Eleazar Moiseevich Meletinskiĭ in her study *The Poetics of Myth*, 'chaos which is a prominent theme in mythologies from around the world is often represented as darkness,

night, emptiness' (Meletinskiĭ, 1998: 186). In the novel, it becomes apparent that through the emptiness, the identity of the narrator develops and is perceived differently. In contrast to the chaos represented by the noise that enters the narrator's apartment from the May Day Parade taking place in the streets, Kadare sometimes places emptiness into the narrative. The feeling of emptiness is a natural consequence of the grieving of the narrator after his split from Suzana, but also a consequence of his fear of political punishment from the state machine.

Emptiness as a philosophical notion has been discussed at length, it 'is an idea that philosophy begins only when there are no further text to read, when the truth you seek has already been missed, as if it lies behind you' (Cavell, 1994: 15). For Stanley Cavell 'in the myth of totality, philosophy has still not found itself – until at least it has found you; in the myth of emptiness, philosophy has lost itself in its first utterances' (ibid). Emptiness contains two forms, 'internal emptiness' and 'external emptiness', however in the narrative, the emptiness felt by the narrator is a combination of both of these forms, so it is both an internal and an external emptiness. The narrator and his feeling of bitterness as a result of his love lost represents the chaos and anguish produced by emptiness and the fear of Suzana's sacrifice.

The feeling of emptiness is introduced from the first sentence of the passage when the narrator is making his way with the surprise invitation to the main stand of the parade, and it is also introduced in the first sentence of the chapter 3. In the first case the narrator states that 'Isolated from the hubbub on the street, the apartment seemed even more silent than usual. Silent and empty.', and then later at the beginning of the later chapter he expresses that 'There was no one on the stairs, and barely any passers-by on the street outside.' (Kadare, 2011: 13 & 18). From the narrative we learn that the events are taking place on the 1st of May, the day on which the Communist Party organises a parade in honour of the workers and invites all of the proletariat to celebrate. We also learn that the narrator lives in a typical apartment in Albania's capital, Tirana, and that the parade is taking place in one of Tirana's

main streets. The atmosphere of the events seems to be divided between noise and emptiness: 'I continued to stare at the empty couch while the distant sounds of celebration echoed in my ears.' (Kadare, 2011: 16). Therefore, the narrative creates a contrast between the emptiness of the narrator's couch and the noise around him. It is clear that, as mentioned above the emptiness is felt because of the ending of his affair with Suzana and also due to the fear the narrator feels. It is surprising that a journalist who has been criticised for his pragmatist ideals and for his non-conformist stance should be invited to the main stand where the Party Leaders and politically privileged individuals sat during the May Day Parade. The narrator's fear seems to be present at different times in the narrative. This becomes clear from his distanced stance whilst walking towards the parade proceedings, and again resurfaces as he argues with his communist uncle, as he greets acquaintances on the street, and when he passes by any individuals who are hidden behind their official uniform. It is this fear that adds to the narrator's feelings of internal emptiness. For Foucault, the emptiness of self-essence logically demands a productive relation between one and one's self (Foucault, 1988: 78).

Kadare makes the point of the emptiness even clearer when describing that the emptiness has a deep impact on the narrator's character: 'I was struck dumb by this argument' (Kadare, 2011: 32). The word 'dumb' highlights the fact that the emptiness felt by the narrator is transforming him. The narrator can no longer think freely and criticise China or the Communist Party as he did in his debates with his uncle. When the narrator refers to Albania as an 'accursed land', his uncle angrily shouts: "I am going to report you!" (Kadare, 2010: 56).

The meaning of 'emptiness' as used by Kadare in the novel changes in the unique contexts in which it is used. In the passage where the narrator is reading and re-reading the story of Agamemnon and his daughter, he begins to ask himself why this pointless sacrifice

that has affected his life took place. Kadare describes his feelings thusly: 'And that's how I felt then — drowsy, and unable to make things out.' (Kadare, 2011: 17). In this context, the emptiness is encapsulated by the narrator's feeling of powerlessness created in his mind as a result of his preoccupation on other matters. This preoccupation is the sacrifice that in the troubled mind of the narrator is described in conflicting ways as a 'mortal act', 'for the benefit of the army' as well as 'blood-soaked' (Kadare, 2011: 16). In this passage of the narrative, this emptiness felt by the narrator after the occurrence of the sacrifice applies to highlight the changes in him.

The reference to myths adds to the confusion and sadness of the narrator. Reading *The Greek Myths* by Robert Graves, the narrator begins to fully understand the situation in which he is in. In his mind he is desperately trying to understand the word 'sacrifice': '…True sadness often makes me feel sluggish and slow…' (Kadare, 2011: 17). The narrator begins to think about all situations in relation to 'sacrifice'; the whole of the communist regime seems like a sacrifice to him: 'Comrades! The age in which we live demands sacrifices for the sake of oil. . . The sacrifices of our cattle breeders . . . and so on' (Kadare, 2011: 16). All of these sacrifices he sees around him mirror his feeling of emptiness and impact on the changes to how he perceives himself. The only difference that occurs is that in the chapters 3 and 4, the emptiness is contrasted more with the crowds on the streets. The narrator walks slowly on the streets mostly ignoring the activity around him. He sees no end to the emptiness he feels: 'A sombre chasm, then a great fall, then a desperate jerk to try to escape at any cost from the chaos . . .' (Kadare, 2011: 26).

Another type of emptiness becomes apparent whilst the narrator is trying to understand the other world in which his lover is living. It is a different world, reserved for a special caste; the caste in which Suzana's father, the heir to the dictator, belongs. This emptiness is revealed in the form of jealousy: 'What if Suzana's simplicity and modesty were

only for appearance, whereas in reality, over there behind the high walls of official residences, villas, and private beaches, she was having a riot at all-night parties with unlimited booze and sex on tap?' (Kadare, 2011: 45). Amongst the emptiness, two worlds are created, two separate identities that develop and grow in different tangents to one another even though they develop within the same geographical area. These identities are the identity of the class surrounding the Dictator, and the identity of 'the masses'. Kadare describes the attempt to alter the identities of the masses through the imposition of Party directives, through the metaphor of the 'cosmic void' (Kadare, 2011: 45). Here the emptiness has been increased to universal proportions. The 'noise on the street' and 'a policeman's whistle' 'added a cosmic proportion', so the loss of their identity was described as a 'cosmic void' (Kadare, 2011: 45).

Surprise is an element to which the narrator is introduced through his contact with others and the situations he finds himself in. 'Surprise' manifests itself after the narrator receives the invitation to the main stand. Surprise also manifests itself through the character of the narrator's uncle. Therefore the emptiness with the feeling of surprise symbolises a duality in the identity of the protagonist. One identity belongs to the man who fiercely argues with his uncle against the Communist Party policies, the other identity belongs to the man who holding the invitation in his hand, goes to join the Party elite in their celebration. Hence surprise appears like a theatrical performance in function of the emptiness: 'It was my uncle. Though delighted to see me, he couldn't mask his surprise.' (Kadare, 2011: 30).

4.4 Archetype of Circe - allusion to mould a new identity

Agamemnon's Daughter reuses elements of the archetype of Circe, as a witch who could turn humans into animals by magic. The archetype of Circe may consist of a number of meanings,

not all of which may have been the intention of the author when he invoked the symbols in his narrative. Despite there being potentially infinite interpretations, here the meaning of the myth is clear: the Communist Party and its principles are themselves Circe.

The machine of the State never relented in forcing everyone to conform to their ideals. Whilst the narrator is on his way to the main stand of the May Day Parade holding his unexpected invitation, he notices the artist, Th. D., meeting some high officials who were distinguishable through their clothing. Kadare is content at simply describing the clothes of these individuals to show their authority. The clothing of the officials clearly illustrated their identity as they dressed differently to the other people. At the same time, the smiles that these people wore on their faces radiated their common happiness at the circumstances and betrayed their common goal, which was, the suppression of the masses. Therefore a mere description of these people in the narrative is enough to identify their status, so Kadare does not need to state it explicitly. Amongst the crowd of invitees to the stand of the May Day Parade, a man tells his young daughter the actual role of the officials around him: '"That one looks after our newspapers," he told his daughter with a smile, "and he's our foreign minister." He could have been showing her new toys.' (Kadare, 2011: 37). To further highlight that the people are indoctrinated by the communist ideology, Kadare raises the question through the little girl: '"Who's higher up, the foreign minister or the minister of the interior?"' (ibid). Naturally the answer of one indoctrinated by the Albanian Communist Party's isolationist ideals is clear: every aspect of 'home' is better than the 'foreign', so Albanians were lead to believe that they lived a better life than foreigners. When the girl mentions that she finds the 'foreign' more 'attractive', the man, so as not to betray his real beliefs, dodges the question with his reply: '"Do you mean dresses?" he asked. "You're right!"' (ibid).

The conforming of the people to the political regime's ideals is used by Kadare not simply as a means of showing the power of politics, but as a means of highlighting the issue that political power can force its ideals on the subjects and change their identity. From reading Kadare it is clear that the conforming policies were brought forcefully from above because it was easier for the communist regime to control people who had conformed to their ideas. Under such forced directives, the people would be sacrificing their identity. According to Kadare, the policies placed the importance of the regime above all else, so the people should be prepared to eat grass to uphold the status quo. However, by eating grass (as the Party prepared them to), would they not be turning into herbivores: "What use could we make of principles [of the Party] whose purpose is to turn us into cattle, like a flock of Circes?" (Kadare, 2011: 32). Kadare employs black comedy in this metaphor by recalling the time of Circe in ancient Greece, when the people were similarly primitive masses who were easily controlled by those with political power. However through the narrative in *Agamemnon's Daughter*, it becomes clear that the Communist Party is attempting to mould a new collective identity for Albanians which suited their agenda. The Communist Regime disguised its policies into nationalistic notions to further their agenda, but according to Kadare in his essay *The Balkans: Truths and Untruths* (Ballkani: Të Vërteta dhe të Pavërteta): 'The nationalist ideas, backed by the administration, police, and academics led to harsh inhuman doctrines' (Kadare, 2005: 19). Kadare is suggesting that the idea of nationalism was used by the Communist Party as an excuse that allowed them to impose controls over the people. These comments reveal that the Communist Regime was attempting to take the role of an oppressor in the way it tried to shape a collective identity of the people it controlled.

Throughout history, due to prolonged periods of occupation, the Albanian cultural identity has been impacted by foreign elements. As such, over these periods, Albanians will have borrowed some elements of the identities of other cultures. The ideas that create the

culture and shape its continuous development cannot be exclusive to anyone. Every person as an individual or as part of a social community plays a role in the process of the formation of the identity of the collective and formation and development of the culture. Therefore exposure to foreign elements of culture over a prolonged period would have led to an adaptation of the Albanian cultural identity. In a similar way, the Communist Regime was attempting to mould a 'New Albania' by introducing 'foreign' cultural norms in the hope that they would be absorbed by the Albanian community.

In almost all of his books, Kadare raises the issue of Albania's European identity – he seems to adamantly reject any idea that suggests Albanian culture is influenced by Eastern culture. This is an important theme in *Agamemnon's Daughter* too. Kadare suggests that just like the role outside powers have had in affecting Albanian cultural identity; the communist regime also had a similar effect, in as much as the communist ideology and the policies of the regime were geared at controlling all aspects of the persons living in Albania at the time. Whilst the narrator is debating with his uncle about the many problems faced by the state such as the mess of the inability of workers to meet quotas, about Stalin, about television programs, about the issue of Kosovo etc., he reminds him angrily that he is not from 'Bangladesh', or from 'Asia' (Kadare, 2011: 30). The character is suggesting that Albanians are European and therefore know more about European issues than is given credit to them. Kadare cites that Albanian national hero Scanderbeg 'Skanderbeg fought for a quarter of a century to snatch Albania out of Asia and to bring it into the European fold.' (ibid). This seems to suggest that Europe and Asia are binary opposites, and Kadare seems to suggest that both Russian and Chinese identities are binary opposites of the Albanian identity. It is clear that the character is used to portray Kadare's own views – Kadare portrays this sentiment in his essay, *The European Identity of Albanians* (2006).

In my opinion, it would be simplistic and wrong to suggest that there is a binary of sorts between 'European' and 'non-European' (or as Kadare suggests here 'Asian') identities. As has been already mentioned above, during the prolonged periods of occupation – especially under the 500 year Ottoman occupation – Albanian cultural identity would have evolved to absorb elements that are 'non-European', despite the fact that Baron Franz Nopcsa von Felső-Szilvás in citing Albanologists such as Boué (1840), Bolle (1891), Cozens-Hardy (1894), Callan (1899), Baldacci (1901), Durham (1905) argues that Albanians at large were able to safeguard their own traditions during the occupation by the Ottoman Empire (Nopcsa: 1920: 6). Therefore, one must criticise the simplistic view Kadare is trying to put across in this novel. On the other hand, it does seem as if Kadare is probably equating the 'European identity' with the West, and therefore equating 'Non-European identity' to the Eastern Superpowers; Russia and China. The failed Soviet-Albanian and Sino-Albanian relationships have led to Kadare suggesting that Albanians cannot get along with these Eastern powers. Kadare's criticism of Communism therefore has meant that he criticises everything Eastern and 'Non-European'.

The identities created by the power of the state and the communist directives, are topics in the heated debates between the narrator and his uncle in *Agamemnon's Daughter*. Kadare through the narrator is trying to explain how Albanian cultural identity will survive the influences by the Communist Party to alter it. The debates between the narrator and his uncle, the narrative reveals, begin after the narrator criticises 'a slogan in one of the Guide's speeches: We shall eat grass if we have to but we will never renounce the principles of Marxism-Leninism!' (Kadare, 2011: 32).

The chapter which encompasses the debates between the narrator and his uncle highlights Kadare's aim for the novel. In a moment of anger, the narrator's uncle shouts: 'You can't understand that it would not matter one iota if Albania were wiped off the face of

the earth so long as the ideas of the Guide were assured of an eternal future!' (Kadare, 2011: 32). Kadare is suggesting here that the existence of Albania has constantly been jeopardised by dictatorial politicians. Every person has their own individual identity; however there is also a collective or cultural identity which is usually shaped by the cultural memory of a group of people. Hence, depending on the situations with which a person is faced, he will enforce or lose some aspects of his identity. In political situations such as under a dictatorship, it is the policies of the state that can affect the collective cultural identity. Dictators, according to Kadare's novel, want to promote their policies which they consider to be more important than the survival of the nation. Kadare writes through the narrator: 'We should be weeping instead. But you won't understand that, seeing that you're already brain-dead!' (Kadare: 2011: 31). The word 'brain-dead' here suggests that the uncle is unable to think for himself, he has just adopted the thinking of the Communist Party. As the narrator sarcastically comments: 'Once they'd been got rid of, turned into thin air, how clean it would be, how spotless! A country that had died, but was kept alive in the ideas and books of its Leader.' (Kadare: 2011: 33). Kadare suggests through the narrator in *Agamemnon's Daughter* that in the communist regime the Albanian people sacrificed their cultural identity for the sake of the political ideologies of the Communist Party, a sacrifice that is dictated through the suppression of an entire people in exchange for a false eternity in the ideological books. For Kadare, it was not just the books, but the whole propaganda which was controlled by the machine of the State. Through the propaganda the State could better impose their policies on the subjects, and also shape their identity. The film production company, the only state television station, the newspapers and the state radio station were all geared towards the promotion of this Communist propaganda. The narrator in *Agamemnon's Daughter* thinks that his uncle is regurgitating the Party line during their argument: 'the way he looked at me, the pat on the shoulder copied from "New Albania" movies' (Kadare, 2011: 33). In another

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section of the novel, when the narrator sees the artist Th. D., he recalls how he had always seen the same sullen expression on his face during the ceremonies which were organised by the television studio. Kadare uses the sullen expression on this character's face to symbolise his reluctant conformation to the party directives. Without his reluctant conformation he would not have been successful as an artist, since 'I knew of no one else in the whole country who was simultaneously considered privileged and persecuted.' (Kadare, 2011: 36).

