



Blood feud through the historical imagination of Ismail Kadare: An analysis of *Broken April*

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Abstract

This paper explores the practice of the blood feud refracted through the prism of Ismail Kadare's *Broken April* (1978), which is set in early 20th century Albania. Analysis of emerging themes reveals some important insights for Law and Literature. We examine the relationship of the blood feud with a number of themes, such as socio-political conditions, social ethos and values, and mechanisms of conflict management. Situating the author's agenda within a perspective of historical imagination, between history and epic, past and present, suggests taking the perspective of *la longue durée* in relation to customary laws and feuding. That insight in turn prompts reflections about the survival and continuation of blood feuding as a form of life in contemporary societies.

Key words

Law and literature; blood feud; conflict management; *la longue durée*; Ismail Kadare

Resumen

Este artículo explora la práctica de la deuda de sangre refractada por el prisma de *Abril quebrado* (1978), de Ismail Kadare, que está ambientado en la Albania de principios del siglo XX. El análisis de los temas emergentes revela algunas percepciones importantes para Derecho y Literatura. Examinamos la relación de la deuda de sangre

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con ciertos temas que entran en el ámbito de los encabezados estructurales de las condiciones sociopolíticas, el ethos y los valores sociales y los mecanismos de gestión de conflictos. Cuando situamos el temario del autor en una perspectiva de imaginación histórica, entre la historia y la épica, el pasado y el presente, se sugiere la perspectiva de *la longue durée* relacionada con el derecho consuetudinario y las disputas. Esa visión, a su vez, provoca reflexiones sobre la supervivencia y la continuación de la deuda de sangre como forma de vida en sociedades contemporáneas.

Palabras clave

Derecho y literatura; deuda de sangre; gestión de conflictos; *la longue durée*; Ismail Kadare

Table of contents

1. Introduction	S167
2. Kadare's historical imagination	S168
3. <i>Broken April</i> - A brief account	S169
4. Emergent analytic themes	S171
4.1. Socio-political conditions.....	S171
4.2. Social ethos and values	S173
4.3. Mechanisms of conflict management.....	S179
5. Conclusion.....	S182
References.....	S183

1. Introduction

Blood feud has often stirred the feelings of modern writers. Some, like Honoré de Balzac in *La Vendetta*, have read feuding as an “honorable alternative to modernity,” whereas others, like René Goscinny and Albert Uderzo in *Astérix en Corse* have viewed it as a “ridiculous appendix of premodernity” (Grutzpalk 2002, p. 116). Ismail Kadare, throughout his oeuvre, and as made especially evident in his *Essays on World Literature: Aeschylus, Dante, Shakespeare* (2018), which can be read both “as a guide to the three literary masters in the title and to the Albanian writer’s own fiction” (Raducanu 2020, p. 20), approaches blood feuds as stuff that bounds together great tragedies. This article draws upon the powerful depiction of blood feud mechanisms regulated by the *Kanun*¹ in the 1930s Albania by Ismail Kadare in *Broken April* (see Kadare 1990). The article forms one part of a diptych, which presents images of blood feud refracted through the prisms of two novels, Kadare’s *Broken April* and Walter Scott’s *The Fair Maid of Perth* (see Scott 1998).² Despite the different contexts of these novels, common topics emerge for our understanding of law through literature, concerning the authors’ agendas in relation to feuding, and comparisons on different themes relating to feuding over time, suggesting the perspective of *la longue durée*³ (Bloch 1963) and prompting reflections about contemporary feuding behavior and its survival in current societies.

A considerable number of studies exist on the history of blood feuds and the role of the *Kanun* in Albania (see Cozzi 1910, Villari 1941, Hasluck 1954, Fischer 1999, Krasztev 2002, Grutzpalk 2002, Voell 2003, Mustafa and Young 2008, Tarifa 2008, Yamamoto 2008, Arsovska and Verduyn 2008, Çelik and Shkreli 2010, Sadiku 2014, Cara and Margjeka 2015, Operazione Colomba 2017, Lugaj 2018), but none is based on perspectives of Law and Literature, which allow for unique insights that can be made about human experiences today starting from literary texts written in the past. Literary analysis conveys a sense of truth, not by a process of scientific proof or historical precision, but by imagination and suggestion, by painting a picture or telling a story. In our analysis of *The Fair Maid of Perth* (Mackay and Pali 2021), we make the case for seeing the novel as a credible account of the life of the time through the critical appreciation by György Lukács of Scott’s verisimilitude as an historical novelist. Kadare’s work cannot be viewed as having verisimilitude in the same way, so we rather read *Broken April* through the prism of historical imagination, as belonging both to history and epic. After contextualizing Kadare’s work in this framework, we provide next an account of the story itself, followed by three main analytic themes emerging in *Broken April*: socio-political conditions, social ethos and values, and mechanisms of conflict resolution. These themes have a bearing on understanding the persistent nature of blood feud as a mode of life, and the relevance of its insights into contemporary feuding behavior.

¹ The *Kanun* is a code that codifies customary laws in Albania. Composed of 1,163 decrees, it regulates all aspects of life through the articulation of norms and sanctions. Different *Kanuns* are considered binding in different geographical areas but we refer to the *Kanun of Leke Dukagjini*, an Albanian prince who in the 15th century collected and codified the norms and customs of northern Albanians. It was only in 1933 that the *Kanun* was published, as compiled by a Franciscan friar called Shtjefën Gjeçov.

² *The Fair Maid of Perth* was published in 1831 and is set in late 14th and early 15th century Scotland.

³ *La longue durée* is the historiographical principle according to which we should take note of continuities, persistence and resilience of modes or life through time. It is associated with the Annales School of Historiography in France.

2. Kadare's historical imagination

Ismail Kadare is one of the most important and internationally renowned literary figures of Albania.⁴ Born in 1936, he grew up in the southern town of Gjirokaster. He has written several important novels, among which *Broken April* in 1978. Since the discovery of Kadare in the West, much debate has focused on his alleged conformity with Enver Hoxha's communist regime as a leading cultural figure in Albania during that period (see Morgan 2006, 2010). Considered by some a dissident and by others a protégé of the communist regime, when asked on this point repeatedly by Western journalists, Kadare has said that "dissidence was a position no one could occupy, even for a few days, without facing the firing squad. On the other hand, my books themselves constitute a very obvious form of resistance."⁵

In line with his own comment, it has often been argued that Kadare expressed dissent and surfed censorship by reviving parables, myths, and legends of the past and packing them with allusion, allegory, ambiguity and metaphor to portray historical reality (Evans 2005). Even the characters of *Broken April* placed in the Albanian highlands have been compared to characters in communist Albania, alluding to the cryptical allegorical language of Kadare (Jones 2007). Referring again to *Broken April*, it has been argued that "the setting of the narrative in a remote, pre-socialist period only thinly conceal the fact that the themes of the work do not nourish socialist optimism" (Byron 1984, p. 42). This evocation of the ancient past which we can read as "historical distancing" or a need to "step outside" the present can be seen as a survival mode, but also a way of showing dissent by comparing implicitly the durability of the past to the passing ideologies of Enver Hoxha's new Albania (Morgan 2006, p. 9).

