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ALLEGORY AND THE CRITIQUE OF SOVEREIGNTY: ISMAIL KADARE'S POLITICAL THEOLOGIES

REBECCA GOULD

In a controversial attempt to integrate African, Chinese, and Spanish literatures into world literary canons, Fredric Jameson argued that postcolonial texts are necessarily and inevitably allegorical. Jameson proposed that all third-world texts, by virtue of their relations to communities embedded within the colonial matrix, were “national allegories.” Whereas Western fiction enforces a “radical split between private and public, between the poetic and the political,” in “third-world” literatures, Jameson specified, “the intellectual is always in one way or another a political intellectual”: “private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society” (69, 74, 69). Jameson’s theses have been contested subsequently, while the category “third-world” itself has come under substantial scrutiny (see Ahmad and Lazarus). Nonetheless, the general alignment between allegory and the role of the intellectual in societies undergoing postcolonial and socialist transformations bears uncannily on the literature of Eastern European as well as Middle Eastern nations, wherein the boundaries between so-called first, second, and third world literatures are as permeable as the experience of dictatorial power in the age of multinational capital.¹

Jameson’s categorizations did not encompass the Albanian novelist Ismail Kadare (b. 1936) nor the Egyptian writer Naguib Mahfouz (1911-2006), although both authors crafted substantial political allegories from non-European histories. Mahfouz’s first three novels, published in the 1930s, focused on Pharaonic Egypt. The Egyptian author used past archives “as vehicles to critique current social and political problems beneath a historical veneer” (Stock vii).² Mahfouz returned to Pharaonic Egypt towards the end of his life,

authoring texts such as *Akhenaten, Dweller in Truth* (1985).³ Confronted by analogous paradoxes of power, the Albanian and Egyptian novelist treat the distant past less as a source of knowledge of the individual than as a means of making fiction speak, allegorically, to the present. For both writers, allegory at once neutralizes the political message inscribed into their fictions and makes the publication of their work possible. This essay considers Kadare's fictions as participants in what can broadly be defined as a postcolonial conversation, and as elucidations of the dynamic Jameson terms "third-world allegory," whereby the intellectual uses his fictions to comment on society and to pursue, through fictional means, its transformation.

Buildings and Bridges

During the height of its power, the Ottoman Empire's bewildered subjects observe the Višegrad bridge—constructed in their midst in 1577 and marketed as a gift of the Ottoman state—with dismay. "They now saw with their own eyes," Ivo Andrić narrates in his classic *The Bridge on the Drina* (1945), "that these glorious buildings involved so much disorder and unrest, effort and expense" (*Na drini čuprija* 22). Observing the bridge arching over the Drina River, connecting East to West, the villagers wonder if the generous bridge bequest was the blessing they had assumed it to be. Half a century later, in what has been called an "Albanian response" (Elsie, *Albanian Literature* 173) to Andrić's novel, Kadare echoed the ambivalence expressed by the Višegrad villagers in blunter terms. "All great building[s]," declared Kadare's storyteller in *The Three-Arched Bridge* (1978), "resemble crimes, and vice versa" (94).⁴ In gazing at columns, one can clearly see "blood spattering the marble." Given that violence is "one of several persistent themes that forge conceptual cohesion within Andrić's seemingly fragmentary narrative" (Kokobobo, "To Grieve or Not to Grieve" 69), the task of the critic is to elucidate why Balkan narrations of the state's sovereignty so frequently coalesce around violence. The ambivalences expressed by Andrić's and Kadare's protagonists crystallize the burden of twentieth-century Balkan narrative: to show how the state's violence compromises the foundations of its sovereignty.

If great buildings are crimes, then the state is an instrument through which crimes are perpetuated. Recapitulating the process through which cities become polities, this essay traces the narrative that begins in buildings and ends in human sacrifice as explicated by René Girard. According to Girard, the scapegoat mechanism shapes all mythological and religious beginnings by "suppressing or disguising collective murders" (*Le bouc émissaire* 233). The immurements alluded to above by Andrić and Kadare classically exemplify such systematic murders. Both writers suggest that displays of glory require sacrifices. Girard's political theology helps us flesh out the sacrifices adumbrated in *The Three-Arched Bridge*, *The Palace of Dreams*, *The Pyramid*, and *Spring Flowers, Spring Frost*. Engaging with polities that

rely on scapegoating to suppress dissent, Kadare's fictions are allegories in the sense that Fredric Jameson ascribed to "third-world literature in the era of multinational capitalism."

Dictatorships do not merely commemorate themselves through monuments. In his autobiography *Albanian Spring*, first published in France in 1991, Kadare identifies two representational strategies for dictatorships. Dictatorships are either monsters—"dinosaurs, tyrannosaurs or many-headed hydras"—or buildings—"fortresses, pyramids, bunkers" (*Printemps albanais* 187).⁵ The building imagery is substantiated through reference to Kadare's Russian counterpart, the Soviet dissident Alexander Solzhenitsyn. "Everyone knows that the last hour of dictatorships bear within it a fatal element," writes Kadare, "Solzhenitsyn compares this time to the moment when a building is about to crumble, and people below are wondering where to go so that they won't stop lumps of concrete with their heads" (214).

As living entities, governments aim, like humans, at self-preservation. Although dictatorships are "organic mechanisms," their virility is contingent on their subjects' obedience. Kadare terms this the "self-replicating" dimension of the dictatorial state. Dictatorships, he explains, have no need "to borrow from Roman or Asiatic law, because they produce their own. And that goes for everything: no need for pity, for sex, for all that constitutes a life" (205). The dictatorial state à la Kadare is both fertile and sterile. Its reproductivity breeds death. Such fecundity bears all the signs of life, but smells, Kadare specifies, of death.

How does the state sustain its hollow and fragile life? Kadare characterizes the early stages of dictatorship as a period of optimism, when the freedom to refashion the world according to new ideological agendas appears boundless. It is only in their late stages that dictatorships threaten the moral good. According to Kadare, dictatorships are most formidable when they "don the mask and dissimulate their crimes" (*Printemps albanais* 204). Erasing their lineages and enforcing new modes of forgetting, dictatorial states blind their populace to the sources of its suffering. Kadare's dictatorship novels collectively rewrite the state's narrative by producing fictive but nonetheless incriminating genealogies for state power.

The scapegoat mechanism, as refined by Girard, sheds uncanny light on dictatorial power, viewed through the lens of Kadare's narratives. In a 1996 interview, Girard defined the scapegoat mechanism as "a generative principle which works unconsciously in culture and society" ("A Conversation with René Girard" 266). The scapegoat mechanisms encapsulated in myths work by disguising "their generative center" (267). The literal suffering induced by scapegoat myths is unambiguous; more obscure and astonishing is their fecundity. Similarly, in Kadare's universe, political states obfuscate the historical grounds of their existence even as they (re)produce the social order. The parallelism between myths and states is revealed most powerfully when

the Albanian writer turns to the strategies used by states for concealing their crimes.

