

PEN KOSOVA
Literary and Cultural Review

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PEN KOSOVA

Literary and Cultural Review

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> foreword by the chief editor

This is the sixth issue of the literary magazine PEN KOSOVA, a publication of Kosova PEN Center. The first 5 publications were published in Albanian and dedicated to the Albanian reader in Kosova and the entire Albanian-speaking space. PEN Kosova literary magazine is currently in its second year. It publishes incandescent, substantial work operating on its own terms. The focus is on poetry, though the editors are always on the lookout for brazen short fiction, blatant creative non-fiction, essays, and book reviews.

The original idea for the publication of PEN KOSOVA was first of all to provide an opportunity for the readers to get the last updates on the literary output by modern authors keeping up the tradition of excellent authors of the past, particularly artists of poetry, which usually overwhelmed the literary output in Kosova. It also serves as testimony of a clearly ambitious performance by the Kosova PEN Center as part of PEN International in its important place in the overall cultural environment in Kosova.

We're proud that we were able to prepare this special English edition of our literary magazine, dedicated to the foreign reader. However, we are aware that this kind of a journal is only as effective as the content in its pages in profound and meaningful ways, and we're grateful for the many fine submissions we received by different Kosovan authors. Though we're able to publish just a small fraction of them, we tried to do our best in selecting stories, essays, and poems that best represent literary output being produced currently in Kosova.

Though the subject matter of the submissions we received has changed over time, they still reflect both the tradition and changes in the Kosovan culture and society in modernity. As one may notice, the works submitted depict their originality in a continued line, yet running parallel to contemporary literary currents in the rest of the Balkans, and widely in a continental scope.

We believe that a literary magazine as this special edition is one of the rare places a foreign reader can turn to for getting acquainted with the creative, artistic and literary perspectives on life in Kosova. We hope that this special issue provides

an appealing review by authors of various forms of literary creativity, poetry, short stories, nonfiction, depicting insights on the contemporary authors from Kosova.

We're grateful to the Ministry of Culture of Kosova for their generous support throughout the years for the publication of this and other issues of Kosova PEN Center.

Avni Spahiu

> short stories/essays



Ibrahim Kadriu

ON THAT AUGUST DAY

Many years ago She lived alone, in an apartment she had registered on her name, when she had an unwanted birth, an apartment which she had as a gift just to hide such a birth.

The political authority of the man behind, who was the cause of the birth was before the stairs of ascension, when the unexpected happened to the girl named Qëndresa Lura, to whom he had promised a life amidst flowers. And, life had really seemed like a flower to her, until the moment when, to that man, that is, Din Gurziu, she told she had become pregnant; in fact, instead of paving the way for her happiness, as she had hoped in her hours of loneliness, he closed it altogether, the moment when Din Gurziu realized, telling her briefly and with sudden concern: “That’s not what we agreed about!”

She did not what they had agreed about, because everything about them had developed spontaneously, always preceded by Din Gurziu, with all the amiable behavior for Qëndresa Lura

and with promises for a happy future. His quick reaction to that “disagreement” came to her as if from the sky.

That day of grief for Qëndresa Lura was at the same time a day of a new perspective for Din Gurziu: he received the trust of the state economic representative, based in Berlin. This appointment came as if by order, while he saw Qëndresa Lura’s further fate easily in the arms of someone else. If Qëndresa Lura refused to abort, he hoped someone else would accept her child as his own. This opinion he had instilled knowing on some other people’s experiences who had agreed to marry women who had given birth to children, or were expecting birth of a child.

Lured by the thought, he found it necessary to stay as far away from her as possible until the deadline for moving to a new position approached. But the deadline was postponed due to diplomatic procedures. He had to wait, to remain still facing the fate and misfortune at the same time. No matter how hard he tried not to pay attention to what he called disaster, it was still a reality that could not be easily overlooked. Being familiar with Qëndresa Lura’s character, he doubted she would accept, in her pregnant condition, to belong to someone else. Realizing the futility of him trying to convince her to change her relationship with him, he decided to do something more serious in order to get rid of that weight which he called disastrous.

He told her on the phone, actually threatening, though not with any distinct rudeness:

- I advise you to release me and free yourself. There are two possibilities, one is to remove the fruit, and the other is to forget me, replacing me with someone else. You would not be the only one to do so. There are many others who have clothed the fruit of someone else with someone with whom he would have a relationship. This is with less trouble...

- I have had no relations with anyone else, and I will keep this

fruit, even without mentioning your name ... - she responded.
- It's no good. We will meet tomorrow and talk ... - he replied.
For the next day, Din Gurziu scheduled the meeting at the square near the Medical School. Qëndresa Lura was surprised when he told her to meet at that square. She did not know the reason, because there were so many other meeting places protected from unwanted glances. She knew that Din Gurziu, from the moment he found out she was pregnant, did not want to be seen in public, but the meeting in that square was meaningless for Qëndresa. However, at the appointed time, Qëndresa Lura was found at the square near the Medical School, at exactly the urban bus station, where there were many people, who, each in his own way, cursed those in charge of the urban traffic services, blaming them for the bus delays. As long as she stood amidst the waiting crowd, Qëndresa Lura learned that, in her hometown, traveling by urban bus was difficult and unbearable. She was glad that she did not have to use the bus, though she was not happy when a "Golf" car with official license plates stopped in front of her feet.

From the dark windows of the car she could not see who was inside. She was about to take a step back when she was stopped by a voice from inside, which caught her ear after the front door glass was automatically released from the right side to where Qëndresa was standing.

- Get inside! - He ordered.

Qëndresa Lura lowered her head slightly to see who was in front of the wheel. When she saw Din Gurziu, who, to her surprise, did not have a personal driver, and was driving by himself, she looked at him longer.

- Come in, what are you waiting for? - He repeated his order. She opened the door and entered suspiciously.

- What were you waiting for like stupid?

- I didn't recognize you! - she said briefly, actually meaning to tell him that she was scared, because from the outside she could not tell who was inside.

- Since you, as far as I understand, are not undertaking anything about the problem that happened to you, I decided to do this together...

- It happened to us, rather than "it happened to me"

- I have nothing in my belly...

- You have in mine!

- There can be someone else too!

- Aren't you ashamed?

- Shame on you for trying to tie my legs in this way...

She looked at him dreadfully.

Stepping on the gas frenziedly, accompanied by the whistling of tires on the hot asphalt, on that August day, came horrifying. It seemed to her like in a movie, when someone is about to commit a crime and has no soul towards anyone. He saw herself in the role of a victim; she saw herself crashing into a stream, as at that great speed, overtaking the other cars, his car took the direction towards the south.

- What are you doing like this, are you out of your mind?

- I was out of my mind when I lost so much time with you as you were waiting for your day to turn me into a vassal. I begged you to do something. I told you to have an abortion, and you keep that fruit to blackmail me ... I am not so stupid as not to understand a woman's trickery.

- What trickery are you talking about? I told you to be careful and you...

- What do you mean by that? Me? Guilty?!

- Who else?

- You're the same as all the women...

- I don't know about other women, nor did you tell me...

- Do you know what authority I have? How could you do that to me?

- I did not do it; you did it to me!

- Did I tell you about my authority...? Do you think that because of you I should ruin my career? Do you know, my dear, what task I have been elected to?

- I don't know!

- Well, know that I will be very far away, I will stay there for a long time, and you can have your own life...

- With your child!

- No, no, I don't accept any children, so we are going to the clinic in Shkup. There you will have an abortion. I bear the expenses...!

Qëndresa Lura suddenly touched her belly, actually caressing her by pulling her fingers lightly, without saying a word. She sighed deeply. She rested her head against the glass of the right door of the car, no longer impressed even by his driving so fast, especially in turns while passing the Kaçanik Gorge. In one of the tunnels Din Gurziu could not keep his balance. He almost lost control completely, at the moment when the wheels of the car slipped and at the slip he almost banged against the protective wall of the tunnel from the left side. Qëndresa Lura pulled her face out of the window glass, screaming:

- You're going to kill us!

- It's better to be killed than dealing with you!

- Why do you talk like this? How can you not be ashamed? Do you think I am an animal? Why do you not pay any attention to me and to this fruit that I keep in my body! I had a completely different opinion of you; I valued you for being an honest man. Relying on you I considered sacred, because I did not spend time with you just for an adventure. You also told me you appreciated me. Were your manners to me a farce?

- Shut up!

- Shame on you!

Either shut up, or I'll throw you down the river, and the devil will not know what has happened to you!

- Better to be thrown, than so...

- I'll do it too if you continue opposing me. I told you: I want you to have an abortion. Did you understand? Then we see what to do! ”

- What does this mean?

- Do you deserve to look back at you...?

- I was not the one who ran to you...

-You mean I was melting for you?

- I don't know if you melted, but you are the one who blocked my way, stunning me with promises, remember? Mentioning also eternity, which I did not understand! You were the one who asked for my body... Isn't that so?

- I was, but now I am not the one. Now I am on my way to a diplomatic career, and you will ruin my career, especially by what you carry in your womb...

- Bastard!

- Say what you wish, and I, you see, am also caring about you. Instead of thanking me for taking you to the gynecologist for an abortion, you keep insulting and cursing me... With this attitude, I am depriving myself of the right of caring for you. I, after taking the new task, planned to grant you complete freedom, to let you go wherever you wished and with whomever you wanted to be, also meeting me from time to time... And so, with this head that you have, you do not deserve me.

- Bastard! With that rotten fantasy of yours you've planned my future; future of a whore.

- Did you expect me to turn you into a Saint Mary?

Qëndresa no longer had the will of talking any further. She

rested her head on the glass again, while her eyes were filled with tears.

- Get out your passport and wipe out your pissing eyes!

Before reaching the border crossing, after these offensive words, Qëndresa Lura thought of doing something, as soon as the car stopped near the counter where he would hand over the passports for verification. She thought of getting out of the car and asking the police for help telling them she was being taken by force to a Skopje clinic to have an abortion. As if he read her thoughts, he said briefly:

- Hand me your passport, although I may not need it: the police chief at this border crossing might happen to be a close friend of mine...

She just looked at him painfully.