Broken April has often been associated with Kadare's sustained interest in the harsh traditions of the Balkans and in the mythic world of the epic (Avdyli 2019, Raducanu 2020). In an interview, Kadare has said that he found Soviet socialist realism, with its moralistic lessons in hope, optimism and hard work an idiocy because "children don't want to read about working hard, they want to play. They like horrors, they like ghosts and witches and magicians" (see Evans 2005). *Broken April* has won critical praise worldwide, even though it deals with specific traditions of Albanian highlands. Asked on how this local tale was able to touch so many readers to whom the *Kanun* is foreign, Kadare replied:

The code you are talking about isn't just Albanian, and contrary to what is sometimes claimed, it didn't come from the cultures of the Caucasus. It originated in ancient Greece, and the most ancient of the Greek tragedies deals with the Kanun. The world has forgotten Agamemnon and the vengeance that led to his death. Hamlet is also a tragedy about the Kanun: The father's ghost demands that his son avenge him. (see Izikovich 2015)

⁴ Kadare is winner of several important literary prizes, such as Man Booker International fiction prize (2005), Prix Mondial Cino Del Duca (2005), the Price of Asturias Award (2009), the Jerusalem Prize (2015), the Nonino Prize (2018), the Neustadt International Prize for Literature (2020), and has been candidate for Nobel several times.

⁵ Quote attributed to Kadare in many newspaper articles, biographical entries and reviews written about him, but without specifying the original source.

Kadare has often aligned Homeric epic with Albanian history and folk tradition (Raducanu 2020). In awarding him the Man Booker Prize for Literature in 2005, John Carey called Kadare “a universal writer in the tradition of storytelling that goes back to Homer” (Morgan 2006, p. 7). At the same time, he has been compared to writers like Kafka and Orwell, highlighting the fact that his work is as imaginative and philosophical as it is historical and epic. Referring to Kadare’s *Essays on World Literature*, Raducanu (2020, p. 22) writes that it is “Kadare’s remarkable knowledge of canonical European literature [which] enables him to perform intricate cultural journeys towards and away from fundamental sources of inspiration.” These essays “illustrate the hybridity underlying Kadare’s creativity – how he travelled across the world through books and circled back to Albanian customs and culture” (Kokobobo 2018). The ways in which the past affects the present can be seen as one of Kadare’s favorite and recurrent themes. In his works he also calls into question the relevance of tradition in the face of modernity, making evident the clashes between lyricism and materialism, durability and change.

Broken April blurs the boundary between past and present, and Kadare never overtly mentions the period when the events take place. The novel portrays both the exceptional greatness of the highlands and their traditions as well as the necessity of their tragic transformation. Many of Kadare’s works contrast the “pettifogging cluelessness of its modern characters and the dark sublimity of the ancient epic ballads” (Weitzman 2016, p. 818). Referring to the complexity of this matter in relation to the *Kanun*, Kadare says “this code has two sides that it’s difficult to separate: It has a noble side and a cruel side. And that’s why it’s so interesting for literature” (see Izikovich 2015). Whereas *Broken April* has been characterized at the same time as an historical novel, as epic and universal, or as ethnographic fiction, given Kadare’s enchantment with myths, legends, and tragic traditions, *Broken April* has also something autobiographical. One of the main characters in the novel is a writer called Besian, who idealises the highlands and their traditions, and is perhaps Kadare himself.⁶

As this brief account of Kadare’s work shows, not only does great literature provide us with important insights about past, present, and future, but it also teaches us freedom of interpretation, because it is the ambiguity of language and the author’s imagination which spawns multiple readings of the texts (Ruggiero 2003, p. 5). *Broken April* is like “a certain kind of an optical illusion, the more you look at it one way, the more it begins to resemble something else” (see Jones 2007).

3. *Broken April* - A brief account

Set in the early 20th century in the Northern Albanian highlands, *Broken April* narrates the stories of a young mountaineer called Gjorg Berisha and of the newlywed urbanites Diana and Besian Vorpsi who are visiting the highlands, and the way their lives are drawn together (for reviews see also Mitgang 1990, Kolsti 1993, Guynes 2012, Mahtab 2020). Gjorg is asked by his family to take revenge for the killing of his brother by their

⁶ Kadare’s own daughter is called Besiana. The name Besian comes from *besa*, the word of honor, which is a central value and social institution in the Kanun. The English translations of *Broken April* render the name as Bessian, but to maintain the connection with the root of the word, we have chosen to render it in original.

neighbor, Zef Kryeqyqe. That killing was also motivated by revenge⁷ as Gjorg's brother had killed another member of the Kryeqyqe family. The Berisha and Kryeqyqe clans have been in a blood feud for 70 years: 22 men from each family have been killed meanwhile, and Gjorg will be the 45th to die.

The story starts with a description of Gjorg shooting Zef Kryeqyqe in the evening of 17 March. Kadare describes Gjorg's automatic movements and dispassionate and confused state of mind. Eventually he calls aloud a warning and shoots.⁸ This is already his second attempt, the first one ending up in only wounding Zef, causing the Berisha family to pay compensation. This time Gjorg kills Zef, and the "messengers of death" announce it in the village. He has done what is expected of him to restore his family's honor.

From this point on, Gjorg is a *gjaks*,⁹ and his life is governed by the blood laws of the *Kanun*. In the days that follow, under a 24 hours *besa*,¹⁰ he is obliged to fulfil other duties such as attending the funeral and the funeral lunch of the victim. After this, the village requests that the family of the victim grant Gjorg the 30 days *besa*, so that he may pay the blood tax¹¹ to the *Kulla*¹² of Orosh and conclude any unfinished business he might have.