Since the Communist Party acts in a ruthless manner through its politics, it can be said that the archetype of Circe, is reused in the novel through a modernised form. Circe's magic is the same as the magic of the Communist Party that deforms the identity of the people for the sake of principles and ideology.

4.5 The myth of the 'Bald Man and the Eagle': sacrifice as a political act

Through the myth of the Bald Man and the Eagle, Kadare gives us shocking and dramatic images about the state of Albanian society under communism and the fight to escape the clutches of dictatorship. The fable consists of a bald man who is riding an eagle which will bring him back from the netherworld, but must be fed human flesh in order to fly. The man has to therefore feed the eagle his own flesh during the flight. Ironically, when the eagle reaches the world above, the man has fed it all his flesh and only a skeleton is carried back. This story again symbolises the sacrifice which is the theme of the novel: one is sacrificing himself in order to reach the top. Herman reads the images of the eagle as representations of the Albanian state's tyrannical grip (Herman, 2006: 10). Eagles feature prominently in Albanian culture and a black double-headed eagle adorns the Albanian flag. Therefore it is very likely that the Eagle in the fable represents the Albanian state. As such the bald man in the fable represents Suzana's father who is sacrificing his own flesh (his daughter) to rise to

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the top, but as the narrator predicts, he could rise to the top but end up without any flesh left. As such Herman refers to the fable of the 'Bald Man' as a 'disturbing story within a disturbing story' (ibid).

The mythical figure of the eagle comes to the novel as a convention of the national identity of Albania. Flying on the back of the bird signifies the desire of the person to search for the realities above, the freedom of being oneself. The figure of the eagle has the function of a codifying and emblematic sign of a bird. The relationship of the eagle with the human reveals a constant desire in the human for a life of freedom, described by the metaphor of flight. This is the most ancient, basically primitive, courageous, imagined collective dream in search for open spaces and new heights, the breaking of boundaries and the achievement of the impossible. However, the eagle is the emblem of the Albanian state and it requires the feeding of flesh every time it crows. The eagle requires the flesh of the person it carries on its back. The feeding on the flesh until the death of the person symbolises the feeding of the state on the individual. Hence mythical events are warped into real events, and historical realities of different epochs and spaces are intertwined.

Kadare uses the fable of the 'Bald Man and the Eagle' in order to give greater meaning to the sacrifice of one's self in order to escape from a fall into the abyss of nothingness; something that symbolises the slow death of the persons who served the Party in order to preserve their undeserved careers. In the narrative, R.Z. is prepared to feed the flesh of others to the eagle, so would sacrifice others before himself unlike in the fable. The character of R. Z. who is presented in the narrative as wearing 'unwashed shirts', is used by Kadare to explain the concept of political sacrifice that was widespread in Albanian society under the Communist Regime (Kadare, 2011: 27). Metaphorically, in the myth of the Bald Man, the 'eagle flew on endlessly through the ice-cold dark', so those sacrificing themselves, or even others, in order to reach the top, were turning 'cold' (Kadare, 2011: 29). Due to his

break-up with Suzana, the author also falls into a mental abyss that has affected his consciousness. Why was he invited to the elite stand during the May Day Parade? Had he himself fed someone else to his eagle, or had he sacrificed himself in order to conform to the political ideal? Through the narrator, Kadare states:

'We'd taken a path not really knowing where it would lead, not knowing how long it was, and while still on our way, realizing we had taken the wrong road but that it was too late to turn back, every one of us, so as not to be swallowed up by the dark, had started slicing off pieces of our own flesh.' (Kadare, 2011: 30).

Kadare uses the myth of the Bald Man and the Eagle as an extended metaphor here to suggest that most Albanians had unintentionally conformed to the requirements of the Regime, and had therefore set about sacrificing themselves for the political ideals. This was the only way in which to survive, or else one would be 'swallowed up by the dark' wrath of the Party. In chapter 6 of the novel, through the narrator, Kadare further reuses the myth as an extended metaphor: 'Meanwhile I was far, far away, in a dark and bottomless shaft, where we all sat astride our eagles, circling whichever way the wind cared to push us...' (ibid). Kadare is probably attempting to justify his own role as a writer during the Communist Regime, and is explaining the fact that in order to survive he would have needed to make his own sacrifice, such as conforming his novels to the communist ideals.

Taking many different forms, the sacrificial rituals associated with the communist regime allowed the political power of the dictator to remain at the helm of Party's state. There are few words in Albanian with the same meaning, for example Kadare uses 'flijimi' in *Agamemnon's Daughter*, but other words with the same meaning are "kurbani", "murimi"

and even the Latin originating "sakrifica". Most of these words in Albanian culture describe ritual sacrifices and were used to denote religious or pagan meanings.

But which were the most self-reflexive forms, which have motivated the author to put them at the forefront through his art? The method of using symbols and other devices of cultural memory is nothing more than the fulfilment of the three methods to which cultural memory refers. Therefore the symbol in the work of the author 'self-conscious or not' is a method which is used by Kadare as a 'subtext in order to camouflage a character, an event, an act, a certain fact' and even to mask the reality through compositional techniques, as well as using his creative freedom to achieve his own symbolism. Bashkim Kuçuku states that 'the symbols of mythology, history and global literacy have been deployed [by Kadare] in a contemporary way and placed in Albanian settings' (Kuçuku, 2000: 38). Looking at *The Three-Arched Bridge*, it is clear that the bridge as a symbol originates from Albanian legends is placed in the context of historical intrigues, and with the parabolic arch of the narrative it touches contemporary problems. Kadare's message, which contemporises the legend and modifies it in different conditions, is that the ultimate truth remains forever buried in the myth.

As has been stated above, the sacrifice of Agamemnon's daughter is requested by Artemis in order for the Greek navy to sail safely towards Troy. In *Agamemnon's Daughter* the sacrifice is desired (it seems as if an actual ceremony as in Tauris is required) in order for the leadership to survive; the political status quo actually depended on the act taking place. Regardless, the spiritual element of the sacrifice of Iphigenia would guarantee the political union of the Greek camp that was put in danger by the quarrelling between the commanders. In the same way, the sacrifice of the Heir's daughter strengthens the government's position. Similarly, just as Iphigenia's sacrifice in Tauris is expected to pave the unwanted storms when the Greek navy sails out, Suzana's sacrifice is expected to calm the rivalry between the

two possible future leaders to guarantee the political union and unanimity of ideas: "What storm are you supposed to appease?" (Kadare, 2010: 35). The narrator thinks about Euripides' drama and about the will, or so it seems, of Iphigenia to self-sacrifice, in order to help her father's military campaign. He ponders in detail about the Greek tragi-comedy and mixes it in his mind with Suzana's departure. The sacrifice of his lover indeed seems like a pointless political act.

The novel *Agamemnon's Daughter* invokes the atmosphere of depression of war, the class war and ideological revolution instigated by the Party spared nobody:

'Years before, the terrible campaign against cultural liberalization had begun just that way, with a step so small, as to be almost imperceptible.' (Kadare, 2011: 47).

Kadare suggests that the Party was intent in trying to control all aspects of cultural life and it would begin with a small step. But then:

'The hurricane had sucked up writers, ministers, allegedly right-deviationist ideas, movies, senior civil servants, and plays. Amid the general chaos, the expression "rightist deviation in cultural affairs" often floated to the surface, and in its wake came the even more ominous phrase, "anti-Party group."' (Kadare, 2011: 47).

The situation of life under the Communist Regime in Albania is described as under constant upheaval. Everyone who did not fall into line was a member of an "anti-Party group." The witch-hunts and paranoia made the situation in Albania akin to a Civil war. This is

comparative to the situation in Greece prior to the Trojan War, when the overwhelming feeling of despair was rife amongst the Greek soldiers when they realised that war against Troy would be unavoidable. Kadare describes precisely the moment when in the Euripides Strait that separates the island of Euboea from continental Greece, the armies from all parts of the country had gathered before they went to war against Troy:

> "Two thousand eight hundred years before, Greek soldiers had probably left the scene of Iphigenia's sacrifice in a similar state. Their faces had blanched at the sight of blood on the altar, and in their hearts they felt a gaping hole they didn't think would ever leave them. They said not a word, and in any case they had hardly anything to say, except for the same few thoughts that kept on going around in their heads." (Kadare, 2011: 57).

The 'blanched faces', the appearance of 'blood' and the grotesque sacrifice that has taken place are a reminder to the soldiers of the horrors of war. However, no Greek soldier would have thought twice about abandoning the campaign. It also seemed that the Heir's decision to prevent his daughter from seeing the narrator could not be set aside. There was no reasoning with him as he ultimately ended his daughter's life. Of course, Suzana was not being killed like Iphigenia before her, but her life was still ending in the sense that her love life was being terminated and her freedom prevented. Was all of this even necessary? In *Agamemnon's Daughter*, the sacrifice is absurd and meaningless. According to Rainey the counter-narratives in *Agamemnon's Daughter*, as in many other novels by Kadare 'cut across Kadare's work with a common theme: that political power begins with crime, a mongrel crime that is part actual, part mythical' (Rainey, 2013: www.full-stop.net).

4.6 Conclusion

Agamemnon's Daughter is Kadare's attempt to combine literary and mythical figures in response to certain problems of composition. The first of these is the difficulty of using the novel to present an abstract subject convincingly. Mythical references fit in well with abstract and essayistic passages as they have a common focal point: the narrator.

This chapter examined the myth of sacrifice and the role of archetypes in prompting the reconstruction of individual identity in Kadare's novel *Agamemnon's Daughter*. It suggests that, if Kadare wants to produce an epitome of the world he must use archetypes. Yet the range of objects with mythical or archetypal significance is so small, and so culturally conditioned that the author will be unreasonably constricted in his choice of subject-matter. Accordingly, the true myth in Kadare is not his series of references to concrete mythical figures, which have their uses in other ways, but to the mythical quest which lies behind them, which is not irrevocably linked to a certain limited number of objects or particular plot-structure. It is all very well remembering 'primordial events', but they can be remembered once too often. The characters will therefore be seen much more as archetypes and less as individuals and there will be a sense of ritual about the action. Kadare would in theory try to see the archetype in each character and thus raise his status. Indeed, one of his conditions for taking characters seriously is to be able to see behind them the archetypes which govern their lives and establish their identity. *Agamemnon's Daughter* is intended to capture these archetypes through its literary shadows and will therefore involve sacrifice, not only for social criticism, but out of artistic necessity.

I have unpacked the fact that there is a linked conflict between the spontaneous or instinctive demands of *Agamemnon's Daughter*'s protagonists and the claims of cultural memory upon them: the opposition is often expressed in ideas associated with memory and with politics. Mythology here means both the cultural memory setting, which Kadare feels as

important, and human sacrifice; religious ideas are transferred in moral questions which Suzana faces, in relationship between cardholders, and in the behaviour of the narrator. Kadare seems on the whole, to allow his female protagonist to lean towards belief in the goodness of human nature and its inspirations, rather than the more formal structures of conventional political faith. However, as I analysed in this chapter, Kadare is instinctively rumoured of mnemonic resolution of the conflicts which he has set up.

Kadare has also greatly explored the theme of sacrifice in a few other novels. Reading the novel *The Three-Arched Bridge* (*Ura me Tri Harqe* (1970)), it becomes clear that the reader is traversing over a bridge with three arches, in which one could see three time periods, three eras of the life of the Albanian nation. In each arch the traversal is saddening, chilling, one is almost caught by the curses of those sacrificed. Nevertheless, the bridge remains intact throughout, even as the journey continues through 'space, time', through endlessness (Deleuze, 2003: 315). Amongst a complex artistic-chronicle Kadare has created, in the first place, the medieval atmosphere, the time just before the arrival of the Turks in the region. The first-person narrative of the monk Gjon (John), the son of Gjorg Ukcama, believably creates the atmosphere of the fantastical events, so much so that the narrative almost seems like an ancient text, a lost document which has been found by chance. In the centre of the narrative structure is the building of the bridge, though this is intertwined with situations and problems that highlight the demonization of the period, and also forebode the Turkish occupation. The building of a bridge according to the legend is problematic; however the aim of this chronicle is to explain that the source myth is twisted, so that the bridge becomes simply a cause, a pretext to discover the contradictions, the wider conflicts and the distant aims of the main characters of the novel. Here the bridge is built by foreigners (that is, those of non-Albanian origin); therefore from the beginning the job is doubtful. The victim of the build is Murrash Zenebisha, however his walling into the foundations of the bridge was

not an offering in order for the build to occur successfully, but a murder, carried out to inflict terror on the population. This sacrifice is therefore a crime, a loss, a senseless killing that does not even fulfil its aim. In the legends, the sacrifice of somebody into the foundations of a building was supposed to appease the spirits who usually cause mischief by knocking down newly built structures, in order for the building to be completed. In Kadare's narrative, the act of sacrifice is deceitful; it is an exploitation of this act.

In *Night with a Moon* (Nata me Hënë (1985)),[16] Kadare has highlighted the theme of moral sacrifice. Mariana is the female character that oversteps the gender struggle through a sacrifice of morality. The sacrifice becomes apparent when Mariana's honour needs to be confirmed through the primitive tradition of proving that she is a virgin. In this novel, Mariana is taken to the doctor who must inspect her in order to verify that she is a virgin and has not therefore had sexual relations with Gazmend, who is engaged to Nora. Through the narrative, Mariana could be construed as a heroine that has attempted to do a favour for many eras, by attempting to change the mentality of the people. The novel suggests that freedom always overthrows barbarism, citizenship overthrows provincialism, and the power of the individual defeats the collective hysteria. The entire set of thought suddenly turns upside down, and in this thrilling spin, it seems as if not only the political system, but also the way of thinking has moved out of place.

A surface reading of the novel *Night with a Moon* would highlight the themes of gossip, the jealousy, the director of the enterprise who appeared in a more positive light than the First Secretary of the Communist Party, and the encounter of the beautiful woman with the drunken man during the night with a moon. Through a more comprehensive reading it is clear that Mariana appears to play the function of a heroine that is faced with the challenges

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[16] The Novel *Night with a Moon* (*Nata me Hënë*) was written in 1984, and was first published in the literary magazine 'November' (Nëntori) in the beginning of 1985. Straight after its first publishing, negative reviews of the novel by school student readers were published in the press. This form of criticism was common in the communist regime, where the party used the 'reading masses' to attack liberal literary works.

that come with their own internal struggle to change the moral order. Hence the narrative reads like a palimpsest; it is as if all of the mentalities of humanity, from ancient to modern times, are conjured in the mind of the reader through the novel. Just as in the apostolic era two thousand years ago, in this novel the crowd mercilessly judge a woman for a romantic conversation and her elegant attire. Mariana's clothing, which passes the threshold of traditional, makes her the scapegoat for a moral sacrifice. Mariana suffers from the distress and punishment served by her primitive peers for her life choices.