Further on, on the way to Shkup, Qëndresa Lura seemed indifferent, she was interested in almost nothing, not even Din Gurziu's occasional words that went by unrecorded. She felt a void. In this condition, the speed of the car did not bother her either. Completely involuntarily, she cast her eyes gazing away from the car window as the landscapes kept changing...

They arrived in front of the clinic at a quarter to two.

- You stay in the car, - he said, - until I find the gynecologist Jordanov, to send him Doctor Fevzi's greetings, a friend to whom I have explained your grief...

- Not my grief, but yours! I have no worries, understand that for once. Even this fruit that I carry, though it is yours, I do not hate! Never mind the gynecologist, and leave me alone too. Before we set out on this road, I had another thought of you. From here on everything is over. To me you are dead and buried. Do not bother, just leave me alone!

- We have come to do a job and we have to do it, so that I can be free, maybe you too... - he responded and, closing the car door

in a strong push, he continued walking away in a quick steps towards the clinic.

Qëndresa Lura, right after losing sight of Din Gurziu, as he entered the clinic through the main gate, got out of the car. She looked sideways. She saw a cabbie parked on the sidewalk. She went to talk to the driver and asked if he was free, telling him to take her to the bus station. He told her he was free and opened the door for her. At that moment, Qëndresa Lura remembered she did not have her passport, as she had given it to Din Gurziu at the border crossing. She told the taxi driver to wait a minute, pointing at him, and ran to Din Gurziu's car in the parking lot. She found her passport in the safe case. She took it. She hurried back and got into the taxi. She told the taxi driver she had to arrive as fast as possible to catch the bus going to Prishtina.

She was extremely happy when she saw the Skopje-Prishtina bus that was about to set off. She paid the taxi driver, rewarding him with twice the real price of the trip, and the bus started forth as soon as she got inside.

She saw her return to Prishtina without an abortion as a victory for herself, but also for the fruit she carried in her womb and, often, unconsciously caressed it. She considered this victory complete, if in the following days she could avoid meeting Din Gurziu. Assuming he would not leave her alone, she considered relocating until the child was born, whether she would raise him or give him or her to a couple for adoption. Now that she thought she was on the way to preserving the fruit, it no longer mattered what would happen next to the baby. She could even lose the baby altogether, becoming part of some family, though the important thing was that he would live. If the opposite were the case, she would never forgive herself. The act of abortion, she thought, would put her in the neighborhood of culprits.

Sitting in one of the last seats of the bus, one released to her

by a young man, as the bus was full, she was pleased with the decision to run away from him, after having been picked up on the spot, quickly and with no chance of weighing things well. Although her decision was hasty, it seemed very appropriate, though she could not tell how Din Gurziu could have felt at the moment when he went back to the car and did not find Qëndresa Lura.

Din Gurziu was really surprised coming to the car and not finding Qëndresa Lura. Dr. Jordanov, at the behest of Dr. Fevzi, had agreed to help her with the abortion, at a lower charge than usual, telling him to bring the patient as soon as he could as he was preparing the bench...

Din Gurziu looked at the side of the car and among the other cars in the parking lot. He saw no one. He entered the courtyard of the clinic, checked the pine tree surroundings, where there were many chairs and patients who had come out to cool off in the shade, but Qëndresa Lura was nowhere to be seen. She asked around, describing her appearance based on the dress she wore, but everyone responded with a nod, suggesting they had not seen her. He returned to the car when, nearby, on the sidewalk, a taxi arrived at the parking lot, from where the taxi driver got out. He noticed Din Gurziu's concern as he looked up and down. The taxi driver guessed he was looking for exactly the woman he escorted to the station.

- Excuse me, the taxi driver spoke to Din Gurziu. - Are you looking for someone?

- Yes...

- The woman who was in this car?

- Exactly that.

- I took her to the bus station...

- What are you talking about...! - he dashed against him, but restraining himself. -You man?!

- I don't know anything, man. I just responded to her request, and she, I tell you, paid me double price. I don't know why she was in such a hurry...

-Ah, the cracked one! - said Din Gurziu, turning his back on the taxi driver.

Din Gurziu ran to the clinic, of course to let Dr. Jordanov know he was canceling the abortion.

Just as he entered the clinic running, so he left. This time with even bigger steps. He arrived at his car and stepped in. He turned on the key and stepped on the gas. At that speed he did not take the direction of the bus station. He heard it and trusted the taxi driver who told him that the bus had left for Prishtina, so he continued on his way to the border, to catch the bus.

While driving at high speed, he planned to get in front of the bus. Stop it and take Qëndresa Lura off the bus to take her back to the clinic, as Dr. Jordanov had told him he would wait for her.

Along the way he only saw only one bus which he stopped, but she was not on it. There he learned that the other bus of the same line was in front of them. He thought he would catch her before he reached the border, but he was proven wrong. The bus, in fact, had reached the border where they had completed all the formalities and had driven off.

Din Gurziu realized this when he handed in his passport and was interested in getting the right information. The border guard police officer told him that, five minutes ago, that bus had left the border crossing and, according to him, could not have been too far ahead.

Din Gurziu continued at even greater speed.

From a distance of about two hundred meters he noticed the bus before entering the first tunnel. On the other hand, that is, from the last seats, where she was sitting, Qëndresa Lura saw

Din Gurziu's car. She was constantly looking back. As soon as she investigated the car giving a light signal for the bus to stop, she stood startled and shivering.

After crossing the tunnel, Din Gurziu's car approached the bus too close, but most likely the bus driver noticed nothing unusual at all, maybe not even perceiving the light signals. The bus continued, just as Din Gurziu continued to increase speed to find an opportunity to overtake. He tried it several times. Qëndresa Lura saw these attempts very well, but she was not sure if Din Gurziu too saw her.

In another try for overtaking, Din Gurziu stepped on more gas, but that part of the road was winding and would not give him an opportunity for a full view of that road. As he was overtaking a pass, a truck appeared from the opposite direction, stepping on the occasion on the brakes on all four wheels. The truck driver then made another attempt not to collide directly. In the effort, always with braking, he crossed aside a part of the paved road. But it was all in vain.

It all ended with a crash, that is, with a hit in the front of Din Gurziu's car, taking it off the road after colliding with a defender, and rolling it down from a height of over ten meters and falling on the waves of the river Lepenc.

This entire sad scene the bus driver saw in the side mirror.

He immediately stopped the bus. The truck stopped abruptly too with the driver of the truck coming out of his cabin with both hands on his head, terrified.

Everyone got off the bus, including Qëndresa Lura, who, along with the rest, approached the iron side bumpers of the road. Others bus passengers stood nearby. Everyone expressed their concern with: "For God's sake!", "May God Save Him!" They watched the wrecked car that had stopped at the roots of a willow tree but with half of it sank in the water. Someone had

called the police and ambulance, while most of the passengers, the men, who were on the bus, found a way out and approached the wrecked car, trying to pull out the man who was left in it and for whom they could not tell if there was any sign of life, or not. The view was clear from above of people unable to open the doors. Next they tried to pull the car out of the water. After a while, the arriving of the police officers at the scene, helped calling for more people's hands that came out of their cars approaching the iron side bars to see what was happening down at the river. The large number of people, who came down to the river, as urged by the police, managed to pull out the car and put it in the river bank. After great effort, they managed to open one of the car doors pulling out the body of Din Gurziu, who was covered entirely in blood. As they carried him to the road, an ambulance arrived from where they pulled out a stretcher on which they lay down the victim's body. Indeed, as first aid was provided by the ambulance team, the driver of the car had died. Qëndresa Lura also heard this announcement, after which she put out a sigh. She lowered her head in order to hide her apprehension as she felt a tremor inside. Tears welled up in her eyes. She gulped and upon chewing, she barely coughed. His death, so unnatural, became so natural to him in the circumstances in which she found herself that day, especially as his persistence was to cause another death; a death of the fruit that Qëndresa Lura was carrying in her womb and, at times, caressed unwittingly. A death had to happen, she thought. Death happened to the assassin, whose incarnation could have occurred with the birth of his child.

Qëndresa Lura was unable to think sober. She was completely confused between this tragedy and the desire to give birth. Nevertheless, in that crowd of people stunned by the event, by that tragic death, Qëndresa Lura seemed calmer. Probably

because she would not be noticed as the one who had been with him in Skopje. She feared investigations that would take place later. As part of those investigations, he thought, they could get statements at the border crossing; they could ask with whom he had traveled to Skopje. In this situation, she asked himself the question: Would they find the notes at the border crossing? She shuddered. It seemed to her that she had faded away, that she had lost her blood. She tried to memorize every move while crossing the border. She remembered that Din Gurziu, before they reached the border, had asked for her passport. But she also remembered that her passport had not reached the police officer at all, it had remained near the gearbox, where she had left it herself. It was true that Din Gurziu also took her passport in his hand, but returned it to where he had taken it, as the police only took his passport and his car and driving license. Qëndresa Lura was convinced that her name was not registered, so she calmed down a bit. In that frenzy of feelings, this conviction enabled her to breathe freely, all the more so when all their encounters had taken place in secrecy, and no one had any knowledge of her intimate relationship with him. She was already in her fourth month of pregnancy.

(Translated from Albanian by Avni Spahiu)

Ibrahim Kadriu (1945) was born in Zhegër. He finished his university studies in Prishtina. During the period of forty years in journalism, he has written film reviews, book reviews, comedy sketches, reports and travel notes. He also wrote screenplays, radio dramas, novels, poetry volumes. From 1969, he continuously publishes books, the number of which reaches over eighty, of which **37 novels**. He has been **presented in over twenty different anthologies**. His books have been translated in Serbo-Croatian, Greek, Turkish, Arabic, French, Norwegian, Italian, English, Swedish, Romanian, etc. He received several best book awards for Literature. He is Vice-President of Kosova PEN Center.



Binak Kelmendi

101 YEARS TOGETHER

For many weeks you had thought long and hard about some letters and numbers engraved on a tombstone on the Cemetery Hill just above the village of Bogë. You had seen and looked at this tombstone every time you had passed silently by. And so, on a summer day, you went to the grave again and walked around it several times.