The *Kulla* of Orosh in the *Rrafsh* (High Plateau) is the seat of the ruling family that governs the region through the *Kanun*. The family is represented by the head of the family, the Prince, and his cousin, Mark Ukaçierra, the Steward of the Blood. Mark maintains a ledger book (the Blood Book), which has records of debts, payments, delays, blood lines, wars, famine, and disease kept since the beginning of the 17th century. His task is to collect the blood tax and make sure that neither the blood nor the blood money dries up.

On Gjorg's journey to pay the blood tax to the Prince, a newlywed urban couple on their honeymoon cross his path, Diana and Besian Vorpsi. Choosing these mountains for a honeymoon is not an obvious choice, but Besian, not unlike Kadare, is a writer obsessed with and fascinated by the epic world of Northern Albania with its strict code of life and death. Eager to introduce his beautiful wife to these traditions, Besian

⁷ Revenge killing in Albanian is called *gjakmarrja* (the taking of the blood). Some of the things that can trigger *gjakmarrje* are killing of a guest who is under the protection of the owner of the house, violation of private property, failure to pay a debt, kidnapping, rape or seduction of a woman. According to the older versions of the *Kanun*, only the killer himself could be killed in revenge, whereas later versions have expanded to all the males of the family (excluding boys under 15 years old).

⁸ According to the *Kanun*, before being killed, the victim has to be given a warning, and once shot, his body has to fall on his back, and his rifle placed near his head.

⁹ *Gjaks* (from *gjak*-blood) means killer, but without any negative connotation. It is simply a killer who has fulfilled his obligation (and can therefore be killed in turn).

¹⁰ *Besa* is a complex cultural concept that cannot be translated into English (or any other language) in a single word. Its meanings depend on context, and include a sworn oath and a binding promise, a protection oath, a principle of unity and inviolable trust, a word of honor, and a period of truce and grace, freedom and security, during which the family of the victim gives to the murderer and his family temporarily, bringing temporary cessation of bloodshed and suspending pursuit of vengeance in the blood feud until the end of the specific term. As "an essential value for an individual and his social behavior, the concept is associated with three main aspects: the spoken word, the assurance of the truce and the protection of the guest" (Sadiku 2014, p. 101) and is "a cornerstone principle of the *Kanun*" (Sadiku 2014, p. 102).

¹¹ The blood tax of 500 *gros*h was essentially paid after every honor killing to the ruling family.

¹² *Kulla* refers to a stone tower, used as a dwelling place in the *Rrafsh*.

gives Diana a copy of the *Kanun* as an engagement present and brings her to the *Rrafsh* to experience close up the heroic lives of its inhabitants.

Moving from *Kulla* to *Kulla*, the Vorpsis take advantage of the hospitality that governs the Albanian highlands. Their paths intersect also with an important character in *Broken April*, the mediator Ali Binak, legendary resolver of disputes, who travels through the highland solving disputes of all kinds with his team of experts, a doctor and a geometer. When Vorpis' paths intersect Gjorg's, they see that he is a *gjaks* from the black ribbon he wears on his arm. Diana and Gjorg become enchanted by each other, and spend the time remaining to them on the *Rrafsh* hoping with increasing desperation to catch sight of each other one more time. But on the 17 April, as both the honeymoon and the thirty days *besa* come to an end, Diana and Besian return to Tirana as strangers to each other, and Gjorg is shot by a relative of Zef Kryeqyqe. Everyone has a full April, but Gjorg a broken one.

4. Emergent analytic themes

4.1. Socio-political conditions

4.1.1. Public authority

Broken April is set in the 1930s during the rule of King Zog (1928–1939). In historical terms, from the 15th century until the beginning of the 20th century (1912), Albania was under the rule of the Ottoman Empire. During the Ottoman Empire, Albanians were relatively free to keep their own justice mechanisms in exchange for paying tributes to the *bajraktare*.¹³ During King Zog's reign serious attempts were made to reduce blood feuds. In the Criminal Code adopted by King Zog in 1928, it was stipulated that anyone engaged in blood feuds and any kind of revenge killing would be severely punished. Despite these changes, the highlands of Northern Albania have continued to remain faithful to the *Kanun* and blood feuds has remained common, with significant historical ups and down, until today (see Voell 2003, Mustafa and Young 2008, Çelik and Shkreli 2010, Cara and Margjeka 2015).¹⁴ Besian says,

The *Rrafsh* is the only region of Europe which – while being an integral part of a modern State, an integral part, I repeat, of a modern European state and not the habitat of primitive tribes – has rejected the laws, the legal institutions, the police, the courts, in short, all the structures of the State. (Kadare 1990, p. 72)

The ruling family that governs the Highlands is represented in the novel by the head of the family, whom people call Prince even though he is not a Prince. This type of dynasty “which was rather like a temple of the law, an institution halfway between oracles and

¹³ *Bajraktaret* (banner holders) were military leaders of their clan, appointed by the Ottomans, who held civil and administrative powers. They represented the region in times of conflict and recruited troops for military expeditions. In peacetime they exercised civil duties, such as collecting taxes (Mustafa and Young 2008, p. 98).

¹⁴ Whereas during the Italian and German occupations, blood feuds went down as the population focused on resisting the foreigners, it was mainly during the Communist regime, that the *Kanun* and blood feuds were heavily repressed as they clashed significantly with the regime's ideology (attack on religion and private property, women's emancipation and modernization, but also State monopoly of violence). There has been a resurgence in blood feuds since the fall of the Communist regime. Historically therefore, Albania has seen the advent of Islam, Christianity, Nazism, Fascism, Communism, Capitalism, and the *Kanun* has lived through it all, showing the tenacity and resistance of traditions.

repository of legal tradition, could in time amass great power, until their origins were quite forgotten and they exercised absolute dominion" (see Kadare 1990, p. 33).

Blood feud constitutes an important profitable industry for the ruling family who collect the blood tax, a tax paid after every blood feud killing. This extensive financial undertaking requires its own office, fulfilled in *Broken April* by the cousin of the Prince, Mark Ukaçierra, the Steward of the Blood, who maintains the Blood Book.

Broken April reveals majestically this atmosphere of tension between modernity and tradition, between inevitable change and stubborn durability. The Prince takes care of public and diplomatic relations and monitors and regulates the public image of the Highlands. To the ones that try to criticize the region, he will ironically say: "How many governments have fallen... And how many kingdoms have been swept from the face of the earth, but Orosh is still standing" (see Kadare 1990, p. 132).

