

<https://doi.org/10.37708/ezs.swu.bg.v24i2.15>

**(DIS)AGREEMENT AS A MARKER OF NATIONAL IDENTITY: A LITERARY
ANALYSIS OF ISMAIL KADARE'S TRIAL "THE DISAGREEMENT:
ALBANIA CONFRONTED WITH ITSELF"**

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ABSTRACT: This paper will address issues of our national identity in the literary trial "*Mosmarrëveshja: Shqipëria përballë vetes*" (The Disagreement: Albania Confronted with Itself), written by the outstanding Albanian writer Ismail Kadare. The argument for our national identity is examined through an analysis of empirical evidence both for and against – the agreement or disagreement, the anthem for the nation or the anthem for the flag, the suppressed identity on one hand, and the defiant, stubborn identity on the other. It also delves into the contradictory relationship between the individual and the nation, as opposed to the more tangible one between the individual and the land, the individual differences within a nation, national pride, patriotism, social justice, and the pursuit of a proper balance are explored through an authentic artistic discourse. This is achieved by utilizing mental representation models, the author's personal experiences, and his knowledge of Albania and the Albanians. Literary trials of this kind provide an appropriate approach to present a comprehensive picture of Albania's relationship with itself, between nationalists and deniers, between the nation and the land, and between fellow countrymen and their blood. This paper will examine where this (dis)agreement stands as an identity marker.

KEYWORDS: literary trial, disagreement, identity, nation, national symbols

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Introduction

The Disagreement: Albania Confronted with Itself is one of the literary trials written by the Albanian writer Ismail Kadare, in which he presents models of mental representation and his personal experiences in understanding Albania and the Albanians, through an authentic artistic discourse. Kadare does not create associations, but rather viewpoints from his focalization, which on the one hand are related to his personal experiences of self-knowledge, and on the other, to the reader's own experiences of knowledge—parallels that must inevitably meet at one point: the point of disagreement—an underlying thread that provides the key to interpret the work. The ability to narrate an identity through contradictions, more specifically his national identity, emerges as a “cultural” battle that the author fights in the name of his country's future. This literary trial is built upon powerful national and international symbols, with its essence - (dis)agreement-made evident from the title and serves as the central motif. The essence of the disagreement is represented by three elements: division, quarrels, and misunderstandings, which manifest in the lack of willingness to be together or in the weakening of the will to be together. The author uses the literary trial as the appropriate approach to present a broader picture of Albania's relationship with itself. His vivid life experiences are transformed into compelling narratives, where storytelling intersects with the essence of artistic expression, creating a universe where the uniqueness and art of words are intertwined. Research on narrative identity has particularly focused on the thematic elements of personal stories, with a common set of themes that lead to vital narratives. Such a thematic transition is marked by denial—(dis)agreement—while sub-themes focus on the contamination of traitors, losses, failures, hurt, and disappointment. The author's narrative power is so strong that it creates an autonomous narrative and influences the reader's perceptions. Beyond the content of powerful symbols, storytelling is essential for understanding the narrated identity. Kadare offers the reader a convincing communication, drawing them into a very close relationship between the author and the reader, deconstructing the stories within a cultural, social, and historical context, and even offering different approaches to the same issue.

Literature Review

Understanding Kadare's 'The Disagreement' through Literary and Cultural Lenses

The question of national identity has long been a central concern in literary studies, with scholars across disciplines exploring how cultural, historical, and social forces shape collective self-perception. Hall (1996, p. 394) argues that identity is not a static essence but a dynamic process, continuously formed through historical experiences and social interactions. This perspective is particularly relevant for analyzing Kadare's *The Disagreement: Albania Confronted with Itself*, which presents Albanian identity as fluid, contested, and constantly negotiated rather than fixed or monolithic. From a narrative-theoretical

standpoint, Ricoeur (1991, p. 78) emphasizes that individuals and communities construct meaning through storytelling. Narratives allow the integration of events and experiences into a coherent framework, providing a lens through which suppressed and defiant identities can be understood. Similarly, Barstad et al. (2019) underline the elusive nature of identity in both literature and life stories, reinforcing the idea that identity is never fixed but continuously renegotiated.

