

Landscape as a reflection of internal conflict in broken april



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The blood feud is an integral part of the society of modern Northern Albania, as it has been for many years. While times are changing, the blood feud continues to persist and endure in Northern Albania, but not everyone agrees with it. Many young children are dragged into these decade-old conflicts, through no fault of their own, and they are subject to a life on the run. While attempts have been made to change this part of the Albanian society, not much progress has been made, and many of these children continue to suffer. The story of their lives is what author Ismail Kadare hopes to reveal through his novel *Broken April*. The novel describes the story of a young man named Gjorg. Gjorg, who does not want to take any part in the blood feud but is forced to do so to uphold the honor and dignity of his family and carry on the ancient tradition. However, Gjorg's heart is not up for it, and author Ismail Kadare makes this clear. In his 1978 novel, *Broken April*, Kadare employs vivid imagery of the Albanian landscape to convey Gjorg's internal conflict and the ever-changing feelings in relation to the blood feud he battles with. Kadare does this in order to help us better understand the plight of Gjorg and all those in the real world facing this same situation.

From the very beginning of the book, specific details about the surroundings shed light to what Gjorg is feeling about the blood feud and his own role within it. Gjorg starts off the story very anxious, impatiently waiting to avenge his brother's death by killing Zef Kryeqyqe. Ismail Kadare formulates surroundings that illustrate both Gjorg's outward and inward feelings of his situation: forceful partaking in the blood feud. By describing the plateau with words like "desolation" and "cold", the readers can better relate and sympathize with Gjorg, because of the negative connotation these words

carry. Another detail used to contribute to the somberness of the situation is the darkening of the sky. The darkening is a metaphor for Gjorg's reluctance to partake in the blood feud simply in the name of honor and tradition. The more daylight that escapes, the more unwilling Gjorg is to go through with the killing and questions what he is about to do and whether it is worth what will follow. With a growing darkness, Gjorg grows more impatient and has more doubts about what he is expected to do. Furthermore, the inner turmoil that Gjorg feels is accentuated by the "wild pomegranates scattered through the brush-covered space on both sides of the road" (Kadare 7). The wild pomegranate bush is a motif that Kadare utilizes throughout the book to show the reader the tremendous guilt Gjorg feels in being a part of the never-ending cycle of the blood feud. Gjorg sees these wild pomegranate bushes as bearing witness to his horrible deed and throughout the book, they serve as a reminder of what he has done. Kadare uses this description of the landscape again, and when Gjorg sees them, "he had thought [they] would be pitiless to him," because they continue to serve as a reminder of his killing, showing the reader that Gjorg will always regret what he has done (Kadare 157). Even when Gjorg knows his life was coming to an end, he continues to be preoccupied, which goes to show his inner conflict: not wanting to be a part of the blood feud. Prior to carrying out the killing, Gjorg still has an insurmountable feeling of guilt and sadness. This can once again be related to the pomegranate bush; the color of pomegranates, red, represents anger and chaos as opposed to the white of snow which is representative of peace and tranquility. The juxtaposition of colors that Kadare creates in the setting is reflective of how the blood feud is impacting Gjorg's life by descending it into a state of inner conflict. This stark

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difference in his life further demonstrates the internal turmoil that Gjorg experiences by being forced to be someone who he is not; he reluctantly shows obedience to the *Kanun* despite disagreeing with and not wanting to follow it. The juxtaposed symbols show Gjorg's transformation and convey Gjorg's emotional status. As the novel progresses, Gjorg only continues to experience more emotional turmoil.

Kadare uses the description of the setting on Gjorg's journey to the Kulla of Orosh to represent his inner conflict. He slowly transitions from being unwilling to emotionally numb and stoic. While starting for his journey, Gjorg sees "a church bell [glinting] weakly in the distance," which shows us his state of loneliness because he does not know what will happen to him or how much longer he will be alive (Kadare 52). Moreover, Gjorg travels on an empty path "for miles [in which] the landscape was empty" (Kadare 52). The lack of concern and importance that Gjorg feels directed at his culture and family history is represented by the bareness that engulfs Gjorg as he makes his journey towards the end of his life. A dreary and monotonous feel of the environment and of Gjorg's emotions is further manifested by Gjorg describing the castle of the Orosh of Kulla as "[nothing] but a mere rag of fog darker than the others" (Kadare 53). The castle is something that is seen as oppressive to Gjorg because he does not believe in what it stands for, and because of the shame and loneliness he feels, he views the castle simply as a somber manifestation of his guilt and regret. In doing so, Kadare explains the extent to which the blood feud had affected Gjorg by symbolizing his apathy affliction following the killing. While continuing his journey, Gjorg notes that "the emptiness of the road on either side [seems] emptier still"

(Kadare 53). By emphasizing the emptiness, Kadare exemplifies Gjorg's emotionally numbed state of mind. Even as Gjorg approaches closer to the castle, its appearance remains unclear, showing the reader how confused and conflicted Gjorg is feeling internally. He is left feeling this way because he is forced to be in a tradition that he wants to be no part of. This clearly describes George's hesitation to carry out his "duties". Kadare's employment of the unclearness of the castle and the fog that covers the land explains the emptiness and lack of emotion in Gjorg.

As Gjorg realizes that he will die at the hands of the Kryeqyqu's, he reaches a sense of complacent understanding about his fate, which is reflected by details about the surrounding land. Gjorg chooses to make the most of what time he has left, and realizes that there is nothing more he can do. When coming to this realization, Gjorg is able to have more internal rest and tranquility after all the turmoil it had gone through. While Gjorg is living the last free morning he has, during which he does not need to fear death, "he [raises] his head in order to find the sun; the clouds, high in the sky, covered it over, but one could tell its position" (Kadare 203). The scene is described as very pleasant and tranquil to serve as a direct reflection of how Gjorg is feeling and what he is thinking at the moment. This captures George's transition to a peaceful state of mind. Of course, Gjorg never wanted to be a part of the blood feud, and he never wanted to kill another man, but he faces what is in front of him and knows what will happen will happen. Gjorg knows that he only has until the afternoon and then the Kryeqyqu family can kill him, and the sun shows him that it is about midday. Rather than becoming alarmed, Gjorg simply keeps walking. Therefore, the sun represents a

departure of George's inner conflicts as he comes to terms with his destiny. The road is also said to be "drowning in the light," (Kadare 204) showing us that George's complacent is taking over, and while he still may not agree with the blood feud, he does not have as large of a problem with it anymore. This, however cannot be maintained as he nears the end of his life. Gjorg sees that the waterfall "current [is] jumbled and without majesty" (Kadare 206). The water lacks stability, much like Gjorg will soon feel as he truly realizes that there is no escaping his death. He knows that he is getting nearer to the end as there is nothing he can do about it. Gjorg sees some "roses [growing] a little darker," which highlights George's want to escape his fate as he realizes that little by little, his life is coming to an end (Kadare 207). The details about the landscape show how Gjorg felt at the end of his life. From Gjorg's story, the reader can better understand how trapped those who have to experience these blood feuds everyday must feel.

Kadare conveys Gjorg's emotional turmoil by providing the reader with vivid imagery of the surroundings that directly reflect his feelings. This allows the reader to know how Gjorg feels about the blood feud and its effect on his life. Gjorg is a representation of not just those who are currently in a blood feud, but a representation of all those who have ever been subject to unwillingly partake in this tradition. Gjorg's story is one that parallels many others, and by reading *Broken April*, one can understand and empathize with lives so different from their own.

Works Cited

- Kadare, Ismail. *Broken April*. New Amsterdam Books, 1990.