Night with a Moon is a novel about the eternal struggle between humanity's inner being and the outer being, between prudence and enjoyment of life, between freedom and doctrine, between morality of the mortals and the preaching of the immortals. In the novel, Mariana has decided to grasp the fate of her life into her own hands: 'This is my life! I decide my own life. Nobody can decide for me, neither doctrines, nor the environment, or the village that surrounds the city, nor the prophets or saints,' (Kadare, 2009: 32). Mariana ignores a moral order. Changing this moral order is not only her challenge; it is the challenge of an era, it is the challenge that returns to every generation as a Sisyphusian stone. It seems as if in this society described by the novel, an individual is doomed to carry the cross of chastity in their back. The slave must do so, in order to be pious; in order not to be gossiped. In Albanian literature, especially that originating from the 20th century, the equality of males and females in Albania has been explored at length. However no other piece of Albanian literature has created a character that embodies the triumph of the freedom of the inner being as well as Maria from *Night with a Moon*.

In the novel *The Prevented Requiem for Linda B.* (E Penguara Requiem për Linda B. (2009)), Kadare has explored another type of sacrifice; the tragic fate of a young girl who lived in forced political exile during the communist dictatorship. In this novel Kadare explores the life, the unrealised dreams, the altered passions and the problems encountered by

women who were forced to live in the forced political exile. Ultimately these women were sacrificed for the political ideals of the Party. But this novel, although it brings an innovative look to the theme of sacrifice during the dictatorship, namely the sacrifice through forbidding, it has a significant weakness in its construction that comes from the author's lack of experience and inside knowledge of the inner world and life in the internment camps. Mostly, Kadare has failed to get a true insight into the difference of a love affair in the two worlds. A love affair on the outside is experienced quite differently to a love affair inside the internment camp, and Kadare has no experience in creating a believable love affair between the woman protagonist on the inside, and her outsider lover.

In the novel *Wrong Dinner* (Darka e Gabuar (2009)), Kadare invokes the theme of self-sacrifice of the kamikaze type. In this novel, death appears from the first moments of conflict. Somebody from the city, a guerrilla partisan fighter has taken an adventurous action. Having cut off the German guards at the city entrance, he had shot at them resulting in three injured German soldiers. His action is a typical military attack, but its consequences are grotesque. The enemy was not seriously hurt, and the attack itself was sporadic. Hence the German retaliation focused on the city itself, and death became a terrible nightmare in the waking lives of the citizens, especially when one man in every ten households was executed in a similar style to the Roman Legion executions. However, whilst the townsfolk hid in trenches and awaited the German retaliatory gunfire to rain down on their city, in one of the households something surprising happens: "Somebody from the citizens, from an unknown neighbourhood, had waved a white flag in the form of surrender to the Germans" (Kadare, 2009: 25). It was also speculated that a white curtain had waved in the wind through the open window in the sign of the surrender flag. This white signal is the first semantic signifier of death. It relates to the logical orientation of collective punishment, seeing it is an accidental and unmotivated cause. But the psychology of the people, their anxiety and dread sometimes

mixed with shame. The consciousness of people was hit by shock due to these events, and their honour was affected. The collective consciousness begins to deal with the death by attenuating it in relation to the lost pride: "It was bad, obviously, but the other evil was worse, the unspoken evil that causes shame... Shortly, this city that so loudly boasted that it had lived manfully seemed to be destined to die like a woman" (Kadare, 2009: 23).

The 'Socialist' death requires self-sacrifice of the kamikaze type. With the white flag in *Wrong Dinner*, Kadare dispels the myth of the mass heroism that was promoted extensively in Albanian literature. The city does not come out to fight the Germans with "guns and rifles" or with "stones and knives". Popular wisdom considers this kind of sacrifice when faced with such a powerful enemy as absurd. Therefore the white flag pierces the partisan bravado and the citizens of the time look at reality with their feet on the ground. The death of the ladies in the novel is another surprise. It is a very interesting semantic signifier of the social consequences of the communist dictatorship. The killing of the ladies and intellectuals such as the doctor, Gurametos, comes as a reprisal many times greater than that of the killing of the eighty men by the Germans. But what is more chilling regarding these deaths is their grotesque appearance. The ladies fall one after the other as in war, but instead of real bullets, on them are emptied the 'bullets' of a new weapon, called 'friends'. Like no other previous writer of Albanian literature, Kadare touches here upon the destruction of the national values, the undermining the loyalty, the main trait in Albanian nationalism. This is one of the worst losses under the communist regime and it would take many years for this loyalty on one another to be repaired: 'In order to create new Ladies, the large houses, which were the only ones who had this ability, would need tens or even hundreds of years' (Kadare, 2009: 116). Kadare has forewarned of the loss of loyalty in each other that took place under communism in this novel set during World War Two. Here Kadare has described the element of sacrificing loyalty: 'Like seagulls who had ran out of time, the ladies of the city fell one

after the other, wherever time caught up with them, and after they fatally cried: "friend!" Ms Janina Mukades, who was said to have been the secret fiancé of the king at one time, was killed right in the middle of the Old Bridge, and the frightened assassin had suddenly ran away' (Kadare, 2009: 114).

In this chapter I began by introducing the themes and the context around Kadare's novel *Agamemnon's Daughter*, highlighting the archetype of the sacrificer and the sacrificed daughter, and how the mythical trope of emptiness represented the increasing influence of Communist ideology on the lives of Albanians at the time. I then looked at the archetype of Circe, and how this represents the Communists Regime to alter the cultural identity of the people into a new collective identity. Finally my focus shifted to a discussion of the reused myth of the Bald Man and the Eagle, which represents sacrifice as a political act under the Communist regime. The dissertation will now progress by looking at how Kadare continued to employ the use of myths in novels written after the collapse of Communism, by analysing *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains*.

Chapter 5: BEAUTY PAGEANT FOR MEN IN THE ACCURSED MOUNTAINS

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will comment on another Kadarean novel, *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains*[17,18] a novella dealing with the myth of Narcissus. Within this context, it is natural to understand that the topic was really very broad, that the Myth of Narcissus is remodelled by Kadare to explore the vanities of Albanian society. This novella is interesting to explore because it is one of the few prose writings by Kadare that continues to use mythical themes to convey contemporary meaning, despite being written in 1996, after the collapse of the Communist Regime. Therefore, unlike the other three texts that I have considered in this thesis, *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains* was not written under the Communist period. It is not clear why Kadare continues to reuse myths in the same way in this novella, as there was no longer a need to escape the censure of the Communist Regime, however it would appear that this had become a familiar style for Kadare.

In the chapter, I will consider what changes might have occurred in the ways in which the author portrays cultural identity, and what this might suggest about the orthodoxy of Albanian society. Looking at Kadare's work has illustrated how he came to earn a reputation as a sympathetic chronicler of Albanian cultural identity. For example, *The Great Pashalics* ("Pashallëqet e Mëdha") (1989) is one of the novels where Kadare challenges the widely believed 'facts' of the lives of previous Albanian rulers. Looking here at the shorter novelistic form of *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains* will provide an opportunity to

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[17] The Accursed Mountains (Bjeshkët e Namuna) or Albanian Alps (Alpet Shqiptare) is a mountain range in the Balkans that extends from northern Albania, to south-western Kosovo and eastern Montenegro. (See: *Albanian National Geography*, Tiranë: 1989, Dituria, p. 89)

[18] In this thesis I will be considering the version of the novella published in the anthology of Kadarean texts *Completed Works* (Vepra) in 2009. The quotes in English which are used in this thesis are my own translation.

explore the complexity and ambivalence that underpins his concern with the Albanian cultural identity in greater depth.

I will show that despite writing the novel after the collapse of communism, the Myth of Narcissus is a mythological structure which is used as a metaphor for criticism of the communist regime that had ended a few years before the publication of the novel. This is related to causes and complicated historical, political, ethic and cultural circumstances, which through centuries have accompanied Albanian society.

The Myth of Narcissus, just like other ancient Greek myths, has travelled in plenty of European cultures, literatures and worldwide. It has inspired a lot of authors, composers, playwrights, choreographers, painters from all over the world, in the realisation of immortal artistic works. It goes without saying that this specific myth is present in Albanian culture and literature.

I also want to show that Kadare's interest is mainly in the way the myth can be used to convey subtle meanings within the novel. I will begin the chapter by giving an overview of the main themes and characters of *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountain*. The chapter will then analyse the reuse of the myth of narcissus in the novel. In this section I will argue that Kadare is trying to show that the post-Communist society in Albania had become egoistic. I will then discuss the reasons why Kadare explores the Accursed Mountains as a trope of Albanian mythology. I will show that the Accursed Mountains were the ideal setting for the *tokrendë* to take place in. The chapter will also explore the concept of the blood feud which is a key theme of the narrative of the novel and will discuss the use of mystery and the motive for why Kadare mentions the figure of Lalë Krosi. Furthermore I will conclude by exploring how the novella deals with the concept of the communist moral values that were established by the regime and will discuss the way in which the themes of isolation are invoked by Kadare. Here I will argue that Kadare opposed the communist 'morals'

suggesting through his novel that the freedom of expression in the West is more desirable, however that the escape from the isolation of the Communist Regime is not always unproblematic.

5.2 The context of *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains*

Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains was written in 1996, when the Albanian society had left behind the totalitarian political system and moved towards a new system, a system that was yet to be well established but promised to Albanians that which they had been missing most during the communist regime: freedom. It was in these socio-political circumstances then that this novella was written and published. *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains* at first seems to be like an experiment, but its whole structure is still rigid: the Myth of Narcissus and its hidden meaning transcend a fairly basic story structure. The origin of the idea for the novella is not known, but a few things can be stated for sure: firstly, that this novella has been more widely accepted in Albania than even Kadare would have hoped, and that Kadare wouldn't have been able to publish the novella before 1990. The story, classified as a short novel, or novella, is split into seven parts or subchapters with most of the key events set in "Lugjet e Epërme" (Upper Grooves) in the heart of "Bjeshkët e Namuna" (The Accursed Mountains) - in the Albanian Highlands in the north of the country during the period of King Zog's reign (mid-1930s). The gloomy politico-social background, low quality of life of the characters, and the pessimistic outlook are all depicted by Kadare as contexts to the narrative of the novel.

Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains' brief plot is based around the desires of Gaspër Cara, a young homosexual man from the capital city of Albania, who is punished for a murder he did not commit. Gaspër Cara had fallen in love with Prenk Curri,

the *Prince of Beauty* (Princi i Bukurisë), who was the winner of the Beauty Pageant, and for this reason he had been accused of his murder. Gaspër Cara was interested in the beauty pageant since first hearing about it, and was under the impression that this pageant would be linked to people like him, and involved a softening of attitudes towards homosexuals (Kadare, 2009: 342). Upon first seeing Prenk Curri, Gaspër Cara becomes obsessed with him, and he is seen following him on the day of his death.

There are two main characters in this prose: Prenk Curri and Gaspër Cara. Prenk Curri is a young highlander, silent and private, that due to a murder an unexplained murder by a member of his family, is involved in a blood feud with the family of the victim, and is forced to suffer the penalty of hiding in the concealment tower, *Agripa e Keqe* (Bad Agrippa). The Canon of Lekë Dukagjini[19] dominates the Albanian society in the highlands during the time, and the Canon allows for the members of the victim's family to take revenge, therefore Prenk Curri is forced to spend his life in the tower in order to escape death. The other protagonist is, Gaspër Cara, who appears from the beginning of the narrative as a character from the capital city who is calm and educated but is tormented by his own sexuality. From the opening scenes of the novel Gaspër Cara is presented as having somewhat strange behaviour, and we know from then that the character does not fit the 'norms' of society, something that becomes clear when his homosexuality is revealed (Kadare, 2009: 338). Another character with a key function in the narrative is the doctor, a man who wears an 'Italian hat' and with whom Gaspër Cara consults about his 'habit', a habit which discomforts him as it is three times punishable; by the social opinion, by the state legislation, and especially severely by the

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[19] The Canon (The Kanun) is a very old protocol for the Albanian society. The Canon is principally a collection of Albanian traditional laws that regulate all aspects of conduct within one's family, village, clan, with members of other clans, and with strangers. The Canon has been the foundation of Albanian society for centuries. The author of the Canon is Lekë Dukagjini, an Albanian knight and a Catholic prince living about 500 years ago, before Ottomans conquered the Albanian lands. He fought against Ottoman occupiers both under the command of George Kastrioti Scanderbeg, the Albanian national hero and a European figure, and later after his death in 1468. (Look at Chapter 3 for more information).

Canon that forbids it (Kadare, 2009: 340). Other characters such as the Flag-Bearer of Kruma, 'a handsome man and very proud of his appearance' ('burrë i pashëm e tepër krenar për dukjen'), who is very jealous of the others, Prenk's friends who are hidden with him in the tower, the judges of the Beauty Pageant, Marubi, Xhilda, the Doctor, the waiters at Café Kursal, and the English Vice-consul, appear to have very peripheral roles or are simply mentioned by name so as to create background and atmosphere to the narrative, rather than playing full roles in the novel (Kadare, 2009: 361).

Toward the beginning of the novel, Gaspër Cara is informed that somewhere in The Accursed Mountains, a beauty contest for men would take place. He is immensely surprised by this and the idea creates a variety of dilemmas in his head. Gaspër Cara therefore shares this news with the doctor, his only friend, and the only confidant of his troubles and sorrows. A beauty pageant for men in the *Bjeshkët e Namuna*, that is to say a *tokrendë* (contest) was something very uncommon, unbelievable to imagine. To Gaspër Cara's mind this raised a slim hope that maybe this event had to be a positive sign, a sign that there was space for freedom for homosexuals. Gaspër Cara decides to travel towards the Lugjet e Epërme, where the tokrendë will take place, in order for him to experience the event which would be competed for by the most beautiful men of the highlands. It was interesting for Gaspër Cara to think about who would be selected as the prince of the pageant, and what he would look like, therefore he had to go and see him at close proximity.

On the other hand, somewhere in the heart of highlands, Prenk Curri leaves the hiding tower known as the Bad Agrippa and makes his way to The Upper Grooves. He will be one of the competing participants in the tokrendë, which will last for a few days. During one of those days, Gaspër Cara's eyes meet with those of Prenk Curri, who wandered lonely, on the tokrendë platform. Gaspër was left breathless by him and realises that he has fallen in love with this man who ends up winning the contest and is declared to be the most beautiful man

in the highlands (Kadare, 2009: 356-357). Directly after winning the contest, Prenk Curri leaves The Upper Grooves to return to his tower of hiding. Gaspër Cara decides to follow him, but when Prenk recognized the curious man who had been observing him during the tokrendë he begins to hurry away. He reaches the *Lera e Ftohtë* (The Cold Spring) and suddenly has the desire to bend over the water surface to see himself, to observe the prince that he had become. Gaspër Cara hurries too, he is happy when he finally catches up to the prince of beauty but as he nears to speak to him he realises that Prenk Curri is lying dead on the edge of the pond; somebody has hit him with a stone on the back of the head. Gaspër Cara is arrested and imprisoned for the murder and remained in prison for a few months until the truth is revealed: Prenk Curri, the most beautiful man of the Accursed Mountains had been killed by men sent by the Flag-Bearer of Kruma, an extremely jealous and spiteful character. His jealousy at the fact that someone else would be considered the most beautiful man, led him to send men to kill Prenk.

5.3 The myth of Narcissus in the novel

According to Sansonese, 'myths spring from an age of universal narcissism, rooted, one must suppose, in the elemental struggle for survival' (Sansonese, 1994: 37). In brief, Sansonese argues that myth entitles, it does not represent; 'myth describes a systematic exploration of the human body by privileged members of archaic cultures' (ibid). Moreover, Sansonese's concept of exploration concludes that 'myth is an esoteric description of heightened proprioception' (Darroch-Lozowski, 1999: 132).