For Girard, totalitarianism in its communist inflection perfectly illustrates the scapegoat mechanism. "There are two forms of totalitarianism," Girard explains. The first form "tries to destroy the concern for the victims openly and directly." Girard labels the second form "insidious totalitarianism" and "communism in many of its forms" is given as one of its variants ("A Conversation with René Girard" 275). Although socialist totalitarianism adeptly rewrites its origins and adapts the scapegoat mechanism to serve its ends, Girard's multifaceted elucidation of his thesis indicates that scapegoating is not exclusive to the communist state. Similarly, Kadare's analysis of state power has implications far beyond the regime of his home country.

One of the more concrete manifestations of the scapegoat mechanism is the foundation sacrifice. Dubbing the foundation sacrifice a "male edifice complex," folklorist Alan Dundes emphasizes the patriarchal foundations of this myth (200). Dundes' allusion is fleshed out by Ruth Mandel, who discerns in foundation sacrifice narratives testimony to male anxiety over female reproduction. Men build bridges to glorify civilization, but their edifices call into question the foundations of civilization itself. Mandel reads this dilemma as a nature/culture conflict: "culture, without a positive nature, can construct itself only by deconstructing nature, by destroying and thereby encompassing [it]" (165).

The Albanian counterpart to the Serbian foundation sacrifice presents a similarly blameless sacrificial victim (Schwandner-Sievers 6-7).⁶ It narrates the immurement of Rozafa in the castle named in her honor. Rozafa's sacrifice was revealed to be necessary when an elderly woman visited three brothers who had been tasked with constructing the castle on the banks of the Buna River near the town of Shkodra. Every night after their work, the castle's walls would collapse and they would be compelled to start building from scratch. The elderly woman informed the brothers that the only way to insure that the walls they built would stand firm was to immure one of their wives within the walls. The brothers discussed this proposition amongst themselves and decided to sacrifice whichever one of their wives came to bring food to them the next day while they were at work. In order to leave the choice of the sacrifice to chance, each brother promised not to inform his wife of this plan. All but one of the brothers broke this promise. Rozafa, the wife of the brother who kept his promise, brought a basket of food to the brothers the following morning while they were at work.

When her husband explained the situation and informed his wife that she was fated to die, Rozafa agreed to be sacrificed. Her only request was that her right breast be exposed so she could feed her son, and that she retain the use of her right eye to see him, her right hand to caress him, and her right foot to rock her son's cradle. As feminist Robin May Schott observes, Rozafa's position

is “half walled-in and half exposed, she remains with a breast in one world and the other given over to the world of nonhuman powers” (37). Women, with their reproductive capacity, belong at once to civilization and to nature. A woman’s liminality as a mortal birther of life makes her the perfect candidate for the foundation sacrifice.

Although Kadare rewrites the foundation sacrifice by making the victim male, the nature/culture conflict is evident in *The Three-Arched Bridge* as well. During the early stages of the bridge’s construction, the river becomes putrefied. In the words of the protagonist Gjon: “the river became an eyesore. It looked like a squashed eel, and you could almost imagine that it would shortly begin to stink” (40). An elderly woman predicts that the river will avenge the crimes committed against its waters. She warns the master-in-chief of the bridge building project that the river “will fill with water and be strong again. It will swell and roar....Where will you hide then?” she asks ominously (41).

Finally, during the immurement of Murrash Zenebisha, which in the context of the plot is figured more as a punishment for the crime of trying to sabotage the bridge’s construction than as the immurement of an innocent victim, the wall itself is feminized. The wall becomes impregnated, and Murrash fills her womb. Gjon describes the scene: “The bulging wall looked at if it were pregnant. Worse, it looked as if it were in birth pangs” (115). Gjon analyzes what he sees as a “perversion” of the original creative impulse:

The wall indeed looked pregnant....But this was a perverse pregnancy....No baby emerged from it, on the contrary, a human being was swallowed up....It was worse than perverse. It would have been perverse if, in contrast to a baby who emerges into the light, the man who entered the darkness were to shrink and be reduced to the size of an infant and then to nothing....But that was not to happen. This was a perversion of everything. It was perversity itself. (116)

In contrast to the Serbian legend, in this Albanian text, the wall itself is framed as the female victim. Zenebisha had tried to destroy the bridge. His punishment is suffocation by the female giver of life. While it can be argued that the real precedent for Zenebisha’s immurement in Andrić’s classical narrative is the impalement of the saboteur of the Višegrad bridge, Radisav of Unište (32-46), the fact that Kadare’s narrator goes to great lengths to frame his story as a traditional foundation sacrifice narrative suggests the applicability of Girard’s scapegoat mechanism to this text.⁷ Additionally, it can be argued that the narrative sleight of hand that seeks to pass off Zenebisha’s punishment as a foundation sacrifice reproduces the logic of state sovereignty, whereby a political act is allegorized as a metaphysical necessity.

Just as humans kill to build bridges, and just as they are killed when they seek to forestall their construction, so does the totalitarian state murder and more subtly silence its citizens in order to maintain its hold on power. In both cases, the goal is achieved by inverting the generative principle. Kadare uses

the foundation sacrifice myth to deconstruct the state's sovereignty. However, patriarchy and the state are haunted by an absence. Alienated from nature and humanity respectively, these institutions amass their sovereignty by mimicking the life forms that necessarily elude them.

Sacrifice and Sanctification

While Kadare's depiction of foundation sacrifice exemplifies the Girardian scapegoat mechanism, at least four of Kadare's political allegories explore how the state benefits from the scapegoat.⁸ *The Three-Arched Bridge*, *The Palace of Dreams*, *The Pyramid*, and *Spring Flowers, Spring Frost* all record in different ways sacrifices made for the good of the social order. These four novels render the sacrificial scapegoating which helps to bring about a more stable social order. Sacrifice is rendered most literally in *The Three-Arched Bridge* and *The Pyramid*, but each of these four novels structure sacrifice according to this paradigm.