The theme of disagreement also aligns with Bhabha's (1994, p. 22) concept of cultural hybridity and the "third space," wherein identities emerge through tension, negotiation, and contradiction. Kadare's depiction of conflict—whether between symbols such as the anthem and the flag, between individual and collective interests, or among citizens and their historical memory—demonstrates that disagreement is constitutive of national identity, shaping it rather than undermining it.

In addition, national symbols play a crucial role in this negotiation. Smith (1991, p. 31) notes that emblems such as the flag, the anthem, or historical figures carry layers of shared memory and emotional resonance. Kadare's portrayal of these symbols shows them not merely as instruments of unity but as arenas of contestation, reflecting the ongoing dialogue between history and contemporary national consciousness. Within the Albanian context, Clayer (2012, p. 56) highlights how national identity has been molded by a combination of political, religious, and cultural influences, evolving through historical contingencies and societal change. Kadare's *The Disagreement* mirrors these complexities, revealing Albania's struggle to reconcile its memory, history, and cultural representation, while negotiating between conflicting narratives of nationhood.

Overall, examining the intersections of literary trial, disagreement, national identity, and symbolic representation illuminates how Kadare's work functions as a forum for redefining collective identity. *The Disagreement: Albania Confronted with Itself* exemplifies literature as an active space in which narrative, discourse, and symbols converge to expose the contradictions and tensions inherent in post-communist Albanian society. As Altun (2023) emphasizes, literature plays an important role in shaping both individual and cultural identities, making it clear that the process of identity is not only historical but also narrative.

Methodology

Combining Narrative and Discourse Analysis in Kadare's Literary Trial

This study employs a qualitative approach, integrating narrative and discourse analysis to examine how Albanian national identity is constructed and negotiated in Kadare's *The Disagreement*. Narrative analysis allows for tracing how events, conflicts, and characters are organized into a coherent storyline that highlights tensions between suppressed and defiant identities (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 79). In the text, Kadare stages the nation itself as a courtroom, where collective memory, political ideals, and individual perspectives collide, exposing contradictions between citizens and the state, history and land, and varying

interpretations of patriotism and justice. Discourse analysis complements this approach by focusing on Kadare's rhetorical strategies, language choices, and symbolic motifs. Elements such as the anthem, the flag, and Skanderbeg's figure are not simply national symbols; they are instruments of narrative negotiation, reflecting contested claims over what it means to be Albanian. Kadare's use of irony, allegory, and dialogue is essential in illustrating the interplay between consensus and disagreement within the nation.

Additionally, this methodology incorporates a historical and symbolic lens, situating the literary trial within the socio-political transformations of post-communist Albania (Clayer, 2012, p. 50). By analysing moments where characters challenge historical narratives or institutional perspectives, the study captures the nation's struggle to reconcile conflicting memories and ideals. This approach views identity as both a cultural performance and a narrative construct, where disagreement itself emerges as a defining marker of national identity.

By combining narrative and discourse analysis, the study enables a multi-layered reading of *The Disagreement*, demonstrating how Kadare employs literary form, character interactions, and symbolic imagery to negotiate, question, and redefine Albanian identity. The methodology ensures that both explicit and implicit tensions, such as the contrast between patriotic ideals and social realities, or between individual conscience and collective norms, are systematically explored, providing a comprehensive understanding of the literary trial as a mechanism for reflecting and shaping national consciousness.

Scrutinizing significance from Kadare's literary trial

The Disagreement – The Symbolism of the Title as a Key to Interpretation

The processing of these experiences of self-knowledge comes to the reader as a surge of imagination and arguments, creating new figures and realities, as products initiated by the multiple suggestions of the author. Reading seems to lead the reader into a maze of initial interpretations, aiming to uproot previous experiences of knowledge. Almost on every page, the reader encounters a new understanding/approach to the historical and political reality of the country. Kadare does not create associations, but rather viewpoints from his focalization, which on one hand are linked to his personal experiences of self-knowledge, and on the other, to the reader's experiences of knowledge—as parallels that must inevitably meet at one point: the point of disagreement—an underlying thread that, as the Arbëresh scholar Matteo Mandalá expresses in the preface of this literary work, “gives us the key to interpret it” right from the title (Kadare, 2012 cited in Mandalá, preface).

