

Calamity and Immunity

HOSTILITY, HOSPITALITY, AND AUTOIMMUNITY IN KADARE'S *THE FALL OF THE STONE CITY*

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Abstract

*The paper explores Ismail Kadare's novel *The Fall of The Stone City* from the perspective of Derrida's concepts of hospitality and autoimmunity. According to Derrida, the concepts of unconditional hospitality and autoimmunity overlap in their absolute openness to the Other, which potentially constitutes both a risk and an opportunity in the context of deconstructing and destabilizing the binary opposition between friendship and enmity. The aim of the paper is to show the relevance of this point in a discussion of key events in the novel. More specifically, the invasion of Albania by German troops and the disastrous regime of Stalinist communist partisans will be analyzed through Derrida's concepts of hospitality and autoimmunity. In addition, the encounter of the German commander with his old college friend, Albanian Big Dr Gurameto, during the invasion of Albania is seen as suggestive of the breakdown of the clear distinction between friendship and enmity. The arrival of the German commander, who is Big Dr Gurameto's old friend but an enemy in the eye of the public, will be examined also in view of Derrida's concept of arrivant, as well as of his concept of hospitality. In this sense, this paper will discuss the destabilizing of the binary opposition between friendship and enmity, and its engagement with hospitality and autoimmunity.*

Keywords: Derrida, hospitality, autoimmunity, deconstructing, friendship, enmity

Ismail Kadare, the best-known Albanian author internationally and a laureate of a number of prestigious literary awards, wrote much of his work under the Communist dictatorship of Enver Hoxha. Like many other Albanian writers who experienced control, repressions, and often imprisonment under the communist regime, Kadare suffered threats and had to compromise in order to see his work published. However, he can still be considered a writer of subversive works in the cultural context of socialist Albania. He has produced a variety of literary texts that explore his country's historical situation and culture, and his novels render him a unique

chronicler of Albanian history. Kadare, is known as both a guardian of the Albanian identity and “a universal writer in a tradition of storytelling that goes back to Homer.”¹

Albania was ruled by a Stalinist regime which lasted five years beyond the death of Enver Hoxha in 1985. After consecutive breaks with Yugoslavia, Moscow, and China, by 1978, the country was sealed off from Europe and the West, as much as from world communism.² During World War II it was invaded by both Italians and Germans, and after the fall of communism it had its vested interest in the Kosovo War. During the communist regime, many of Kadare's works were censored, but they were published in various forms and formats, and were both published and translated inside and outside Albania. In his early years, under the Hoxha regime, Kadare realized that “a dictatorship may be made of harder material than the dictator himself” and as he matured he thought that “the writer and the dictator share something in their control over the worlds of imagination and reality.”³ Based on his experiences during the dictatorship years, Kadare offers a large body of novels, essays, and stories that present a perspective on related political and historical events in the Albanian history to the readership in Europe and the world.

*The Fall of The Stone City*⁴ can be seen as a great portrayal of the social and political situation in Albania during the time of dictatorship, capturing the themes of resistance and totalitarianism, as well as the dark political threats that the people faced during that period. The events in the novel take place in the year 1943 in Kadare's birthplace, the ancient stone city of Gjirokastër, which had been occupied by the Italian army since 1939. In the course of the war, the German Army invaded the city from occupied Greece to replace the Italian occupation with a new one. The novel thus depicts how the war disrupted people's lives and how they struggled against the political regimes of the various occupying forces, adding up to the Ottoman Empire, Italian fascism, German Nazism, and Stalinist communism.

At this point, the Albanian resistance started with fire on German motorcyclists and tanks. The main action of the story began with the meeting of two old college friends – the Nazi commander Colonel Fritz von Schwabe and Big Dr Gurameto, a popular surgeon in the city. Gurameto invited von Schwabe for dinner at his home with other guests, including Little Dr Gurameto, a friend and colleague of Big Dr Gurameto's. The townspeople, who hear the music from the doctor's gramophone and the clinking of glasses and dishes from his house during the night, presumed that Big Dr Gurameto betrayed his country, and even celebrated and toasted the German invasion. However, Big Dr Gurameto persuaded his old friend to release the local hostages, including a Jewish pharmacist captured by the Germans, to which von Schwabe eventually conceded supposedly for the sake of their old friendship. Consequently, after the hostages were freed, Big Dr Gurameto became almost a heroic figure for the Albanian people for having secured better fortunes for the city. Still, the dinner remained a mystery for the townsfolk until its secret was revealed at a later time when Stalinist functionaries arrested and tortured the two surgeons to speak out the truth about that evening.

¹ Peter Morgan, *Ismail Kadare The Writer and the Dictatorship 1957-1990* (UK: Legenda, 2010), p. xv.

² *Ibid.*, p. 1.

³ *Ibid.*, pp.115-116.

⁴ Ismail Kadare, *The Fall of The Stone City* (Great Britain: Canongate Books, 2008).

When the Stalinist regime took over the country, the two foremost investigators in Albania at the time, Shaqo Mezini and Arian Ciu, examined the full list of the surgeons' patients because the two doctors were charged with planning to commit political murders of communist leaders. In the process of the investigation, Big Dr Gurameto learned that the man who was supposed to be his old friend attending the dinner back then was a German Colonel called Klaus Hempf, who only presented himself as Fritz von Schwabe. The two Nazi colonels met by chance in a field hospital in May 1943. The mortally wounded von Schwabe asked – as daying wish – his fellow officer, who was to be transferred to Albania, to find and bid farewell to his old Albanian college friend. Hempf promised to carry out his wish, as von Schwabe died in his arms on May 11, 1943. Four months later, on September 16, 1943, the Nazi tanks invaded Albania and the name of the city, Gjirokastrë, reminded Hempf of his promise. When reaching to Big Dr Gurameto, Hempf passed himself off as Colonel Fritz von Schwabe, even as the latter had already died on the front a few months before. Subsequently, Big Dr Gurameto supposed that he was greatly altered by time and his wounds. Thus, in due course, the deathbed encounter between von Schwabe and Hempf in a military hospital was followed by the mysterious dinner and, years later, by the Stalinist political investigation, after extracts from Hempf's diary made these events known.