Already in the seventh century, exegetes and theologians were attuned to the multivalent meaning of the Latin verb *sacrificare*. In his book of etymologies, Isidore of Seville (560-636) foregrounded the semantic proximity between sacrifice (*sacrificare*) and sanctify (*sanctificare*) when he offered a genealogy of the word *sacerdos* (priest). "A priest," wrote Isidore, "has a name compounded of Greek and Latin, as it were 'one who gives a holy thing [*sacrum dans*],' for as king [*rex*] is named from ruling [*regere*], so priest from 'making sacrifice' [*sacrificare*], for he consecrates [*consecrare*] and sanctifies [*sanctificare*]" (171/VII.xii.17). Many passages from the Hebrew and Christian scriptures additionally substantiate the affinity Isidore perceived between sanctification and sacrifice. In the Hebrew Bible, for example, Samuel requests that believers "*sanctify* themselves, and prepare to join with him in the *sacrifice* he was about to offer" (*Book of Samuel* 16: 4, emphasis added). Sanctity hereby becomes a necessary condition for legitimate sacrifice. Reading Isidore via Girard, it becomes clear that social institutions (including but not limited to religion) confer on sacrifice the potential to create as much as to consecrate. If it is not conceived of as sacred before its consecration, the sacrificial object is consecrated when it is sacrificed. Sacrifice and consecration are mutually imbricated and virtually analogous processes. In partaking of holiness, sacrifice alters the balance between the sacred and the profane.

Echoing for the purposes of Girardian exegesis Isidore's sacrifice/sanctify lineage formulated during the early centuries of the consolidation of Christian theology, James Williams notes that "sacrifice" literally means "the act of making the offered victim or object sacred" (69). While Williams's gloss may seem to merely restate the verb in simpler terms, the double meaning thereby signaled is worth remembering, as the verb is frequently invoked without reference to the simultaneous implication of sanctification and annihilation. It has been largely forgotten that sacrifice definitionally signifies a form of

violence, an offering made without consent, the ethical ambiguities of which are often suppressed. In explicating Girard's thesis, Williams implies that the sacred is created only through sacrifice and that the holy realizes itself only through violence. This implication is reinforced by Girard's generalization of the scope of religion to encompass "any phenomenon associated with remembering, commemorating, and perpetuating a unanimity that springs from the murder of a surrogate victim [*une victim émissaire*]" (*La Violence* 439). Often, the violence inscribed into sacrifice extends to a murder retrospectively justified through the Girardian scapegoat mechanism. The scapegoat mechanism thereby facilitates violence even while concealing it. "In order to retain its structuring influence," speculates Girard, "foundational violence must remain hidden" (*La Violence* 430). Stated otherwise, violence is efficacious only when it is naturalized as necessity.

Kadare wrote *The Palace of Dreams* (1981) soon after *The Three-Arched Bridge*. In this later work, which Kadare called his "most ferocious attack" on dictatorship (*Printemps* 9-10), the author lays bare the logic that justifies the foundation sacrifice that remained a opaque in the earlier text. Towards the end of *The Palace of Dreams*, the protagonist Mark-Alem records his family's history in a vain endeavor to make sense of his past. Unsurprisingly, he alights on the myth of the bridge sacrifice. The story is already implicit in the protagonist's name, Qyprili, a Slavic translation of the Albanian word for "bridge" (*ura*) that also bears Ottoman Turkic associations:

His pen was still again, and he thought of the distant ancestor called Gjon who on a winter's day several centuries before had built a bridge and at the same time edified his name. The patronymic bore within it, like a secret message, the destiny of the Quprilis for generation after generation. *And so that the bridge might endure, a man was sacrificed in its building, walled up in its foundations.* And although so much time has gone by since, the traces of his blood had come down to the present generation. *So that the Quprilis might endure.* (201-2)⁹

To the narrator's statement that Qyprili refers to the family's original association with a three-arched-bridge in central Albania, "constructed in the days when the Albanians were still Christians and built with a man walled up in its foundations," Peter Morgan adds another dimension. "The three-arched bridge," Morgan writes, "possibly derives from a Christian Trinitarian symbolism, thus linking the Qyprili family to the different historical destinies of South-Eastern Europe" ("Between Albanian Identity," 367).¹⁰ Second, and no less important, is the Ottoman subtext, whereby the historical Köprülü family name is Slavicized (via *qyprijalkuprija* which are variants on the word for "bridge") as Qyprili. For present purposes, however, the importance of Mark-Alem's revelation lies in its allusion to the bridge sacrifice. Far from being a spontaneous act to appease the gods, sacrifice appears in Kadare's text

as an evil that makes the good possible. Such is the paradoxical—the amoral but also necessary—relation between good and evil that cuts across Kadare’s novels. Without openly criticizing the logic that justifies foundation sacrifice, Kadare’s representations of this act amount to a series of subtle exposures.

Sacrifice is inevitable, but Kadare’s fictions show how its implicit violence is “managed” by the state. Kadare’s works are dense with references to folk ballads, myths, and legends in which immoral acts are committed in order to make social existence possible. Implicit in the oral legends is the danger that, once the reproductive goal has been achieved, far from dispersing, the endless sacrificial cycle will only become more vicious. Such is violence per Girard and Kadare: a self-replicating force that can never be abrogated, and which is only suspended in order to ensure its perpetuation.

The painter Mark Gurabardhi of *Spring Flowers, Spring Frost* characterizes violence’s self-perpetuating nature when he describes the predicament of a boy who has committed murder in an act of blood revenge without knowing how to extricate himself. As his girlfriend attempts to persuade Mark to free his family from the cycle of violence that encompasses them, we read through the prism of a double narrative consciousness:

Nothing could now stop the blood from following its course. Whether he took refuge in the highlands or behind prison bars or in the grave, he had no means of stopping the wheels of the machine. If he went into hiding or into prison, then the opposing clan would kill someone in his stead. If he were to die, then his own clan would be drawn into the infernal cycle. So everything would unfold along lines laid down centuries ago. (168)

One of the most politically consequential achievements of Girard’s theory of violence is its demonstration of violence’s relentless reciprocity. Girardian sacrifice mediates between good and evil, making violence possible and necessary, while assuaging and containing its destructive power. Violence can only be appeased by violence. The only release from this conundrum is afforded by systems answering to a higher logic. One antidote to violence is mercy, but mere surrender has hardly proven historically efficacious. Instead of mercy, Mark’s girlfriend appeals to the power of the state. In words filtered through Mark’s perception, she maintains that the only way to block the mechanism that the murder “set in motion—to halt the rusty gear wheels that even death could no longer arrest” is to have recourse to “the machinery of state” (169).

Of all human institutions, the state most effectively sells itself as an inhuman enterprise, capable of transcending human limitations. Certainly, the goals of the state along with the methods it uses to achieve those goals cannot be justified through appeals to the good of a single individual. The state represents and therefore serves humanity in the aggregate. Given the impersonality intrinsic to statist logic, its ends and the methods are as inscrutable as the ends and methods of violence itself. Because it is able to assert power without

needing to rationally justify its exercise, the state is the most effective and also the most repressive antidote to the logic of violence. Weber registered this institution's peculiar logic a century ago when he epigrammatically defined the state as "a monopoly of legitimate violence" analogous to the priesthood's monopoly on the legitimate means of salvation (27-8). The Weberian account of power lays the groundwork for Girard's reduction of all scapegoat myths to instruments of state power.