Kadare's ability to narrate an identity through contradictions—specifically his national identity—emerges as a harmonious relationship between the narrator (the author himself) and the reader. The reader, in turn, creates his or her own identity by integrating their own experiences of knowledge into the stories being told, as a “cultural” battle that the author fights on behalf of his country's future.

In the floods of the literary stream, there can be found everything that is related to the nation and our country, from our national hero, Gjergj Kastriot Skanderbeg, to the various political regimes that have substituted each other; almost everything is connected to Albania, framed within a literary experiment.

How identity processes are revealed is highly dynamic and often results from negotiations and social interactions. “Identity negotiation processes” refer to actions in which individuals in a society “create, maintain, and change their identities” (Swann & Bosson, 2008, p. 465). However, in the case of the Albanians, the opposite happened: the bright figures of the nation were tarnished by the Albanians themselves, yet were honored by outsiders. Specifically:

Let’s return to Europe. More precisely, to its memory. Was there any reason to not forget Skanderbeg? The first thought that arose in such cases, especially in the Balkans, was that Europe, as manipulative as it was (to use the softest characterization for it), did nothing without an interest. The European interest in the defensive role of Skanderbeg was quite clear. The praises for him, the ceremonial expectations, the anthems, the titles, the music, and the bells were all explainable. What was hard to explain was why the music, the praises, and the bells continued long after everything had ended. Yet, Europe remembered him. Half a century after his death, Europe remembered him even more, and then even more strongly ever after (Kadare, 2006, p. 53-54).

Identity is a broad and delicate issue for countries like ours, addressed by the author through theses and hypotheses of historical significance, even extending to the verses of national poets, all analyzed from a fresh perspective deeply rooted in the psychology and mentality of the Albanians. Our identity appears to be layered on several levels, even though the core theme is closely connected to Albania and the Albanians. In the literary work, one encounters concrete historical facts, written in the style of a historian, ranging from reflections on the figure of Skanderbeg during the era of the Great Time (Moti i Madh) to a more contemporary perspective on the current reality. This thorough engagement with identity issues “is as much about becoming as it is about being, and belongs to the future as much as to the past” (Hall, 1996, p. 435).

This literary trial is built on powerful national and international symbols, with its core (dis)agreement emerging right from the title and serving as the main motif and the key to interpreting it. Such a vision does nothing more than expand the boundaries of thought that the author defended in his other work: *The European Identity of Albanians* (Kadare, 2006). In *The Disagreement*, the perspective is more analytical, sometimes harsh, pessimistic, and at other times optimistic and calm. The title suggests the paradigm of duality, not of an individual, but of a society. Thus, this book “applies the paradigm of duality to a societal and cultural body different from that of the individual; it is distinguished by unparalleled intellectual courage compared to his peers who have dealt with the nature and character of other peoples” (Kadare, 2012, as cited in Mandalá, preface).

The temporal scope is broad, dense, and treated logically concerning the (dis)agreement, as an “abstract” subject that is both nuanced and foggy. Kadare states during the book’s promotion that this disagreement is the disagreement we live with every day... “I believe you have all felt it and experienced it every moment that there is a disagreement! I have tried to explain it...”

If we refer to “Fjalor i Madh i Gjuhës Shqipe 2026” for the word “disagreement”², the following meanings are presented:

1. Lack of agreement, disagreement, or contradiction of opinions, viewpoints, goals, actions, etc., between two or more people or parties; division, contention.
2. An incomplete, improper, or incorrect understanding of something said or proposed by another; misunderstanding³.