The novel vividly depicts this period of Albania's history and the victims of the German invasion. It also presents us with a picture of the totalitarian communist regime that followed, which was supposed to liberate the Albanian people from the fascist occupying forces but instead brought about another disastrous rule. In this framework, *The Fall of The Stone City* also offers a perspective for discussion of binary oppositions such as hospitality and hostility, friendship and enmity, as these are the primary concepts explored in the novel. Kadare tells his story from a perspective that challenges well-established notions by juxtaposing them with their opposites in the course of the events he narrates. It will be primarily these binary oppositions that will be analyzed here through Derrida's concepts of hospitality and autoimmunity.

In this respect, the challenged borders between these binary oppositions prompt an examination of the notion of foreigner/stranger, who can appear as enemy or friend within Derrida's concept of hospitality. In *Of Hospitality*,⁵ Derrida analyses the sense of hospitality (*xenia*), which derives from the Latin *hospes*, meaning 'host, guest, or stranger'. Since by its etymology it carries its contradiction within itself, hospitality can be understood as the reception of a stranger (*Xenos*) in a most general sense which accommodates two opposing meanings. Derrida points out that this is indicated in the translation of *Xenos* in French with two contradictory meanings: as *étranger* (stranger or foreigner) or as *hôte* (host).⁶ Thus, for him, this coexistence of meanings reveals the apparently paradoxical relation between hospitality and hostility, in which both of these concepts haunt each other ambivalently – “the foreigner welcomed as a guest or as enemy. Hospitality, hostility, *hostpality*.”⁷

In this framework, Derrida carries his study further and puts forward two kinds of hospitality, namely, *unconditional* and *conditional* hospitality. For Derrida, the ideal hospitality is unconditional hospitality where the Other is welcomed with no expectation to adapt to the

⁵ Jacques Derrida, *Of Hospitality*, translated by Anne Dufourmantelle (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

traditions, conditions or rules of the host. That is, in unconditional hospitality, the Other is accepted with absolute openness. This indeed implies a risk that the guest might turn out to be an enemy/parasite. And yet, the uninvited guest/stranger might be as well a friendly guest. This ambiguity in the sense of hospitality can be related to Derrida's concept of *autoimmunity*, which is described as "that strange behavior where a living being, in quasi-suicidal fashion, 'itself' works to destroy its own protection, to immunize itself against its own immunity."⁸ In other words, autoimmunity can be seen as a potentially destructive threat to its own immunity while it tries to protect its own community or sovereignty. Since it is the instance of the body attacking its own immune system, autoimmunity can be considered an internal occupation which also allows the intrusion of the Other.⁹ Derrida further explains autoimmunity in *Rogues* as follows:

For what I call the autoimmune consists not only in harming or ruining oneself, indeed in destroying one's own protections, and in doing so oneself, committing suicide or threatening to do so, but, more seriously still, and through this, in threatening the I (*moi*) or the self (*soi*), the ego or the autos, ipseity itself, compromising the immunity of the autos itself: it consists not only in compromising oneself (*s'auto-entamer*) but in compromising the self, the autos – and thus ipseity. It consists not only in committing suicide but in compromising sui- or self-referentiality, the self or sui- of suicide itself. Autoimmunity is more or less suicidal, but, more seriously still, it threatens always to rob suicide itself of its meaning and supposed integrity.¹⁰

Thus, autoimmunity can be understood in terms of a self-attacking move, which allows for the destruction of one's self, such that the relation "is neither one of exteriority nor one of simple opposition or contradiction."¹¹

On this basis, Derrida's hospitality and hostility will be used as umbrella concepts throughout the discussion of the theme of friendship and enmity. The paper aims to explore the interwoven relation of hospitality and hostility in the novel by examining the two old friends' promises and threats to each other in the context of friendship and enmity under the German occupation of Albania. As it is related to the theme of hospitality, the concept of the *arrivant* will be analyzed here as well; and additionally, the communist regime will be discussed as a destructive threat from the perspective of autoimmunity.

Besides hospitality, hostility and friendship are also underlined in *The Kanun of Lekë Dukagjini*, the traditional Albanian legal code mentioned in the novel. As Ramazan Balcı explains, "*The Kanun of Lekë Dukagjini* had continued to survive as a national law which had never lost its effectiveness among Albanians, since the 11th century. The works on this subject, evaluate this code as a part of the oral folk tradition, and especially draw attention to its cultural aspect."¹² In addition, in his *Essays on World Literature: Aeschylus, Dante, Shakespeare* (2018), Kadare emphasizes the importance of the guest as having almost deified status for the

⁸ Giovanna Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jurgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 100.

⁹ Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, translated by Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 123.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

¹¹ Giovanna Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, p. 114.

¹² Ramazan Balcı, "The Ottoman Practices of *The Kanun of Dukajini*: The Method of Cibal," *Türkiyat Mecmuası*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (2016), p. 33.