What is the difference between the state's "monopoly of legitimate violence" and the violent logic that constitutes power exercised by non-state actors? Perhaps the state is only able to suppress violence due to the structural homology it shares with illegitimate violence. Whether legitimate or illegitimate, both state and non-state power assume that ends justify means. The security from violence offered by the state is as ethically contestable as are the violent scapegoat mechanisms that dominate stateless societies. Durkheim famously demonstrated in *The Division of Labor* (1893) how crimes come to be regarded as such not due to their intrinsic morality or immorality but rather through the challenge they pose to social structures. Recapitulating in reverse the Durkheimian account of punishment's circular logic, Kadare's fictions 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. Combining Durkheimian ambivalence with Girardian outrage, Kadare thus represents state power as less a reversal of the scapegoat mentality than as its continuation and fulfillment.

The scapegoat is the primary site through which Girard achieved his appropriation of Durkheimian sociology (Gans). Just as Durkheim recognized that the criminal consolidates the social consensus through his symbolic function, so per Girard does the "imaginary character of myth" contrive to "make the 'guilty one' consubstantial with the crime" (Kearney 5). In a 1978 interview, Girard credited Durkheim with being "the first" to reject the facile opposition between "primitive religion and other kinds of human thinking" (Girard, "An Interview," 205). Girard builds on Durkheim's recognition that violent punishment has religious foundations. "When we desire the repression of crime," observed Durkheim, rather than desiring personal vengeance, what we want is "to avenge something sacred that we more or less confusedly experience as outside and above us" (68). Because vengeance in Girard's account is itself an "interminable, infinitely repetitive process" (*La Violence* 31), only ritual can hold it in check. Scapegoating restores unity to the community. Unity, in turn, guarantees peace.

Girard perceived that his formulations of the mimetic cycle and the scapegoat mechanism fulfilled the agenda that Durkheim initiated. Whereas Durkheim emphasized punishment's socially efficacious nature, Girard stressed that sacrifice aims "to quell violence within the community and to prevent conflicts from erupting" (*La Violence* 31). A further distinction between the

two thinkers touches on both the strength and ultimate weakness of Girard's political theology. Girard perceives the Christian revelation as a solution to the scapegoat mechanism, a stance I contest towards this essay's end. Both Durkheim and Girard account for the political by foregrounding the sacred. Neither theorist however links his findings with the total state that constrains so many postsocialist as well as postcolonial allegories. This deeper recognition hinges on Kadarian allegory. Analogously with postcolonial indictments of imperialist fictions, Kadare's Albanian novels expose scapegoat mechanisms that flourish *within* state power, not as premodern ossifications but precisely as modern sovereignty's consequence.

How does "primitive" scapegoating distinguish itself from state punishment? Mark-Alem of *The Palace of Dreams* suggests that the Ottoman Empire is compelled to verbally justify its actions. A "traditional speech" is delivered to the newly blinded in which they are assured that they have been blinded for the good of society (121). Folk ballads do not articulate the logic undergirding sacrificial punishment. Rather, scapegoating is implicated in the divine order, fated, as it were, before the foundation of the world. Scapegoating belongs to the field of what Bourdieu called *doxa*, wherein "what is essential goes without saying because it comes without saying: the tradition is silent, not least about itself as a tradition" (167, emphasis in original).

As Kadare's "most subtle portrait of the dictator as both modernizer and tyrant" (Morgan, "Ismail Kadare," 9), *The Pyramid* (1992) also dwells on sacrifice as a means of consolidating state power. One of the state's most historically resonant sacrifices is memorialized in a speech the High Priest of Egypt delivers to the Pharaoh Cheops (r. 2609-2584 BCE) in this novel in the hopes of convincing him to build the pyramid at Giza, Egypt's most renowned pyramid:

Egypt also needed to find some means of consuming the excess energy of its population. To launch works colossal beyond imagining, the better to debilitate its inhabitants, to suck them dry. In a word, something exhausting, something that would destroy body and soul, and without any possible utility. Or to put it more precisely, a project as useless to its subjects as it would be indispensable to the State. (9)¹¹

Kadare here invokes building as the quintessential activity of the totalitarian state. Kadare's Egyptian pyramid allegorically indexes the Enver Hoxha mausoleum, not coincidentally called "The Pyramid," and constructed four years prior to Kadare's novel of the same name. As Harold Segal notes, "the huge white marble edifice" that is Hoxha's pyramid still stands, although "the red star of plastic that once crowned it was removed in the aftermath of the regime's downfall" (129).

As Herodotus argued millennia ago, the pyramids built to glorify the state had the double effect of crushing the populace. Herodotus's account of

Cheops's infamous deed suggests that the *Histories* shaped Kadare's vision of Cheops-as-tyrant. According to Herodotus, who was engaged in much the same mythography as his Albanian counterpart, Cheops

brought the people to utter misery [κακότητα]...he shut up all the temples, so that none could sacrifice there; and next, he compelled all the Egyptians to work for him....They worked in gangs of a hundred thousand men, each gang for three months. For ten years the people were afflicted in making the road whereon the stones were dragged, the making of which road was to my thinking a task but a little lighter than the building of the pyramid.¹²

The oppressive dimensions of Cheops's actions are already in evidence in Herodotus, whose reflections long precede the advent of the nation-state but which nonetheless speak to sovereignty's paradox. The convergence between Kadare's and Herodotus' representations in turn suggests the transtemporal alignment binding building to sacrifice and sacrifice to sovereignty. At the same time, Kadare's representation of Cheops substantiates Jameson's proposition that "all third-world texts are ...national allegories" (69). Like a latter-day socialist dictator, the Egyptian Pharaoh makes of the Egyptian people his slaves. He puts them to work quarrying and transporting stones across the Nile, rolling them over the mountain, and, finally, uses them to build the pyramids. Significantly, Herodotus regards such forced labor as a catastrophe. The structural illegitimacy of the power that upholds the state's artifice is thereby already registered in Greek antiquity. Like bridges and buildings that rely on foundation sacrifices, pyramids rely on the death of innocents, as Herodotus and Kadare acknowledge. These acknowledgements express an inversely proportional relation between guilt and innocence, analogous to the Marxian distinction between use and exchange value: the purer one's nature, the more necessary one's punishment becomes. The greater the miscarriage of justice, the more the state is empowered to consolidate its power. The less a state's subjects stand to gain from a given set of regulations, the more necessary such regulations become for the state.

