

**‘BEAUTY PAGEANT FOR MEN IN THE ACCURSED MOUNTAINS’ (1999)
SYMBOLIC INTERPRETATION: DRESS IN GENDERS’**

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ABSTRACT

In this essay I will analyze Kadare’s novel, this time to Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains (Konkurs bukurie për burrat në Bjeshkët e Namuna) (1999), a novel dealing with homosexual issues. I will consider what changes might have occurred in the ways in which this prominent author portrays gender identity, and what this might suggest about the strength and status of the homosexual orthodoxy as the Albanian society wears on. Looking at Kadare’s story has illustrated how he came to earn a reputation as a sympathetic chronicler of gender identities, and how he can be identified as a writer who notably subverts and challenges the dynamics of cultural memory. Looking here at the shorter novelistic form of Beauty Pageant for Men in The Accursed Mountains will provide opportunity to explore in greater depth the complexity and ambivalence that underpins his concern with homosexuality.

Ismail Kadare has progressed closer to the zone of the dangerous moral taboo in many of his works. Homosexuality in Life, Games and Death of Lul Mazreku (Jeta, loja dhe vdekja e Lul Mazrekut) (2002) and the ‘freezing of the erotic message’ in the love affair of an unsuccessful filmmaker with his ‘stranger’ lover in the novel Shadow: Notes of a Failed Filmmaker (Hija: shënime të një kineasti të dështuar) (2003), add wealth to the characters who are usually avoided. In Chronicles in Stone, (Kronikë në gur) (1971) researchers have found ‘pre-historic sexuality’ (Pipa, 1991: 67). One of the reasons who brought Doruntine (Kush e solli Doruntinën) (1979) was judged mercilessly was the mention of incest, as a likely event of the ballad. The Broadway boys in The Winter of Great Loneliness (Dimri i vetmisë së madhe) (1977) are presented as the expected pollution of youth by the bourgeois impact. In fact, if we refer to Foucault’s ‘the question of pathology’, the characters of Ismail Kadare are not ill people with moral abnormality, but spiritual beings, that pursuit an elementary right to perform (Foucault, 1990: 295).

Also, I want to show that Kadare’s particular type of stylistic excess helps him to explore and exploit cultural memory devices and ideas of fixed identity, gender stereotypes, and linguistic referentiality and thus challenge the concept that ‘nature’ is not a social construct like ‘culture’.

Keywords: Gender identity, cross cultural dressing, symbolic interpretation, and transient gender attachments.