This confidence is not fully substantiated as things are obviously changing. The blood tax, the most important source of revenue for the Prince, is drying up. The Prince holds the Steward of the Blood responsible for the reduced revenues. It is seen as his job to maximise revenue by encouraging feuds and acts of vengeance, reminding people that they have not fulfilled their obligations under the *Kanun* (see Kadare 1990, p. 136). The Prince tells Mark: "If you, the steward of the blood are tired of your work, don't forget that there are plenty of people who would be happy to have the post – and not just anybody, but university men" (see Kadare 1990, p. 150).

Saying that university graduates are interested in this job shows the ambivalent image of the blood feud tradition in Albanian society, seen both as barbaric and as heroic. This ambivalence is highlighted by Kadare mainly through dialogues between the highly educated couple of urbanites, Diana and Besian. Idealizing the region and the *Kanun*, and comparing it to other codes, legal structures and regions, Besian will say that the *Kanun* is "one of the most monumental constitutions that have come into being in the world, and we Albanians should be proud of having begotten it" (see Kadare 1990, p. 72). His wife will time and again fail to agree with him.

4.1.2. The state of society

Life and death in Albanian society have been for centuries regulated by customary laws, and as shown in *Broken April* continue to be so regulated even in the 20th century, when Albania has been transformed from a clan-based society into a State. In the novel, society is divided into two parts. On one side are those who come from elsewhere, the guests, the urbanites from Tirana, those outside the regulatory power of the *Kanun* (yet under its spell), and on the other side are the highlanders who still live in a clan-based society and are under the full grip of the regulatory power of the *Kanun* (yet perhaps not so enchanted by it).

In the highlands, individual rights, freedoms, and sentiments do not seem essential and individuals are expected to meet the obligations (*munus*) of the kin group. The *Kanun* is experienced for generations as fully epic, and its definitions, rules, decrees cannot be questioned by the individual.¹⁵ In fact "[s]uccessive generations had been accustomed to

¹⁵ The epic is a specific form of historiography where "everything must happen as it does happen, it could not be otherwise, and there is no need for explanatory connectives" (Auerbach 1953, p. 23).

the feuds from their cradles, and so, not being able to conceive of life without them, it never entered their minds to try to free themselves from their destined end" (see Kadare 1990, pp. 144–145). The *Kanun* regulates all aspects of life through norms and sanctions arbitrated by a Council of Elders (Vickers and Pettifer 1997, p. 132).¹⁶ Blood laws, while not having a specific chapter in the *Kanun*, percolate it through and through, the same way they govern Gjorg's life:

[T]he other part, which was concerned with everyday living and was not drenched in blood, was inextricably bound to the bloody part, so much so no one could really tell where one part left off and the other began. The whole was so conceived that one begat the other, the stainless giving birth to the bloody, and the second to the first, and so on forever, from generation to generation. (Kadare 1990, p. 27)

Contrary to the popular imagination about the blood feud as a work of passion, the world of *Broken April* is a dispassionate and automatized world in which "people have to kill those whom they do not hate, to perpetuate feuds that began centuries before, whose may have been totally forgotten" (Llewellyn 2009). Justice is a machine, cold and calculating. The Steward of the Blood sees the blood feud as an industry, as a mill-machine. Through his character we see the delicate power equilibriums and how much these depend on the blood industry. Imagining a day without any drop of blood spilled, "he felt that if that day [17 March] had really passed as it very nearly had, all of that mill of death, its wheels, its heavy millstones, its many springs and gears, would make an ominous grating sound, would shake from top to bottom, and break and smash into a thousand pieces" (see Kadare 1990, pp. 153–154).

4.2. Social ethos and values

The social norms and rules of the *Kanun* are based on some essential moral and ethical concepts which are deeply entangled with each other, such as *nderi* (honor), (*besa*) word of honor/truce, *beja* (oath), *mikprijtja* (hospitality), *buka* (food/bread), *gjaku* (blood), *burrnija* (virility), *hakmarrja* (revenge), *gjakmarrja* (revenge killing), *falja* (forgiveness), *pajtimi* (reconciliation). We highlight the values and social ethos that appear central in *Broken April*.

4.2.1. Honor and vengeance

Honor has a substantial place in the *Kanun*,¹⁷ to the point that blood feuds and honor could be seen almost as symbiotic.¹⁸ Unless acts of revenge are endorsed by ethical concepts, they result in vicious and endless violence (Yamamoto 2008, p. 232). Gjorg's father, as master of the house, urges his son to fulfil his obligations to the family to

¹⁶ The *Kanun* contains 12 chapters: church, family, marriage, household and property, work, loans, pledge, honor, damages, wrongdoing, judgement, and exceptions.

¹⁷ "There is no fine for an offence to honor. An offence to honor is never forgiven" (Article 597); "An offence in honor is not paid for with property, but by the spilling of the blood or by a magnanimous pardon." (Article 598); "The person dishonored has the right to avenge his honor; no pledge is given, no appeal is made to the Council of Elders, no judgment is needed, no fine is taken. The strong man collects the fine himself." (Article 599); "A man who has been dishonored is considered dead according to the kanun" (Article 600) (Gječov 2001, p. 64)

¹⁸ *Gjakmarrja* is sanctioned killing (which is not considered murder) that cleanses honor with blood to avenge a crime or infringement upon the honor of oneself or one's family (Mustafa and Young 2008, p. 95, Cara and Margjeka 2015, p. 182).

sustain its honor.¹⁹ Reminding Gjorg of the laws of the *Kanun* which declare that “two finger breadths of honor have been stamped on our foreheads by Almighty God” he scorns him for putting off his obligation, saying “whiten or further besmirch your dirty face, as you please. It is up to you to decide to be a man or not” (see Kadare 1990, p. 46).

Restoring honor appears as the striving to avoid dishonor. Whereas Gjorg has in reality no real alternative options as discussed previously, even the few options that he considers are discarded for being dishonorable. If he will not revenge his brother, others in the village will offer coffee to him and his family under the knee, a practice which shows that they would be dishonored in the eyes of the community. It is not his own death therefore, but this public communal shaming which frightens him the most.

It is honor that makes the difference between being a killer and a justiciar such as Gjorg. Justiciars were considered vanguards of the tribe, the executioners of death penalty, but also victims of the blood feuds. Their names were never forgotten. Yet, there are moments when Gjorg feels like a killer, such as during the funeral of the victim when faced with the “edifice of death” he has unleashed and when he inside the so-called “gallery of killers” in the *Kulla* of Orosh, the room where men who have avenged a murder wait to pay their blood tax to the Prince.