The Three-Arched Bridge, as has been shown, narrates a story of violence sanctified through sacrifice. In *The Palace of Dreams*, the state polices the most intimate aspects of the private life. Dreams are considered public property, and every citizen is duty-bound to report their dreams to the Tabir Sarraïl ("Dream Bureau"). In *The Pyramid*, the state treats all citizens as slaves, useful only for the construction of monuments. Even the good of society as a whole is irrelevant to the concerns of the state. Although, or perhaps precisely because, the pyramids' sole *raison d'être* is the legitimation of state sovereignty, these physical monstrosities end by crushing human subjects:

[the pyramids] had not given rise to hatred among these people. They felt in a muddled way that as long as the pyramid was there, blocking the horizon

of their lives, then neither hate nor love would ever manage to form in their breasts. An unhealthy evenness of temper and a wretched listlessness had taken the place of all other feelings, just as tasteless beans had long since replaced the more succulent dishes of bygone days. (120)

Uncannily like Albanian communism, the ancient Egyptian state aims to turn its citizens into automatons and to subjugate the will of every individual in its domain. Indeed, *The Pyramid* revives a theme Mahfouz had been exploring since the 1930s: the tyrants of antiquity mirror the dictators of the communist present. Intrinsically parasitical, these authors suggest, the state's only goal is to consolidate and accumulate power. Pyramids are "the ultimate incarnation of unadorned power" inasmuch as they are "unproductive and thus entirely uncompromising" (*The Pyramid*, 90). Unable to weigh costs against benefits on ethical grounds, the state's interest lies solely in what Kadare called its self-replication and what Girard called its self-perpetuation. To restate Kadare's point in Girardian terms, "the ultimate object of scapegoating, even when we selectively denounce it...is scapegoating itself" (Girard, "An Interview" 208).

In *Spring Flowers*, *Spring Frost* (2000), the most recent among Kadare's novels discussed here, the cult of blood violence prevails over the state, which refuses to stand in the way of Albanian tradition. Compared to his earlier political allegories, Kadare presents the state as a less repressive institution in this novel, which transpires in a transnational Albania against the background of OSCE jeeps and NATO jets. Ironically, the state's refusal to engage in scapegoating guarantees that scapegoating will be a cyclical process without end. If, in earlier novels, the state extended and consolidated the scapegoat mechanism, in *Spring Flowers*, even the state cannot call a halt to the process it sets in motion. In the absence of repressive state power, a code of violence prevails.

In regulating violence, the state also regulates humanity and thereby perverts life. Kadare advocates in his writing neither state power nor a utopia of "peaceful" anarchy. Although his autobiography makes obeisance to the French political system, which helped Kadare to obtain asylum in 1990, Kadare's fictional narratives represent state sovereignty in all its iterations less transparently. In revising received narratives, they intensify the scapegoat mechanism's political allegory. The Kadarean ambivalence towards state sovereignty bears on all political structures characterized by disjunctures between the will of the state and the social good, as do Kadare's differential deployments of power through allegory. The remainder of this article explores more deeply the specific myth that underwrites Kadare's allegories of state power: immurement.

Walled-Up Wives

Of Kadare's novels considered here, *The Palace of Dreams* and *The Three-Arched Bridge* explicitly engage oral traditions pertaining to walled-up wives,

a folkloric genre that features substantively in Balkan, particularly Serbian and Albanian, folklore. Dundes lists over seven hundred texts that conform to the ballad's narrative pattern. As seen above in the discussion of Rozafa's foundation sacrifice, the legend of the walled-up can be reduced to a few basic elements. A sacrifice is required for the construction of a public building such as a bridge, a monastery, a castle, or a well. The only acceptable candidate is a woman who is the wife either of one of the masons, the architect, or the king. The woman is tricked into entering the building. In most variants, the victim's husband has promised not to inform his wife of the consequences of entering. Once inside, masons immure the woman into the foundation where she eventually dies amid her protests, curses, and pleas for mercy. This narrative is enshrined in many texts of Balkan literary modernity, most famously in Andrić's *The Bridge on the Drina*.

Archeological scholarship has demonstrated that the walled-up wife story is historically attested and that human immurement was widely practiced in antiquity. Paul Brewster has assembled an impressive catalog of immurements from archeological excavations, all of which have humans buried into their foundation (38). These sites include Strasbourg's Muenster Cathedral, the bridge at Višegrad (eulogized in Andrić's novel), the city of Rome, Hooghly Bridge on the Ganges, Liebenstein Castle in Thuringia, the castle at Nieder Manderscheid, and Bridge Gate at Bremen.

What does this practice signify in a broad social context? The Girardian scapegoat mechanism, deepened and modified by Durkheim and Bourdieu, helps to answer this question. If, for Girard, scapegoating underwrites the social order, it is not hard to see why Kadare chose the scapegoat mechanism to deconstruct the state's sovereignty. Zimmerman reads the Serbian variant of the walled-up wife ballad—known to Serbian folklore as “The Founding of Skadar”—as a polemical account of the construction of the social order. According to her, even as it narrates a story, the ballad propagates a morality deeply inflected by Christian understandings of sacrifice. For Zimmerman, “The Founding of Skadar” documents a belief “in the efficacy of a contract between human beings and superhuman forces—a sacrificial contract” (151). The moral cosmology of “The Founding of Skadar” implies that, by sacrificing innocent victims to the gods, the gods will keep the social order intact and allow human monuments to stand. The sacrificial victim—and herein lies the paradox that strikes at the very core of the state's legitimacy—is necessarily innocent. “The mason's wife,” notes Zimmerman, is “the only possible choice among the participants” (152).

According to the readings proposed in Kadare's novel, the founding myths of state power function analogously with the founding myths of monotheistic religions, including Christianity: a sacrifice is required, and this sacrifice needs to be justified. Religion's founding paradox corresponds to Weber's insight, cited above, that the state's monopoly on violence is analogous to the priest's

monopoly on salvation. In the case of the Adam and Eve story, the first humans were told to refrain from partaking of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. As Girard acknowledged, the paradox written into this seemingly innocuous request was that no explanation for the injunction was ever provided by God. The paradox that drives Christianity's inaugural foundation sacrifice also drives the foundation myths of cities and empires: the innocent must suffer for the guilty to attain legitimacy. The greatest sin is to deny the civilizational alliance between sacrifice and sanctification. Here, for Kadare, is where the writer-as-critic is incorporated into the state's moral economy. Rejecting the stereotype of the dissident writer without denying the political salience of literature, Kadare engages the illegitimacy of the state's sovereignty at the level of its ethical cosmology.