In *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains*, the novel's dynamic, always changing and slippery discourse refuses the process of naming things indefinitely, since in it we can read through Kadare's representation that there is no stable meaning. For example, the

many visitors at the pageant are given a description, but their identity is not revealed. This ambiguity leaves their role and function in the novel as ambiguous. This novel explores the theme of the pagan tradition of the "beauty pageants for men", something which was kept as a tradition in the heart of The Accursed Mountains in the mountainous North, which is an area of Albania where the predominant religion is Roman Catholicism. Kadare is suggesting that the people living in the region had a vanity about them, which had to be fed by such accolades as 'Prince of Beauty' that would be given to the winner of beauty pageants. To show this vanity of the people, in the novel Kadare states that the inhabitants of the region:

> "[had been sent] a Papal bull in the seventeenth century, if I am not mistaken, in which the Pope threatened the Catholics of the region with excommunication if they did not stop their foppishness. Whereas for the men…- You yourself said that Albanian men are vainer than the women…" ("një bullë e shekullit të shtatëmbëdhjetë, në mos gabohem, në të cilën Papa i kërcënonte me shkishërim malësoret katolike, nëse nuk hiqnin dorë nga spitullimi i tepruar. Kurse për burrat... – Ju vetë sapo latë të nënkuptohet se burrat shqiptarë janë më spitullantë se gratë...") (Kadare, 2009: 341)

Here Kadare is ironically contrasting the official issuing of a 'Papal bull' and the formal threat of 'excommunication' – grand gestures by the Catholic Church – with the 'foppishness' that the Church is criticising. Since human vanity is a theme that regularly transcends the narrative of this novel, it is easier for the myth of Narcissus to be worked into the novel. Both Prenk Curri and Gaspër Cara play the role of Narcissus at different times. Though both are unsure about themselves at times, Gaspër Cara because he is tormented by his own desires and Prenk Curri because he has become unsure of himself due to his

prolonged isolation in the tower, they are both fed by a vanity and their own appearances comfort them at different times of the novel. In one such instance in the novel, Kadare writes:

 "…Prenk remembers that he was approaching The Cold Pond. It was what his friends in the Isolation Tower had advised him to use as a mirror on the way to "tokrendë"... The desire to bend again over it, now that he was the Prince of Beauty, was naturally mixed with that of confession...! *You are approaching the water to see yourself in*, Gaspër Cara said to himself. *Be careful, Narcissus*. Prenk stood some moments at the side of the pond. Then he bent over it to view himself".

("një bullë e shekullit të shtatëmbëdhjetë, në mos gabohem, në të cilën Papa i kërcënonte me shkishërim malësoret katolike, nëse nuk hiqnin dorë nga spitullimi i tepruar. Kurse për burrat... – Ju vetë sapo latë të nënkuptohet se burrat shqiptarë janë më spitullantë se gratë...") (Kadare, 2009: 362)

The water thus becomes a mirror which Prenk Curri is using to have a glimpse of his own reflection, so that he can admire his own beauty now that he had been crowned the Prince of the pageant: '*You are approaching the water to see yourself in* […] *Be careful, Narcissus*' (ibid). Prenk Curri is looking at his own reflection to begin to understand his own identity. He has been isolated for so long that he had become unsure of who he was any longer. For Lieve Spaas a narrative of this type reflects the Narcissus myth, 'not only through its form, that is to say using a mirror/water for self-reflection' but also because the Narcissus myth suggests that

a screen/mirror of memory, such as the pond which Prenk Curri is using to see himself helps one find his identity (Spaas, 2000: 6).

According to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (2010), the main characters in the mythological story of Narcissus are: Narcissus, Aphrodite, Echo and the other main Gods of Mount Olympus. Therefore the whole myth structure consists of the relationships Narcissus-Aphrodite, Narcissus-Echo and Narcissus-Narcissus. Narcissus was the son of the river god Cephissus and Nymph Liriope (Ovid, 2010: 468). He was a terribly beautiful individual, indifferent towards the world that surrounded him, silent, lonely, distant and tremendously romantic. He passed nearly all of his time near the crystal waters of the river Cephissus and the woods near there. One day, his beauty attracted the attention of the nymph Echo, who, like many other nymphs and gods, fell in love with him. Narcissus refused her love; he shunned all the approaches from the nymphs and gods who adored him. However the goddess Aphrodite became angry with Narcissus. She couldn't endure at all his arrogance and cursed him so that nobody should ever respond to his love. The punishment was special; Narcissus would fall in love with himself, but when he did he would finally realise the full extent of Aphrodite's curse. He meets his own reflection one day in clean and clear waters which he used as a mirror. He saw his face mirrored in the spring waters and felt a deep-tragic adoration and love for the reflection (without recognising it to be himself). However, due to Aphrodite's curse; the other Narcissus in the watery mirror didn't respond at all to his love. This was a real torture to Narcissus. Narcissus continued to view his own reflection with adoration and love and for a moment thought he could hug "the other". He brought his head towards the reflection, fell in the deep spring water and drowned, ending up in the dead kingdom of the underworld. At the place where he fell, a white flower sprouted, the death flower named Narcissus.

The myth of Narcissus has always attracted the attention of many philosophers, poets and writers. Narcissus represents a specific myth, a lyrical-dramatic monodrama, completely extravagant, with strong philosophical messages. To refuse another's love in preference for the love of yourself, (something consider at the time to be not normal and right as a natural and human rule), up until this self-obsession leads to your drowning. This is more or less the essence of this antique myth, as transmitted from century to century through reuse in literature.

Philosophers and scholars, but especially writers and poets of all ages, have used the Myth of Narcissus to represent new ideas, adapting the myth to the specified eras during which they write and to their individual literary styles. The Myth of Narcissus, as a variety of myths (derived not only from Ancient Greek sources) is used in different literary writings, after an elaboration and re-inflection, in coherence to the contemporary social-cultural and aesthetic sensibilities. Such a process of interest, re-inflection and literary use, has happened in Albanian literature too, though the myth under discussion in this chapter, has not been generally invoked by Albanian writers in their novels.

Compared to other Greek myths of antiquity, for example, the myths of the Trojan Horse, Laocoon, Prometheus, Sisyphus, etc., the myth of Narcissus has been less frequently referenced in literary works. However, despite this, the myth is of course still sometimes referenced in Albanian popular culture. For instance, the myth of Narcissus is usually referenced in political or other news analysis pieces in newspapers as it can always be used to denote people or groups of people who have egoistic tendencies. We come across such a case in the article by Pëllumb Xhufi, in the Albanian newspaper "*Shekulli*", in which he analyses a somewhat secret meeting, held in Tirana, by a group of intellectuals in protection of Kadare, after the debate with Qosja. Xhufi coming back writes: '…They met almost in complete secrecy, without making invitations or announcements…as if a masonic meeting… all

narcissuses…' (Xhufi, 2006: 7-8). The few Albanian literary works where the myth of Narcissus has been invoked include Ernest Koliqi's novel *The Mirrors of Narcissus* (1936), and of course the novel in consideration here; Kadare's *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains*.

In Kadare's *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains* the main thematic elements of the myth of narcissus are interlaced with the narrative. Kadare is nearer the main subject of the myth, because the mythical story is kept and retold as are the main signifying elements of the myth. The Myth of Narcissus, plays an intertextual role, and provides the control of the whole narrative perspective of the story as writing category which will be analysed further in this chapter.

Kadare invoked the myth of Narcissus in this novel to represent the vanity of Albanian Society in the period immediately after the collapse of Communism. He turns the myth against the pompous self-importance of people, especially against the self-importance of the people related to the state and power. Even though it is not really known when he actually wrote *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains*, it is evident that the novel was actually published in 1996, just over seven years after the communist regime in Albania collapsed and Albania established a new system of democracy. Even though the book was published in this year, Kadare has again chosen to use the myth metaphorically to put across his message, just as he did when writing under communism. Kadare is suggesting through the novel that the new system, which was yet to be fully functional at the time and was, experiencing many setbacks, seemed to already act narcissistically in its self-appreciation. After the collapse of communism in 1990, the Albanian government attempted to introduce policies of democratic and economic reform that were an effort to bring Albania closer to the West. However, widespread greed, sometimes within the political class itself, led to the creation of pyramid schemes, the collapse of which led to social unrest. The early post-

communist period in Albania was also marked by political strife and widespread corruption. For example, in April 1994, ex-Prime Minister Fatos Nano was found guilty of embezzling state funds during his role as Prime Minister. At the same time ex-Communist Party leaders such as Ramiz Alia were being tried for crimes that occurred during the Communist Period. The political situation was confused and there was no political homogeneity or cooperation between the opposition parties. Furthermore, the period saw a deterioration of relations between Albania and neighbouring countries. For example, Albanian-Serbian relations were strained, and more critically, in 1994 relations with Greece deteriorated to the point where the Greek government blocked EU loans to Albania – something which led to stagnation in Albania's ability to integrate into Europe. All of this was occurring at a time when some individuals had gained huge personal wealth in a short period, whilst the country as a whole was becoming poorer. During the period of transition, Capitalism did not appear to be the dream that was yearned about.

Democracy in Albania had still not entirely removed itself from the shackles of communism and the old dictatorial regime still acted in the shadows through its old structures.[20] Therefore the myth of Narcissus is used by Kadare in *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains* as an analogy for the vanities of a society that was in upheaval. Just as Gaspër Cara and Prenk Curri, who were initially unsure about themselves, but grew to love their own appearance, the transitional Albanian society had developed to become narcissistic, something which did not bode well.

In *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains*, everything is in anarchy, a scene where the life of everyone in the Accursed Mountains is chaotic. Like Narcissus with the pool they are captivated by the attraction of obvious display and fail to see that human

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[20] One of the two major political parties, the Socialist Party of Albania, was a (milder) continuation of the Labour Party of Albania (the dictatorial Communist Party), and prominent politicians on both of the major parties in the post-Communist era had had major links to the previous regime.

worth lies elsewhere. For Levine 'This anarchism is akin to the egoism of Narcissus' (Levine, 1994: 16). In Kadare's narrative this reflects narcissism of the state. Kadare uses the description of narcissism in order to symbolise the anarchism of the state amongst the egoism and self-love. Instead of being a mirror of the social phenomena, which is one of the main aims of the state, the themes of self-reflection and narcissism show that the totalitarian state is like a self-reflective mirror, just like the surface of reality that reflects the anarchy.

In order to make the anarchy in the Accursed Mountains more evident, Kadare firstly compares it with the capital city, and continues through the description of Gaspër Cara, who is referred to as 'lost', with his vision expressed as 'the vision of a person from the capital city', a person who could not find himself in the anarchy, in that particular environment, but the reflection of his eyes revealed 'prayers, longing, demands, threats and suffering before the enigma' ('lutje, adhurim, kërkesë, kërcënim dhe vuajtje përpara enigmës') (Kadare, 2009: 356). As a boy from the capital city, Gaspër Cara, in this point, represents ordinary Albanian society who is unsure about what the future holds, and is still distressed despite the end of the totalitarian regime. In contrast, the mountainous regions such as the Accursed Mountains are described in the novella as places where anarchy meant that you could only think about the present, only about the self-reflection that was extinguished beyond the enigma. They represent the chaos of the society in upheaval. Just as Gaspër Cara could not fit in to the Accursed Mountains, Albanian society was struggling in the post-Communist chaos.

In the scene where Gaspër Cara first looks into the eyes of Prenk Curri, we are also reminded of Narcissus' falling in love with his own reflection. Kadare describes how Gaspër's look becomes a 'knife' aimed at the 'glaze of glass and stone in the eyes of the other [Prenk Curri]' ('vështrimi i tij u dendësua e u mpreh si thikë, thua se vetëm ashtu do të mund të çante atë syprinë prej qelqi dhe guri të syve të tjetrit.') (Kadare, 2009: 356). It appears that Gaspër sees his own reflection in Prenk's eyes. Just as Narcissus, Gaspër Cara remains

transfixed, completely fascinated by his reflection. Gaspër Cara's problem, just as the problem faced by Narcissus is that he is split between two entities of himself, the figure reflected in Prenk Curri's dead eyes and the one looking at it. Anne Hollander states that 'The story of Narcissus shows that staring at your own reflection means you cannot separate yourself from it' (Hollander, 1993: 392). Both entities are equally empty. The eyes, just as all other objects of reflection, have always been thought of as mysterious and regarded with fear. In Albanian folklore, a proverb states: "he stabbed him with his gaze like knives" which relates to watching something closely, waiting for something to occur, or looking at someone else in anger. The events that occur at the end of the narrative explain the fate of both protagonists of the story; in particular Prenk Curri's death reveals his unfortunate fate. Even in death, he still serves a purpose in the narrative. His eyes become the object which allows Gaspër Cara one final self-reflection of himself.

The tokrendë has its own rules, and in the eyes of the other, in the eyes of those that have arrived from the capital city to witness it, and even in the eyes of the locals, it must have been equipped with all of its forms and contours. This interests the propaganda of the state more, and exposes its self-reflection in the eyes of the others. Hence in Kadare's narrative, references to Narcissus and the conditions of the beauty pageant for men, is not lacking even when describing that those taking part in the pageant had 'a red daffodil [Narcissus plant] in the collar' of their shirt ('me nga një karafil të kuq në qafë') (Kadare, 2009: 356). Whilst Prenk Curri is preparing for the tokrendë (pageant) his thoughts further amplify the idea of self-reflection: 'Where will I go with these nails, this un-ironed shirt and this hair that has not been combed for ever? On your way you will find a calm stream. You can bend over and see yourself in it…' (''E ku do të shkoj unë me gjithë këta thonj, këtë këmishë të ndragur e këta flokë të pakrehur kahmot? Udhës do të kesh ndonjë burim të cemtë e aty do të përkulesh për të parë veten, të pastrohesh e të krihesh...') (Kadare, 2009: 352). The narcissistic thought

appears through the belief that on his way to the pageant he will find a calm stream to look at his own reflection, the reality of his own appearance. But this is the beginning of the preoccupation and concern of *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains* protagonist for his own appearance, and for his clothes, since in his own mind he now knows that the tokrendë itself is a mirror that will reflect his being. Gaspër Cara is another representation of the figure of Narcissus in the novel. For Hollander, 'behind the reflecting surface is something waiting to be born' (Hollander, 1993: 392). 'In the glimmer of light, Gaspër Cara's face, maybe due to the silk scarf, looked pale white' ('Në flakëzën e shkrepëses fytyra e Gaspër Carës, ndoshta për shkak të shallit të mëndafshtë, iu duk e bardhë') (Kadare, 2009: 343). According to Steven Bruhm for Gaspër Cara, Kadare's *Narcissus* 'the mirror of reflection is also a tablet of inscription, a moment of … creativity' (Bruhm, 2001: 23). The tokrendë becomes the ideal setting for self-reflection. Both Prenk Curri and Gaspër Cara are trying to find themselves in their own ways and the tokrendë with its own rules seems to attract their attention. However the tokrendë ends up leading to a futile end to their search. We can understand from this that the Albanian society in the aftermath of the collapse of Communism is faced with new difficulties that show that the expectation of instant bettering of the situation is futile. Kadare is suggesting that at the time of writing, Albania still had a lot of hard work to do in order to reach its aspirations.