4.2.2. Heroism

Finding the situation in which he finds himself absurd, Gjorg is nevertheless repulsed by the idea of a life without honor and heroism. To avoid being a victim of the blood feud he could leave the mountains and take up the itinerant trade of woodcutter. Gjorgj prefers death to that. As Besian elsewhere says about the woodcutters, “having left, for various reasons, the homeland of epic, they [the highlanders] were uprooted like trees overthrown, they had lost their heroic character and deep-seated virtue” (see Kadare 1990, p. 66).

Gjorg sees his life as sharply divided: the life before he became 26 years and the life after, the one month between 17 March and 17 April. The one before appears to him long and boring, whereas the other one, short, violent and tempestuous. He remains unsure about which life was the best, the calm one, or the dangerous one (see Kadare 1990, pp. 48–49). Blood feud gives a young man in the highlands a purpose, a meaning and a heroic status, things which would be lost if the *Kanun* were to disappear, reducing life to an unbearable aimlessness. Males are considered precious because their blood is the currency that settles the feud, and virility and honor are deeply connected.²⁰

Gjorg is often compared to a young Hamlet, and to other heroes and gods. According to Besian, the only difference between Gjorg and Hamlet, is that Hamlet decides himself to commit the crime and does it with passion, whereas Gjorg has no passion and takes no decision. This does not make him less heroic, as Besian says: “A man must have the will of a Titan to turn towards death from a place so far away... For, in point of fact, at times

¹⁹ *I zoti i shtëpisë* (the master of the house) is in charge of family affairs, honor and behavior of his family members.

²⁰ *Burrnija* comes from the word *burrë* (man) and signifies virility and manhood, the person who is virtuous and worthy of honor. Anyone who breaks his promises, hospitality, agreements, truces, or protection to guests is considered *shburrnuem* (dishonored).

the orders come from a really distant place, the place of generations long gone" (see Kadare 1990, p. 112).

4.2.3. Besa

The role of the mechanisms of *besa* is prominent in *Broken April*. Referring here mainly to a period of truce given by the family of the victim, when Gjorg kills Zef, he is granted a short-term *besa* of 24 hours during which he is obliged to fulfil other duties such as *breaking bread* with the victim's family and mourning with the family at his funeral. He is under the protection of the *besa* during this time and the family of the victim is forbidden to kill him. During these 24 hours he must not abuse the *besa*, otherwise he is not granted another *besa*. For example, he has to keep a low profile, respect the pain of the victim's family and cannot go bragging in the village about the killing.

After the short-term *besa*, the village elders ask the victim's family to grant Gjorg the 30 days *besa*, which he will need for travelling to the *Kulla* of Orosh to pay the blood tax and concluding unfinished business. The 24 hours *besa* is requested from the victim's family by four mediators (called *bestare*) and the 30 days *besa* is asked by the village elders. While these periods of truce are granted without huge difficulties if the family of the justiciar and the justiciar himself are respectful towards the pain of the victim's family, they still have to be asked for and cannot be taken for granted.

Besa has therefore a strong element of temporality, the *besa* is protected time. When the month of *besa* will come to an end, and time will move out of the *besa*, Gjorg can either lock himself away for the rest of his life in a Tower of Refuge²¹ or take his chances out in the open. At the same time, *besa* has a spatial quality, as shown in the novel, through the existence of the *besa* protected roads, safe roads in the mountains where there is a permanent truce.

4.2.4. Blood

As Kadare makes clear in *Broken April*, the element of blood in blood feuds is essential. It is blood, the important life currency that makes men equal, whether they are rich or poor, handsome or ugly. At the same time, it is blood which binds and bonds them in obligations within the community. The *Kanun* says that for Albanians of the mountains, the chain of relationships of blood and kinship are endless (Gjeçov 2001, p. 70). Living generations acknowledge obligation (*munus*) towards the previous generations, and an individual is expected to meet the obligations of the kin group, living or dead. The blood of the killed is offended that the killer severed his link of blood with ancestors and descendants and cries for vengeance. Blood, commands the *Kanun*, is never unavenged (Gjeçov 2001, p. 87). As Gjorg's father urges his son to fulfil his obligations, he points at the yellowing bloodstained shirt of his brother, unwashed since a year and a half. When the stains become yellow, it means the dead cries for vengeance.

Yet, despite the importance of the blood line, we must not think of blood in essentialised terms but rather as a regulating social institution, since blood relations can also be

²¹ Towers of Refuge, also called Towers of Silence, are dark and windowless towers of sanctuary where killers can retreat to live forever, fed by family members.

acquired. Through blood union, one can become a brother with someone by drinking a drop of each other's blood (Sadiku 2014). So strong is this bond considered, that intermarriage is not allowed among the families of the blood brothers for several generations. During blood feud reconciliation, one can even create brotherhood with the family of the victim.

4.2.5. Hospitality: the guest as God

Despite the importance of blood, it is the "guest" which is the supreme ethical category in the lives of Albanians, prevailing over even blood connections (Sadiku 2014). This institution is central in *Broken April*. The enmity between the Berishas and Kryeqyqes had arisen from an incident in which a guest who had left Berishas' house was killed by one of the Kryeqyqes within the border of the village. According to the *Kanun* the death of a guest must be avenged. If the victim falls with his face towards the village, the duty of revenge lies upon his host, while if he falls away from the village, the duty lies upon his family. The guest had fallen with his face to the village, starting therefore a 70 year old saga of revenge killings. Nobody knew the name of the guest whose killing caused the feud.

Among different interpretations on the importance of the guest, a case has been made for recognizing a similarity between Albania and Japan based on the tight connection between guest and god in the two countries (Yamamoto 2008). A god manifests itself disguised as a guest in the religious rituals of ancient Japan, and the same has been argued for Albania. The *Kanun* declares that the house of the Albanian is of the god and of the guest. In *Broken April* this connection is made several times by Besian, who says that "unlike many people among whom the mountains were reserved to the gods, our mountaineers, by the very fact that they lived in the mountains themselves, were constrained either to expel the gods or to adapt themselves to them so as to be able live with them" (see Kadare 1990, p. 78). He continues saying that "the moment a humble wayfarer, a pack on his shoulder, knocks on your door and gives himself up to you as his guest, he is instantly transformed into an extraordinary being, an inviolable sovereign, a law-maker, the light of the world" (see Kadare 1990, p. 78). It is this deification of the guest that explains "why an attack on a guest protected by the *besa* is the worst possible misfortune, something like the end of the world" (see Kadare 1990, p. 79). A guest, says Besian, is sacred, a demi-god (see Kadare 1990, p. 77).