A strong wind blew, and it flattened the long grass almost completely to the ground. You were waiting to catch the base of the long, tilting stone as it was being laid bare by the wind, in order to take as many pictures of the full tombstone as possible. You did not want to uproot the grass at the foot of the stone because you thought that would uproot the bones of the buried man too. There was only a stone and the dug out soil had reimmersed with the ground. The grave was flattened, as if it didn't exist.

"Well many years have passed since his burial", you said to yourself, capturing the entire width and height of the tombstone

with the camera.

Then you stopped to look at the pictures and analysed and compared them with the carvings of letters and numbers on the stone fixed in the ground with the tall grass around it.

Together the letters said the name, "Halil Ali Demëbogaj". The numbers, "1839-1898".

And you approached the stone again. A tilting stone, almost round though quite high, at the foot of the muddy road surrounded by trees, slightly removed from other tombs with small white stones... You rubbed it with your hands, you almost stroked the stone taking more pictures of it from top-down.

"Them, them Serbs, killed my grandfather. He was about to turn sixty. Them, Them Serbs, did not want him to make it. Grandpa was tending the sheep, he had over 500 sheep, bardhoka, sykas and galas... each sheep better than the other, when Them killed him."

"Them" that's what father called Serbs.

You stopped to look at your father who secretly wiped his eyes to continue the story in a trembling voice:

"... Only my grandfather was left at home. In fact, only grandfather was left because Them, Them Serbs, had burned down the house and everything else. When Them killed grandfather, the sheep had screamed anxiously and had surrounded the fallen man, licking him. Them, Them Serbs, then shot at the sheep above the grandfather and three or four sheep fell on his body. Then, Them Serbs, had turned him over with their feet and pushed his body and the bodies of the slaughtered sheep down the hill. The bodies were stopped by the roots of a maple tree... The rest of the sheep were stolen by Them and Them Serbs left the village after setting fire to all the houses... It is not known who, when and how my grandfather was buried. The village was left without men. It is said that I

was born around that time, a year after my grandfather was killed, or in the year my grandfather was killed. In 1898 "...

"Halil", then called out my father.

My big brother stood up.

"You have my grandfather's name," said father to him.

"I know", Halili nodded.

"Bring me the lute!", your father turned to you.

You struggled to remove the lute from the nail.

Your father and your brother laughed: "You will grow soon", they said,

Then father started the song of Muja and Halil.

You listened, while your brother Halil assisted your father from time to time with his voice.

"You have a good voice", said father to your big brother and Halil looked at you...

In May 1999, you were in Tirana. A Refugee. Expelled. Followed. Fugitive. You did not know what to call yourself. On a sleepless night, you tried to figure out exactly what and which of those four nouns described you best. Then at midnight or later the phone rang.

"It's me", said the voice on the other side of the phone.

"I know you", you said. "Hey, have you got any news about Kosovo, about Peja, about Llabjan?", you asked after a while.

The voice went silent.

"Speak, do you know anything?", you begged him.

"Your brother Halil has been killed by the Serbs", and the voice far away began wailing.

You wrapped the headset with your hand so that he couldn't hear you cry. Then you hung up the phone and went out into the yard. You looked at the sky and the stars in it. And the crying started.

"Them. Them Serbs. They. Again Them Serbs. Again Them.

The same thing again. Again after 101 years. A new murder of another Halil. Killed near his house."

... After killing him, Them, Them Serbs, set fire to Halil's house. Everything was burned, even the lute, even pictures of his father. Three old women from the street watched the flames from the house with headscarves removed from their heads, cursing Them, Them Serbs. Them ordered the women to bury Halil in the meadow, above the burned house in Llabjan, but not in the village cemetery...

Halil's second burial took place in August 1999. Three months after his murder, on May 2 1999, and two months after the explosion, escape and deportation of Them Serbs from Kosovo. You returned from exile, in Alsace.

Three wreaths were brought to the grave for Halil. Two slightly older and slightly torn ones that had been taken from the murder scene and from Halil's first grave. The third, new wreath was for the second tomb.

"Halil was great and one grave wasn't enough for him", someone consoled you.

There were no patriotic speeches.

You too went silent.

You did not even thank the funeral participants. You shed three or four tears on the coffin that you later wiped, threw some soil on the grave and took many pictures of the board shaped like a pyramid holding records of the year of Halil's birth and death on the stone:

"Halil Ali Kelmendi."

"1941-1999."

It was hot and new graves were being dug out for the others slayed by the Serbs.

You left looking beyond the brown mountains and to the newly covered grave.

The two Halils were six feet under and 40 kilometers apart. And you immediately thought that the dead were talking to each other. Especially your father's Halil and your Halil.

You shed more tears again and then you put the photos of the graves of the two Halils in your bag and said to yourself: The fates and names of people are repeated. Like the days of the week and like the months of the year.

"Especially the tragic fates", you said to yourself whilst putting the photos of the Halils' graves in your bag.

"My two Halils," you shouted loudly.

Everyone looked at you in amazement and fear. They seemed to say, "He's gone mad."

You replied: It is maddening. How can war not be maddening. Especially this war that has lasted 101 years, even more perhaps. And no one knows whether it will end.

With one look at the new grave again and not looking at anyone else, headed back to Prishtina.

In Ulpiana, in your apartment, you again encountered the traces of Them Serbs: There, Them, Them Serbs, tore many books, left them without covers on the floor and took everything that belonged to you. Even the computer where he had sketched your family tree with the two Halils killed by Them, by the Serbs...

(Translated by Ard Kelmendi)

Binak Kelmendi (1950) is a writer, publicist, translator. He has published the following books: "Rozafa", short stories, "Rilindja" 1990, Prishtina, "Vezet e vdekjes" ("Eggs of Death"), Dukagjini, novel, Peja 2001.

"Ofelia e Dukagjinit" ("Ophelia of Dukagjin"), short stories, "Rozafa", Prishtina, 2004, and a dozen more novels, short stories collections in both fiction and non-fiction, as well as translations especially from the French. He was awarded Koha's "Rexhai Surroi" literary award for best novel in 2014. He is the President of Kosova PEN Center.



Avni Spahiu

ANOTHER WINTER IN NEW YORK

“I will stay in New York for one more winter. I will see snow fall on my hair. I will convince myself if Brooklyn Bridge separates or connects the shores. I will prove how loneliness burned Serembe... I will roam the streets of the Bronx for one more winter. I will spend the evenings in the Botanical Park. I will see how the grass withers and the leaves turn yellow. I will feel the waves in the Atlantic. I will stay in New York one more winter – So say all those who came from there. They don’t lie that winters come and go – The soul goes to the Fatherland, but the bones stay here. I will try what it means out of sight – out of mind. I will measure the distances in nautical miles. I will study the art of exile ballads. I will find the square root of Balkan hatred. I will stay in New York for one more winter...”

Every time I heard this song sung by my friend Arben Krasniqi, with his voice sounding like that of Charles Aznavour, and every time I read these lines written by Sinan Kamberaj, I was

saddened so deeply that it made me forget all the other things and return to languishing in the city of dreams, New York. They were all young Kosovar boys and old men, whole families and family members scattered around after having sailed in an unbearable tempest of life in Kosovo, crushed and broken, becoming part of a dream journey that they never expected it would last more than a winter. Among them were some of my old friends and former journalist colleagues, thrown across the Atlantic to this city of tall buildings, which equally embraced the Albanians together with their history and culture intertwined with the lives of its people.

Though, for them, it was not a visit as of someone who wanted to live the fast life of a New Yorker, standing by and observing, smelling and enjoying all the experiences this city has to offer. The ideal image of expats in New York was beyond the high-rises and hustle and bustle of life in the city that never sleeps. The city that is part of almost every image we had of it. In the city that tries to live up to everyone's expectations and show more understanding and promise. Even for Albanians, our emigrants...

Many people feel that, as a city, New York is a bit annoying, though I never thought so. Indeed, New York City, where I had once lived a long time ago while serving as a UN correspondent was always as exciting to me as it was in my first encounter with the city. I made frequent visits, and although the drive from Washington takes long, the most special and true moment of the trip came once we entered Manhattan, the heart of the city. Traffic entering the city, through bridges or underwater tunnels,

presented a challenge to deal with a large and overwhelming mess. We always experienced this part with difficulty, and every time we had to pay the toll to enter Manhattan, it was like entering a theater performance. But inside, the city, the people and the buildings welcomed us with open arms.

The noise of the city permeates everything reaching beyond the facades of buildings and traffic on the streets of Manhattan. Everyone becomes part of the vivacity that happens outside. The buildings themselves present an amazing uniqueness to behold. They even have their own characters and even names: *Empire State Building, Rockefeller Center, Chrysler Building, The Plaza, St. Patrick's Cathedral...* With each building bigger and nicer than the next. And, as the lights in the city are added and mixed, a dazzling combination of colors is created. The city itself is experienced as a big hug and one feels overwhelmed by it. New York makes you a part of it, as many of our people who had immigrated to this city of “startling beauty” had done for years. The sights are lined up one after the other: *Broadway, Park and Fifth Avenue, Times Square*, the main intersection of the city, where I often met our Kosovars who were forced to leave their homeland for the United States, especially some of my precious colleagues who took the road of exile and with whom I often met in this metropolis of great racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic mixtures...

The metropolis is attractive to all people of the world from all walks of life: from advertising models on billboards, to people from the open floors of restaurants and on the streets. The city that never blinks is a place where millions of people a day strive to achieve something. With the rest the Albanian exiles too. Their voice is even heard loudly. The catchphrase “*I love New*

York”, the first New York anthem produced by an Albanian-American film director, Stan Dragoti, reminds us of what New York represents and what it is exactly. It begins with a tune about New York and its neighborhoods from the bottom up, *Downtown* and *Uptown*, *East* and *West Sides*, and elite neighborhoods, where many famous and thriving actors, artists and writers have lived...