In remarking on how, at the end of the ballad, the bride's "innocent *sacrifice* is *sanctified*" (154, emphasis added), Zimmerman unwittingly reproduces the lexical compact between sacrifice and sanctity, violence and holiness. Violence is intrinsic to any form of sanctity that depends on sacrifice. If we follow Zimmerman in labeling as Christian the moral tradition that argues that "the innocent, the good, must suffer," then Christianity, like other monotheisms, remembers, commemorates, and *perpetuates* "a unanimity that springs from the murder of a surrogate victim" (*La Violence* 439). Accepting this argument means complicating the Girardian solution to the sacrificial condition. It also means learning from critics such as Keenan, Kearney, Levinas, Derrida, and Lacoue-Labarthe, all of whom perceive a limitation in the Christocentrism of Girardian political theology. Just as states use discourses of sovereignty to legitimate conquests, so too do monotheistic religions rationalize the very evil from which they claim to protect its believers. This parallel between the logic of monotheism and the logic of the sovereign state is precisely the conjuncture that Girard's political theology fails to address.

Rewriting Sacrifice

In spite of their many internal differences, interpreters of walled-up wife ballads agree in one crucial respect: the genre is indifferent to the sacrifice of innocents. The narrative transpires from within the scapegoat mechanism, and seeks no point of adjudication outside this matrix. Girard calls texts written from within this narrative perspective "persecution texts." He defines such texts as "accounts of real violence, often collective, narrated from the perspective of the persecutors, and therefore influenced by characteristic distortions" (*Le bouc émissaire* 18). Walled-up wife ballads justify evil by arguing for its necessity. Are Kadare's political allegories persecution texts or texts that contest the state's persecuting mandate? Whereas walled-up wife ballads pass silently over the sacrifice of the innocent, Kadare's novels ironize the sacrificial imperative. Without openly passing judgment, their very representational strategies call certain political norms into question. Relying on

the poetics and politics of allegory in the era of multinational capital, Kadare unravels the injustices—totalitarian, statist, and colonial—that bind the social order together. At the same time, his narratives demonstrate the mutually-imblicated contemporaneity of the Communist experience and the advent of “third-world” nationalism.

Girard himself was deeply invested in undoing the self-legitimizing rhetoric that persecution texts enact. In interpreting a medieval anti-Semitic text, he wrote: “one must either do violence to the text or let the text forever perpetrate violence on innocent victims” (*Le bouc émissaire* 17). Therefore if a text sanctions—or, to extend the fortuitous pun, “sanctifies”—violence, it is the critic’s hermeneutical responsibility to unravel the moral casuistry crystallized in such myths. However, persecution texts as a rule cannot be adequately adjudicated or even analyzed according to rubrics of truth and falsehood. Persecution texts follow logics of their own, logics that underwrite the sovereignties of state and religion. The problem with scapegoating, and the reason why it is so difficult and perhaps impossible to eradicate, is that it *does* often contribute to the unity of the community. The scapegoat mechanism is therefore provisionally beneficial to society, although the terms through which its benefits are secured may cause more evil than good. If ends always justify means, and if the security of the state is the highest goal, then no argument can be waged against scapegoating as an effective means of regulating social conflict. According to this logic, innocent victims are the equitable price exacted for security.

It has been argued thus far that Kadare’s political allegories rewrite persecution texts from the victim’s perspective. This revision is accomplished in *The Three-Arched Bridge* through the blood that stains the bridge and the muddy waters that merge with the river. The chronicler also writes of the river’s stench, the population’s sickness, and dwells on graphic details intended to induce revulsion, such as that of the workers vomiting (37). When Gjon the storyteller discusses the Albanian variant of the walled-up wife ballad that locates Rozafa’s immurement inside Shkodra Cathedral, his first impulse is to justify the sacrifice by interpreting it as a mere metaphor for the sacrifice all labor requires. “Every major task requires some kind of sacrifice,” Gjon writes, “this magnificent idea is embodied in the mythologies of many peoples” (96). Through such narratives, sacrifice is sanctioned and sanctified.

These pages of *The Three-Arched Bridge* constitute a persecution text of sorts in that their goal is to naturalize the sacrifice of innocent lives. Such naturalization is, however, laced with ambivalence, as when “*paid* bards” are used to “spread the legend that the spirits of the water will not tolerate the bridge” (78, emphasis added), leading the reader to wonder how bards can receive financial remuneration for their services. We are later told of a “horde of bards” that returns “from an unfinished war somewhere along the principalities of the north” (104). These mercenary bards appear precisely as the notion that

the bridge under construction needs a human sacrifice is gaining currency with the builders. That the bards are returning from a war reinscribes and subverts the stereotyped image of the poet aloof from political machinations. Just as Kadare was himself implicated in Enver Hoxha's dictatorial regime, so do the bards in *The Three-Arched Bridge* share more in common with mercenaries than with the dissident writerly persona projected in Kadare's autobiography and standardized into a trope by a scholarly convention that treats socialist literatures—again not unlike “third-world” literatures—as quintessentially dissident and never more than purely political. The militant bards in the *The Three-Arched Bridge* also recall the poets and minstrels who in Kadare's *Elegy for Kosovo* are “poised to sing the glory” of their rulers as they approach the battlefield destined to determine the subsequently bloody course of Balkan history (31, also see 26 and 48).

While the improvisations of Kadare's bards explicitly serve a wartime agenda, the foundation sacrifice in *The Three-Arched Bridge* is repeatedly described as “murder.” The first such description occurs during the bridge builders' meeting to decide how the “culprits” who wish to prevent the construction of the bridge should be dealt with. “Shall we do the murder ourselves?” the count asks those gathered before him (80). “Murder” is then seamlessly reworded as “punishment.” When Gjon recounts the walled-up wife balled to the collector of tales, his words are more blunt. The walled-up wife begs her murderers to “leave one breast outside the wall” (94) for breastfeeding her child. Lest the implications of his lexical choices be missed, Gjon clarifies that he “used the actual word” in telling the story. The “actual word” is of course “murder.”

Just as the meaning of Zenebisha's immurement is reconfigured as a sacrifice following his punishment soon after Gjon has invoked the walled-up wife narrative, so do persecution texts rewrite themselves as soon as what Girard calls their “generative principle” is consciously articulated. For, as Girard insists, building on his earlier theorization of mimetic desire in the novel, “the sacrificial process requires a certain degree of misunderstanding [*méconnaissance*]” (*La Violence et le Sacré*, 21). A narrative sleight of hand is needed to bring coherence to the irrational bridge sacrifice. The moment when it becomes “a most simple and natural thing to talk about a sacrifice” marks the beginning of the scapegoat mechanism's disintegration (even as it presages the mechanism's eventual reconstitution). Gjon is profoundly alienated from his community that has actively embraced the scapegoat mechanism. “The idea of sacrifice,” he complains, “up to now a truth within a ballad, had emerged from its cocoon and suddenly crept up on us...it move[s] among us, alive and on equal terms with all the other concerns of the day” (111). The generative principle has still not fully articulated itself, however, inasmuch as it is taken for granted that a human sacrifice is necessary if the bridge is to remain intact. Gjon finds his community's enthusiastic embrace of sacrificial ideology all

the more disturbing once he has glimpsed the inner workings of the scapegoat mechanism.