5.4 The mythical trope of the highlander and the mountain as a mythical space

Because the events are set in the Upper Grooves in the heart of the "Bjeshkët e Namuna" the Albanian Highland in the north of the country during King Zog's monarchy, the mountain as a setting is essential to the narrative of the novel. The events in *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains* occur in two separate settings: the capital city, Tirana, and the

Accursed Mountains. In both cases, the setting is presented with unique character and qualities. The ethnography, one of the main characteristics of the novel relates to the theme: the beauty contest is not allowed to take place in Tirana, Albania's capital. The actions of the characters require the correct environmental, historical, and cultural, settings for them to become natural. Therefore the Accursed Mountains are an ideal location for the tokrendë. The academic Alfred Uçi carries out a detailed categorisation of Kadare's work. He sees the social groups of the narrative divided into three parts, or since we are focusing on the environmental setting, split into three stories of a Kafkan building (Uçi, 1999: 87). The effect of this vertical separation, which can be depicted as a first attempt by Kadare to incorporate mythical stories with the grotesque vision of the socio-cultural and politico-anthropological reality in communist Albania, which seem almost like Dante's structures of paradise, purgatory and hell, is that particular importance is acquired in the narrative by the actions of the characters and the environment in which these characters operate. Gaspër Cara's actions within the narrative reveal the real frightened face of the Albanian person living during uncertain time in a period of transition from dictatorship. The narcissist, Gaspër Cara is designed to have the aim of conducting an exhausting search for a special existential dimension, a feat that can be defined as the search for his own identity. His task is obstructed by the authorities, which curtail his freedom and do not allow him to express himself. This obstruction has deeply affected the lives of individual citizens who search pointlessly to find themselves. Similarly, under the communist regime, all forms of expression which did not equate to communist 'morals' were vehemently forbidden. As the representation of an ancient character, Gaspër Cara, through his friend the doctor, constantly sends notifications to the setting of the city, of his search for an identity. At the same time, the atmosphere in cafe Kursal takes the form of an environment that stifles the individual.

The city is a large, centralised living space, but from the perspective of the narrative in *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains*, the city is a space that blocks initiatives due to known and unknown cultural reasons and it even creates problems with the individual who is searching for his freedom. The fact that Gaspër Cara is happy with the news that there will be a tokrendë (beauty pageant) in the Accursed Mountains, makes it clear that the city is a mechanism of containment. The city, like culture, is a mechanism that opposes time in the narrative. The city draws from events from the past, which can easily be substituted with contemporary events, so that the past and the future are perfectly synchronised in the setting of the capital city in the narrative. This is why the Tirana in the 1930s of the narrative, could very easily be the Tirana of communist Albania, or even a Tirana during the early 1990s. Gaspër Cara is a typical character in the Kadarean style of narrative and appears as if he has been transported from a different era. The reader can look for other details in the text, but may have the impression that this is a futile search. It seems as if Gaspër Cara has his own world in which he lives in. Through his internal desires, and the way in which he acts, as well as through his immediate desire to search for and travel to the north of Albania in order to attend the beauty pageant for men, the reuse of the myth of Narcissus becomes evident through the role of Gaspër Cara in the narrative. This great desire to find himself in the midst of the world that shuns him echoes Narcissus' love of himself.

In settings of pressure, Gaspër Cara loves himself, he constantly looks at his own reflection on the way to the mountain and when he arrives there he falls in love with Prenk Curri, the young victim of the blood feud traditions in northern Albanian. The mountains are an altogether different environment from the capital city. Here the ancient traditions are kept alive, though Gaspër Cara is wrong in *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains* to think that there would be greater freedom here than in the capital city. Though Gaspër Cara can escape here in the northern mountains where nobody knows him, the dominance of the

Canon of Lekë Dukagjini in the region means that old values are respected and 'abnormality' is shunned even more than in the capital city. The characters arrive into this setting full of internal struggles, pain and suffering. As a result, the required settings that satisfy the culminating events of the novel, may only be given by the Accursed Mountains, these mountains that are well known to Kadare, since they are the inspiration behind the myth of the mountain in the Albanian mythology. If we take the rigid constraints of the capital city to represent Communist Albania, the mountains represent the post-Communist uncertainty that is far from inviting.

On the other hand, the mountain as a setting is linked with the Canon of Lekë Dukagjini. The Canon of Lekë Dukagjini emanates decades after its author's death, in the early sixteenth century, when most Albanian cities were destroyed and the remaining fortresses were under siege by the Ottoman garrisons. Most Albanians were sheltering in the mountains where enemies could not be seen or heard (Çobani, 2003: 110). The Canon of Lekë Dukagjini or the Code of the Mountains, so called because of its popularity in the mountains of the North, took complete control of the area. The people of the mountains strongly linked their lives with the Code of the Mountains. The mountains are the breath of the Canon, no other regions of Albania could keep as many secrets as the mountains of the North and no other region of the country had experienced as many deaths from a gun as the mountains. It is due to the fact that the mountains were said to hold many secrets over the centuries that the phrase developed in Albania which proclaims that: 'the mountain has ears and the field has eyes'. The mountain in Kadare's literature is inspired by the oral stories, which have been transmitted between generations through the eras. In the mountain, Kadare sees an ethnographic unit, he calls *the Accursed Mountains*. Kadare glorifies the mountains, calling them 'everything'. Kadare's mountain code appears on several dimensions: the

mountain as anthropological space with an arsenal of tradition, the mountain as a signifier and the mountain as a setting of mythology.

A thorough examination and dissection of *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains* allows us to see the complexity of its cultural memory threads, the construction and fragmented journey of the text itself. *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains* had gone through several editing stages before it was published in 1996. In the novel, the highlander with his mentality and the distinguishing features of that society are present in Kadare's work; a social system based on the code of the Mountains: blood feud, a keen perception of masculine honour, and absolute fidelity to the given word.

The mountain in *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains* also takes on a metaphorical meaning for a catastrophe. The world of the mountain, its landscape, is a metaphor for fatality. The mountain was the reason why a major dream of Gaspër Cara was not realised and his search for himself failed, the mountain is also the reason why Prenk Curri died, it turned a deaf ear before Prenk's death, '*I have killed him*, he said to himself without even the slightest bit of surprise. In fact he raised his head in order to hear the echo of his own gun, and then, since the mountain gave no reply, he smelled the barrel of the gun' (''E paskam vrarë, tha me vete, pa kurrfarë habie. Madje, ngriti kryet për të dëgjuar, së paku, jehun e armës së vet, pastaj, ngaqë bjeshka nuk dha sgjë, i mori erë tytës së revolverit') (Kadare, 2009: 369). The mountain played the role of the deaf-dumb in this case. It did not hear anything, nor did it echo as it normally does, and it certainly did not speak. This is a good metaphor used here by Kadare that suggests that the post-Communist society in Albania had turned into such a setting of chaos that nobody seemed to keep track of the crimes any longer; even the mountains saw and spoke of nothing that happened.

While The Accursed Mountains is a site of danger and intrigue, it is also strangely alluring. As the gateway to Montenegro in the North, and Kosovo in the North East, The

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Accursed Mountains were seen as exotic, mystical, and deeply sensual. At the same time, The Accursed Mountains were also, an Albanian catholic region. For Kadare, this dual geographical and religious link gave The Accursed Mountains a liminal quality transforming the place into a space of multiple metamorphoses.

As a quasi-utopian locus, The Accursed Mountains serves Kadare's purposes. Kadare merges elements of Southern and Northern Albania together in his description of the region in the novel, and yet he never fully merges them, so it is clear that the area he describes has cultural borrowings from both Greek and Serbian culture. Therefore, Kadare's Accursed Mountains create a space in the Balkans which allows binaries to emerge and dissipate. For example, the reserved and secretive visitors to the Accursed Mountains are polar binaries to the proud and welcoming locals.

In the Albanian ethno-customary tradition, which is dominated by The Code of Lekë Dukagjini, the rural and mountain area is used as a separator: the boundary of mountain is used in the highlands and continues to be used nowadays to separate regions; just a mountain line separates lands, or confuses the tribes among them. In the anthropological gaze the mountains the highlander in literature and in particular in Kadare's novel are seen as inter-temporal devices. The mountain with its entire context, with its codes, the musicality, the apparent hospitality, and the highlanders with their characteristic accent, their mannerism and customs, and their appearance – the highlanders seemed to take pride in their own clothing and grooming - is a place of mystery. This is why the mountains became an essential setting for the beauty pageant for men in Kadare's novel.

Kadare used the mountains in *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains* to show that it was easier for a society to descend into chaos and for its people to commit crimes in a setting full of uncertainty and mystery, just as the Albanian mountains. Since the city has a wider and more open space, especially the Albanian capital city, Tirana, the inside of the

mountains is far away from the watching eyes, and so here crimes could be committed and hidden from the eyes of the people. Prenk Curri's murder on his way back to the concealment tower shows that the killings in the narrow space of the mountains are an easy way of killing the opponents of the dictatorship. The rough reality, the repetition of the ordinary things destroys the human spirit. Gaspër Cara whilst following the Prince of Beauty, metaphorically commits suicide, since he becomes self-aware and begins to realise the essence of the pointlessness of his own existence. Following the assassination of Prenk Curri, Gaspër Cara has felt the worthlessness of his existence, becomes pessimistic, and all of his hope is lost. Gaspër Cara is shocked by the absurd reality of the wider world that he has not really known. He has given up looking for his own identity which he had previously craved, so just like Narcissus; he has ultimately killed his own self.

As such, the mountain highlighted the 'cultural subsystems of Albanians' and in their space the pivotal cultural values imposed by government such as 'submission and conformity' and the spectre of the values of the people of the mountains such as 'bravery and courage' were intertwined together (Dervishi, 2013: 85). For Kadare, the mountain was a frozen moment of time, it symbolised death, and represented a crossroads with two possible destinations. The mountain is a key symbol of seemingly open, but isolated space where everything is uncertain. According to Albanian sociologist, Gani Bobi, the mountain is chosen as the setting of the narrative as it is the ideal place from where a 'rebellion could rise', and since life in the mountains is 'full of dangers and the unexpected' (Bobi, 1997: 39). *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains* is therefore set in the mountains, but kept outside of the traditions of the mountains, kept away from the ancient traditions and values of the mountain people. The events of the narrative occur in the mountain and we are reminded that the codes have been broken, since the customs and traditions of the mountain have faded and there is no one to inherit them. Prenk Curri's lifeless body is described through the point

of view of Gaspër Cara who finds his corpse. Gaspër Cara looks at the dead man's eyes 'but there was nothing there apart from the endless cold misunderstanding' ('Por atje s'ishte tjetër veç moskuptimi i ftohtë e i pafund') (Kadare, 2009: 369). Another person has disappeared in the mountains. Here, where the blood feuds took the lives of many men.

In *Autobiography of the People in Verses* (Autobiografia e popullit ne Vargje), Kadare writes that the Accursed Mountains, are the mountains 'where lie the seven sons of mujit' (Albanian mythical heroes), and where the *Epic of the Kreshniks* (Eposi i Kreshnikeve) appears in a true alpine setting, with a cold sun, under which 'the strange tragic characters, true offspring of the Albanian mountains, move as if in a trance' (Kadare, 2002: 106). The characters in Kadare's novel are essentially proud people, shown in a harsh mountainous but dignified setting. More importantly they are affected by the regime which holds their fate in its hands. It is not a coincidence that Kadare has titled the novel '…*in the Accursed Mountains.*' In this mountainous environment the lone towers are also present, where the victims of the blood feuds are hidden. These people are linked with the mountain itself, and for them 'the gun was the same as the woman 'my beauty, my dear, my faithful one'', and were ready to empty 'the beautiful gun upon anyone on the day when the Canon demanded it' ('pushkën e bukur'', që kishte qitur ditën kur Kanuni ia kishte kërkuar') (Kadare, 2009: 360). Just as the Kreshniks, heroes of Albanian mythology from the Middle Ages, 'the highlander' that appears in Kadare's literature, represents the idea of a group of people who are born heroes and defy history (Sinani, 2009: 17). In *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains*, the highlander appears in many different aspects.

Motives such as killing by the Canon, death linked to political and dark motives, accusations that the state is using censorship, are described through a chaos and a wild transition which represent the anarchic reality of an Albanian society that has only just left

the communist dictatorship behind. The background to the narrative hints at political tension. Even the aftermath of Prenk Curri's death hints at political issues:

> 'The story which was written in many of the newspapers did not give
> the name of the flag bearer, so this inspired the opposition to protest
> that the State used censorship every time a member of a family related
> to them was involved in a crime'
> ('Historia e treguar disa herë në gazeta nuk e jepte emrin e flamurtarit,
> çka bëri që opozita të përsëriste festimet se shteti përdorte censurën sa
> herë që në qërthullin e krimit përziheshin familje të afërta me të')
> (Kadare, 2009: 366).

In *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains*, Kadare seems to allude to the fact that the post-Communist society in Albania was riddled with political unrest. The facts are derived from a historical reality in which absurd paradoxes prevail, as there are no laws that govern society, and human rights are widely ignored so that the existence of the society is under threat. In the novel the mountain-dwellers are described as jealous:

> 'It was known that they were jealous of any man who became known
> because of his good looks. Moreover they never worried if something
> bad happened to the unlucky man, such as: a disease affecting his
> skin, or that which caught up with the men of the mountains quicker
> than illness, death'
> ('Dihej se përherë pezmatoheshin kur ndonjë burrë merrte famë për
> pamje. Dhe nuk qetësoheshin veç kur fatlumit i ndodhte diçka:

sëmundja që i prishte lëkurën ose ajo që më lehtë se lëngata e arrinte

njeriun e bjeshkëve, mortja'.) (Kadare, 2009: 346).

Kadare is suggesting that the highlanders were jealous men. In a way, this is a continuation of the metaphor of the post-Communist society in Albania. The sudden freedom from the constraints of the totalitarian regime, and the introduction of quasi-capitalism had led to many people getting involved in illicit means of making money. The gaining of profit often came at the expense of the wellbeing of others. Many types of crimes were common, as many individuals felt confident enough to perpetrate frauds or other illegal acts in the chaos. Suddenly capitalism was not the Promised Land. Society had become vain, just as the highlanders in *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains*. According to the novella 'The highlanders of the north, especially the men, were proud of their clothes and looks' ('Malësorët, sidomos burrat janë krenarë për veshjet e tyre dhe pamjen') (Kadare, 2009: 345). To add to the situation of chaos and anarchy, Kadare introduces elements of terror and surveillance in the novella: 'the King's spies meanwhile... continue to search for a whiff of the potential hidden side of this tokrendë' ('Spiunët e mbretit, ndërkaq, ndonëse të qetësuar disi, pas ankthit të ditëve të para, vazhdonin zhbirimet për nuhatjen e kahut të fshehtë të mundshëm të kësaj tokrene.') (Kadare, 2009: 355). So therefore mythical thought transcends itself, going beyond the images that describe relationships through human experience, and begins operating in a world of concepts that dominate with each other in free association. This means that they are combined not by referring to an outer reality, but according to incompatibilities that exist between them in the architecture of the mind. In the novel, the idea for the beauty pageant itself seems to be lost in myth:

'An old man from Gucia, it was said, had proposed the idea of the pageant as his last wish before he passed away. *The men of the mountains are getting uglier*, he had said.'

(''Një burrë i moçëm nga Gucia, para se të jepte shpirt e kishte lënë si dëshirë të fundit: po shëmtohen burrat e Malësisë, kishte thënë, po i bjerrin veshjet e pamjen e po e lëshojnë veten') (Kadare, 2009: 349).