By inference, three elements emerge: disruption, contentions, and misunderstandings as the core of disagreement, which appear in the lack of willingness to be together or in the weakening of the latter to be together. In this literary trial, Kadare seems to open the doors that he initiated in his previous work “*The European Identity of Albanians*” (Kadare, 2006), implying that they form a meaningful continuation in addressing the issue of the Albanian identity to its conclusion. In Kadare’s case, it seems that there is no interdependence but rather an “extension of meaning” (Kristeva, 1980, pp. 64–91) from one trial to the next. Just as Roland Barthes (1966) expresses, “the meaning of an artistic work is not necessarily sown within itself,” the same is true for Kadare’s works, which address the issue of the Albanian identity. They come as seeds sown in the first and sprouted in the second. Moreover, in an interview with Mimoza Cika-Kelmendi, journalist for *Deutsche Welle*, Kadare remarked:

I believe that most Albanians agree that Albanian identity is homogeneous; it is the same, it is part of European identity. There can be no half-Albanian identity, nor a fractured yet continuous process of identity formation, or modified Albanian identity because of a long history of slavery. We have experienced a classic external slavery, which was the Ottoman slavery, and an internal slavery with two faces: the Albanian communist slavery in Albania and the communist Serbian slavery along with the slavery of the Yugoslav monarchy in Kosovo. There exists a bad theory, I would say, which claims that

² *Mosmarrëveshje*: 1. Pikë, çështje ose situatë për të cilën nuk bie dakord dhe nuk jepet miratim; mungesë konsensusi ose miratimi; mospajtim a mospërputhje mendimesh, pikëpamjesh, qëllimesh, veprimesh etj. 2. Konflikt ndërmjet dy a më shumë njerëzve, palëve etj.; përçarje, grindje; 3. Paqartësi dhe keqkuptim në të kuptuarin e diçkaje të thënë nga dikush tjetër. (See: Fjalor i Madh i Gjuhës Shqipe 2026 — Fjalori Online | fjalori.online | Akademia e Shkencave e Shqipërisë)

³ Ismail Kadare used the word *disagreement* already in the title of his work, turning it into an abstract concept that reflects everyday discord, experienced as a universal and existential phenomenon (Kadare, 2012).

these heavy historical accidents have modified and changed Albanian identity... So all those tales about the modified identity remain just tales...⁴

Besides, he explicitly states in the literary experiment *The Disagreement...*:

On stage, there were three places, more precisely, two states and a ghost—the dissolved Ottoman Empire—alongside which, for no reason, Albania found itself. And as often happens in states of anxiety, those created by disagreement, stronger than the Greek and Serbian neighbors, was precisely the ghost. Even this might seem somewhat exaggerated, especially in the trial of a man of letters (Kadare, 2006, pp. 41-42).

Kadare's *The Disagreement* ultimately demonstrates that Albanian identity is not a static inheritance but a dynamic process shaped by historical ruptures, symbolic reinterpretations, and cultural self-examination. By staging disagreement as both theme and structure, he reveals identity as a continuum of disruptions and negotiations, extending meaning across his literary trials. In this way, the work underscores that national identity is sustained not through uniformity, but through the ongoing dialogue between memory, history, and collective imagination.

The trial is divided into three parts, also titled in the subtitle (“A Literary Trial in Three Parts”)

Kadare's division of *The Disagreement: Albania Confronted with Itself* into three distinct parts—ranging from the cyclical reflections on the national anthem in Part One, to the author's meta-commentary in Part Two, and the historical appendix in Part Three—illustrates the fragmented yet dynamic nature of Albanian identity. This unconventional structure resists the traditional linearity of literary essays and instead mirrors the discontinuities of national self-perception, where identity is constantly renegotiated through memory, history, and symbolism. As Altun (2023) emphasizes, literature plays a crucial role in shaping both individual and cultural identities, not merely reflecting them but actively constructing new frameworks of belonging. Kadare's literary trial exemplifies this process: by weaving together personal recollections, national symbols, and historical traumas, he demonstrates that disagreement itself becomes a narrative device through which identity is articulated. The fragmented architecture of the text thus embodies the contested and evolving character of Albanian nationhood, underscoring literature's capacity to transform cultural self-understanding.