Albanian people according to *The Kanun*.¹³ Indeed, hospitality is to such an extent at the core of *The Kanun* that penalties have to be applied if someone breaks its rules. Since it plays such an important role in the Albanian culture, hospitality cannot be simply ignored.¹⁴

As mentioned above, for Derrida, ideally hospitality is unconditional, which essentially means welcoming the Other without asking questions about his or her name, identity, state or origin; as opposed to conditional hospitality, which requires the guest to adapt to the rules and the norms of the host. More broadly put, whereas in conditional hospitality the host has control over the guest in terms of control over national borders,¹⁵ in its very essence Derrida's claim suggests that hospitality should be unconditional and should involve openness to the stranger whoever or whatever she or he may be. As Derrida puts it, a visitor can be "a foreigner, an immigrant, an uninvited guest, or an unexpected visitor, whether or not the new arrival is the citizen of another country, a human, animal or divine creature, a living or dead thing, male or female."¹⁶ Thus, it can be said that unconditional hospitality does not limit the visitor – the Other – or force the visitor to adjust to the host's space, for "hospitality should be neither assimilation, acculturation, nor simply the occupation of my space by the Other."¹⁷ Instead, as he claims that unconditional hospitality should be ideally the case, for Derrida the host should open his or her space without any request to do so:

I have to – and that's an unconditional injunction – I have to welcome the Other whoever he or she is unconditionally, without asking for a document, a name, a context or a passport. That is the very first opening of my relation to the Other; to open my space, my home – my house, my language, my culture, my nation, my state and myself.¹⁸

Hence, Derrida, in his comments on unconditional hospitality, emphasizes the ambiguous relation between the host and the Other, and especially the moment that welcoming "the Other whoever he or she is unconditionally" implies a risk. As Derrida points out, this risk functions such that "I have to accept if I offer unconditional hospitality that the Other may ruin my own space or impose his or her own culture or his or her own language."¹⁹ It is therefore uncertain whether the visitor is a friend who brings peace or is an enemy who will harm the host. Instead, Derrida argues, "The one inviting becomes almost the hostage of the one invited, of the guest, the hostage of the one he receives, the one who keeps him at home."²⁰

According to Derrida, an *aporia* stands at the centre of the concept of hospitality in terms of the opposition of "*The law (of hospitality)*, in its universal singularity, to a plurality that is ... a number of laws that distribute their history and their anthropological geography

¹³ Ismail Kadare, *Essays on World Literature: Aeschylus, Dante, Shakespeare* (New York: Restless Books, 2018), p. 78.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

¹⁵ Jacques Derrida, *Of Hospitality*, p. 135.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

¹⁷ Geoffrey Bennington and Jacques Derrida, "Politics and Friendship: A Discussion with Jacques Derrida," 1997, <http://www.dariarothmayr.com/pdfs/assignments/Politics%20and%20Friendship.pdf>

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Jacques Derrida, *Of Hospitality*, p. 9.

differently.”²¹ He elaborates further that in this sense “*The* law is above the laws. It is thus illegal, transgressive, outside the law.”²² Thus, one can say that both concepts (of law and laws) depend on each other, that this is a two-way dependence as “*the* unconditional law of hospitality needs the laws, it *requires* them” in order to become “effective, concrete, determined.”²³ In this sense, the conditional hospitality corrupts the unconditional hospitality, and vice versa. As Derrida puts it, “We will always be threatened by this dilemma between, on the one hand, unconditional hospitality that dispenses with law, duty, or even politics, and, on the other, hospitality circumscribed by law and duty. One of them can always corrupt the other, and this capacity for perversion remains irreducible. It *must* remain so.”²⁴

The slippery ground of this concept is supported by Derrida’s concept of autoimmunity. In his article “Hostipitality,” he argues that this dilemma results in hospitality auto-immunizing itself:

Hospitality is a self-contradictory concept and experience which can only self-destruct – put otherwise, produce itself as impossible, only be possible on the condition of its impossibility – or protect itself from itself, auto-immunize itself in some way, which is to say, deconstruct itself – precisely in being put into practice.²⁵

In this sense, Derrida takes the biological term ‘autoimmunity’ in order to deconstruct ‘hospitality’ as the self-destructive tendency of the political and philosophical theories that are apparently intertwined with the concept of the Other. The key moment here is that if unconditional hospitality involves openness to stranger, then, it implies a risk. Autoimmunity, on Derrida’s view, emulates this risk highlighting the vulnerability and powerlessness of the immune system, which works to destroy its own protection. What here makes the juxtaposition between unconditional hospitality and autoimmunity possible is that, although they are different concepts, they share common features such as risk and promise.²⁶ They both convey “a double bind of threat and chance, not alternatively or by turns promise and/or threat but threat in the promise itself.”²⁷

Thus, for Derrida, autoimmunity²⁸ is a direct attack against itself – its own immune system – for itself. It is self-destructive and a “quasi-suicidal” drive attacking one’s own

²¹ Ibid., p. 79.

²² Ibid., p. 79.

²³ Ibid., p. 79.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 135.

²⁵ Jacques Derrida, “Hostipitality,” *Angelaki* 5, no.3 (2000), pp. 4-5.

²⁶ Andrea Timár, “Derrida and the Immune System,” p. 5.

²⁷ Giovanna Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, p. 82.

²⁸ Derrida appropriates this medical term standing for the biological condition in which living system immunize itself against its own immunity. His use of the term dates back to the 1990s, particularly in *Spectres of Marx* (1994), *Politics of Friendship* (1997), and *Faith and Knowledge*. He admits that it is a central concept in his philosophy, especially following the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, most notably in an interview with Giovanna Borradori (2003), and, later on in *Rogues* (2005). However, Derrida’s formulation shows contrasts with actual implications of the biological concept. As Andrea Timár points out, Derrida’s concept is closer to the body’s reaction to infection by the AIDS virus, which “stands in an uneasy, almost spectral relationship with autoimmune diseases. For whereas in autoimmune diseases the immune system destroys the body’s own organs, during HIV

immune system, which was to protect oneself and one's own identity.²⁹ Furthermore, Derrida explains that autoimmunity also allows for the intrusion of the Other through the destruction of the immune system.³⁰ As this is a situation in which, as a result of internal corruption, the immune system destroys itself, the suggestion here is that this sense of autoimmunity also destabilizes the binary opposition between friend and enemy. Respectively, the relation of friend and enemy between Colonel Fritz von Schwabe and Dr Gurameto here will be discussed in terms of this sense of autoimmunity as well. And overall, along Derrida's sense of unconditional hospitality, so specified as autoimmunity, *The Fall of The Stone City* can be read as destabilizing this binary opposition by making it possible for the Other to be understood as both a threat and an opportunity.