Myth is never the idea and fact itself; it always relates to some other ideas and facts. It is an attempt to find a suitable means of expressing an idea or concept where there is a lack of method to express this idea, but at the same time, it is a generative system that still takes on new meanings all the time. According to the novella: 'They [the men] are the flower of all masculinity... To dishonour them would mean to dishonour the Canon' or further 'With the shadow of death, or without it, a man does not have the same beauty' (''Ata janë lulja e krejt mashkullimit, thuhej se kishte thënë zëdhënësi i Kullës së Oroshit, kur i kishin kërkuar një mendim. T'i hiqje ata, do të thoshje ta fyeje Kanunin') (Kadare, 2009: 350). This meant that Prenk Curri, as one of those highlanders 'who hid in one of the isolation towers' where 'they stayed in the dark like animal, blind bats of the night, who could not function in the light of the world' ('ndoshta që nga terri ku kishin ndryrë si bishat, lakuriqë të verbër të natës, do të mund të dërgonin në botë një rreze drite') was also a representation of the Albanian in the post-Communist regime (Kadare, 2009: 350 and 352). This gives the Prince of Beauty the typical characteristics that define his character as someone who is doomed by the blood feud. Here learned cultural and social values are tended. In the cultural usage of myth, according to Barthes, the ability to understand is narrowed for the reader, 'Men do not have with myth a relationship based on truth but on use: they, depoliticise according to their needs' (Barthes,

2009: 144). Pure mythicism is the condition where a sign or system of signs is complete and simultaneously with an open end (Gould, 1981: 119).

According to Shaban Sinani, the mythical trope of the highlander invoked expressly or through its key concepts such as honour, loyalty, is a mythical element that shows the impact that the Canon had over the highlanders living in the north of Albania (Sinani, 2011: 147). According to the novella, the highlanders are well known for their strong belief in honour: 'The judges had accepted, however what made it even easier, was the fact that the other family had given their *besa*, that they would not attempt to kill him while at the pageant' ('Juria kishte pranuar pjesëmarrjen, por kurrfarë lehtësimi për ta, veç besës, s'kishte kërkuar') (Kadare, 2009: 351). As can be seen, even the isolated man, Prenk Curri, 'is protected by the ethnic traditions which are determined by the Canon' (Buda, 1976: 98). 'The winner, Prenk Curri, was accompanied up to the edge of the village, they even insisted on accompanying him up to his own territory' ('Fitimtarin, Prenk Currin, e përcollën gjer në kufijtë e fshatit, e ngulën këmbë ta shoqëronin gjer në flamur të vet, por ai tha se donte të udhëtonte i vetëm') (Kadare, 2009: 357-358). This aspect of honour is a paradox to the general chaos and uncertainty of the mountain setting. One thinks that Kadare in attempting to romanticise the character of the highlanders has muddled the metaphor. As described above, however, it is evident that the mountain setting was chosen for the novel as it represents the chaos of post-Communist society in Albania, with the mythical stereotype of the highlanders of these mountains representing the Albanians living the post-Communist society.

5.5 Representation of the blood feud and isolation in the novel

In *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains* blood feuds are a drama around which the life of Prenk Curri revolves. This character in Kadare's narrative suffers extreme pain especially as a result of his tragic fate that requires him to go into hiding so as not to end up a victim of the blood feud that has encompassed his family. Blood feuding or vendetta, (Gjakmarrje) is a reflection of Albanian customary law as codified for instance in the Kanun of Lekë Dukagjini [Canon[21]]' (Elsie, 2001: 44). According to the Kanun of Lekë Dukagjini, a blood feud occurs when a person has committed a murder and as a result he and his family are in a vendetta or "Gjakmarrje" with the family of the victim, who are given permission by the Canon to avenge his death. From that moment onwards, the person committing the original killing and other male members of his family were destined to go into hiding, usually in one of the isolation towers. These people would spend the rest of their lives in hiding, unless the family of the victim found it upon themselves to forgive the death and end the feud. This was the reality on which Prenk Curri's character is based.

So for Prenk Curri, the possible freedom in exchange for participation in the tokrendë (beauty pageant) makes him even more troubled, and insecure about his life. For him, life is more secure inside the tower, in isolation, inside the space where everything linked to freedom, life and beauty is far from a reality of existence. Kadare specifically invokes the theme of life being better in isolation, since according to the propaganda of the communist Regime, Albanians would live better in isolation, and the country should not have been open to the world. The future of Prenk Curri out in the open during the beauty pageant is certain. He is supposed to prefer life inside the tower. As soon as Prenk Curri goes to the pageant, his life is in danger. His freedom is tainted by the possibility of death. This represents the uncertainty of the post-Communist Albanian society.

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[21] 23 of the 24 chapters of the Canon (Code) of Lekë Dukagjini (Kanuni i Lekë Dukagjinit) refer to blood feud (gjakmarrje) see for more information Gjeçov, Shtjefën (1993) *The Code of Lekë Dukagjini* (Kanuni i Lekë Dukagjinit). Tiranë: Albinform and *The Code of Lekë Dukagjini* (Kanuni i Lekë Dukagjinit). New York: Gjonlekaj Publishing Company.

Hence the use of the blood feud in the novel by Kadare gives us an idea of its continuation in Albanian society during the time when the novel was written. Just as in the novel *Broken April*, the idea for *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains*, originates from the tradition of the Canonical system in Albania from the Middle Ages, which was collected into one document by Shtjefën Gjeçov and became *The Canon of Lekë Dukagjini* (1989). Furthermore both in *Broken April* and *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains*, the events of the narrative take place during the reign of King Zog, around the 1930s and occur in the north of Albania, though the slight difference is that *Broken April* is set in the highlands of the region of Mirditë. During that time and space, the Canon of Lekë Dukagjini functioned totally in Albanian society. According to Rainey 'Scholars have traced the Kanun back to the Bronze Age ethical codes that address kinship, hospitality and death' (Rainey, 2013: www.full-stop.net). 'In the Kanun of the mountains of Albania, every male child born is considered to be good, and all are equal' and 'the value of a man's life is the same, whether he is handsome or ugly' (Gjeçov, 1989: 170). The Canon of Lekë Dukagjini originates from the orally transmitted laws and became the main source of laws in Albanian society during the period of Lekë Dukagjini. During the communist period, the Communist Party tried to stamp out the influence of the Canon. However it allowed some aspects of the Canon to continue to flourish in order for it to help in the Party's aims. For example the Communist Party officially did not allow blood feuds to become wide spread during its regime; however the dictatorship sometimes used the blood feuds as a pretext which allowed it to get rid of political opponents without questions being raised. There was no easier way of getting rid of opponents than by killing them off in supposed blood feuds which were supported by this 'elusive' Canon that they were 'struggling' to eradicate from society. This is the exact context in which the Canon is used in all of Kadare's novels, but especially in *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains*.

Whilst in *Broken April* Ismail Kadare places the events of the narrative inside a Medieval Albanian castle, in *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains* he places Prenk Curri in his hiding tower, which is probably as ancient a building as the fortress in *Broken April*. By placing these events inside these medieval walls, Kadare is attempting to highlight the fact that the dictatorship re-establishes every type and means of killing of opponents which it finds in from every corner of the historical forms. Killing off opponents by any means helps the dictatorship to reinforce its own position. The dictatorship is narcissistic and in its attempts to save itself it must to anything possible to remove elements of threat to its position

The main character in *Broken April*, Besian, not unintentionally, decides to travel to the north of Albania with his wife in order for them to spend their honeymoon in the region, just as in *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains*, Gaspër Cara, not unintentionally, decides to travel to the Accursed Mountains in search for the beauty pageant and is attracted to the Prince of Beauty, Prenk Curri. First of all, in the case of Besian, he also wants to impress his wife with the grand tragic elements of the Canon, but more importantly perhaps, with his own ability to interpret and understand even the most obscure aspects of the Canon.

As we can see from *Broken April*, Kadare's character, Besian, instead of recapturing the medieval castle, that is, rather than capture the castle through an invasion, something which would impress his new wife, the opposite happens: a mysterious force, a spiritual shadow of this castle, a mechanism centuries old tragedies which had occurred in the castle, will possess his wife Diana, and will in turn reduce this expert of the Canon of Lekë Dukagjini into a nobody. In *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains*, the tokrendë does not turn out to be a new start for Gaspër Cara; it ultimately leads to the death of Prenk Curri, something which results in the temporary imprisonment of Gaspër, and the beauty

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pageant showed Gaspër that there was no hope of more freedom for him, so he was doomed to live an unfulfilled life. Here the death of Prenk Curri is also due to an unknown shadow – again representing the uncertainty of stepping out of isolation.

As has already been discussed elsewhere in this thesis, one of the main methods that the communist regime used to control people was isolation. Kadare brings isolation into the mind of the reader in *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains*, not simply to show that isolation is something that serves the purpose of the dictatorship, but to explain that the consequences of isolation are suffered by the people even after the dictatorial regime collapses, since they are the ones who are faced with a life where freedoms are restricted. In this sense Kadare explains that with the resurfacing of the Canon of Lekë Dukagjini in his novel, the characters would be faced by the cruelty of the ancient laws that have been followed for centuries by Albanian society. Though the Canon is clearly an opposite to the Communist Party policies, and the regime tried to eradicate its hold over sections of the Albanian society, the way in which the Canon functions, that is, the fact that it has absolute power over the lives of people, reminds of the way in which the Communist Party's directives functioned. The fate of Prenk Curri's life is categorised by Kadare as the fate of an isolated person, through the norms imposed by the Canon. When Prenk does leave the tower in order to compete in the pageant, he appears to be intoxicated by the outside freedom, simply because he is not used to it. A person who is isolated from the outside life, somebody like Prenk Curri, has naturally lost all bearings of life. His freedom is still limited even when he leaves the tower. It is again controlled by forces which are not in his control. Similarly, in post-communist Albania in the 1990s, when the novel was published, there were many forces that still affected the freedom of the country. In the novel, the sudden exit from the isolation of the tower makes Prenk Curri weak when facing the bigger world, he is unsure about himself. Kadare shows this through the following passage:

"From the isolation tower of Bad Agrippa, Prenk Curri exited, stepping on the earth as if intoxicated. His legs were wobbling, his eyes were blinded by the light and his head was spinning. At first he wanted to turn back, but at the door of the isolation tower his friends were forming a wall that couldn't be breached."

('Nga kulla e ngujimit të Agripës së Keqe, Prenk Curri doli përjashta duke shkelur mbi tokë si i dehur. Këmbët i merreshin, sytë mend po i verboheshin nga drita. Një herë deshi të kthehej mbrapsht, por te porta e kullës së ngujimit shokët e tij ishin më të pakërcyeshëm se muri.') (Kadare, 2009: 351).

The passage reveals that Prenk Curri's legs are 'wobbling' ('Këmbët i merreshin') and he is 'blinded by the light' ('sytë mend po i verboheshin nga drita'). The description clearly describes a person who is unsure and anxious about the open world after spending time in isolation. In fact this is simply a description of the situation in which Prenk Curri finds himself, and can be read as a signifier of the fact that the forty year isolation of Albania had impacted massively on the lives of the Albanian people. The isolated Albanian had had years of non-communication with the outside world and had lost his own sense of freedom. As such the isolated person would be naturally inclined not to believe in his own freedom straight away, not to have a perspective of where his future should be heading. Here in the novel, where the isolation occurs in the mountains, we are again reminded why Kadare chose to set the novel here. The communist regime had used the mountains as a natural isolation barrier because 'these mountains have functioned as a natural border' as isolation for Albanian people (Mateos, 2005: 276).

Even after the collapse of the regime there are still issues with the society in which Kadare finds himself in. The Albanian society is in chaos as it tries to find a new democratic direction, and there is lawlessness throughout. The beauty pageant for men in the novella is a metaphor created by the author which represents the other competitions, or games of luck that are rife in Albania during the 1990s. The people who had just escaped the darkness of isolation (just like Prenk Curri) wanted to try to make life as it had been prior to the isolation, so attempted new ventures, some even leading to self-destruction. The novel published in 1996, this was during the period leading up to the social unrest caused by the collapse of Ponzi Pyramid Schemes in Albania. Albanian society could not yet fully cope with the sudden new freedom. In the novel, after Prenk Curri left the isolation tower, he knew that his life could be in danger; however he still decided to compete in the tokrendë. "Tokrendë" as a word is specifically chosen by Kadare to represent the idea of the grotesque. In the novel, Kadare's use of the word "tokrendë" instead of the original Albanian word for competition, 'konkurs', gives another cultural connotation. The meaning of the word "tokrendë" is, on the whole, closely parallel to the meaning of the phrase 'running together', and originates from the Turkish word *rekabet* from the period of the Ottoman Empire where athletes had to compete in wrestling or running sports to be considered as winners of the special prize. It is a contracted pronunciation of the Albanian words "tok" (together) and "rend" (run), which had long historical connections with beauty competitions in Albania. In this instance it has happened that one of the older words of Albanian language for rivalry, 'konkurs' has been almost entirely superseded by Kadare with a synonym that introduces the meaning more clearly. Through the use of the word, Kadare clarifies that a person who has been kept in isolation is destined to escape at one point. There would come a time when there would be a mass exodus and everyone would run together away from the isolation.

In the novel, Kadare provides the route of escape from isolation for Prenk Curri. We have the scene when Prenk Curri thinks to himself: '…one day, out there, something may happen, and all of a sudden you get out… word had spread that the King's youngest sister would attend the tokrendë, and would pick her own Prince out of the competitors' ('... një ditë atje jashtë mund të ndodhë diçka, dhe befas ti del... i thoshin se ishte hapur fjala se në tokrendë do të vinte motra e vogël e mbretit, për të zgjedhur princin e saj...') (Kadare, 2009: 351). After a few seconds, with the same speed he responds to his own thoughts in "brisk" manner: 'And what do I care…, I am in isolation, and what if I'm handsome, who am I handsome for? For nothing, for my grave…' ('E ç'më duhet, thoshte ai, unë jam i ngujuar dhe, në qenkësha i bukur, për kë jam? Për terrin jam, për varrin.') (Kadare, 2009: 351). For Prenk Curri, his looks may be his means out of the life in isolation. The King's sister may be the key to his escape. Ironically Kadare uses a symbol of a totalitarian regime to symbolise a method of escaping from the isolation of another. The Royal Princess who was said would arrive at the Accursed Mountains accompanied by her many servants is described by Kadare as a spinster. To Prenk she may represent salvation, a twist of fate he has been hoping for: "the King's sister would obviously pick him, if he won, and would take him with her away, far away, to the capital city' ('Do ta zgjidhte ajo me siguri, po të fitonte, dhe do ta merrte me vete atje në kryeqytet') (ibid). This shows that the fates of the isolated people in a dictatorship were determined by the regime. Even their means to freedom could be determined by the dictatorship. Moreover, in *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains*, the isolation is contrasted with the presence of foreigners in the "tokrendë". Kadare states that 'the locals, in their attempt to hide their surprise, closely watched the foreigners whose eyes did not show the fear of the open space, or the anxiety to claim revenge, but shone in another light' ('Vendësit, ndonëse përpiqeshin të fshihnin habinë, i ndiqnin gjithnjë me kureshtje këta njerëz, në sytë e të cilëve nuk gjendej as tmerri i rrugnajës e as brenga e gjakut të pamarrë, por

një tjetër ndriçim'.) (Kadare, 2009: 353). The distrust of the foreigners highlights the setting as an isolated region and represents the isolation of Albania under the control of communism.