I used to tell to my friend Sulejman Gashi, while sitting in a bar with glasses of red Californian wine in front of us, that New York City is the place I always wanted to return to. This feeling for New York comes from an experience unlike any other big city experience. Passing under the *Hudson River*, the *Lincoln Tunnel*, or over the *George Washington Bridge*, the *Triboro*, or the *Brooklyn Bridge*, and entering *Grand Station*, a crowded subway carom, feels like a ride in some kind of land-to-earth space vehicle in the blink of an eye. Living in America is a fantastic privilege, but living in New York City is something even more special. As we wandered through the endless spaces of the city streets, accustomed to its air and scent, we'd openly speak out: Yes, this is New York, that city that embodies the vivacity of life and freedom! ...

The buildings are surprisingly tall and imposing, which made my daughter Vjosa, every time we passed the Lincoln Tunnel, say: “I feel like these buildings are about to fall on our heads!” These buildings had a most unique architecture we have ever seen. We used to wonder jokingly and with a little destructiveness how hard it was to believe that someone could build them, or, on the contrary, how even harder it would be to bring them down. As we walked the streets of the city, we felt surrounded by people who spoke different languages, people who looked like we had

never seen, looking somewhat strange, all different in their own ways and styles, among all sorts of trends and currents, as in a vortex of all innovations and perceptions of a deprived expression of freedom...

I had been reading quite interesting stories about the city. I knew how the city had different ethnicities within it, just like we had found in the books and seen in the movies. Sometimes it was hard to believe how the different ethnicities had preserved their cultures and peculiarities so well. We heard so many different languages and accents of English from so many people that it had become normal and a quality of life. Everyone is in New York and everyone lives by their own conventions. People seem proud of this and stick to this lifestyle...

We also noticed an abundance of restaurants in New York, and someone said that this city had more restaurants than any other city in the US, or maybe even in the world. There were many Albanian restaurant owners, mainly Italian ones. They were part of this mixture according to ethnic categories, along with Chinese, Japanese, Cubans, Jamaicans, Thais, Germans, Poles and primarily Italians. Every place you've ever heard seemed as if it had its own cuisine in Manhattan. And, everywhere in the city we'd encounter our own people...

This is a slightly extended narrative of peculiarities to understand that living abroad, in New York especially, is a tempting opportunity for people who may gain many useful experiences and valuable knowledge. But living in such a foreign country can be an experience as tempting as it is terrifying. It is also a

new and unforgettable experience, though one that cannot be common to everyone. People living away from their countries usually experience an effect and that is especially felt in New York, something that may change one's personal outlook. The main effect, one may think, is the one that reminds one of his family and hometown. Living away you're your homeland, and facing a situation one cannot change, will make one realize how valuable homeland and family are. Moreover, simple things will remind you of belonging with a feeling of longing for as little as the chirping of a bird, trees blowing in the wind, sunrise, a quiet night, words people say and how they live. This is not an easy feeling for those living in foreign lands.

This feeling of estrangement and extraction must have captured people like Shaqir Gashi, who spent almost his entire adult life in this city, coming from Vojnik of Drenica. An expatriate, who rose to become an owner of exclusive restaurants in various Manhattan squares and who, before becoming a respected New Yorker, always maintained a sense of yearning for homeland with an undying patriotism for Kosovo. Or, people like Bruno Selimaj and Sejdi (Sergio) Bytyçi and many other restaurant owners and individuals who served their country in its worst days. And, the next generation of Albanian New Yorkers who melted into the American dream, though maintaining the pride of their Albanian ancestry. All of them spent hard winters outside their homeland with unstoppable visions of the deprived homeland...

Whenever I had a chance to meet these people, I was very moved by their painful stories. The way they had left their country and how they found themselves in New York City. They would speak about themselves and their families and we would listen deeply

moved by the stories. Lonely people alone or in groups with all the baggage of an afflicted nation. People who came from so many Albanian provinces and regions, a conglomeration of backgrounds and professions, every single one with the concern of Kosovo, for which they raised their voices above the hundred-story buildings over the megalopolis...

New York metropolitan area seems endless. Skyscrapers, however, edifices of a different kind of dream, constantly rear their heads above the treetops. Inside the city, in the parks where emigrants moved, a whisper may have reached their ears with the words about freedom, under the breeze of the shadows of the hundred-stored buildings...

In a whisper of freedom, thousands of our people seem to have been torn apart. Among them, I remembered the restless and bohemian-minded poet, Tahir Desku, wandering the avenues, streets and parks of the megalopolis, or the narrow neighborhoods of the Bronx with his compatriots, in cafes made like in Kosovo and filled from corner to corner, on Arthur Avenue in the Bronx, overwhelmed by the endless political discourse of the hometown. Killing time and mind for the bleeding Kosovo, he and others became part of the national movement in America. Until they went away, to join the struggle as they homeland beckoned.

After eight years of severe absence away in the distant land, Tahir Desku felt he did not belong there any longer. I remember a poem by the late poet, after he joined the ranks of the liberation war of the KLA, until liberation. The metaphor

of New York City or perhaps Prishtina, or both, follows him to the homeland, with a longing and pain for the homeland high above the skyscrapers: “... *I wonder how spring comes to this city/ how evening falls over the skyscrapers/ for I will wake up the sleepers with a song/ as boredom has fallen in my heart/ the great crowd fell on our parts/ everything turned into a shape of fire/ houses, mountains, oaks, caps flew away... I came to the city to convince myself that I am not dead/ although among the dead I still start singing/ with the dead the road leads me to the homeland/ I, you and dead comrades are on a journey/ and boredom has fallen into our hearts/ burying, exhuming, burying/ our comrades together with my songs...*”

The poet finally returned to his Drenica following “a tough winter” that took the breath away from him and the entire nation. He returned with freedom. Still, “I will stay in New York one more winter...” continues ringing into the minds of many Albanians in the eternal metropolis... until the promised spring that comes following each winter!

Avni Spahiu (1956) is a diplomat, journalist, author, translator, born in Mitrovica, Kosovo. He studied at the University of Prishtina where he received an MA degree on Literature. He was a New York based correspondent for daily newspaper “Rilindja” and later its Chief Editor. In the 90s he dealt with human rights as one of the founders of Human Rights Council of Kosovo. After the war, he became co-founder of public broadcaster RTK and served as its first director. He has translated over 30 books of Western literature and thought. He also translated poetry. He is author of several non-fiction books, including Noli – Life of An Albanian-American (in Albanian and English), Nobel Literary Laureates, American Essays, The First Mission. From 2008-2012 he served as the first Ambassador of the Republic of Kosovo to the USA and later to Turkey. He was cofounder and Vice-President of PEN Center of Kosovo.

> poetry



Ali Podrimja

Take this stone

Take this stone and cast it
Wherever you wish
If you wish

Beyond my thread and tribe
Beyond the nine wounds
of Gjergj Elez Alia

Nail it if you wish
wall it in

Take this stone

Baptize it or leave it nameless
I have changed the time, the climate

Leave it without land, without sky

Take this stone and cast it
Wherever you wish

Its strength makes us immortal

Song of freedom

Everything about you, your birth
And your step Lumi
My security in life

Listen to the ancient flute
An eerie beast is sniffing about
In Europe

Many a song is sung
But only one song never ends
The song of freedom

Paris, native land

We'll go to Paris
There we shall lay our stone
Teuta, Genti will not be expecting us
The savage Roman hordes will not be expecting us
No one will be expecting us
To Paris we shall go
We shall hang our dreams on stork wings
At a fountain we shall wash our eyes, our wart-covered hands
We shall leave the Balkan nights behind us

the dances, the songs, the ballads, the tales
The flute alone we shall take with us
To play whenever we are homesick
 when we get lost in the crowds of drunks
 in the shadows
 amongst the rats
Late at night in the streets of Paris in the frantic metro
We shall smell the fragrance of the quince from our native land
With our fingers we will talk of vile times
We shall not step on any ants
We shall not frighten any birds
We shall vent neither hellfire nor spleen
 upon the head of man
We shall not bow to a torpid Europe
 nor to any deranged gods
Promise me Lum Lumi
That we will not forget our native land

(Paris 1981)

And you dead

It was summer
Overhead the sun
Shadows, you around Europe

From that horrible journey
You returned one day with eyes wide open
You entered your father's poem without knocking

There you are in safety Lumi
I swear no harm
Will come to you

It was summer
The sun in the west
And you dead, earth

Agony

I don't know why I long for Skopje
Now that Lumi is no longer there
And Baci Bajram no longer descends the Kačaniku Gorge

I don't know why
I plunge my hands deep into the waters of the Vardar
And black out

I don't know why I stumble and fall
With the rain battering down upon me
Until I lock myself in my room

I don't know why
I really don't know why
Skopje causes me such anguish

It is the Albanian's fault

It is the Albanian's fault
That he breathes
And walks on two legs

That I take tranquillizers
And swat flies all day
In the Toilet

It is the Albanian's fault
That he besmirches your wife
And frightens my family

That my hand cannot reach the apple
On the highest branch
That he has filled the Well with dead words

It is the Albanian's fault
That not more of Turkey exists,
More of America of Norway

That the Gulag is so far away

That they chose me and sent me
To sniff him out
Does death smell

It is all the more the Albanian's fault
That he does not eat
Or close his eyes and sleep

That our sewers are broken
And the Catacombs of the Balkans
Have fallen into ruins

It is the Albanian's fault
That he whiles away the time under the moon

And breaks windows and stirs up muddy water

That he speaks Albanian that he eats Albanian
that he shits Albanian

It is the Albanian's fault
The Albanian is the one at fault
For all my undoings

Both for my broken tooth
And for my frozen smile
So therefore: BULLET

Ha ha ha
Ha ha
Ha

May God have mercy!

(Translated by Robert Elsie)

Ali Podrimja (1942 – 2012) was an Albanian poet born in Gjakova, Kosova. He studied Albanian language and literature in Prishtina. Author of **over a dozen volumes of cogent and assertive verse** since 1961, he was recognized both in Kosova and Albania as a leading and innovative poet. He was considered by many to be the most typical representative of modern Albanian verse in Kosova and was certainly the Kosova poet with the widest international reputation. Podrimja's first collection of elegiac verse, **Thirje** ("Calls"), was published in 1961. Subsequent volumes introduced new elements of the poet's repertoire, a proclivity for symbols and allegory. In the early eighties, he published the masterful collection "**Lum Lumi**", which marked a turning point not only in his own work but also in contemporary Kosovo verse as a whole. Ali Podrimja was member of European Art Center and member of Kosova PEN Center.