The story begins in the stone city of Gjirokaštër in 1943 in the middle of World War II. In September 1943, Albania was occupied by Nazi forces and German soldiers advanced on the ancient gates of the city. The two popular surgeons, Big Dr Gurameto and Little Dr Gurameto, having the same surname without a family connection, are presented as having a significant role in the unfolding events. The important difference between the two doctors is that Big Dr Gurameto studied in Germany whereas Little Dr Gurameto studied in Italy, which was to play a part in their respective professional esteem in the course of the events. The Italian invasion, or, as some people called it – “Albania's unification with Italy,” changed the “equilibrium between the two doctors and elevated one at the expense of the other.”³¹ The relation between the two doctors is another important factor to analyze in the novel from the perspective of autoimmunity. In the novel, Little Dr Gurameto is presented as the projection of Big Dr Gurameto's unconscious, a “projection which the people around him for some inexplicable reason had accepted.”³² From this point of view, the projection of Big Dr Gurameto's unconscious can be seen as an autoimmune system.

In 1943, Italy lost her big brother, Germany, and the German Army was coming as a “friend” with the aim of liberating the country from “the hated Italian occupation and restoring Albania's violated independence,” as written in the leaflets that were dropped from German aircrafts over Gjirokaštër.³³ The leaflets, which were prepared in two languages, German and Albanian, caused different opinions among the city's inhabitants: it was possible for Germany to be seen as a friend or an enemy. It is important to note here that for Derrida the arrival or visitation of the other can also be an invasion. As he puts it, “if I accept the coming of the other, the arriving (*arrivance*) of the other who could come at any moment without asking my opinion

infection, the immune system destroy itself, and becomes entangled in a process that inevitably leads to its total destruction. Thus, Derrida's definition of autoimmunity echoes, in fact, the medical definitions of AIDS, but unlike AIDS, autoimmunity becomes a political concept in Derrida's thinking”. (See Andrea Timár, “Derrida and the Immune System,” *Et al: Critical Theory Online*, 2015, <http://etal.hu/en/archive/terrorism-and-aesthetics-2015/derrida-and-the-immune-system>).

²⁹ Michael Lewis, “Of (Auto) Immune Life: Derrida, Esposito, Agamben,” in *Medicine and Society, New Perspectives in Continental Philosophy*, ed. Darian Meacham (New York: Springer, 2015), p. 216.

³⁰ Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, translated by Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 123.

³¹ Ismail Kadare, *The Fall of The Stone City*, p. 4.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 164

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

and who could come with the best or worst of intentions: a visitation could be an invasion by the worst.”³⁴ In the same vein, in *Aporias* (1993), Derrida presents us with his notion of *arrivant*:

The new *arrivant*, this word can, indeed, mean the neutrality of *that which* arrives, but also the singularity *who* arrives, of he or she who comes, coming to be where s/he was not expected, where one was awaiting him or her without waiting for him or her, without expecting it, without knowing what or whom to expect, what or whom I am waiting for – and such is hospitality itself, hospitality toward the event.³⁵

In this sense, the arrival of Colonel Fritz von Schwabe, a commanding officer of the German Army, can be considered as that of an uninvited guest or as a new *arrivant*. Although, as accompanied by German tanks and troops, he appears a destructive stranger and an inevitable force against Albania, as a new *arrivant* he is not yet “an invader or an occupier, nor... a colonizer,”³⁶ even if he also becomes one. He actually claimed that he came to Albania in order to find his old college friend and he expected to be welcomed by the Albanian hospitality as laid down in *The Kanun*. When von Schwabe and Big Dr Gurameto met, the doctor failed to recognize his college friend. He thought that he could not recognize him because of the passing of time, his military uniform, or the two scars on his face, but an emotional reunion still took place:

“Like the *Nibelungenlied*, eh? Or the *Kanun of Lekë Dukagjini*? Do you remember what you told me in the Widow Martha’s Tavern? About Albanian honour, hospitality?” ...
“I’ve dreamed of this meeting for so long...and so when they gave me orders to take this tank division and occupy Albania, my first thought was of you. I would not invade Albania but save it, unite it with the eternal Reich and of course, before anything else, I would find you my brother. And I set off happily to the country where honour rules, as you used to say.”³⁷

Von Schwabe proceeded to show his disappointment from the Albanian hospitality: “Dr Gurameto, they fired on me in your city...I was fired on. I was betrayed... It was my fault for believing you. Nostalgia had turned me soft and without thinking I had put my men in mortal danger... Gurameto, you traitor, where’s your Albanian honour now?”³⁸ Fritz von Schwabe makes it clear that he already expected his old friend’s warm welcome and unconditional hospitality as presented in the old days, “I sent you word. I dropped thousands of leaflets from the air. I told you I was coming as a guest. I asked the master of the house, ‘Will you receive guests?’ ...Where is your honour, Dr Gurameto? Have you nothing to say?”³⁹ As the novel has it, von Schwabe criticizes the host’s tradition even though he himself is an *arrivant* or a guest. Although he does not question Gurameto’s Albanian identity directly, he calls into question his Albanian tradition of hospitality. We can note here that on Derrida’s view the arrival of otherness surprises the host, “enough to call into question, to the point of annihilating or

³⁴ Jacques Derrida, Jacques Derrida, “Hostipitality,” *Angelaki* 5, no.3 (2000), p. 17.