The symbols of beauty take negative connotations. For the sake of beauty, a person is destined to sacrifice himself, just so that he can sample a brief moment of freedom. The novel employs elements of the grotesque through the use of certain auxiliary characters. For example, during the tokrendë, Kadare introduces Jilda (Xhilda), the owner of a hairdresser, which was said to be a secret brothel and also other lazy types who were at ease with everything and never worried. Through the introduction of Jilda, the mistress who may or may not have ran a brothel, and the 'lazy types' Kadare builds the contrast of the two polar opposites of people in the post-communist Albanian society. On the one hand, we have the risk taking individuals who were willing to undertake illicit and sometimes illegal ventures in order to make a living, on the other we have the indifferent individual who perhaps still secretly yearned for communism. It is clear that the society was still problematic. In the novel, the tokrendë is a space that gives the representation of Albanian society as it existed during the time when the novel was written, a society that had left communism but was now a place where every rule is broken. This can also be highlighted by Prenk Curri's death, which bore witness to even the Canon being broken. In the Canon of Lekë Dukagjini, 'blood follows the finger' which means that 'to the old Canon of the mountains of Albania' the gun was the only weapon which could be used to take revenge (Gjeçov, 1989: 172). In *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains*, Prenk is killed after being repeatedly hit with a stone on the back of the head. This defies the rules of blood feud as legitimised by the Canon. The death may not have actually been Canonical at all in the end (Prenk was killed by assassins sent by the flag bearer who was jealous of his Prince of Beauty title), but it does represent the fact that Albanian society had entered a stage where all rules were being broken.

5.6 Mystery in the narrative, the figure of "Lalë Krosi"

The reuse of the Albanian mythical period of "Lalë Krosi" has a very simple form. In *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains* the figure is simply mentioned in the narrative to announce the invocation of the myth in the context to the story: 'any stories about Lalë Krosi?' ('Ndonjë histori e re e Lalë Krosit?...') (Kadare, 2009: 340). The name "Lalë Krosi" became a myth linked to the regime of King Zog of Albania. Before King Zog ascended the throne of Albania, King Zog had hired Lalë Krosi as his personal tutor. Though his real name was Abdurrahman Krosi he became known by the nickname Lalë Krosi. Lalë Krosi was known to be a completely illiterate man who was a servile of King Zog and had taken a position of influence within the King's court. Lalë Krosi's feats and crimes were legendary, and it was believed that he did not even spare his own family from the atrocities he carried out. He was also known to be an initiator of blood feuds, as happened in the case when he aggravated the situation with his brother's killers. Hence 'Lalë Krosi' in *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains*, is invoked through the secret actions, replacement of the events that occurred at different times of history, with a subtle shift in space and time. A setting is created, an era where events are happening, places, different details, we have the making of a new situation that is based on these structures in order to design something new. The characters possess individuality that is often sanctioned by their name. The use of the name of "Lalë Krosi" in the narrative of *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains* is an attempt by Kadare to show that the ignorance that surrounds the Dictatorship is as prevalent as the ignorance that due to inertia continues to fill the roles in the Albanian state in the years of transition away from Communism. Dictatorships are able to shape the ignorance into a tool that allows them to prevent the rights of people and also curb excessive freedoms.

In many of Kadare's novels, for example, *The Accident* (Aksidenti), *The Prevented* (E Penguara), *Doruntine* (Kush e solli Doruntinën), *Wrong Dinner* (Darka e Gabuar), or even *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains*, it is as if the present is intertwined into the historical setting, the past remains relevant to the present. As if without noticing, the narrative unexpectedly turns on itself. The narrative will be an attempt to show what has happened in the past. In these novels the historical events are introduced from the start, though this history is not understood. A suicide that occurs in *The Prevented* (E Penguara), two mysterious deaths in *Doruntine* (Kush e Solli Doruntinën), an accident that can easily be a crime in the novel *The Accident* (Aksidenti), Prenk Curri's killing, a dreadful fear that encompasses Gaspër Cara, and before that, the long-standing anxiety he had of ever being the last to remain in a bar in *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains*, all occur in the narrative of the novels, but we are never familiarised with the perpetrators, and the real motives are only ever described sketchily. The investigation depends on the constant return to the same events, to verify and correct the smaller details, until finally the truth is brought out, and the story is laid out in the narrative. Kadare's fiction is built on a causality relation, logical order and as for Erll 'fictional narratives can fulfil an array of different functions' (Erll, 2008: 12). In all of the above mentioned novels the narratives travels from the known to the unknown. The narrative does not simply attempt to find the perpetrator of the crime and his motive, the aim is to understand the unknown, a mystery that is beyond human.

The final understanding, a clarification of the events is not described fully in these novels because the solution to the event is not the important issue. For Erll, literature 'can be viewed as one medium of cultural memory' (Erll, 2008: 13). The secret of the Kadarean narrative is essentially the existence of a core secret, something that is not mentioned, which drives the prevalent machine of the narrative. In *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains*, Kadare's motive is dual and seemingly contradictory, which enables a continuous

restart. On the one hand, Ismail Kadare uses all devices in order to reach the hidden core, to discover the secret object. On the other hand, he distances this secret, protects it until the end of the novel, if not even beyond. Hence Kadare masks the inner motives of Gaspër Cara, and also invokes other elements. The mystery is the absurdity of life in a transitional society moving away from dictatorship. Everything is uncertain, and society is faced with mystery as it tries to find a new route. Then the mystery would attempt to find its place, and the best place for mystery is ignorance, something that is rife in a society in transition away from the totalitarian regime, a period during which those with authority attract the ignorant and servile elements. Here Kadare invokes a reuse of the figure of 'Lalë Krosi' in his novels, a figure who became prominently mythical in Albanian society.

Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains ends with the death of Prenk Curri, but before that happens it has happened in its depths. A puzzle must be cracked but this is not simply limited only to the cause of the murder, it goes up to the mystery of the dictatorial world, to the secrecy of myth itself that permeates the new form. The tangible lurks, it is dissolved in a dream or presented in vague forms that allude to lack of force of human order. Noting the purposeful lack of information given by the narrative and the specific care in not delving into the emotions of the main characters, into their concerns, their inability to cope with their problems, we can detect the lack of presence of the internal point of view, that is, the absence of narration in the first person.

Crime in *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains*, takes the form of an archaic secret. The investigation into Prenk Curri's killing firstly results in the imprisonment of Gaspër Cara. This was a crime that he had not committed as his weapon had not shot Prenk Curri, even if he himself had at first thought he had committed the killing. However everything changes in the run-up to the parliamentary elections when 'the crime in the Accursed Mountains exploded again in the pages of the press' and only then did the truth

come to light and 'the real killer of the Prince of Beauty was found, Gaspër Cara was released from prison...' ('Zbulimi i vrasësit të vërtetë të princit të bukurisë, lirimi nga burgu i Gaspër Carës...') (Kadare, 2009: 366). At this time there was also a demand for 'the sacking of the Attorney General of the State' ('kërkimi i shkarkimit të Prokurorit të Përgjithshëm') something which hints to the use of the figure of "Lalë Krosi" in Kadare's novel (ibid). The story of the complex relationship that ends in ignorance of dictatorship, is indeed a story of something that hides, it is a story which is mainly connected to the nature of human relations, the truth slides or is presented in forms that challenge human logic and so declare the logic powerless. Prenk Curri's killing takes on the mystery of ignorance, and within Gaspër Cara, who is the first to discover the dead body, these mysteries will remain locked forever: 'the eyes of the other had remained just as glassy as after the third scream' and 'only then did Gaspër Cara see the bloody stone beside the body...' ('Sytë e tjetrit kishin mbetur po aq të qelqtë pas pëshpërimës së tretë dhe vetëm atëherë Gaspër Cara kishte parë gurin e përgjakur përbri...') (Kadare, 2009: 369).

The mysteries of the narrative, the figure of "Lalë Krosi" are simply the mirrors which the post-Communist society uses to admire itself. The whole system drowned in ignorance, is the reflection of a situation in which Narcissus seeks to negotiate with the others and with reality itself. Even though this reality is bitter, it is a self-indulgence of the dictatorship that attempts to use the force of mystery, and the figure of ignorance to strangle freedom. The characters are brought to this setting and they are lost within the self-indulgence. The negotiation between the characters and reality in *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains* reveals a state of ignorance and specifically requires the intervention to negotiate for knowledge. Thus the ignorance of the society brings mystery, the non-clarification of information as a mirror which reflects itself. McLuhan clarifies that 'we often create artificial situations that rival irritations and stresses of real life under controlled

conditions' (McLuhan, 2001: 46). Controlled conditions bring the darkness where in fact light is later needed, even if that of the moon, in order for reality to be seen: 'under the light of the moon, the young man's face appeared very pale and beautiful. *A real Narcissus*, the doctor thought to himself...' ('Nën ndriçimin e hënës fytyra e djaloshit u duk përsëri e bardhë dhe tepër e bukur. Një Narcis i vërtetë mendoi doktori...') (Kadare, 2009: 344).

However the mystery of the narrative and the figure of "Lalë Krosi" are also the doubts, the masking that occurs in *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains*, as a method to provide details of hidden structures of the post-Communist society that are designed to serve it with the full force of ignorance. This happens under the Kadarean narrative to show that the masking of the situation was the dark side of the mirror, or that form of darkness where the Narcissistic society sees its own image in the reflection of the darkness and becomes profoundly numbed, narcotized by it.

The mystery of the events in the novel *The Accident* is hidden by the mirror of the taxi, which has seen something. It knows the secret, and even the 'eyes of the other' that 'just as glassy' ('sytë e të tjerëve' 'mbetur po aq të qelqtë') have seen the mystery of the death of Prenk Curri in *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains* (Kadare, 2009: 369). The living man alive, not only cannot create any sequence, but with all his subtle reasoning, he cannot reveal the mystery of the order of the universe. The motive and the explanation about the truth of the crime in the novel seem to be locked away in the isolation tower. However Kadare has made the truth available in the context of the novel. By realising the context of the reuse of the figure of 'Lalë Krosi' in the novel, we understand that Kadare is showing us that the post-Communist Albanian society is struggling to find the right course towards the freedom it had yearned whilst under the totalitarian regime.

5.7 The myth of morality under communism

In order to control the actions of the people, the dictatorship had imposed uniformity into every aspect of life, be it a uniformity of mannerism or uniformity of clothing. Everything had to be done according to the predetermined communist morals. The norms' imposed by the totalitarian regime created the myth of the 'moral person' and so curbed any attempts by people to wear fashionable clothing, as well as preventing the development of any method of expression. Communism in Albania required the people to wear the same clothes and to act in the same way. It also expected everyone to speak in the same manner. The dictatorship attempted by any means to create the situation where it would be easy to identify and to punish anyone who dressed differently, acted differently. Anyone who did not conform would be considered an enemy of the cause and a collaborator of the foreign powers, simply because he had the desire not to dress in the way in which the dictatorship ordered. After the collapse of Communism, Albanians began to take advantage of the extra freedom they were faced with, and this became evident in the way in which they dressed and acted. Kadare highlights this aspect of life under the post-Communist Albanian society in *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains*, when he describes the protagonist Gaspër Cara, as well as his friend the doctor. Through the description of their clothing, the author aims to attack the communist morals which had been entrenched in Albania. However Kadare was clear that the problem with the communist moral was not simply an attempt to control the actions of the people and prevent their freedoms, but it also helped to establish the propaganda that only the products that were created in the country through the hard work of the Albanian people were moral. The products from the west were not only foreign, but also anti-moral. The problems with the idea of moral man turned out to be somewhat larger than the propaganda itself.

Gaspër Cara's black coat and his white scarf which were of the latest fashion are shown in contrast to the clothing of the two waiters in café Kursal at the beginning of the novel, and the clothing of the doctor, to whom Gaspër had confessed everything (Kadare, 2009: 338-340). Further, Gaspër Cara's flirtatious conversation with one of the waiters at the beginning of the story and the mocking look of the other waiter, alert the reader of Gaspër Cara's 'differences', before his homosexuality becomes apparent. Touching the collar (*qafëzën*) of his black coat, nervously, is one way of representing Cara's frustrated state of mind (Kadare, 2009: 340). Kadare's careful craft of this latest fashion garment reads like an extract from a traditional perception of foppishness. However, the text's insistence on this seemingly unimportant detail is out of proportion to its apparent significance and cannot, therefore, simply be explained by the author's careful reconstruction of local perception. As the young boy, Gaspër Cara, dresses himself in a black coat, it becomes more than a significant means of ensuring his privacy. His dependence of the black coat elevates it to a necessary part of his behaviour.

The fact that the doctor is depicted as wearing a Borsalino hat and smoking a pipe, together with his mannerism show that he is upper class and that he had studied abroad. His western culture is apparent not only in his clothing, but also in his desire to help Gaspër Cara and the sympathy that he feels for Gaspër Cara's plight. This is highlighted by the fact that the doctor gives Gaspër, Oscar Wilde's book *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* to read. As the doctor prepares to help Gaspër at this point, Wilde's book is invested with a layer of symbolic, even fabled value. In a sign whose cultural associations are understood by protagonists and reader alike, Gaspër's and the doctor's private conversation of social norms is paralleled by Kadare's belief that the West was more tolerant and allowed greater space of freedom for individuals.

In the case of Gaspër Cara, Kadare again uses the tragic element of the Canon as he seeks to bring to attention belief that people should be able to live their life and enjoy the freedom. By bringing to attention this fact that requires the demolition of the moral taboo in dictatorship, Kadare gives us another opportunity to understand that communist morality was a tool that allowed the secret purging of unwanted elements of society. Prenk Curri's death in the novel is at first attributed to a blood feud killing. It is not until later that the truth is revealed.

Ismail Kadare has progressed close to the zone of the dangerous moral taboo (for Albanian Society) in many of his works. Homosexuality in *Life, Games and Death of Lul Mazreku* (Jeta, loja dhe vdekja e Lul Mazrekut) (2002) and the 'freezing of the erotic message' in the love affair of an unsuccessful filmmaker with his 'stranger' lover in the novel *Shadow*: *Notes of a Failed Filmmaker* (Hija: shënime të një kineasti të dështuar) (2003), add wealth to the characters who are usually avoided by other Albanian writers of the period. One of the reasons why *Doruntine* (Kush e solli Doruntinën) (1979) was judged harshly by literary critics in Albania at the time of publication, was the mention of incest, as a likely event of the ballad. The Broadway Boys in *The Winter of Great Loneliness* are presented as the typical 'youths polluted by the bourgeois impact'. In fact, if we refer to Foucault's 'the question of pathology', the characters of Ismail Kadare are not ill people with moral abnormality, but spiritual beings, that pursuit an elementary right to live (Foucault, 1990: 295). Therefore, in *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains*, Gaspër is a character created by Kadare that keeps in line with his group of socially 'bizarre' people (to Albanian society). The dictatorship did not appreciate coexisting with individuals who stepped outside of the set standard of morals it expected of all citizens. The fact that Kadare has created these characters in his different novels, suggests that he opposed the fixed concept of 'morality' that Communism had tried to impose on the Albanian society.

5.8 Conclusion

This chapter has explored how Kadare has invoked the myth of Narcissus in *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountain* to represent the narcissistic nature, in the Freudian sense, of the post-Communist society in Albania. The chapter has delved into considerations of Albanian society both as portrayed in the novel which is set during the King Zog reign in the 1930s, and also what the narrative suggests about Albanian society both during communism, and in the aftermath to the collapse of the communist regime in the 1990s, which was the time during which *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountain* was published.

