

Title: Ismail Kadare's *Lulet e ftohta te marsit*: a tragic narrative of old and new Albania
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This paper argues that Kadare's *Lulet e ftohta te marsit* (*Cold Flowers of March*) can be read as a tale of a newly independent nation's struggle to maintain order amid the anarchy of freedom, where old traditions and new values are in competition. The novel richly juxtaposes references to the oral tradition (a girl married to a snake, revival of the ancient law of the Kanun, the Code of Leke Dukagjini) with depictions of modern absurdities in newly independent Albania (rife with bank robberies and people in "Boss" shirts searching for the Communist Secret Archives).

Cold Flowers, as Robert Elsie notes, is "A complex work with many levels of interpretation and intertwining themes..." (407). More than a treatment of the tragic ways that old and new Albania must coexist, the novel is also a tale of the fates of the artist and the nation, a reworking of the myths of Prometheus and Tantulus, and a semiautobiographical story where Kadare seems to work out his own position as "Albanian patriot and European existentialist, repository of the legends of his nation and communist modernizer, dictator and dissident, Zeus and Prometheus" (Morgan, 10) through the liminal figure of the narrator, artist/policeman Mark Gurabardhi ('Whitestone'). Metaphors of stone and water, elements prevalent in the northern Albanian landscape, permeate the novel. The image of the snake, feared by the people of B as representation of all that lies just under the surface of "new" Albania, while also revered as a friendly animal of Albanian folktales, highlights the threats to the nation's way of life.

Elsie, Robert. *Lulet e ftohta te marsit*. *World Literature Today*, Vol 75, No. 2, pp. 406–07.

Morgan, Peter. "Ismail Kadare: Modern Homer or Albanian Dissident?" *World Literature Today*, Vol 80, No. 5, pp. 711.

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