³⁵ Jacques Derrida, *Aporias* (Stanford: Stanford University, 1993), p. 33.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

³⁷ Ismail Kadare, *The Fall of The Stone City*, p. 31.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

rendering indeterminate, all the distinctive signs of a prior identity, beginning with the very border that delineated a legitimate home and assured lineage, names and language, nations, families and genealogies.”⁴⁰ In this sense, von Schwabe can be considered an *arrivant*, who surprises Big Dr Gurameto and has enough authority to question his hospitality, Albanian honor, and loyalty to *The Kanun of Lekë Dukagjini*. Thereupon, Big Dr Gurameto defended himself, saying:

“I did not fire on you, Fritz.”

“Really? It was worse than that. Your country fired on me.”

“I answer for my own house, not the state.”

“It comes to the same.”

“It does not come to the same. I am not Albania, just as you are not Germany, Fritz. We’re something else.”⁴¹

After this conversation, Big Dr Gurameto invites von Schwabe for dinner. It is not known to the city’s population what this occasion was really about – “Some still called it the ‘dinner of shame’ but others referred to it as the ‘resurrection dinner’.”⁴² Some people thought that Gurameto’s plan was to “cock a snook at the Germans,” while others believed he followed the Albanian custom and welcomed them, opening his house to everyone, friend or foe.⁴³ However, Big Dr Gurameto’s intention was different: he was planning to convince Fritz von Schwabe to release the Albanian hostages taken by the occupiers. On that evening, Big Dr Gurameto, while looking out for his guest towards the gate of his yard, felt sorrow that he had never known before. In this case, applying Derrida’s sense of unconditional hospitality appears to be seemingly impossible, as this requires that one accept the guest without any anticipation or expectation, while relinquishing control over one’s own space. Derrida’s remarks on the *aporia* of hospitality are fitting here:

For there to be hospitality there must be a door. But if there is a door, there is no longer hospitality. There is no hospitable house. There is no house without doors and windows. But as soon as there are a door and windows, it means that someone has the key to them and consequently controls the conditions of hospitality. There must be a threshold. But if there is a threshold, there is no longer hospitality.⁴⁴

In this sense, it can be said that the threshold of the house is already a representation of the limit for unconditional hospitality. Hence, the concept of unconditional hospitality, or pure hospitality, seems impossible. Although Big Dr Gurameto, as the master of the house, showed his hospitality to the colonel and the German servicemen, the colonel’s confession effectively turned the master of the house into stone; hence, Big Dr Gurameto’s hospitality turned into conditional hospitality upon asking the colonel to release the hostages:

⁴⁰ Jacques Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 34.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22.

⁴⁴ Jacques Derrida, “Hostipitality,” p. 14.

“And so, as I told you, when the order came to occupy – I mean to unite Albania, my first thought was that I would visit my brother. I would find him wherever he was. And look, I have come. But you... You fired on me, Gurameto. Treacherously, behind my back.”

“It wasn't me.”

“I know. But you know better than I do that your *Kanun of Lekë Dukagjini* demands blood. German blood was split. Blood is never counted as lost... Eighty hostages will wash away that blood. While we are dining here, my men are rounding them up.”⁴⁵

Here, the dilemma at the heart of the hospitality, which Derrida sets out in *Of Hospitality emerges again*: “How can we distinguish between a guest and a parasite? In principle, the difference is straightforward, but for that you need a law; hospitality, reception, the welcome offered, have to be submitted to a basic and limiting jurisdiction.”⁴⁶ Although Big Dr Gurameto granted Fritz von Schwabe access to his house as if he were a valued guest, von Schwabe turned out to be a parasite and broke the code of honor at the heart of hospitality. As Derrida states, “Not all new arrivals are received as guests if they don't have the benefit of the right to hospitality or the right of asylum, etc. Without this right, a new arrival can only be introduced ‘in my home’, in the host's ‘at home’, as a parasite, a guest who is wrong, illegitimate, clandestine, liable to expulsion or arrest.”⁴⁷ Therefore, apparently, it can be said that the guest turns out to be a destructive enemy – a parasite – or a threat, who ruins the host's nation or space and abuses the host's hospitality. Undeniably, this implies the risk of pure hospitality, for, as Derrida says, “[...] That is the risk of pure hospitality and pure gift, because a gift might be terrible, too.”⁴⁸ In the novel, Fritz von Schwabe violates Gurameto's hospitality, which potentially shows the colonel as a destructive enemy. Apparently, the collapse of the ethical boundaries of being a guest and a friend displays the ambivalent nature of the friendship between two men. At this point, this leads us to another of Derrida's works, *The Politics of Friendship*, in which Derrida discusses the paradoxical closeness between friendship and enmity in the lens of integration between politics and friendship. Big Dr Gurameto asked the colonel to free the hostages; however, the colonel insisted on not releasing them until he learned the name of the people who fired on him: “Gurameto, my brother, I do not want to spill Albanian blood. I came as a guest, with promises and gifts, but you fired on me. Give me those damned names, give them to me and the hostages are yours, instantly.”⁴⁹

Here, other relevant questions arise: What does it take to understand a private friend or a guest as a public enemy? Alternatively, what does it take to distinguish friends from the public or the private enemy?

Derrida takes these questions and reinterprets the communal and individual enemy, which are also discussed by Carl Schmitt. Schmitt, argues that the meaning of friend can be only determined within the distinction between friend and enemy.⁵⁰ For Schmitt, in politics, the enemy is always the public enemy; however, Derrida's reading of Schmitt deconstructs this approach. As Derrida puts it, “The enemy in the political sense need not be hated personally,

⁴⁵ Ismail Kadare, *The Fall of The Stone City*, p. 35.