I began the chapter by giving an overview of *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountain* which included an exploration of the main themes of the novel and a discussion of the main characters and their roles. After this, I proceeded with an analysis of the reuse of the myth of narcissus in the novel. I established that both the main characters, Prenk Curri and Gaspër Cara contain elements of Narcissus in their role. In fact the narrative in general invokes many narcissistic themes. I concluded that this was used by Kadare to show that the post-Communist society in Albania had become egoistic and self-loving, in that those with any power need to find ways to maintain their position amongst the chaos. Furthermore, I looked at how the setting of the mountain and the mythical trope of the highlander has been used in this novel. The mountain represents a closed and isolated place, which to Gaspër Cara's disappointment does not offer him an opportunity to find himself. The mountain, away from the full control of the King's regime, is also a perfect setting for the tokrendë. Similarly, the highlanders are a personification of the mountain themselves, with their sturdy personality, loyalty, pride, but above all, difficulty to control. However, Kadare's novella suggests that their vanity and obsession with their appearance was their one weakness. The

chapter concludes that they are a representation of the Albanians living in the chaos of the post-Communist society. This means that the tokrendë could only take place in the Accursed Mountains where the highlanders lived. I then explored the concept of the blood feud and isolation in the novella. Similarly on this point, I explored the use of mystery in the novel and the invocation of the mythical figure of "Lalë Krosi", both of which hint at the chaos of the post-Communist society in Albania. The chapter then progressed by exploring the Communist moral values society that had been established during the communist regime and the contrast with the post-Communist freedom. I argued that Kadare was opposed to such an imposed set of moral values and he has written about 'immoral' aspects under communism (for example Gaspër Cara is homosexual) to show his opposition for the communist reality. Kadare suggests that the west is more understanding in regards to freedom of the people. In the novel, the doctor who was educated in the West and wears Western clothing is the only character who is sympathetic to Gaspër Cara's internal struggles with his own sexuality. I also argue that Prenk Curri's isolation in the isolation tower and then his doomed exit from isolation, represent the Albanian isolation during the communist regime and the seemingly doomed society after the collapse of communism. The final chapter of this thesis will conclude the findings of the research.

Chapter 6: CONCLUSIONS

Myth, a form of authority that is eternal may be identified in Ismail Kadare's work as specific moving force. This dissertation studied the relevance of myth as a signifying force in Kadare's work. It studied the specified rules, important links, the origins and significations, as well as the aesthetic goals of the myths invoked in the works in order to understand how the meaning of the myth as used by the author hint at the socio-political factors during the time in which the author wrote his novels. In relation to the myths that were reused by Kadare in his novels, it has to be said that the majority are either Greek myths or myths originating from the Balkans. Myths these, that have been part of the cultural memory of the Albanian people. The myths dominate the narrative of Kadare's novels even where their reuse in the text is not as apparent in a first reading. The myths have this dominance over the narrative because of Kadare's familiarisation with the myths and ancient literature from an early age. The myths that are reused in the novels therefore were a default means for Kadare to express his thoughts metaphorically, especially when he criticised aspects of society under the communist regime, whilst also escaping the censorship of the Communist Party. It was also

explored in this thesis that Kadare continued to use myths to metaphorically criticise the post-Communist society in Albanian in a few occasions.

Kadare has carried out a transformation of the classical myths, by taking some of the motives and mythical characters from ancient and Albanian myths, in order to represent the cultural identity of his people. He has also similarly reused legends, folktales, ballads and histories that are transferred through cultural memory, and used them as synonyms to mask his criticisms of the dictatorship he wrote under. Cultural Imposition has been another factor that appears in Kadare's work, as a complementary and sometimes determining notion of the role of identity. All of these aspects appear in the novels through a specific structuring of narratives that are full of fantasy, but also give a realistic overview of Albanian cultural identity through their description of realistic themes. The typical Kadarean literary universe, using both completely new characters and also archetypes borrowed from mythology, to create analogies, metaphors or allegories that help the writer to express his views through the narrative. As such, the relationship between the form of the reused myth and the meaning it has in the narrative is important when analysing Kadare's novels.

At first, the gap found at the heart of the myth is nothing more than the permanent tensions you find in any symbol between the sign and the signifier, in other words: the event and its meaning are never present simultaneously. Ismail Kadare has given priority to the bridging of the gap between the sign and the signifier. Hence, myth is a synthesis, an organiser that acquires entirety, an organic entirety, even if the myth undergoes transformations in Kadare's work, and its content is changed. The signifying function defines the emergence of a new meaning in the narrative. Kadare's literary text creates a structure that allows the artistic experience, the possibility of plurality of meaning and the aesthetic values of the text to appear at the forefront of the narrative. All constituent and intertextual elements serve this purpose and are subject to convey multidirectional memory.

This study attempted to traverse the veins of an intertextual network which helps to describe and to define the mechanism of recycling of myths in literature, especially in the novels by Kadare. In order to do this it has highlighted the intertextual signifiers, that are both revealed and hidden, and has explored intertextuality as a process of metamorphosing one system of signs into another, as a moving force that rewrites texts. Some of the titles of Kadare's novels and some of the characters within them, immediately present their intertextual character. However, another group of novels that are configured with unpredictable components of signification require a new way of thinking in order to understand the meaning that they are trying to convey. They raise question marks over that which we thought that we knew well and invite a new exploration of signifying elements that give meaning to the whole. Ancient models, universal models or models identifiable with the concept of archetype are invoked in Kadare's work. For example, the archetype of the collapse of a civilization is depicted through the most ancient method of deceit: the Trojan Horse. In *Chronicle in Stone* Kadare modernises the concept of the Trojan Horse to fit the setting of his narrative and also gives it a meaning that relates to the communist dictatorship under which he wrote his novel. Elements of terror and sacrifice, instruments of torture and monuments to folly in Kadare's novels relate to the existential hell of life under communism in Albania. Renovation of the punitive system, restoration of hell and inferno through the brutal elements of classical myths which appear in *Agamemnon's Daughter*, *Chronicle in Stone*, *The Bearer of ill Tidings – Islamo nox*, represent the situation of a modern problematic society. In *Agamemnon's Daughter* the archetype of Circe is an allusion to the moulding of a new identity through state initiated Cultural Imposition. Through a clever reworking, the archetype of Circe, allows the generating of the main elements of the ancient model; Kadare modernises this known paradigm to relate to the Albanian context. The archetype of Hermes as "a bearer of ill tidings" is brought through narrative transformations by Hadji Milet's

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character, and synthesises the continuous meaning that in the society under communism "a bearer of ill tidings" implements the orders of the tyrant, and is a key figure in the self-sacrifice that is required of the people in order for the dictatorship to spread its darkness and cover all that is beautiful in society, so that society can be better controlled.

The dialogue between the present (the time during which the novel was written) and the past (the setting of the narrative) extracts the relationship between myth and cultural memory. In Kadare's work the psychological portrait of the tyrant, the dictator of all times, takes form. The methods of eliminating opposition, hits by the secret intelligence, appear in *Agamemnon's Daughter*, where the figure of the tyrant and his fears about regime ending are portrayed. The regime carries the fears of an eventual quick fall from power, as a result of the crimes over which it has built its despotism. In *Agamemnon's Daughter*, the victim of the sacrifice, Suzana, who needs to be sacrificed in order to secure the political standing of her father, the second in line to the control of the ruling party, points to the ancient Greek myth out of which the narrative is derived. A lack of freedom and the melancholia, and an insatiable willingness to survive, appear at poles apart, with one pole relating to the sacrificed victim and on the other concentrated on the demonic parody. In *Agamemnon's Daughter*, the tyrant appears more Machiavellian than ever, and again in *Chronicle in Stone* the communist reality is described through a portrayal of the troubles in the city of Gjirokastra. The fear of blindness that appears in *Chronicle in Stone* as a signification of the fear by the author of not being able to write that which he sees with his own eyes, explains why Kadare reused myths to metaphorically criticise the communist regime without being a victim of the censorship. The characteristics of Agamemnon (king and commander, warmonger, imposer of iron discipline, violence and terror) define this archetype and represent the ex-Prime Minister of Albania (and Enver Hoxha's right hand man) during the communist dictatorship, Mehmet

Shehu. Therefore, the figure of the Heir in the novel, who reuses Agamemnon's archetype relates to Mehmet Shehu and tells his story.

The archetype of Iphigenia is invoked in a unique manner in *Agamemnon's Daughter*, and though the name is transformed into Suzana, it plays the same role in the narrative of the novel, apart from the fact that Suzana's sacrifice is a political act, whereas Iphigenia's sacrifice is an attempt by Agamemnon to unify the Greek soldiers. In both cases the sacrifice is require to prevent catastrophe. For Kadare, the sacrifice is not important, more important is the context in which it is placed. In this context, the sacrifice relates to the moral and sometimes physical sacrifice that the Communist Party required from Albanians during its regime.

The archetype of the destruction of the city in *Chronicle in Stone*, represented through the reuses of the myth of the Trojan Horse, is portrayed through the airport and the aeroplanes that enter the city of Gjirokastra during the narrative. The airport and the aeroplane therefore become modern devices that represent the ancient wooden horse; however they play the same role: they still stealthily bring soldiers into the city and aid in its destruction. This stealthy entry in to the city represents the communist paranoia that the foreign powers were always poised to enter into Albania and destroy the country. As such it helps to portray the situation of paranoia and isolation in communist society in Albania.

Archetypes are also invoked through the naming of the characters and through their function in the novel. Character names signify ideas and sometimes represent the personality traits of the character, as well as predicting the function of the character in the narrative. We can see the traits of Hadji Milet and we are given hints about his role in *The Bearer of ill Tidings – Islamo nox* through his name. In this novel, Kadare has chosen this name specifically to highlight the characters role in helping to portray the Turkish obscurantism in the novel. Hadji (pilgrimage) and Milet (people) clearly reflect the character's role as

messenger of the Sultan, who delivers the Sultan's messages to the people. In also betrays his fate of becoming a martyr for the people's cause. As such it further adds to the character who is a reuse of the archetype of Hermes. By this means, Kadare extracts the archetype during the narrative and uses it in establishing the structure. Therefore Kadare actualises the possibility that the archetype gives.

The city, the mountain, the stone and many other elements of the Albanian nature become part of Kadare's description in his novels. The city as labyrinth of the mythic is one of the most interesting forms that appear in Kadare's novels. In *Chronicle in Stone* the city as labyrinth of the mythic appears through the many phenomena that occur to the people of the city of Gjirokastra, and the consequences of a noticeable development of the transformation of identity. The same function is played by the myth of the colour 'black' that in the space of the city and the narrative relates to the misfortune and deaths that occur both in the narrative setting and during Communism.

Myth in Kadare's novels is rebuilt, fused, juxtaposed, and transformed into the narrative. The configuration of myth through fantasies makes the episodes in *Chronicle in Stone* characterized by the dilemma with which the reader perceives the given events. The boy narrator uses his eyes in order to read the city with all of its forms and events, since his fantasies were enriched, among others by the wide landscape, but his fantasies are also fuelled by the books that he reads. These books take on intertextual meaning in the narrative of *Chronicle in Stone* and add a sense of the mystical. However, everything is a question for the reader, because the events in the narrative are not extraordinary, they are not supernatural occurrences and do not take place in the world of miracles, they are simply events that take place in the context of the city of Gjirokastra, something which both for the author and the reader is ordinary. This is a story about perception. It is similar to the mythical trope of

'emptiness' in *Agamemnon's Daughter* which plays an important theme since it serves as a metaphor for the changeability in the narrator's identity.

The reuse of myths in Kadare's novels has much in common with Roland Barthes's concept of 'myth today': It is basically a tone of voice, and a vision of the entire universe, 'every object in the world can pass from a closed, silent existence to an oral state, open to appropriation by society' (Barthes, 2009: 131). The myth is therefore the natural vehicle for Kadare. It provides the cultural memory tempo which he was seeking because it is essentially a process. Without the motifs connected with the myths, the presentation of some of the themes could not have occurred in the novels published in communism. These mythical motifs, forming a complete and independent structure, often with its own story to tell, constitute a separate level of reality in most of Kadare's novels. Kadare continue to occasionally reuse myths and mythical motifs in his novels after the Communist period. This is despite the fact that he no longer had to worry about escaping the Communist censorship. The thesis has chosen to look at *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains* in order to explore if there has been any change in the way in which Kadare reused myths to criticise the post-Communist society in Albania. For example, the mountain, as seen in *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains*, appears as an ethnographical unit, representing the Canon of Lekë Dukagjini, which is implemented in the mountains, and in many cases it is also called the "Code of the mountains". I also realised that Kadare's novel *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains* is more or less, referring to the myth of Narcissus, sometimes directly as a real literary character and sometimes as a spirit and experience.

Inside the code or convention of *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains*, both the archetype of Narcissus and the mythical trope of the mountain appear. Both can be considered simply as different approaches on the same reality; the reshape of the mythical event. Both mythical elements contain very different significances to one another, even

becoming at one point a collision of forces, but both myths function in Kadare's idea and help to portray the hidden message of his novel. If through the reuse of Narcissus he created the character of Gaspër Cara, Kadare attempted to show that the environment where he was standing or that surrounded him was infection by the meaning of this myth. In other words, the post-Communist Albanian society had become narcissistic in a Freudian sense, and those who had obtained any power in the vacuum left by the collapse of the Communist regime had an ego that foretold of a detrimental ending –Just as Narcissus self-obsession had led to his own suicide. In this way the mythical trope of the mountain with his entire force is also a decoded message that acts between the narrative and the cultural memory. Kadare, through enigmatic means, awakens the mountain in order to make his call to his Albanian readers of the time that they lived in an uncertain and dangerous setting just like the mountains in the novel *Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains*.

The details of a few of Kadare's plots are built up from some pre-existent framework, but the literary figures are usually chosen as symbols of some idea: those in *The Bearer of ill Tidings – Islamo nox* are chosen for their innocence and those in the *Agamemnon's Daughter* for their connection with sacrifice and false honour.

In *Chronicle in Stone*, where the literary themes do not determine the plot and are related to the real characters in that they provide the subject for endless conversations, and illuminate rather than determine character; the real characters even introduce the literary themes themselves. Clearly, the use of myth and literature for which Kadare is known is the general trend towards the integration of the myth with the narrative of the novels. The reader is not free to choose how he reads the novels because there is always the distant but strong viewpoint of the narrator who suggests an understanding.

The mythical and literary levels have such a radical effect on the form of Kadare's novels that some of them can be called 'mythical' from the title, as in the case of *Chronicle in*

Stone; where the mythical element of 'stone' is related to the stone city of Gjirokastra, or *Agamemnon's Daughter* where the Ancient Greek leader Agamemnon is comprised as a figure in Albanian politics of the Communist Party.

This study, by attempting to analyse the reuse of myths in Kadare's novels has found that the significance of the myths that are invoked in these novels paint a picture of the reality of Albanian life under communism and in the period immediately after its collapse. Therefore the myths as invoked in Kadare's novels relate to the Albanian reality, and are mechanisms that reflect the cultural identity in Albania. Through a detailed knowledge of the system of myths, Kadare has portrayed the elastic behaviour of myths that can continuously take on meanings. He has dedicated the meaning of the myths to portrayal of society under the communist regime and through this he was successful in writing about thematic topics whilst escaping the literary censorship of the Communist Party at the time when he wrote the novels.

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