Kadare begins with the national anthem, reflecting on the childhood perceptions of the time, as he also does in other artistic works, reminding us of the childhood reflections in *“Chronicle in Stone”*, and making it clear to us that “the imagination was, of course, mistaken,” since “Albania was the only country in Europe that had initially named its ‘anthem’- what was usually called royal, state, or national anthem—as the ‘anthem of the flag’...” (Kadare, 2012). Many people,

⁴ See: <https://www.dw.com/sq/kadare-jam-evropianist-i-vendosur/a-3435936>

at different times, believed that everything was done for it. The flag was imagined as something that could be taken away from Albania. In fact, among all the coveted values, such as the coast, the mountains, the minerals, Skanderbeg, and the Albanian language, the flag undoubtedly occupied the top of the list” (Kadare, 2012). The analysis of the national anthem comes through a discourse that is both poetic and philosophical. Building powerful symbolism on a seemingly simple discourse is a craft of the author. The lyricist of the anthem, Aleks Drenova, wrote—or more precisely translated—the words around 1907 or 1908, a time when Albania did not yet exist as a state; it was the period when another immigrant, Faik Konica, was exploring medieval Balkan heraldry to uncover the early flag of the Kastrioti’s (Kadare, 2012). Konica and Fishta left us written, despairing messages that Albania’s enemies were, in fact, the Albanians themselves. The author describes the anthem’s lyrics as being hastily composed, with a melody borrowed from an Austro-Germanic style, but over time, its origins would quickly be forgotten (Kadare, 2012). Another disagreement (or lack of agreement) is that the anthem was meant to be created for the *state*, not for the *flag*. The cyclical circle begins and ends with the *anthem*.

The literary trial is the right approach to present a broader picture of Albania’s relationship with itself on one side, the nationalists, and on the other, the deniers. Kadare transforms vital experiences into convincing narratives, where storytelling intersects with the essence of artistic expression, as a universe where the uniqueness and the art of words intertwine. In this work, “*the author offers a series of events, characters, and settings, allowing the reader to immerse themselves in experience*” (Ezra, 2023) while including several essential elements such as the plot, the setting, and the characters—keeping the readers engaged while also offering them a deeper understanding of the world and mindset of his fellow countrymen. Through personal stories and experiences, this literary test helps shape a connection between the author and the reader, as a sense of empathy. The conflict—arising from disagreement—moves the story forward, creating both emotion and tension to keep the reader engaged.

Disagreement?! What does it consist of? In the connection between the land and blood? It constitutes the relationship between the nation-land and fellow countrymen-blood, relationships that are fatal for the Albanians. Such quotations, sentences, and statements—sometimes true, sometimes fabricated—carry the same relevance in Kadare’s book. The Albanian identity is seen by the author as a process that is always changing, determined by historical or political circumstances. This literary test requires the author to present accurate historical data, blending them with a well-structured narrative while reflecting on the values, beliefs, and mindset of the Albanians. The exploration of identity shapes the effort to differentiate and integrate the writer’s personal feelings about his belonging, as well as the different social dimensions. This confrontation, then, on one side, *identity as a collective similarity*, and on the other, *identity as individuality*, are presented through narrative configurations that derive meaning from the chaos of reality. Kadare’s interpretation happens through self-understanding—as a form of

mediation. At this point, one might say that Kadare has played the role of an ambassador for our national identity in the international arena, reflecting through his works the customs, traditions, and rituals of his homeland—and not only that—but the “deniers” have darkened the reputation of this nation. They have written even against our national hero, Gjergj Kastrioti.

One of the other vital issues of our identity, extensively addressed in *The Disagreement*, is the issue of the national flag. This narrated identity is connected to the autobiographical memories of the author, often influenced by his understanding and emotions. However, as subjective as these memories may be, they also serve an objective function, as they are self-representative of our nation in the international arena. By using personal memories to create and preserve a relationship between himself and his country, the author states that during his childhood, specifically between the ages of three and eight, Albania changed its *flag* four times (from a temporal perspective, very significant changes within a short period—almost one flag per year): *the kingdom flag*, as the oldest Albanian flag; *the Albanian flag as part of the Italian kingdom*, to which were added the Roman licitor’s axes; *the flag of sovereign Albania*, an ally of Germany, purged of Roman symbols; *the flag of communist Albania*, to which the five-pointed star symbol was added; and *the post-communist flag*, without any additional symbols.