⁴⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Of Hospitality*, p. 59.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

⁴⁸ Jacques Derrida, “Hospitality, Justice and Responsibility,” p. 71.

⁴⁹ Ismail Kadare, *The Fall of The Stone City*, p. 39.

⁵⁰ Jacques Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, trans. G. Collins, (London, UK: Verso, 2005), p. 373.

and in the private sphere only does it make sense to love one's enemy, that is, one's adversary."⁵¹ Derrida suggests here that one can destroy one's enemy in the public sphere while continuing to love him/her in private:

The friend (*amicus*) can be an enemy (*hostis*). I can be hostile towards my friend, I can be hostile towards him publicly and, conversely, I can, in privacy, love my enemy. From this, everything would follow, in orderly, regular fashion, from the distinction between public and private. Another way of saying that at every point when this border is threatened, fragile, porous, contestable ... the Schmittian discourse collapses.⁵²

In this sense, for Derrida, "friend and enemy are not mutually exclusive opposites."⁵³ Although Derrida focuses on the concept of friendship, he believes that enemy precedes the friend and that war is a condition of friendship.⁵⁴ In this sense, the love of the political enemy at a personal level can be seen as the most notable aspect of Kadare's novel. Although Fritz von Schwabe was a public enemy, he released Albanian hostages for the sake of his friendship with Gurameto, giving the order to free the hostages, including also a Jewish pharmacist, following a long discussion with Big Dr Gurameto:

"Dr Gurameto, you've broken your word. There is a Jew here."
"A Jew? So what?"
"So what? You know I can't release Jews."
"Jews, Albanians, it's all the same."
"It's not the same, Gurameto, not at all."
"Albanians do not betray their guests. You know that, Fritz. This Jew is a guest in our city. We can't hand over a guest."
"Because the *Kanun of Lekë Dukagjini* forbids it?"
"I told you this long ago in the tavern. It's been our law for a thousand years."⁵⁵

Based on the dialogue above, although the two men have different political views, von Schwabe and Big Dr Gurameto appear to embody the paradoxically close relationship between friendship and enmity. In this relation, it is very indicative that the friendship argument applies also to the Jewish hostage, even though the colonel's hostility towards Jews is quite obvious. This is because, despite being a political and public enemy, Fritz ultimately turns out to be a friend at a personal level: "The doctor and the colonel muttered to each other in private for a long time and again the situation changed. Nobody explained why. Colonel Fritz von Schwabe, bearer of the Iron Cross, took a deep breath and ordered the hostages to be freed. Not just some, but all of them."⁵⁶

Meanwhile, at the dinner, Big Dr Gurameto's daughter passed round the drinks to the colonel, then to her father, her mother, the others present, and finally to her fiancé. After everyone emptied their glasses, they collapsed on the sofa and the carpet and fell into a deep

⁵¹ Jacques Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, p. 88.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 88

⁵³ Antonio Calcagno, *Badiou and Derrida: Politics, Events and their Time*. (London: Continuum, 2007), p. 46

⁵⁴ Jacques Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, pp. 132-172.

⁵⁵ Ismail Kadare, *The Fall of The Stone City*, pp. 45-46.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

sleep. The next morning, she woke up and found herself lying fully clothed on the bed in her parents' room. In the living room, she "saw them stretched out where they had fallen, arms outspread and mouths gaping, her father, fiancé and mother, in whose lap an officer had laid his head; and then the colonel, his face still masked, and the others, frozen, white, like sculptures."⁵⁷ She thought that her father had already planned to poison his guests alongside with his own family; Big Dr Gurameto suspected his daughter of the same.⁵⁸ But nobody could solve the mystery of the situation, i.e. nobody knew who had put the poison into the drinks. Here, the German colonel and soldiers who were supposed to dominate the doctor's space became victimized in the house. The guests became oppressed subjects in the host's place and the host turned out to be the oppressor. Thus, there seems to be a reversal of the relation between host and guest into a relation of victimized guest and host oppressor. At this point, the supposed poisoner was trying to protect her family and home by serving the drinks to the colonel and soldiers, and took the risk of serving the same drinks to the whole family. This can be discussed in terms of autoimmunity. The supposed poisoner directly attacked herself/himself and her/his whole family, making the gesture of autoimmunity, which is "both self-protecting and self-destroying, at once remedy and poison."⁵⁹ According to Derrida, "Autoimmunity is always more or less suicidal, but more seriously still, it threatens always to rob suicide itself from its meaning and supposed integrity" as "it consists not only in committing suicide but in compromising sui- or self-referentiality, the self or sui- of suicide"⁶⁰ In this way, the autoimmune entity apparently threatens the whole family in order to protect them against the German oppressors. As has been discussed above, despite the threat of the Nazi occupation, it is the supposed poisoner himself/herself who arguably constitutes the greatest threat to the family.

It has been suggested that the concepts of hospitality and autoimmunity are similar in that both contain openness to the outside, which implies risk. As Michael Naas says:

If autoimmunity describes the way in which an organism, an individual, a family, or a nation, compromises its own forces of self-affirmation so as to become open and vulnerable to its outside, then autoimmunity is always a kind of hospitality – the welcoming of an event that might well change the very identity of the self, of the *autos*, the welcoming of an event that may thus bring good or ill, that may invite a remedy or a poison, a friend or a foe. To be open to the event, to offer hospitality, it is essential *not to know* in advance what is what or who is who.⁶¹

Immunity can be bound up with the conditional hospitality where people are able to protect their sovereignty and defend themselves from the intrusion of the Other. Thus, "autoimmunity is not an absolute ill or evil. It enables an exposure to the other, to *what* and to *who* comes – which means that it must remain incalculable. Without autoimmunity, with absolute immunity, nothing would ever happen or arrive; we would no longer wait, await, or expect, no longer expect one another, or expect any event."⁶²

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 48.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 119.