Azem Shkreli

Kosova

I am returning
My fierce, my good one
I am returning

I am returning
My wild, my beautiful one
I am returning

Once again
I meet you
Like a mother

Before the elegy

One day you will take them to your breast
the fallen leaves of your seasons
and you will search for yourself in vain

through the forgotten paths of an age
and you won't even have windy hair anymore,
nor rainbow vision to measure the thread
and the end of your brief deception.

One day you will reveal your years
as the dowry of a dead bride
you will count the butterflies gone by
of the sunset dawns
and you will no longer even have fire on your lips,
no tears in the eyes of warm laughter,
for a fake cry to amaze the
boys

One day you'll be eating your lips,
you will spit out your traces
you will baptize each twilight
with all thee regret that hurts
and you won't even have sea eyes anymore,
not even a single step
to see how they laugh at you
and run away from your shadow.

Beware, as the most beautiful girls
Are killed by their own beauty.

A song of journey

Tonight I went for a walk through your eyes,
Rejuvenating the leaves of the seasons
tonight only.

And if I get lost in the alley of arched eyebrows
Don't turn off the lights of the spelling views,
As the stars of this night's joy
Will go out.

Tonight I went for a walk through your eyes,
Wandering the fields of green wishes all night long
Tonight only

And if you cross over the boulevards of my shoulder
Don't run away, as I will catch
The wild hounds of want!

in their flame I'll lit a thread of hope-
tonight only!
Tonight I went for a walk through your eyes

Vigils

The two of us tonight
Are but to eyes of this vigil

Hours will stay
Awake, tolls awake

Tonight you and dI
Are that cleggy awakening

Wolves on foot
Will be, Kosova on foot

A night that never took
A gun, and a gun that never took you

The rock

We saw what we saw
You kept silent. I barely grew up.

I envied your shadow
And your patience

I kissed your memory
One day and off I went

I don't know why you taught me
The pain of a dot in the stone

On the road

Now I am somewhere far of you, far of myself
and – who knows where I'll be sent to?
by the countless crossroads of life?

I've become a forgotten greeting of passers-by,
I've turned into tears and songs,
I've become an oath of the roads and a beam of fire
on top of a stone.

Now I am somewhere far of you, far of myself
and – who knows where I'll be sent to?
by the the torn threads of this song?

I've become prey of a curse of blazing eyes,
I am left without a blessing and name,
I've become a bird and cloud of white dawns?

Now I am somewhere far of you, far of myself
and – who knows where I'll be sent to?
by the countless crossroads of life?

Four tips to oneself

Don't be a poet if you can't be born
with each verse, born with each word.

Rise above yourself and you'll hold the reins of the winds,
trampling on the wrath and the bonds of your blood.

If you fall in love, fall in love passionately,
not in blue eyes, as you'll turn into a mad sea of remorse.

Don't be a poet if you won't die
for each verse, die for each word.

Highlander's death

No bowed head
For you'll knock down the oaks

No lament like a stone
For you'll knock off the tops
No tears, none
For you'll dry out its springs

In his eyes only
The day forgot to set

What a bleak thought
What a cold thought between eyebrows
Blessed he be, what a death

Lyrics on freedom

Freedom is my rainbow beyond the bars
Freedom is the maiden's braid with a ribbon
Once she grows up, we dress her as a bride
When we're thirsty, we drink to health from her breast
She is a drop in the water, a bird in the sky
When she speaks, we understand her as a mother
When it hurts, it hurts in the heart
Freedom grays beautifully, it never gets old
When it dies, it becomes immortal
When it dies, we make room for her in the home land.
Freedom is like Kosovo, I can hardly find a word.

A quiet song

Through passages of life we met, sometimes by chance
And in its waves we set off with a trumpet
Some omen told me: isn't it better
To give you away to memory, to love you unconditionally.

Ever since I see gloomy clouds hovering over me
Like your shadow, never breaking the word
As long as I look at myself face to face
I have no courage, as I fear remorse will kill me.

A shameful song

Tonight
Tonight I cried for you
Arbëria*
I am not ashamed
Why I cried
I am ashamed why I could not
Do more for you
I cried of shame

*Albania

(Translated by Avni Spahiu)

Azem Shkreli (1938-1997) One of the best poets of Kosova, he was educated at the University of Prishtina at the Department of Albanian Literature. A poet, author of fiction, drama, screenplays, essays, and a collection of letters, he was considered to be the bard of Albanian poetry in Kosova. Shkreli was best known for his ten verse collections, including **The Buds, The Street of Angels, I Know a Word of Stone, The Bible of Silence, and The Call of the Owl, The white Caravan, Eva's eyes, etc.** He was President of the Writers' Association of Kosovo, Director of the Kosovo Theater and founder and Director of Kosova Film. His poetry was widely published in several world languages. He was member of Kosova PEN.



Rrahman Dedaj

Marathon

Reaching as far as that flower
And then die

Reaching as far as that word
And then live in it
How many times it went mad in its magic
Cutting out its tongue
In a flute

Reaching as far as that skeleton
That whisper to the time
So as to give it my flesh

How beautiful he would be playing the harp
That burnt-mountain outlaw

I have always entered his song
And have run away
For the slightest pain

Reaching as far as that sound
Snd then die beautifully
Like butterflies in the rain

Instead of an epitaph

That stone
Flag

No army
Took its color

It was never raised on a poll
All the polld over the naval cord

That stone
Flag

It died a bit every day
No one placed a cover over it

That stone
That wall

Our word

You've been sleeping in our hollow bone
You twined legends and brought down temples

You blood-stained bridge between ashes and light
You rebelled child of the heart bread and salt

You in the lasses's dreams spangled like a bride
You in whitewashed stone-houses a never-torn bride's veil

Through yellow rings you crossed your name
Your love stricken with love arrows

Like a full moon you are born in every affection
And in every heart you build a home for yourself

You in our bone a red butterfly
Indulged in a song snatched off from our flesh

The final

This is history too
That will not be taught
To children in schools

Chronicles will keep no records
In modern-day times

No word of it will be used
To write a composition on fatherland

And the child of my blood
Drawing Kosova's map
Will intentionally forget
To name a village street
By my trampled name

The pain

You'll never be that powerful
As to die
With my name

(Translated by. A. Spahiu)

Rrahman Dedaj (1939-2005) is a well-known Kosovar poet. He was born in the village of Penduhe, Besjana, Kosova, and died in London. He finished his primary school in Besjana, and Normal School in Prishtina. He studied Albanian Language and Literature at the Faculty of Philosophy in Prishtina. He was a journalist for Radio Prishtina and Publishing Editor and later Director of "Rilindja" publishing enterprise. He began dealing with literature as early as sixteen and published the following works: **The Bird and the Tower, With singing eyes, Symphony of words, Hidden Ballad, Thirst, The Misfortune of Wisdom, Crossroads of Shadows.** He was one of the forgotten poets of Kosova's literature, which flourished from the 60s to the 80s. His latest works include **The Secret** and **The Medallion**, story collections, as well as **Two Lakes**, children rhyme collection.



Basri Çapriqi

My room in London

the traditional english-style window and the mirrors around it
increase the illusion of space you watch me from the street and
from the surrounding apartments i cannot lock anything with
the key that binds me to you the thames takes it all and casts
it down by the two flanks of my naked body surrounded by
mirrors that increase the illusion of infinite space in my bedroom
i cannot lock this cubic world with the key that separates me
from you the thames takes my little belongings and i cannot
find them in the shadows suffocating me as they parade in the
mirrors that extend the size of my bedroom the traditional
english-style window and the confusing key in the open door
fracture the light into a multitude of views of my limbs hanging
in the mirrors that turn to ruins my world hidden from public
view and the masses

(London, 1993)

Grass in the window

The fruit is spoiling on my table,
I vow to pluck sour apples,
To hide their lifespan.
Someone who secretly loves me
Lays her unripe cheek on mine,
That I not taste unknown apples.
Spurn fruit in the evening,
She says in a distant tone
So that morning shoots will sprout in the mire.
Cast seed beyond the garden
When the seasons change and the foliage falls,
To keep your home so leaves won't conceal your face.
If grass gets in through your window,
Don't say the garden has grown up over your table,
Triumph of death over the verdant arch.

My room in Ulqin

Even when I am not there
My mother opens the shutters to the sea.
The moon floods in, outlined in a glass,
Filling the room with my figure.
My mother flings the shutters open to the sea
Even when I am not there
To bring in the fresh salt air,
For I am breathing somewhere
On the crest of a breeze
When she leaves the door open.

Girl from the east, prostitute in Rome

They pay good money here
Full stop
In Prague the minister of food production arraigned me
In the name of the people
Full stop
I was a member of the Party
They pay good money here full stop
And the minister of heavy industry
And the people
Full stop
And I'm not permitted to be a member of their
Party
That is the main difference
Full stop
Buona notte

(Rome, 1990)

Portrait of a blood killing pardoned

Firstly they had to buy him shoes
That he could cross the threshold of his house.
Almost ready to kill himself
When he did not know his shoe size,
He had not worn shoes for a thousand years,
Bursting, he uttered: give me a size 1990.
They measured and assessed him and said:
Off with you now, avenger,
Eat crow on that muddy road
All the way to Vranjevc, on foot
Right from the start.

Archetype

When lighting that torch for me
You cover my sun
With that oversized head of yours.