The flag as a symbol, serves as a return to identity because it was the flag that originated in the era of Skanderbeg. Through that flag, the Albanians regained their national pride, lost during the Ottoman occupation. The royal shadow was naturally given by the black eagle, its claws, and especially its double-headed form (Kadare, 2012, p. 16). Furthermore, Kadare does not limit himself to comparing within the same type but also moves on to comparisons with the flags of other nations, undoubtedly elevating our flag, which, according to him, was the oldest, the most captivating, with the blackbird in the center. It appeared so solitary and so dignified, assuming that both solitude and the heavy shadow were present. The author allocates the double-headed eagle as the noblest bird, with which, on the brink of the great world war, the Albanians had managed to seize the precious emblem, just as one would claim a diamond amidst the chaos. All this symbolic load has given rise to a cult for the flag, as Albania was the only country in the world that had named its national anthem “The Anthem of the Flag.” Thus, we have a chain of symbols: postage stamps with the double-headed eagle, the flag with the double-headed eagle, and now the anthem for this flag with the double-headed eagle.

The flag was the first symbol of the state, while the second was *the anthem*. It is concluded that our national flag has changed whenever political regimes in Albania have changed, even for short periods; whereas the anthem has remained stoic, unchanged, though not completely intact, as during the communist era in Albania, there were attempts to replace it. However, the competitions to select a new anthem had “such slow” juries that their decisions were delayed so much that were eventually ignored.

The a-like Literary Trial

This Literary Trial is presented as an attempt to provide a general overview without aiming to offer absolute solutions to issues of national importance regarding Albania and Albanians. It is based on fact, truth, and reality, not fiction. The essay is distinguished by the logical foundation of the topics it addresses and the detailed arguments it reflects, openly and boldly presenting the author's thoughts.

This Literary Trial does not follow the traditional model of a literary essay. A traditional trial consists of three parts: an introduction, content development, and conclusions (closing), where everything is tied to the initiation of an event, so there is a beginning, development, and an end (conclusion). Structurally, this literary trial does indeed have three parts, but they do not align in content with the introduction, development, and conclusions; thus, they do not conform to the traditional structure of a literary essay. The essay *The Dispute: Albania Confronting Itself* has its own structure, which I would call a unique structure. The first part consists of several literary trials that begin with the national anthem and end with it as well, forming a cyclical loop of argument and thought that is revisited throughout the essay's content. Another structural deviation is that the first part constitutes the largest volume, which ideally should have been the second part, as it would normally be associated with the development. The second part begins and ends with the author's notes on the first part, while the third part serves as an appendix, an additional structural deviation. The entire literary trial concludes with the author's notes in the third part, thus notes in the appendix. This appendix serves as a conclusion to the horrors and communist murders, often presented as suicides. In the appendix, since Kadare briefly mentions the communist regime in the first part, histories of horrors are laid out from a different perspective, as the author himself notes, making them more comprehensible and including some mysteries still unexplained to this day.

The introduction intertwines with the conclusion: "This book is neither history nor science, but simply literature and a literary trial," says the writer Kadare in the presentation of this book. According to him, "This book belongs to everyone."

The first part of the book begins with the essay "On the Old State Anthem" and concludes with the essay "Epilogue with God." In terms of content, it opens with the national anthem and ends with it, creating a cyclical loop that repeats itself. This structure, on one hand, suggests a recurring cycle, and on the other, it does not lead to a conclusion but to unresolved issues that remain in suspense even today. Thus, the first part opens and closes with the anthem and its rather absurd verse, as it's unclear where Albanians heard God speaking—and, above all, not about uniting nations (for peace) but about extinguishing nations (for war). This is why Kadare titled the concluding essay of the first part "Epilogue with God," where, according to the writer, Albanians had posed a question and made a promise to God—or, in truth, to their conscience—and had been waiting for over

a century for an answer. Most of the literary essays are logically connected, and where one ends, the other begins.

Development of the content: Kadare elaborates on issues that he will make the focus of his writing, highlighting and arguing them, thus forming the content of this literary trial. The arguments clarify the book's content for the reader. This literary trial is organized into several essays, which may or may not be interconnected. Each trial contributes to the overall information that the book develops, helping to complete the entirety of the trial's content, as one trial may or may not lead to the next.