⁵⁹ Giovanna Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, p. 124.

⁶⁰ Jacques Derrida, *Rogues*, p. 44.

⁶¹ Michael Naas, *Derrida from Now On*, p. 32.

⁶² Giovanna Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, p. 152.

In addition, in the context of autoimmune logic, the communist Albanian groups can be seen as the other threat to life in Albania. As the course of events unfolds in the novel, the communists claim that the nationalists and royalists are preparing to do a deal with the Germans.⁶³ However, communists' calls for war provoked only chaos and anxiety throughout the city. They knock on the doors and brake into houses: "'Territorials' as the local communists were called, helped the patrols to carry out arrests of prominent nationalists."⁶⁴ The conspiracy to demolish the entire city, cabals and other horrors lead people to go against their own allies. In this context, Derrida argues, "In all wars, all civil wars, all partisan wars or wars for liberation, the inevitable escalation leads one to go after one's rival partners no less than one's so-called principal adversary."⁶⁵ Thus, while the communist groups are supposed to protect their own country, they themselves constitute also a threat to the Albanians. This finds an explanation within Derrida's sense of autoimmunity. He argues that the autoimmunity turns on itself, and "must then come to resemble [its] enemies, to corrupt itself and threaten itself in order to protect itself against their threats."⁶⁶

In 1953, the two surgeons were arrested on suspicion of murder and charged with being terrorist doctors: "The Soviets themselves had broadcast the news, calling it 'murder in a white coat'."⁶⁷ The accusation was in the political murder of communist leaders; supposedly, "Under the direction of a Jewish organization known as the 'Joint', a group of doctors was preparing the greatest crime in the history of mankind: the elimination by murder of all the communist leaders throughout the world, starting with Joseph Stalin."⁶⁸ The foremost investigators of Albania's Communist regime, Shaqo Mezini and Arian Ciu, interrogated the two doctors for the murder of patients during surgical procedures, and tortured them in the Cave of Sanisha until they died. The interrogation was to make them confess 'the whole truth' about the dinner on the night of the reunion Big Dr Gurameto with his old college friend who turned out to be commander of German troops invading Albania.⁶⁹ The investigators were not convinced by Big Dr Gurameto's answers: "Isn't it a bit like of one of those old fairy tales we learned at school? Quite apart from the dinner with music and champagne, the release of the hostages and the salvation of the city, doesn't it look a bit like a game? Why not stop this charade and tell us what was really behind it?"⁷⁰ They did not believe Gurameto's answers because Colonel Fritz von Schwabe had allegedly died in a field hospital in Ukraine long before that dinner.⁷¹ Furthermore, the investigators maintained that Big Dr Gurameto was part of the aforementioned Jewish organization because he asked von Schwabe to release a Jewish pharmacist that night. Thus, they considered it an evidence against him and claimed that Big Dr Gurameto was collaborating with the Nazis to establish Jewish rule throughout the world, and to murder the

⁶³ Ismail Kadare, *The Fall of The Stone City*, p. 55.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

⁶⁵ Giovanna Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, p. 112.

⁶⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Rogues*, p. 40.

⁶⁷ Ismail Kadare, *The Fall of The Stone City*, p. 102.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

world communist leaders, starting with Stalin.⁷² In this sense, we can also note that the “new regime” of communism appears to attack its own integral protection at the level of the state by destroying its own immune system. That is, the Stalinist regime corrupts the city of Gjirokastër and Albania, pushing the city as a whole through a peculiar autoimmune destruction. As Michael Lewis says, “the greatest threat of terror comes from within, in that destruction of the immune system which allows the relatively strict border between one’s self and the outside to collapse, not because of an external enemy’s attack but as a result of internal corruption.”⁷³ Although the new regime was supposed to be associated with “reconstruction,” it seemed that it came to resemble an enemy. Stalinists’ anger, aimed at Gjirokastër because of the conspiracy plot, threatened the whole city. The Stalinist functionaries who interrogated and tortured the surgeons constituted the threat to the life in the city. In this sense, the autoimmune entity can be seen as turning on itself and starting to resemble enemy of Albania. Since autoimmunity implies opposites such as threat and chance, protection and destruction, the Stalinist regime, as *Other*, can be seen at first as promise, but then – as provoking an attack against the city. For Derrida, autoimmunity is essentially a relationship between self and other; however, it also deconstructs the binary opposition between self and non-self. Since autoimmunity is a self-destructive system, which implies an eroding of our defense mechanism to protect ourselves, it directly attacks itself such that the relation of self and other is no longer one of exteriority. Thus, according to the logic of this system, the self turns into a non-self or Other who sees itself as a threat to itself. In the same way, the communist regime can be interpreted also as self and Other or exterior force, whereas Little Dr Gurameto, who is an opposition of Big Dr Gurameto, can be seen as a non-self figure who was created as the self’s defense mechanism.

At the end of the novel, in September 1993, shortly after the fall of communism in Albania, both doctors’ graves were exhumed.⁷⁴ It was discovered that one of the shackled men that were exhumed was not Little Dr Gurameto but someone else who was never identified.⁷⁵ Since the little doctor had left so few traces behind himself, people began to doubt whether he ever existed⁷⁶ and many believed that “Little Dr Gurameto had been merely an exteriorization or projection of Big Dr Gurameto’s unconscious.”⁷⁷ This particular situation can be considered a model of autoimmunity on the level of the psyche. As Derrida says, “To put it a bit sententiously in the interest of time, without autoimmunity there would be neither psychoanalysis, nor what psychoanalysis calls the ‘unconscious’.”⁷⁸ In this sense, Big Dr Gurameto arguably created a persona in his subconscious in an attempt to protect himself. That is, he may have created this persona as a projection of his own negative sides in an attempt to protect his own status and his own life, very much as the living ego maintains its own autoimmunity in itself. This is the sense in which Little Dr Gurameto might be considered a non-self figure indicative of the self’s protective apparatus. As Derrida explains in *Specters of Marx*, “the living ego is auto-immune. To protect its life, to constitute itself as unique living

⁷² Ibid., p. 121.