(Translated from the Albanian by Robert Elsie)

My room in Prishtina

All the things you left upside down in the evening
Dripping red blood of the meat you brought
From the surrounding woods
Hang on the hooks over the oven in the morning

My whole trouble is
How to fit the dishes once and for good

At the corner where our cat usually sat
At the corner where usually
My wife mended the vases towards the light
At the corner where
Children left their toys
At the corner where we left
An empty space
Letting the door open

Now I hang my hat my pale nails
Over a blazing peg
And I can lock the door in with
A stretched hand

On the wall where the clock stood on a peg
Where I used to hang things with my
White eyes framed in black
Over the curtain
Where a spider was now peeking

Now I blow the off the dust of storm dropping from rooftops
Cold amidst an evil day
The cord standing on naked
Waiting for the while clothes to be hanged
Free of heavy smell and the weight
Of my body now decomposing by the stirring waters

Now it is I impulsively opening the windows
Not to break to pieces from Bindi's cries

(Translated by A. Spahiu)

Basri Çapriqi (1960 – 2018), finished his studies on Albanian Literature at the University of Prishtina and received his Master's and PhD in Philological Sciences. He was Professor at the University of Prishtina teaching Stylistics, Semiotics and Contemporary poetry. His work was translated into English, French, German, Rumanian, Polish, Serb/Croat, Turkish, Arabic and Macedonian. He was President of Kosova PEN Center, President of the Governing Board of University of Prishtina and Member of Albanian Academy of Arts and Sciences. He published seven collections of poetry and five collections of literary criticism among them: **'He Mocks Me'**, **'The Bizarre Fruits'**, **'Grass on the Window'**, **'The Taming of the Snake'**, **'The Microstructure of the Text'**, **'Dimensions of Context'**, **'The Kadare Paradigm'**, etc. He received several literary awards: the Poetry: Meeting Award in Gjakovë (1996, 2007), Annual Award of the Art Club, Ulqin, the Lasgush Poradeci Award, Albania (1992), Silver Medal, in the international poetry competition Saloon of The Academie Europeenne Des Arts, Brussels, (2007), etc.



Lindita Aliu

Children rhymes

Children in my country
Do not stamp their feet
In front of toy shops

They play hide and seek
In midst of squares where grown ups
Stamp their feet and shout
In front of twinkling preachers

Children in my country
Do not sing hey diddle diddle
The donkey and the fiddle

They raise two skinny fingers
High up
Their heads with twinkling eyes
Shouting DEMOCRACY

Two childish fingers
De-mo-cra-cy
Two long ears
Above the round face
Of the globe

For my father

My daddy is the prince of one hundred fairy tales
My father is a knife
My daddy is the water of all the rivers
Which twist like snakes
My daddy is the tallest tree up to the sky
Under its shadow I get my sunshine
My daddy has beautiful eyes like mirrors
I shiver each time I look there at my face
My daddy has a big soft hand like a dove
My father is a knife

Where is my daddy
My daddy the magician
The longest shadow
In the world?
Why is the earth round?
Why is it the same thing
To be in front
Or
Behind?

My daddy is the only daddy in the world
My father is a book without paper

My daddy frightens away the scary sounds of the night
My father is an old violin
My father is the sleepest bear
My daddy has hair like fire flames
My daddy laughs like a star
My daddy has a sun in his heart

My father is
A knife
He cuts
He carves
The handle
Wherefrom I come out
A knife

The right place for a flower

I want to become a woman
Said the flower

My roots will fall down like gorgeous hair
My stalk will stand proudly like a graceful maiden
My petals will shiver like soft silky skin

Haven't poets forever claimed
A women is like a flower

I really want it
The flower said
A perfect vase
For me

At the bus stop

As I wait for my destination
A signless bus arrives

People move from the pressed sidewalk
Pushing each other inside

I envy them
Grasping tightly my certainty

When the war ended

Noises still echoed in my ears

Don't worry you said
Those are not sounds of war but sounds of peace

When the war ended
A cloud of smoke covered my eyes

Don't worry you said
It is not the dust of war but the dust of peace

When the war ended
A sob burst out of my lungs

Don't worry you said
It is not the cry of death it is the cry of birth

A new world is born you said
Don't you hear the noise of the hammer

And can't you see
The metal net
Rising higher and higher

When the war ended

Translating for the Helsinki comitee for the Human Rights and Freedoms

Did they hit you on your left or on your right above or below
your left ear

Take off your shirt put it on turn around stand still

One wound two wounds five wounds here is the bullet sign

How did they rape you where did they tear your dress apart

How did it hurt

How was your son dragged how was your father stabbed

How did the blood flow

Who beat you up why they beat you up & how much they
beat you up

I talk and talk and talk and talk and my lips are scorching

How shall I drink the red red red strawberry juice

How shall I drink your blood brother

Faster would you talk faster please shorter

Others are waiting faster please shorter

Look at me too I have also been beaten

I have also been shot look at me too

Here you are another wound

Let's choose faster please just faster
Just one more shot one more wound one more pain
Choose

I talk and talk and talk and talk and my lips are scorching
How shall I drink your blood blood blood
How shall I drink
My blood

After reading at the festival of poetry

In the hotel "La Royale"
The chat of the poets feels as a lullaby
Rocking me into a dream
Where I see you
 Smuggling through a border line
 Swearing like a Balkan swine
 Already missing
 Your ninth child
 And her coarse hand caressing you in the dark

In the hotel "La Royale"
You royally sit in my poetical throne
So don't worry
When you leave your home
Taking with you only the dreams for free Kosova
Go freely to sweat all over free Europe
Clean freely all her free streets
 Go freely, don't worry
 Because after all
 You sit royally on top of my political poetry
 Written in free verse

In the hotel "La Royale"
My verses stand on top of your pain
Where many poets watch altogether
At you and me
So just enter the row of verses proudly
 As you are food for poetry
 Ideological food
 For free non-ideological verses
 In this hungry world
 Brother

Bad dream

The door opens
And someone shouts:

Wipe them out
Let's protect the people.

They kill & kill & kill.

The door opens again
Someone shouts:

Wipe them out
Let's save the people.

They kill & kill & kill

The door opens and
Someone
Shouts:
Where
Are
The people?

Talking with a child

Why is there a wolf why why why?
To slaughter the sheep.
Why is there a hunter why?
To kill the deer.
Why is there a knife why?
To butcher the cow.
Why is the winter why?
To wither the flower.
Why is the day why?
To end the night.
Why is the soldier?
To end the men.

Love of one's country

I can't bare you staring at me with those sliding eyes,
my fatherland. You know you see me and do not see me thin
and lingering.

I can't forgive you the sky that you never looked at the
earth you never stepped at the sea that has no water to cry. I
can't forgive you yourself which you gave me like the coin I

gave today to the beggar in the street.

Like all poets live or dead I will dedicate a poem
to you so that children can say it by heart and soldiers may
march it in straight rows, my fatherland.

I can't forgive you running with lead letters in
harmony, my verse, me eagle, my fatherland.

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Ibrahim Berisha

Unforgetfulness

Do not kill me
For I will die said the man.
The man died.

Do not tear me
For I will wither said the rose.
The rose withered.

Do not put me on fire
For I will burn said the mountain.
The mountain burned.

Do not leave me
For I won't forget said the woman.
The woman did not forget.

Instant man

He told me his way was the right one
I said everyone has his own way.
He said his dream was the most beautiful
I told him everyone has his own dream.
He said he was the best
I told him everyone was good.
He said he was the richest
I told him everyone is rich.
He said he was the bravest
I told him everyone is brave.
He said he did his job
I told him everyone does his job.
He said he was not the same
I told him everyone is the same.

Do not become immortal

Do not become immortal,
So the winds will cry over you.
Silk leaf soul,
Full clouds navigating
There are plenty of reasons for the winds crying over you
Do not forget being seen,
Beyond the dried steam.
And do not become immortal.
I understand you
If anyone asks me
So that I have a reason.

So do not forget
Nor don't you ever die,
And never turn yourself
For the winds to cry over you.

Revision

If you see anything, tell
The real reason
After all, why are you watching
Without still seeing a thing.

Waiting time

Even if you arrive
Without notifying me, I will always
Have enough time
To wait.
Are you coming
Looking out of the cracked glass window
Wreaths of apricots full of yellow berries,
So that you'll eat eggs at breakfast
Wild goose, cheese made in the basement
Of stone, or
Like never before
Through a wavering of clouds

The white rose catches a butterfly,
To be a happy shadow again.

I repeat: Even if you arrive
Without notifying me, I
I have enough time
To wait, even if you never come.

Breath

On this long beautiful day to complete the speeches
Nonsense is anyone thinking about the crown?
On this day winter swarms of sand in front and back,
Is anyone thinking about the forest crown?
Will an Old boat a Wide bed of Wood suffice?
To keep the question alive: Is anyone else thinking about the
earth?

A Hanging Plant

Fire, why are you crying? Who do I ask, why the sea cries
When shaken
A fisherman never returning
To the wooden trough,
Beds in orphanages
Why are they crying? Who do I ask why train sirens cry
At last
Station, why are you crying at the siren fatigue?
Why everything cries when nothing stops.

Hand

A beautiful girl then
took me by my hand,
Hand in hand and carefully,
not to lose the thin track.
Before I could laugh
She took me by my hand
She said it was time to live.
But in the morning she let go of my hand
And I still keep her by my hand.

(Translated by Avni Spahiu)

Ibrahim Berisha (1955) is a Professor of Sociology at the University of Prishtina. Berisha's books include sociological and cultural works, collections of poetry and short stories. He won The Annual Prize for the Best Book Published in Kosovo (**The Origin of Recognition**, 1997) issued by the Albanian Writers Association, Award for the Best Book in Fiction (**Wife of Loneliness**, Tetova, North Macedonia 2000); Annual Prize of the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports of the Republic of Kosovo for the Best Essay Book in 2009; Award for the Best Literary Work by PEN International on the occasion of 100th Anniversary (**The Scent of Heaven** 2021). Berisha's works have been translated into German, English, French, Slovenian, Turkish, Bosnian, Macedonian, Romanian, Montenegrin, etc. He lives in Prishtina.