To illustrate his point, Besian tells Diana the story of a man who had killed someone in the market, eventually escaping the brothers of the victim who had run after him. Not being from that village, he had asked refuge in one of the houses, which happened to be the house of the victim. The parents of the victim hosted him not knowing who he was or what he had done, until the brothers of the victim came back home, and seeing him there, told the father that he is the killer. The father instructs the brothers to put their rifles down because he is their guest. They host him as an honored guest until the day after, and then accompany him protected to the edge of the village. The betrayal of the guest protected by *besa* is the most serious crime according to the *Kanun*.²² Several times

²² Article 649: "If the guest under the protection of the host is killed, his blood must be avenged at all costs. An offense against a father, a brother, and even a cousin without heirs may be forgiven, but an offense against a guest is not forgiven" (Gjeçov 2001, p. 68).

in the novel we hear about houses and villages burned to the ground for violating the rules of hospitality.

The Vorpsis during their the honeymoon take also advantage of the hospitality system, having acquired the temporary status of demi-gods. When Diana expresses fear after hearing stories told by Besian in a gloomy *Kulla* where they are hosted, he tells her that there is no reason to be afraid, because no real couple has ever been more protected than they would be as guests. She tells him that her fear is not of that nature. She cannot define it, but says she wishes not to cause misfortune to someone (see Kadare 1990, p. 84). Diana, this woman with the name of a goddess, perceives of herself as having supranatural powers, a goddess disguised as stranger, as a mountain *ore*.²³

4.2.6. Performativity and tragedy

The performative ethos of blood feuds is evident throughout *Broken April*. Life in the highlands is a kind of a theater and its main actors, characters in a tragic play. For example, when Gjorg is about to kill Zef, he feels he is acting a role in a play that someone else has written. Being the first blood feud killing of that spring, his act gives people in the village something to talk about, recounting its details over and over, something they had been waiting for.

Another performative scene is the funeral lunch organised by the victim's family. There are weeping women present, who perform their grief the way they do in Greek tragedies. Looking at these women whose faces are full of blood from scratching and crying, they seem to Georg to be wearing masks. He then imagines the same masks worn by his own family, and each family putting on bleeding masks before joining funeral lunches.

Additionally, the performative aspects of the blood feud are obvious in the visit of Diana and Besian to the highlands. The news of their honeymoon had caused its own theatrical stir back in Tirana, giving 'high society' something to be amused with and to talk about. In the blood feud theater, outsiders act as audience, while the insiders play their parts accordingly. Besian and Diana often compare the mountaineers to characters from Greek and other tragedies. Gjorg, as we mentioned previously, is often compared to Hamlet. At the moment when they enter the *Rrafsh* and see the mountaineers carrying black ribbon in their right arm and rifles in their shoulders, Besian says exultedly that that is the sign of death. Diana finds this beautiful and terrible at the same time. To which Besian adds: "Yes, it's true. It's tragically beautiful, or wonderfully tragic, if you will," and continues: "Yes...we have entered death's kingdom like Ulysses, with this difference – Ulysses had to descend to reach it, but we must climb" (see Kadare 1990, pp. 68–69). Besian's exultation of death is often criticized by Diana, but also by one of the members of the arbitration team,

Your books, your art, they all smell of murder. Instead of doing something for these unfortunate mountaineers, you help death, you look for exalted themes, you look here for beauty so as to feed your art. You don't see that this is beauty that kills... (Kadare 1990, p. 195)

²³ Albanians believe in a mountain spirit or fairy called Ore, who wanders about to hear and to carry into effect the blessings and curses pronounced by men on each other.

4.2.7. Exoticism and erotism

As mentioned before, a honeymoon in a region plagued by blood feuds is not an obvious choice and illustrates how traditions are exoticized and even eroticised. As they enter the region hand in hand, Besian exclaims “The accursed mountains!” enjoying the reaction that the solemnity of that expression provokes in his wife. Whereas the first mountaineers they encounter appear quite normal and unremarkable, Besian, worried his wife will be disappointed, says that “[t]he real mountaineers are there in the *Rrafsh*” (see Kadare 1990, p. 55).

Diana is critical of her husband’s exoticizing of the *Kanun* and its blood laws. And yet, she will fall for Gjorg only after a brief shared gaze, becoming possessed by him. She will see him as a Hamlet, a black Prince, and will seek him out on the road and in the Towers of Refuge. Gjorg will also become totally possessed by Diana seeing her as a fairy. As Diana grows distant from her husband,²⁴ Besian realises how profoundly Diana is changed by her experience:

She had had just one brush with the High Plateau, and that had been enough to carry her away from him. It had been enough for the monstrous mechanism merely to touch her, to ravish her away, to take her captive, or at best to make her a mountain nymph. (Kadare 1990, pp. 207–208)

This reference to the erotic magnetism that Diana feels for Gjorg and for the highlands is conveyed during the scene which describes how Diana enters in one of the Towers of Refuge looking feverishly for Gjorg, an action considered extremely dangerous for a woman, especially for a beautiful woman like her. While not openly stated, the inference is made that she could have been raped by the men hiding inside, in reference to both their virility and involuntary celibacy.

The relation of exoticism and erotism is two directional. Mountaineers speak both with desire and contempt of Diana, this beautiful stranger outside the prescriptions of the *Kanun*. For highlanders she is equated either with the divine or with modernity. For example, in one of the ending scenes, when Gjorg’s period of *besa* is ending, he has a conversation with someone about electrical power being derived from water, a clear reference to modernity. They wonder whether the curbing of the waters of the mountain region, could have the effect of softening the *Kanun*. Thinking about Diana (and waterfalls) Gjorg thinks the *Kanun* could become gentler.

Diana arouses strong emotions also in the Steward of the Blood. He sees her both as a repelling figure, and as tempting and erotic. Examining the figures in his Blood Book, he broods over the presence of the woman from Tirana in the *Kulla* of Orosh, beautiful like a fairy, but an evil fairy and a dangerous witch. For him she is yet another sign of “an ill wind blowing from afar, from the cities and the lowlands that had long ago lost their virility, was trying to stain and infect the high country too” (see Kadare 1990, p. 134). This allusion to the virility of the highlands is interesting. According to Mark, the loss of virility prevalent in the lowlands which had started to ‘infect’ the highlands started exactly with the appearance of beautiful women “who excited in one the desire to live

²⁴ See Byron (1984, p. 42) who argues that Diana comes to see Besian for who he really is, a *poseur*, a man of no deeds, a man whose manliness was lived out in the absolute safety of words, a man to whom the worst that could happen was a bad review of his writings.

without honor." The "desire to live without honor" refers here both to life outside the *Kanun* and its blood laws, but also to sexuality, the desire to live with desire. Hardly afraid of anything at all, Mark is afraid of Diana, because for him her very existence puts at risk the laws of the highlands. All the affirmations of the Prince which to him are indisputable truths carrying the force of law, lose their power in contact with her eyes.