⁷³ Michael Lewis, “Of (Auto) Immune Life: Derrida, Esposito, Agamben,” p. 219.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 164.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 164.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 164.

⁷⁷ Ibid., pp. 164-165.

⁷⁸ Jacques Derrida, *Rogues*, p. 55.

ego ... it must ... take the immune defenses apparently meant for the non-ego, the enemy, the opposite, the adversary and direct them at once for itself and against itself.”⁷⁹ It is in this sense that Big Dr Gurameto’s creation of the little doctor can be seen as a kind of immune defense on the level of the psyche. Whereas the destruction of the immune system, which allows the intrusion of the Other, allows us also to say that the notion of autoimmunity can be used for deconstruction of the relationship between self and non-self, between self and other.⁸⁰

In conclusion, *The Fall of The Stone City* is a remarkable novel which can be analyzed from the perspective of Derrida’s concepts of hospitality, autoimmunity, friendship, and the arrivant, while destabilizing the binary oppositions between hostility and hospitality, friendship and enmity. As has been noted, according to Derrida, the concepts of unconditional hospitality and autoimmunity overlap in their core meanings because they are both open to the Other, which constitutes both a threat and opportunity. In this sense, as Derrida points out, the term autoimmunity is fundamentally different from other terms beginning with ‘auto’: “While all the other *autos* words, without exception, express the power, independence, and stability of an enduring self, *autoimmunity* evokes the powerlessness, vulnerability, dependence, and instability of every self or *autos*.”⁸¹ Thus, the paper draws attention to the risk of autoimmunity as a self-destructive term by investigating its sense through the political events and the level of the psyche. Overall, the aim of the paper has been to draw attention to the overlapping senses of unconditional hospitality and autoimmunity as openness to the Other, which can be understood as both a threat and a promise.

In the novel, the binary opposition of friendship and enmity with regard to the two men is discussed within the framework of deconstruction of the friend-enemy dichotomy, which becomes possible in terms of Derrida’s concept of autoimmunity. Here, the key moment in the sense of autoimmunity is that, while an autoimmune entity aims to protect itself, in reality it constitutes a self-destructive threat to itself. Colonel Fritz von Schwabe as an arrivant was shown as expecting to be welcomed with the traditional Albanian hospitality. And yet, the hospitality offered by Big Dr Gurameto turned into conditional hospitality. We can conjecture here that either Big Dr Gurameto or his daughter used their immune defenses to destroy the enemy by attempting to poison the German Colonel and the other soldiers. At the same time, the poisoning can also be understood as an autoimmune process, as Gurameto’s family was exposed to the poison as well. Furthermore, a transposition of the concept of autoimmunity at the level of psyche can shed light on Little Dr Gurameto’s presence as a reflection of Big Dr Gurameto’s subconscious. The rivalry between Big Dr Gurameto and Little Dr Gurameto, especially as represented at the level of psyche, could be discussed as competition between two of them. So far, Big Dr Gurameto was the victor on every occasion while his colleague was called the loser. Big Dr Gurameto’s projection of his own failure on the imaginary little Dr

⁷⁹ Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, translated by Peggy Kamouf (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 177.

⁸⁰ For other related discussions see Catherine MacMillan, “Looking for the Rogue: Democratic Autoimmunity in José Saramago’s *Seeing*,” *Global Conversations: An International Journal in Contemporary Philosophy and Culture*, Vol. 4 (2021), pp. 27ff; as well as, Rossen Roussev, “Feminism, Deconstruction, and Literary Criticism: A Deconstructive Feminist Reading of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s Novel *The Scarlet Letter* with the Help of Alice Jardine and Jacques Derrida,” *Global Conversations: An International Journal in Contemporary Philosophy and Culture*, Vol. 4 (2021), pp. 68-69, 81.

⁸¹ Michael Naas, *Derrida from Now On*, p. 125.

Gurameto can be understood as an attempt to protect the integrity of the ego. In this way, he apparently utilized immune defenses to constitute himself as a unique and significant figure in public. Big Dr Gurameto's immune defense suggests the concept of autoimmunity that helps explain "how we inevitably turn against ourselves, against the very principles that constitute and sustain ourselves and our identities."⁸²

In addition, in the novel, the communist regime brought a high level of oppression in the city, including tragic results, as well as the psychological trauma of Big Dr Gurameto. After the communist regime took over the city, Big Dr Gurameto was arrested and kept in the Cave of Sanisha which was the most terrifying dungeon of the city's prison. The investigators tortured him and the marks of torture were clearly visible on his face; Big Dr Gurameto's psychological state became deeply imbalanced. Like an immune system, which functions in an uncontrollable way, the communist groups moved against the people in the city causing terror, which in reality came from a group that was supposed to protect them. In this way, in autoimmune fashion, the communists came to resemble their enemies.

Most generally, the work of Albania's best-known writer, Ismail Kadare, depicts his country's history, culture, and traditions while keeping a close look to the concepts of hospitality, hostility, and friendship. Here, these concepts are analyzed in the perspective of the concept of autoimmunity to support the main argument of this paper regarding his novel *The Fall of The Stone City*. However, the exploration of these concepts from Derridian perspective may arguably serve as an investigative model for approaching other contemporary novels, which deal with the experiences of hostility, hospitality, and autoimmunity within still other political, social, and cultural contexts.

⁸² Ibid., p. 33.