Sali Bashota

Don't touch the door with your hand

Tell the soul to lockdown for a few more sunny days
Nights sigh less
When dreams prolong their happiness
Do not leave the house as fear waits there for humans
Even when flowers bloom in the rose garden
No girl with beautiful eyes will water them with tears
Only those eyes filling with loneliness have water
Don't even touch the door with your hand
There instincts of drowsy beings are awakened
Nobody knows what it's like to run away from your own self
When everyone loves animals
Some even cats of all colors
Others love camels with long necks and two humps
Tell the soul to lock up for a few more days
If the stunted death starts at any minute
When you're told not to kiss anymore
When you're told not to hug anymore

When you're told don't shake hands anymore
Maybe just to love each other
Nothing more

Two meters away from death

Just two meters away from death
You can't put out the fire
Or the flashes of lightning
That end in a flame
Two meters away from death
Try to live
Every day from the unknown
I take three steps back
As a living being of this world
Two meters away from death
As you smooth your hair in the first dream
With the soft fingers of fantasy
As you kiss the eyes of longing for the world
With endless seduction
As you wet the cold lips
Full of deception
Do not touch them with either hand
Two meters away from death
Nor the cracked palms of the dream
They are never more afraid
Than of death
Only white clouds in the sky they are free
And the sad morning birds
Two meters away from death
In every day with the living

Fear is pain

Fear is pain
In everyone's eyes
Like an open wound in the chest
Something like a lament
That you won't wake up alive in the morning
On the usual day
Fear is pain
That preserves the immortality of souls
Until the last moment
Something like a lament
On the extraordinary day
Fear is just pain

The way how not to die

All the days of the week are the same
As the loneliness of the world
Wanders over its own fervor
How not to die
How not to be forgotten
How can we not go mad
On a snowy spring day
All the days of the week are the same
Only the death toll rises
As silence escapes like the hands of the clock
How not to die
Without knowing the day still to come
With its own grief

Everyone draws their own destiny

Everyone draws their own destiny
In the palm of your hand
Pain in the morning
Pain at noon
Pain in the evening
Somewhere the eye of nostalgia wakes up
Somewhere the flutter of eyelids
Somewhere the multiplication of dreams
Somewhere just a trembling voice
Everyone draws their own destiny
In white gloves
If the colors dissolve like fear
At the end of the rescue
Everyone draws their own destiny

Treachery of fear

There is a fire
That is never lit
Not even a handshake
Inside the cage
Here is loneliness
With unfamiliar eyes
It is also a sigh of the soul
In silence
There is sadness
By deceiving oneself
Even a tamed creature
Waiting
Hence the treachery of fear
That does not know how to forgive

And a rusty key
Full of illusions

Everyone locks down to his own fear

Everyone locks down to his own fear
In the room with white curtains
Here and there the same misfortune unfolding
Lost magic of the night
Sleepy magic of the day
Like crazy shadows
Eyes dart away
Instead of saying hello
Then the fresh air of souls
Clamours on the website
Allergy of numbers is still diagnosed
As the troubled world turns upside down
Everyone insists on their own fear
In the room with white curtains

First fever after sleep

Last night I had a dream
Where they sprinkled pain with tears
Where butterflies breathed in the room
No painkillers to relieve anxiety
Last night I had a dream
Where snakes danced under rocks
Threatening to strike
Then everything was left speechless
Last night I had a dream
My three dearest friends

Each tied his own memories into a knot
With pale fingers of doubt
As the loneliness of dawn knocked on the door
Suddenly it became light
Where fear awaited
As in a dream

May god help us

All the TV channels
Have death on their agenda
And the salvation of living beings
May God help us
With the promise of reviving hope
Even the next day
May God help us
Anxious sleep in white clothes
A foreboding of fear
May God help us
All the TV stations
Have salvation on their agenda
May God help us

Ballad on panic

The first panic
The crown of the new virus hides everywhere
There's a chill
in the bloodstream
On the self-isolation front
The second panic
Broken mirror in the children's room
Eggs spoiled in the refrigerator

Frozen omelet from the evening news
The third panic
Milk poured on the floor
Red onion stink in the kitchen
Scissors plucking the threads of grief
And my loneliness

Trembling footsteps in the room

In a while
At the first murmuring
Flocks of bad thoughts
Pain in the heart blunts the sharpness of insight
Like the threads of lost imagination
Premonitions are shattered
Along with the flowers blooming in the garden
Faces like carved statues
Afraid on the pathway of sorrow
Where the heartbeat is muffled
Drowsing in the suffering chairs
Always in silence
In a while
Steps through the room tremble
A spider spins a web round itself
In a while
At both ends of the distorted night
My pain

The invisible

Nothing resounds
More than loneliness
In the quarrels between life and death

Life with all the unknowns
Death with only one acquaintance
In every moment of sadness
Sharpening the gleaming melancholy
Breaking that pain once
Lying in its own misery
Break that sadness once
Left halfway
Allow good faith
Be a prayer of the soul
Every moment the waiting rocks
Its own unknown death
In the grief of the world
All loneliness medicines
Are swallowed with water from the sky
There is no better cure for salvation
Nothing is more silent
Than the invisible

(Translated by Avni Spahiu)

Sali Bashota (1959) Born in Carravik, Klina, Bashota studied Albanian literature and language at the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Prishtina. He holds a doctorate in philological sciences. Since 1984 he was Professor of literature at the Faculty of Philology. From 2003-2013 he served as Director of the National and University Library of Kosova. He was Editor-in-chief of the literary magazine "Jeta e re", Vice-President of the Balkan Libraries Union, and numerous other duties. He is author of **various books of poetry, poetic prose, studies on literature and literary criticism**. He has been translated into various languages of the world and has been represented in many anthologies at home and abroad. His works have been promoted at international poetry festivals, and he has been honored with high national and international awards.



Milazim Krasniqi

Sabri Popaj's escape*

On the mountain, I came out alone, with the sheep,
I see them grazing on their own account,
I'd rather sit here with a dog
Than with perplexed village and town people.

I keep gazing at the eagles for hours
Flying away as if playing a game.
Their arched-wings resembling alphabet letters
Revealing a secret and leaving one speechless.

We say we are sons of ancient Eagles
Of the tempests** rising in whirlwinds,
Though we are no heroic species all the time
We are more like reptiles.

Eagles have keen eyesight
Wings as hard as a millstone.

And our movement is soft
Two-minded, like a dull Fakir prayer.

Eagles dare to escape too
And they come back to where they left.
As for us, making our leave once
We begin hating our motherland with all our soul.

I don't know what I'd do without their flight
And without my escape here.
I would become like a blue chip
And you would make fun of me even more.

As I see the eagles fly away
As if I see my sons coming back to me,
Reborn and forever rejuvenated,
On the long journey through the bleached skies.

It seems as if they come to me and say:
Father, we came to see you once more,
After we left you in a coma that day,
Falling face-down on that wretched stream.
We never got to say goodbye, dad.
As bullets hit us like lightning.
The day darkened and soon night fell,
A night filling our pupils in oblivion.

We weren't dying, we were leaving you
Falling upside down in that dry bush,
We already knew that freedom would come
Without us it would be like a slain eagle.

In such an instant my sons lose me
Over the range of snow-white clouds,
Though it seems as if they keep calling me
Me freezing with the cane in my hand.

They fly back again above the clouds, in the skies,
Where neither my sight nor my mind can reach,
I don't know how I follow their flight, how I feel
Close, as if they were patched into my coat.

That's why my soul wants to sit in this mountain
In the storm, snowstorm, in the rain and the snow,
I wait for the boys coming and going anew
Filling the void into my chest.

I don't have to go down to plains and the city
Where you are cruelly destroying freedom.
I am waiting for salvation here entirely calm,
Taking off the sorrow like a dirty coat.

You the liberated ones down there, go on
Gouge each other's eyes out in hot blood,
But do you deserve the freedom you squander?
It came out of Agon's and Shëndeti's blood ***

Freedom gained by the blood of the young boys
And the sufferings of unfortunate women,
Freedom its is not, you drunken men,
It is rather a test for different times.

You continue the fight you never fought,
I'm looking down on you from the top.

The way you undo the freedom of my sons' blood,
But where will you hide your head after undoing it?

Without a homeland and freedom we have tried life,
How we were not worth even a donkey's saddle,
And we learned for long how to hide the truth
And we lied for the Albanian having courage.

We tested ourselves this more time
And we fell down, we fell into an abyss.
Courage and manhood dissolved like salt in water
We saw ourselves miserable and wretched.

We saw how our children were killed before our eyes
We saw them how they abused our wives and sisters.
We saw how they beat us and how they killed us,
How they burned our graves and our hearths.

You all saw them, as did I
With a frozen heart, darkened eyes.
Nor did I do any bravery, any effort
Although I did an unheard of funeral.

Those days/nights that haunted me like a witch
Unleashed alien fury upon our lives,
I knew nothing of Sophocles from antiquity,
I had no idea who Antigone was.

I had to start that kind of burial all over again
With our memory having been erased by barbarism,
I would have to experience it all over again
Horrors that history had tried once.

Later, much later, I found out
That Antigone broke a decree,
She had buried only one brother left in the square
Unlike me, who had to bury sixty.

She had but a corpse, a brother, it was easy,
While I barely knew where to start,
My brother Nazmi, or my dear sons,
Corpses of other children, deserted in the grass.

It was hard to think of a queue
Because I had forgotten to count.
I touched my fingers, didn't feel them in place,
I rubbed my eyes with my nails, I couldn't see.

I didn't even know who I was and why I was there
Sabri Popaj you say, I don't know if I am, are you sure?
Am I in a dream and I can't wake up?!And how can a stone man wake up?

But then I clearly remembered
That it was me, Sabri Popaj, and that I was smart,
And that I definitely had to form an order
From the corpse of the little boy I was holding.

Who would mind to know who I was then
And what was I really supposed to do?
I don't believe it was that unlucky sister, Antigone,
Out of myth and back to life.

It wasn't her and there was no way it could be
She had been killed according to the law.

The voice that spoke to me, indeed my voice it was,
Out of the unknown depths of the soul.

Following that voice coming horrific out of me
I started the burial from Shendet and Agon,
Followed with the brother nephews and others in turn
Each with a prayer according to custom.

In daytime I was hiding in the houses-ruins,
Gathering blankets to use as deathcloth,
I wrote the names of the dead in bottles
As a memory left under the pit of the buried person.

If the dark earth knew who its new resident was
And if we knew who he had been when he lived,
With the vague hope when dear freedom would come,
Let us rebury them with reverence longing to meet again.

Night after night, grave after a grave, I buried them
All of them, in the cemetery, without an epitaph.
I buried my coat at the very end,
If only my soul had a cenotaph too. ****

Because there I buried myself forever
And I ran away never to come back.
Even if I am burned of boredom, burned of longing
I'll neither turn back nor make a sound.