The main content is Albania and everything related to it:

- There are Albanians and anti-Albanians – a high number of deniers, yet Albania would be made despite the Devil and the Albanians themselves (Kadare, 2012, p. 45);

- Nearly all major Albanian political figures are mentioned and analyzed (Fan Noli, King Zog, Haxhi Qamili, Enver Hoxha, Ramiz Alia, Sali Berisha, and Fatos Nano) as well as international figures who played a role in our country (Prince Wied, Benito Mussolini);

- All Albanian Renaissance figures are mentioned and analyzed, particularly Naim (who was called the national poet; according to Kadare, the first Albanian poet had a different view, even though he was called “honey-tongued” by his contemporaries, he wrote astonishing verses);

- Albanian poets and writers, such as Asdreni, Migjeni, Fishta, Konica, and F. S. Noli, are also featured.

- There are deep analyses of the verses of our poets, which express another side of Albania, the grim side (the verses analyzed are: “For God Himself said with His mouth / That nations perish upon the earth / But Albania will live on / For it, for it we fight” – Asdreni; “All nations rejoice, but why does Albania not rejoice / The fate of Albania rose / Like the dead from the grave... / Took the path of Asia / Running like a madman... / Our fate rose from the pit / Like the dead from the grave / Took the path of Europe / Running like a madman... / O mountains of Albania, that hold your head high / You spread terror and fear, devouring the skies and the clouds” – N. Frashëri; SKANDERBEU: - “So, what about the Albanians of Albania?” THE DEVIL: - “What about them?... As the enemy wants them!” – Gj. Fishta; “O miserable Albanians / *Ç'u ka marrë koka erë?*” – A.Z. Çajupi);

- It is the natural Albania and its issue, namely Greater Albania, more specifically, the three Albanias:

1. London Albania (refers explicitly to the Albanian borders fragmented in 1913 by the London Conference, which is why Kadare calls it London Albania) = Territorial Albania (the Albanians of Albania);

2. Atlantic Albania (it is the Albania that was lost due to the partition) = Kosovo (the Albanians of Kosovo);

3. Phantom Albania = the one that wandered like a mist in Macedonia (the Albanians of Macedonia);

It is Albania, divided into three parts, from which emerges a thoughtful Albania, which is unlike the others... It is Albania that “puzzles” the mind, a phrasing that may seem strange, but which once again accurately demonstrates the not-so-friendly relationship the Albanian has with his mind (Kadare, 2009, p. 96);

- It is our national hero (the Kastrioti File) and the continuous efforts of deniers to diminish his figure and not only his, but that of all Albanians, by diminishing his; it is the stoicism and invincibility of Skanderbeg – the story of the captain who didn’t drown with the ship (Kadare, 2009, p. 55);

- They are the anti-Kastriots, who seek to tarnish Skanderbeg’s image;

- They are the main historical figures in the founding of the Albanian state, George Kastrioti Skanderbeg and Ismail Qemali;

- They are all the powerful symbols of our nation, which we could also call chain symbols because they are treated in such a manner (the flag, the two-headed eagle, the anthem, the national stamps, the national hero, the Albanian language, the cross...);

- Lastly, there are the dark enigmas.

Analysis of Findings

The examination of Kadare’s *The Disagreement: Albania Confronted with Itself* shows how the author opens a critical conversation between Albania’s historical experiences and its ongoing search for identity. The work suggests that national identity is not inherited in a fixed form but emerges as a process shaped by memory, trauma, and the country’s dialogue with Europe. Kadare highlights the tension between tradition and modernity, between isolation and integration, and between the way Albanians perceive themselves and the way they are perceived from outside.

At the same time, the text places Albania’s inner conflicts within a broader cultural and political horizon, arguing that genuine self-understanding requires confronting the unresolved aspects of history. In this sense, Kadare’s book is not only a literary narrative but also a form of social commentary, where irony, allegory, and historical analogy become tools for rethinking the national story within a European frame.