While the scapegoat mechanism's ideology is left intact by the novel's end, the circumstances within which it is enacted have been radically inflected by the nation-state. The master-in-chief of the bridge building project prophesies a "new world order" that will "carry the world many centuries forward" (101). This new world order is signified by the proliferation of banks and the universalization of a single currency: the Venetian ducat. Outside the realm of allegory, such fiscal transformations anticipate the universalization of the American dollar in the age of global capital signaled in Jameson's essay. The master-in-chief connects the rise of the new world order to the demolition of bridges that are "born dead"—bridges that require a foundation sacrifice to stand firm. It remains an open question, however, whether the termination of the foundation sacrifice signals scapegoating's demise. Kadare's novels portray the nation-state as an "advanced" manifestation of the scapegoat mechanism chronologically, but not ethically. So too is Girard prepared to acknowledge, in the face of his rather dogmatic insistence that premodern scapegoating was in the process of yielding to a Christological transcendence of the scapegoat, that the contemporary world is "brimming with scapegoats" and that "the illusion of persecution is even more rife and duplicitous today" (*Le bouc émissaire* 62).

"To know the myths," argues Mircea Eliade, "is to learn the secret of the origins of things. By acquiring such knowledge, one learns not only "how things came into existence but also where to find them and how to make them reappear when they disappear" (25). Whereas myths address universal origins, secular fictions address the origins of the state. Political theology in this sense endeavors to adapt irrational cosmologies to rational polities.¹³ Within Kadare's fictional universe, claims about the nature of things are referred back to the state rather than to a pre-political state of nature. Kadare assigns control over the sacred to the state in his scapegoat novels. The novelistic tradition within which he writes prescribes these limits. The movement away from divine origins enables a self-identifying "objective" account of the foundation sacrifice to critique that selfsame sacrifice, now that it is no longer seen as a moral pillar of the social order.

By contrast, Girard perceives the latter-day justifications of the intrinsic irrationality of scapegoat punishment as indications that the scapegoat apparatus is gradually yielding to the anti-sacrificial principles enshrined in the Christian revelation (see Girard and Doran).¹⁴ However, the persistence of the scapegoat in Kadare's political allegories suggests that this ancient institution has merely adapted itself to the exigencies of socialist modernity, and that, far from being on the verge of disappearance, the scapegoat has been reconstituted through a sovereign and totalitarian state that has allocated to itself the work that used to be done by religion. On the other hand, and pace Girard, Kadare's political allegories demonstrate that the movement away from mythic etiologies and

towards secular genealogies enables the writing of persecution texts from the perspectives of the persecuted.

Almost Without Guilt

Two years before his death, Franz Kafka defined the position of the writer in relation to society in terms that uncannily anticipate the scapegoat mechanism later elaborated by Girard. Writing to his best friend and literary executor Max Brod, Kafka defined the writer as “the scapegoat of mankind” (386; see Danta). The writer in Kafka’s moral economy is “useful” to society inasmuch as he “makes it possible for men to enjoy sin without guilt, *almost without guilt*.” The qualification that follows Kafka’s bold definition—*eine Sünde schuldlos zu geniessen, fast schuldlos*—arguably transforms the entire significance of this apothegm. For Kafka does not argue that society successfully sacrifices the writer to its sinful ends. Instead, implying that the scapegoat mechanism is always doomed to failure, he states that the writer enables humans to enjoy their sins with only a *trace* of guilt (*fast schuldlos*). In Kafkan poetics, negative hypotheses, hypothetical propositions, and fictional allegories resonate so profoundly that the dangerous contingency inscribed into Kafka’s “almost without” speaks as boldly as does the text’s concrete negation of guilt.

Like Kafka writing to Max Brod, like Mark-Alem of *The Palace of Dreams*, Gjon regards himself as a scapegoat. He notes that his chronicle, which is in fact the novel itself, “may demand a sacrifice” (184). The sacrifice, according to Gjon, will be himself. Gjon is a willing scapegoat who bears witness to injustice. Kadare follows Kafka’s lead: making of the writer a witness-bearer and substantiating the insight that it is less ethical superiority that makes of the writer a sacrificial victim than sheer doggedness. The writer, like the storyteller, is less a hero than a befuddled witness. Like Kafka, Gjon believes that he will pay with his life for his “testimonies,” but, in rendering such payment, he does not construe himself as a victim. Rather than passively submitting to the scapegoat mechanism that drives social relations under the totalitarian dispensation, Gjon exposes—without explicitly denouncing—the state’s crimes through his acts of narration.

Kadare’s readers have long been aware of the singular paradox of Kadare’s legacy. A “profoundly dissident writer,” writes Robert Elsie, Kadare led an “extremely conformist, even collaborationist, life” (“Ismail Kadare” 221).¹⁵ Kadare traversed the spectrum between accommodation and dissent, showing how a persecution text can explicate a victim’s story, and how scapegoating is deployed by the strong *and* weak to serve radically different ends. Rather than directly criticizing the Hoxha regime, Kadare “revived old forms—parable, myth, fable, folk-tale, legend—packed them with allusion and metaphor, [and] plundered the past” (Evans). Although Kadare has explicitly denied the political content of his writing, and maintained that he would have become the

writer he became under any regime, the very comparisons he adduces between his own allegories and Greek tragedy substantiate the impulse to read his work as political allegory for an era that witnessed the demise of both colonialism and state-mandated communism.¹⁶ More than a dissident, Kadare is an ethical cosmologist who unravels the myths and paradoxes that underwrite political sovereignty. Kadare was hardly the only socialist writer to reap the benefits of dictatorial power even as he engaged in its critique, but, at least in the Albanian context, he is the one who most successfully crafted from his ambivalent location within the dictatorial hierarchy haunting political allegories that expose, nuance, and ironize the state's sovereignty.

Rather than seeking an isomorphic relation between authorial intentions and literary production, this essay has sought to lay bare the politics of a literary genre: allegory, or, stated more metaphysically, political theology as embodied in the novel form. In keeping with Jameson's insights regarding the intimate relation between the personal and the political in postcolonial contexts, the political allegory has been considered less from the vantage point of individual authorial consciousness than within the framework of the discursive force field of literature as a social institution in a society that places a high premium on the literary imagination. At its most effective, allegorical poetics looks beyond specific regimes; its literary critiques of power operate by manipulating form, and its references are often all the more haunting for their abstruseness. Notwithstanding Kadare's endeavor to distance himself from the politics of his day when he presented his work to transnational readerships, grasping the capaciousness of literature's political imagination means registering the political aesthetics of Kadare's allegorical poetics, even against the author's own self-representation.

