

THE GENERAL OF THE DEAD ARMY: CODES AND BREACHES OF SOCIALIST REALISM IN ISMAIL KADARE'S PROSE

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Abstract

Ismail Kadare is the most important Albanian writer of the second half of the twentieth century. The major part of his work was written in a period of extreme state control over literary output, embodied in the official method of the so-called socialist realism, a strict framework which completely subdued literature to political/ideological criteria. The outstanding success of Kadare, by Albanian as well as foreign readers, who with the very first published work in the genre of long prose, the novel "The General of the Dead Army", shows in a clear way his ability to avoid the schematicism and well known clichés of the aforementioned method. In this paper it will be shown how Kadare manages to achieve this avoidance of schematicism even though he used some of the basic codes of socialist realism, as for instance, the linear, one-directional movement of history towards the victory and consolidation of the socialist revolution, the basic characteristics of the so-called "positive hero", etc. The aim of this paper is to show how these codes are used by the author, who relies on typical means and techniques which enable him to come out of the schematic referential frame of the socialist realism method, in this way contributing thoroughly in the semantic wealth, proliferation of the semantic layers, in the ambiguity or possibility of alternative readings, etc. Among these means and techniques might be mentioned, for example, the polyphonic enrichment with secondary lines, the shift of focus or point of view, the frequent use of fragmentation, the digression or other similar literary techniques and means. As a conclusion, in the paper it comes clear that these techniques used in relation to the creative maneuvering with central codes of the official aesthetics, are in action in a degree more or less visible, since this very first published novel of Kadare. Considering them as one of the most essential pillars of the creative poetics of the author in general, and as one of the main markers of his artistic mastery, it is suggested that "The General of the Dead Army" can be seen to some degree as the embryo of all Ismail Kadare's later literary works.

Key words: *Kadare, prose, socialist realism, code, ideology, positive hero.*