4.3. Mechanisms of conflict management

The *Kanun* is composed of 1163 decrees which regulate everyday life in surprising detail through the articulation of norms, sanctions and mechanisms of conflict management. As Cara and Margjeka (2015, p. 178) write on this point: "There is no social, economic or moral sphere that is not covered by its norms. It deals with matters of public law as government, court, army, and the relationship between the individual and the State." Central in *Broken April* is the whole mechanism of the blood feud, but a few other mechanisms appear too, as we will show in the following sections.

4.3.1. The blood feud mechanism

Broken April shows how the *Kanun* is experienced by those governed by it as matter of fact. The function of safeguarding the *Kanun* is mainly fulfilled by Gjorg's father, who at no point questions its requirements, even though he is about to lose his son, just as he lost the one before him. The bloodstained shirt of Gjorg's brother plays the role of an unmistakable barometer of the chronology of the blood feud. Kadare masterfully describes the heavy silence reigning at home in the initial period of indecision, showing how everything changes from the moment Gjorg decides to revenge his brother, how "from that moment, the whole house sprang to life. The silence that stifled it was suddenly filled with music. And its grim walls seemed to soften" (see Kadare 1990, p. 47).

In the process of convincing Gjorg, his father tries to make him hate the Kryeqyeqes, but at no point in the story does Gjorg express anger towards the other family or hate the person he was expected to kill. Even after revenging his brother, he cannot feel happiness. When his mother washes the bloodstained shirt of his brother, a sign that his face was now clean, and despite having often dreamed of the clean shirt, Gjorg feels no joy.

In the opening scene, Kadare describes at length Gjorg's automatic movements. He repeats mechanically the laws of the *Kanun*, unable to stop. He thinks he is dreaming, time and again struggling to remember what he is doing, and why is he doing it and has to remind himself of the purpose of his action. When shouting out the warning to his victim, Gjorg is unsure whether he is speaking with a loud voice, or with his inner voice. After killing Zef, he does not remember why he is bending over him. Gjorg thinks it is to wake him up, but it is instead to turn him the right way according to the prescriptions of the *Kanun*. He is not even sure whether it was him or someone else that killed Zef Kryeqyeqe.

When asked by his father to attend the funeral of the victim, Gjorg does not want to and asks why he should be doing that, a question to which he only gets a gaze back as a response, a gaze that says *because that's just the way it is*. At the funeral, contemplating the edifice of death he had created and in which he had to partake, he asks himself: "[W]hy should I be here?" The lunch is even harder for him, having to sit at the same

table with the family of the man he has just killed. A few times he has the temptation to escape and abandon that absurd situation in which he finds himself, thinking let them insult him, jeer at him, accuse him of violating age-old custom, let them shoot at his retreating back if they liked, anything so long as he got away from there. But he knows very well that he could never run away, no more than his grandfather, his great-grandfather, his great-great-grandfather, and all his ancestors five hundred, a thousand years before him had been able to run away. He has the impression that the whole life of his family and of the generations that come after would continue to be a funeral lunch. On the road back home from Orosh, where he had gone to pay the blood tax, he finds a new cairn raised for a dead man. He is confused. It is Zef Kryeqyqe's cairn. Speaking to himself about the dead man he confuses his victim with himself. Likewise, at the moment of his own death, he also confuses himself with his killer, reliving the moment when he took his (own) life.

Blood feud as illustrated above is an automatic mechanism of established laws and conducts that is put in place, but at the same time it is also an industry highly enmeshed in the economic logic that sustains the power relations in the highlands. The Steward of the Blood has an obsessive devotion to the law of the blood feud. His greatest fear is that the feuding will cease, that the blood and the revenues it brings will dry up. Looking at the latest records in the Blood Book, he ruminates: "On March 16 there were eight murders; eleven on the eighteenth; the nineteenth and the twentieth, five each; while the seventeenth had almost passed without a single death" (see Kadare 1990, p. 139). And indeed, if it were not for the timely revenge killing of Gjorg Berisha on 17 March, the Blood Book would have recorded a disastrous blank for that date, a thought which terrified him. He recalls the harsher-than-words look that the Prince had given him at dinner, a look which seemed to say: "You are the Steward of the Blood, and therefore you ought to be the chief instigator of feuds and acts of vengeance; you ought to be encouraging them, stirring them up, whipping them on when they flag or falter" (see Kadare 1990, p. 136). So distressed is Mark by the reduction of the number of the feuds and by the reproaches of the Prince, that in his ravings he wonders whether the laws of the *Kanun* can be changed so that even women could become involved.²⁵ At the end of the novel he wanders the *Rrafsh* trying to gain intelligence to help him maximise the output of his bloody enterprise by planning to visit the whole highlands again and return to Orosh with a report with proposals for increasing productivity in the future.

4.3.2. Compensation

The economic aspects of the blood industry are also obvious in the compensation of wounds. Gjorg's wounding of Zef Kryeqyqe results in his family having to find money to pay compensation. The mechanism of compensation is especially dramatized in a dialogue which takes place between Besian and the doctor who is part of the arbitration team of the mediator Ali Binak (the other member being a geometer) (see Kadare 1990, pp. 189–196). Reflecting on his own role in disputes, the doctor tells Besian rather ironically that the mountaineers actually use *raki* (strong local alcoholic drink) to cure real wounds, for which they would never call for a doctor. Despite being a doctor, his

²⁵ Women were held in such low esteem that they were exempt from all feuds, as was a potential victim caught while in the company of a woman (Vickers and Pettifer 1997, p. 132).

function actually is judicial: he supplies Ali Binak with the classification of wounds, by defining their degree and their location on the body, in order to calculate compensation. He tells Besian that many families who cannot pay compensation for wounds, prefer to sacrifice a life instead, whereas others are ready to get completely destroyed financially in order to restore their honor; so they would pay for 20 wounds, and when the victim is healed, they would still kill him. He refers to another case of a man who supports his family financially with the compensation money for his wounds, since he always escapes death. Through these stories the doctor is trying to tell Besian that blood has transformed into a commodity. Everything is about paying off debts, and whether it is "blood, precious stones, cloth, it makes no difference" (see Kadare 1990, p. 195).