Notably, the findings confirm that Kadare’s reflection on identity goes beyond questions of literary style. His approach resonates with cultural theories that perceive identity as a continuous process, deeply conditioned by historical experience and power relations.

Henceforth, from the present analysis, three points emerge:

- *Identity as Process: The Disagreement*, Albanian identity is portrayed as fluid, contested, and always in the making.

- *Literature as Mediation*: Kadare uses literature as a bridge between imagination and political reality, offering insights into Albania's dilemmas.

- *European Belonging*: The work insists on Albania's cultural and historical link with Europe, showing both the necessity and the difficulty of this connection.

In conclusion, *The Disagreement* demonstrates how literature can illuminate the complexities of national identity. Kadare's reflections invite readers to see Albania's past and present not as isolated fragments but as part of a wider dialogue with Europe and the world.

Conclusions

The present research examines the Albanian national identity through Ismail Kadare's literary trial *Mosmarrëveshja: Shqipëria përballë vetes (The Disagreement: Albania Confronted with Itself)*. Using a narrative and discourse analysis approach, the study explores how symbols such as the anthem, the flag, and the figure of Skanderbeg serve as contested markers of identity. Findings suggest that Kadare's work reflects both suppressed and defiant forms of identity, revealing tensions between collective memory, political history, and cultural representation. The analysis contributes to debates on literature as a vehicle for identity formation in post-communist societies.

The final results of Kadare's writing are usually placed at the end, but in *The Dispute: Albania Facing Itself*, they appear each time the author concludes his arguments and hypotheses. Every logical argument that Kadare presents is a conclusion shaped in the form of a literary trial. From time to time, the author arrives at conclusions we may not have heard before. Through this argumentative literary work, the author aims to persuade the reader, presenting numerous arguments and facts in a manner that also reflects his stance on the controversial issues he addresses.

The third part, specifically "A Return Back (Appendix)," serves as a powerful conclusion to the entire literary trial. In the essay "Intermezzo with Two Murders in the Background," the essence of everything the author has discussed—and has left undiscussed—is encapsulated, all summarized in a single sentence, specifically in its opening paragraph: *This intermezzo may be necessary to understand, from another viewpoint, a more graspable one, some of the disturbances, or rather, mysteries, still unexplained in contemporary Albanian life. Briefly, to explain them differently, using an adverb considered so modern today, as emphasized in the preceding chapter.* Although this intermezzo covers a limited time: the winter between 1943 and 1944, it essentially connects to other truths, one hundred, two hundred, and even six hundred years old. In it, we will find a part of that mechanism that has produced the prologues and epilogues of histories, credible and false testimonies, true and false myths, myth-makers and

de-mystifiers, equally true and false, masks and counter-masks, which often cover not only the face of a character but of an entire era (Kadare, 2009, p. 268). This sentence encapsulates the essence of the whole of this literary essay, as the double murder occurring here, according to the author, is linked to an archetypal crime. The intermezzo itself is an insertion between events; an adaptation placed among the other subjects of this literary essay. However, Kadare presents this intermezzo as a conclusion, summarizing the information provided and offering an additional perspective on this literary trial.

Furthermore, the characteristic adaptations, which include a character's motivations—numerous in this literary trial—as well as the concerns and developmental strategies of life, are used to describe the individual within their own time, the place, namely Albania, and the social and political roles that not only held significance when they occurred but have also left traces in our days and will continue to play a role in the future.

Significantly, narrative identity plays a key role in shaping psychological well-being. Researchers often focus on how the themes within personal stories connect to mental health. One of the main areas of interest depicts themes that emerge in these life narratives. Many personal stories feature common themes like denial or conflict, often illustrated by experiences of betrayal, loss, failure, harm, and disappointment. These themes help structure the story and highlight the storyteller's power to shape the narrative significantly. The storyteller can create an independent, compelling narrative that deeply influences the readers' perception of the story. Beyond the content itself, storytelling is crucial in understanding identity. Notably, the works of Kadare demonstrate how storytelling can establish a strong bond between the author and the reader. His stories unfold within a specific cultural, social, and historical context, offering multiple perspectives on the same issue, which enriches the reader's experience and understanding.

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