Even more forcefully than Kafka, W. H. Auden rendered the political theology of the scapegoat prior to Kadare when he cataloged civilization's most famous in the closing lines of his poem "Vespers." In this text, the fifth poem in Auden's sequence *Horae Canonicae* (1955), the poet records his encounter with an unnamed nemesis as he journeys figuratively towards the hour of Jesus Christ's death. Wondering about the circumstances that have brought him and the hostile stranger to the same hill, Auden asks whether it is simply a "fortuitous intersection of life-paths, loyal to different fiefs" that compels them both, for "a fraction of a second, to remember our victim":

on whose immolation (call him Abel, Remus whom you will, it is one Sin Offering) arcadias, utopias, our dear old bag of a democracy are alike founded:
For without a cement of blood (it must be human, it must be innocent)
no secular wall will safely stand. (76-77)

Like the walled-up wife ballad discussed above, "Vespers" belongs to the literature of scapegoating, a subgenre of political allegory. In equating the Biblical Abel and the Roman Remus as equally ambivalent "Sin Offerings,"

Auden underscores the scapegoat's civilizational reach. Eloquently registering the violence intrinsic to sovereignty, Auden perceives in his unknown nemesis a force that compels him to recognize the bloody foundations of the polity that constitutes the horizons of his literary utterance. Were the poet not haunted by his double, he could forget the blood that has been shed. Were the double not haunted by the poet, he could forget the victim's innocence. The answer to the question with which the final section of Auden's poem opens—the question of what brought the poet face-to-face with his nemesis on that hill—is that the presence of others makes of scapegoating's the bloodletting of the innocent an ethical problem that cannot be evaded. Pace Girard, pace Auden himself, religion merely perpetuates the cycle of bloodletting, and naturalizes it metaphysically. Like Kafka's parables, Kadarean fictional allegories do not allow for exceptions to the sacrificial mandate. Rather than resulting from specific political positions, these authors' uncompromising stances are generated by allegory's political aesthetic in the age of globalization. It is less the case that these writers are opposed to the state as that the medium that they mold into fiction requires their authors to expose and ironize the sovereign power of the dictatorial, colonial, or otherwise corrupt state.

Auden's reflections on the "cement of blood" that enables secular walls to stand firm were penned after the onset of Albania's political nightmares, albeit prior to Kadare's inscription of them. Auden wrote a decade into the utopian experiment of the Socialist People's Republic of Albania (1946-1991). Through its colossal, though by no means unique, failure to forge a true brotherhood of peoples on socialist principles, this utopian experiment caused its greatest writer to envision in his political allegories the repetition of a divisive past rather than its transcendence. Like Andrić's Balkan tales of ethnic and religious violence, Kadare's allegories are more pessimistic than Girard's. Girard appeals, far less obliquely than Auden, to Christian revelation as to an annulment of the scapegoat mechanism. However, when aligned to the state, religious revelation appears just as prone to perpetuate the scapegoat mechanism as to annihilate it. Christian revelation can just as easily be read as a fulfillment of the sacrificial imperative as its annulment. Registering scapegoating's cyclical modality and ineluctable futurity, Kadare has demonstrated the fundamental equivalences between sacral and political forms of scapegoating. He has generalized the communist experience into a description of political power in the second half of the twentieth century, which in turn explodes the hierarchical rubrics attending the study of first, second, and third-world literatures. Writing in a world where, far from being normative, religion was officially outlawed, Kadare's allegories show that the literary imagination can be more rigorous than philosophical theology, even when the theoretical apparatus of the latter makes the former legible.

NOTES

¹ The contentious politics attending “third-world,” which for the purposes of this essay refers to that part of the world that is neither wholly aligned to the Communist bloc nor fully identifiable with US and European imperialist democracies, is discussed in Wolf-Phillips 1979 and 1987.

² For another Egyptian allegory in the Mahfouzian tradition, see Sonallah Ibrahim’s novel *The Committee* (1981), a work that memorably transposes a Kafkan trial by nameless interrogators to a contemporary Arab bureaucracy.

³ The Arabic title of this work is *Al-‘A’ish fi-l-haqiqa* (“Life in Truth”).

⁴ In discussing Kadare’s works, I have been limited to texts that have been translated into French or—most frequently via French rather than directly from Albanian—into English. Given the complicated translation history of Kadare’s texts, the Works Cited lists not only the translator but also the language (Albanian or French) from which the translation was made. For a useful discussion of Kadare’s many translators and the complexities of working with a translation of a translation, see Bellos 2005.

⁵ The Albanian title of this work, published by Fayard in Albanian simultaneously with its French translation and yet to be published in Albania, is *Nga nje dhjetor ne tjetrin* (*From One to Another in December*).

⁶ For Kadare’s engagement with this legend, see Klosi, 107 and 115.

⁷ On the political significance of Radisav’s impalement, see Longinović 134.

⁸ Kadare is the author of roughly ninety books, many of which bear some relation to political allegory, and not all of which could be discussed here. For a list of Kadare’s available work in French as of 1993, see Druon 19-20.

⁹ As discussed in Bellos 2008 17-18, the dissident aristocrat Jusuf Vrioni was Kadare’s sole translator from the 1960s until 2001, when he died and the mantle was picked up by Tedi Papavrami.

¹⁰ For the most recent study of this novel, see Kokobobo 2011. Throughout, I replace the spelling Quprili used in English texts with the Albanian Qypri.

¹¹ Kadare’s allegory of pyramid construction in ancient Egypt bears comparison with Mahfouz’s biography of the same pharaoh in *Khufu’s Wisdom*.

¹² Herodotus, *Histories*, 1: 424 (=2: 124 of Greek text). For an argument for the unreliability of Herodotus’ account of ancient Egypt, see inter alia Aldred 260; for the contrary position, see Trigger 52.

¹³ The field of political theology has most recently been enlivened by the revival of Carl Schmitt, specifically his *Political Theology* (1922). I use the term here to signify the space where religion, state, and ideology converge.

¹⁴ For an attempt to think through the implications of Girard’s political theology without accepting Christological orientation, see Williams, “René Girard without the Cross?”

¹⁵ Were one to narrate Kadare’s relationship to political power from the vantage point of his biography, no doubt that relationship would appear in a different light than has been suggested here. Rather than addressing Kadare’s actual relation with the Hoxha regime, however, my aim has been to focus on his fictions, in the belief that an author’s literary oeuvre merits consideration apart from his biography.

¹⁶ See Kadare’s remarks quoted in Flood, but contrast Kadare’s statement that *The Palace of Dreams* was banned for its allusions to the “Communist empire” (Kadare and Guppy, 209).

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