4.3.3. Mediation and arbitration

In *Broken April* the character of mediator and arbiter Ali Binak appears as a legendary and highly respected resolver of disputes. His knowledge of the *Kanun* and his skills in interpretation are held in awe by the highlanders. The Vorpsis encounter him on their way to pay a visit to the Prince and witness first-hand the settlement of a dispute about boundaries, which had already led to many deaths. Ali Binak is there together with his team, the geometer and the doctor. Diana starts a conversation with him. Referring to the custom of having the cairns on the sites of the slayings of members of the contending parties to mark the boundaries between disputed land, she asks him whether the presence of death is indispensable to ensure the long duration of the boundaries. He answers her coldly: "We are here, madam, precisely to prevent death from taking a hand in this affair" (see Kadare 1990, p. 101).

Ali Binak is a man always on the road, because conflicts are never ending and his task is constantly to arbitrate. Throughout the many stories told of him and of his successes, the focus is his power and skills in helping people to 'save face' and often avoid feuds. In one of the stories, there is even a striking parallel drawn with Solomon (see Kadare 1990, pp. 188–189). It tells of a woman killed by mistake, who was pregnant with a boy. Not caring about the death of the woman but wanting to revenge the death of her male son, the families ask Ali Binak to help clarify who had to revenge the baby boy. In another scene, Kadare narrates Ali Binak's courageous action of entering the Tower of Refuge together with a priest to obtain the safe release of Diana (who had entered in the tower looking for Gjorg). Whereas the priest, who is outside the blood laws of the *Kanun*, and therefore protected, did not take a huge risk entering the tower, Ali Binak did. Being someone deeply implicated in the disputes of the region, he could have been killed.

4.3.4. Forgiveness and reconciliation

Forgiveness and reconciliation are always honorable possibilities in blood feuds. For example, whereas an offence in honor cannot be paid for with compensation, it can be by the shedding of blood or a magnanimous forgiveness (Gječov 2001, p. 64). Likewise, there are many articles in the *Kanun* regulating the role of mediators and the reconciliation of the blood. Nevertheless, in *Broken April*, forgiveness and reconciliation appear to be rare events.

The attempt of reconciliation in the case of Berisha and Kryeqyqe is started by an aunt of the Berisha family, who had travelled through seven mountains to stop blood shedding. Gjorg is the only man left in the family besides his father, and therefore she

tries to persuade the family to arrange to pay blood money (compensation) instead of taking revenge, so the family does not become extinct. Her counsel is initially not accepted, but after she insists for a long time, they eventually accept her proposal. Mediation is arranged through the support of a priest.²⁶ The mediators together with the Berisha family (who are owners of the blood) and manage to agree on the amount of the blood money with the Kryeqyqes.²⁷ After that, the father would make a cross on their door and they would drink each other's blood to establish brotherhood. All looks well set for a settlement until an old uncle of Gjorg, who had said nothing until the end says "no!", blocking the settlement.²⁸ The priest announces that the feud must continue saying: "[M]ore blood must flow!" (see Kadare 1990, p. 48).

5. Conclusion

Broken April remains an important novel for understanding blood feuds today. As Kadare conveys, the mechanism of blood feud must be seen in a perspective of *la longue durée*, as tenacious and persistent, while also constantly changing. As we argued, both persistence and change are inevitably related to things such as socio-political conditions, social ethos and values, and mechanisms of conflict resolution.

The regulation of blood feuds in Albania has changed significantly adapting to new circumstances and conditions (Mustafa and Young 2008). It has been argued in particular, that the knowledge of the Kanun among Albanians who practice it has significantly deteriorated (Schwandner-Sievers 1999). Nevertheless, while the knowledge of the Kanun has deteriorated, the phenomenon has not subdued, on the opposite it is a phenomenon on the increase. This tradition of a blood feud as an alternative mode of life is therefore still alive in Albania and highly destabilizing for the present society as the phenomenon has transformed into privatized and individualized forms of vendettas (see Cara and Margjeka 2015). Blood feud is also currently not isolated to the Northern mountain highlands, but since Kadare wrote *Broken April*, has travelled to urban areas and as Kadare himself, towards Europe (see Voell 2003, Operazione Colomba 2017). In the face of weak and unconvincing State authority, but also in the face of anomie and chaos of values, people make recourse to alternative ways of dealing with conflicts, ways which are old and tested.

²⁶ Mediation can be initiated and conducted by individual mediators, by the Council of Elders, and by clergy.

²⁷ "Blood money" that may be paid to the party that has incurred the most casualties in a settlement proceeding is not generally regarded as a very honorable way to settle grievances (Mustafa and Young 2008, p. 101).

²⁸ Successful reconciliation (*pajtimi*) concludes with agreement by the offending family to repay the "blood debt" which may take the form of money or livestock. Of importance in this payment is the perception that the compensation is sufficient to uphold the honor of the offended family within the community. The resulting *besa* is considered to be a lifelong promise by which the user is considered legally bound. Additionally, offering a woman in marriage to the clan who has incurred more blood feud casualties transforms the feuding clan to friends of the family through a marriage alliance. When the reconciliation is achieved, a ritual *buka e pajtimit* (meal of peace) is served by the murderer's family, in their home, to the mediators, the victim, and his relatives and friends. Only after all of the above have been completed and any negotiated payment made should the cross be made on the offender's house as a "sign of reconciled blood" and brotherhood constituted (drinking of each other's blood) (see Gječov 2001, pp. 90-92, Mustafa and Young 2008, p. 103).

Kadare's achievement has been to explore the social ethos and atmospheres of the highlands and the ambivalent mechanisms of the feud caught between meaningfulness and meaninglessness, between lyricism and materialism, between an ethics of justice and profit-making industrial machine. These dissonances and ambivalences persist over time where past and present are reflected in each other. As Kadare knows all too well, great literature continues to remain our hope for a renewed capacity for endurance in an age "torn between the forgotten lessons of the past and the "murky" (Kadare's term) promises of the future" (Raducanu 2020, p. 32). It is therefore the perspective of Law and Literature and the author's historical imagination that, as we have shown in this paper, allow for unique insights that can be made about blood feud, its durability and its universal appeal.

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