I am turned to stone by the pain and I am burning
From the pain that not even Sophocles could describe,
I am a cattle rancher with a gun, with a stick in my hands
Reborn, rejuvenated, I am Sabri himself.

I overcame the pain and fear by myself
With patience I never knew turning me into a brave.
While I already keep my freedom forever
Fugitive from your freedom, which you defiled with crime.

November 29, 2015

Note:

* Sabri Popaj from the village of Bellacërkë (Fortesë) in Rahovec, on March 25, 1999, witnessed how Serbian forces executed in front of his eyes the two sons he had of minor age. In the massacre, his brother Nazmi was also killed, two of his brother's sons and many cousins and neighbors, men, elderly, women and children. He says he watched the whole tragedy from a trench, two hundred meters away, where he hid, so that he wouldn't suffer the same. He speaks how on the following nights, at first completely alone, later helped by two fellow villagers, he buried his sons, brother and nephews at night, as well as all the other bodies of that massacre. He tells how he opened graves and buried the corpses all night, entering the houses left without inhabitants and taking blankets there to wrap the dead with them, since he did not have a shroud. He also collected bottles inserting papers with the names of the buried, so that their identity was preserved. Sabri Popaj testified about the massacre at the Hague Tribunal against Slobodan Milosevic. Sabri Popaj has a flock of sheep, spending some time as a cattle-raiser in the mountains of Sharri.

** A new word with figurative meaning: eagles are the storm itself.

*** The names of Sabri Popaj's two sons, who were killed by Serbian forces.

**** An empty grave, in which a garment of a dead person was placed, whose body was not found. In ancient Greece it was believed that even the soul of the unburied dead needed a grave, where he would return to find rest.

Vjollca Berisha's journey*

I don't know where I am, is this trip
Nailed to this flying coffin.
Or is this a landing?
To the depths of burning hell?

I wonder if I am in heaven or on earth.
Though amidst the dead I lay.
They fell on me too, headless!
Oh, I know them all!
They are our dearest, my people
All of them lying lifeless,
What happened to us, God?
Why am I unable to scream!?

Who has uprooted us like roots
Turning us into corpses?
Unburied why they leave us?
Why does a bulldozer accompany us?

Oh, I am alive among the dead
And I don't know where to run to!
Ah, my son, Gramoz, you are alive
Shall I rejoice or cry?

Here he is on my lap, out of horror
I barely recognize him, covered in blood.
How to get him out of this hell
Out of this crazy machine.

Help us, please, Lord,

Now we only have you,
We jumped as with wings on the ground
And we are both alive.

We got off the hell machine
We move forward, without knowing where.
We will live as a testimony of horror
Less about me, more about you.

December 10, 2015

* A resident of Suhareka. A survivor of the Suhareka massacre of March 1999, where fifty Albanian civilians were killed, most of them women and children. Together with her son Gramoz and sister-in-law, Shyhrete, they jumped from the truck, which was carrying the fifty corpses of that massacre to Serbia, where the Serbian authorities hid the corpses.

The eyes of zoje Prendi*

I don't even know when days dawn,
When the nights are dark and moonless,
I never cry, though my eyes betray me,
I am a mother, oh, mother.

I sit back on the couch
Frozen like a statue in a museum,
Nothing separates me from longing,
In memories flowing like a torrent.

All five of my eagle sons
Honoring their home and threshold,

Death took them away from my hearth
Extinguishing the fire in a breath.

They were young boys, brave boys.
Their laughter fueled my days.
I dreamed of their happiness sitting
Like a dream that never ends.

Together they went to work happily,
They went to church together willingly.
They dreamed of a new Kosovo
Of a free homeland.

But the dark snake of the Carpathes
Bit my sons too.
No one knows the mystery of fate
In a fight to death or freedom.

January 9, 2016

* An Albanian mother from the village of Korenica in Gjakova. Serbian terrorist forces killed all five of her sons in a campaign of ethnic cleansing and the Serbian genocide in 1999.

Sadik Sherifi's white-cap*

It got dark, night fell like a bird shot.
I don't hear any scream,
There is no sense of a sigh
No call is being heard.

Silence has fallen like a meteor

Leaving behind mystery and coldness,
He can't move my legs and arms
I feel my body is frozen.

My leg is bleeding
Slowly but surely,
Two strangers tied it a bit
With a string and ran away. **

My blood is thickening and cooling,
It's getting dark like tar.
My vision is slowly getting dark,
And my forehead is burning.

I watch the clouds play,
Brown and dense as rocks
Covering the moon with anger
Preventing it from looking at us.

But the moon appeared quite a bit,
A few moments between clouds full of light,
Everywhere it saw blood only
And men who had passed away.

When they gathered us, they told us
Remove the *plises* from your heads,
Albanian mothers they cursed us
With curses that earth cannot swallow. ***

Then they fired at us with volleys
So that noon became dark,

I don't know how I fell
To be still alive, I never expected.

Blood is dripping out all the time.
I feel the outpouring heartbroken,
A thought blurts to me:
How much blood I had!

Yes, a lot of blood, a lot, a lot
Albanian blood through the ages!
I am neither the first nor the last
With death hanging over my head as a *plis*.

No voice is heard in Izbica,
Death looms like a Slavic beast.
Farewell Kosovo, farewell Drenica,
I just want to rest in peace.

December 19, 2105

* A villager from Broja of Drenica. In the Izbica massacre, where Serbian military forces tortured and massacred 147 Albanian unarmed civilians, Sadiku was injured. According to the witnesses, he remained there for forty-eight hours and died of massive hemorrhage.

** Two survivors had tied his wound with two socks and left.

*** The survivors of the Izbica massacre have testified that the Serbian military forces, before executing the Albanian civilians, also used psychological terror against the hostages, insulting the Albanian mothers, asking them to remove the *plis* (Albanian white-hat), telling them that they were doing as a sacrifice for Eid Day, etc.

Luck of being a girl*

I am old enough to understand now
Every word and every story.
I know why they let me live
And what happened to my father?

My aunts and mother told me
The pain that fell into their souls,
Like a falling rock trapping you inside
With neither breath nor light.

As they broke into that house
Where my family was sheltered
To that good and noble host
The killers were furious at me.

They didn't want me to be a girl
They wished I was a boy instead,
In their ritual they would tear me apart
Saturating themselves with blood like beasts.

I had been taken from the rocking cradle
They had confirmed my gender,
As Pharaoh had done in Egypt **
They were doing the same for Serbia. ***

Obsessed like the Pharaoh himself
They fired to kill the men,
Now at the end of the 20th century
In the enlightened Europe.

When I was little I didn't understand
I was looking for my father outside the house,
Until I learned to dream
And meet him in the sky of freedom.
December 26, 2015

(Translated by A. Spahiu)

*The seven-month-old daughter of Valdet Kastrati from the Plain of Peja, was saved from the massacre, only after the Serbian terrorists had confirmed her gender, that is, that she was female. While her father and all the other males of the Kastrati family, (Sokol, Xhafer, Valdet, Adrian and Alban) together with their host, a Bosniak Hasan Muratagic, were executed.

** According to the Holy Revelations, Pharaoh killed all the males born in Jewish families, while he let the girls live. Moses was saved thanks to the Divine Will and then became the prophet who freed the Israelites from the captivity of the Pharaoh and caused the Pharaoh to be flooded, humiliated and remain in the memory of humanity as a symbol of arrogance and cruelty.

*** The massacres by the police, army and other paramilitary Serbian terrorist forces against the Albanian people in Kosovo in 1998 and 1999 were carried out under the slogan "Za Srbiju!" ("For Serbia")

Milazim Krasniqi (1955) is an Associate Professor of Journalism and Head of Department of Journalism in the Faculty of Philology at the University of Prishtina. He was founder of the Media Institute, first editor of scientific journal "Media", Member of Board of Directors of Radio Television of Kosova. He was one of the founders of the Democratic League of Kosovo, a close associate of the late President Ibrahim Rugova. Krasniqi is a lecturer, poet, novelist, playwright, publicist and political commentator. For over ten years he served as secretary of the Kosovo Writers Association, editor-in-chief of "Fjala" and "Interesi Nacional" magazine, editor-in-chief of the daily newspaper "Bota Sot" and a regular columnist for various newspapers and magazines. Some of his over 40 books include poetry, novels, dramas, studies and publicist writing, including "**Literature and Religious Beliefs**", "**Sonnet in Albanian Poetry**", "**Photographs of Memories**", "**Russian Roulette for Ali Pasha**", "**Gentius' Coin**", "**Whose culture is this**", etc.



Lulzim Tafa

Packing worries

It's not Nana's fault
When she says

Get rid of those dreams
They drive you out of your mind

All night long
We packed our worries
In a plastic bag

Black laborers loaded them
Aboard the ship

And I remember nothing anymore

Until the morning
When they said
The sea got bitter

Good news books will get more expensive

My love
Books will get more expensive
I just spoke to a publisher
With the royalty money
I will buy a yacht
An airplane

We are the first to gain from Poetry
(Well, that's pretty cool)
If it is not a dream

We will not give our book for free anymore
Ignorants will no longer cut their nails
on our books

Prostitutes will not use it as refreshmen tool
Vendors in the square
will no longer wrap in poetry
peanuts, seeds, chestnuts

Pharmacies, drugs,
pesticides, poisons

Books will become more expensive

without going into debt no one will be able
to buy a book of Poetry

Forget it

Or their children will go hungry

People will wait in line to buy books

The poem will be read in the Oval Office

at the Foreign Office, the Kremlin

I qon't be saying the last word

Billionaires will read poetry

Ministers, businessmen,

We'll buy books of Poetry to our girlfriends

instead of diamonds

They will rejoice

They are not expected to throw them against our face

We will go on as we are

We will sail

In deep waters, as clear as tears

we will fly our plane up

higher than butterflies than birds

to the stars

Then we will land

in a green meadow

and we will sit as before

And we will read

Poetry

To the Grass

How soon has nana* forgotten me

Today is Nana's birthday
She became four now.

How slowly the dead grow up.

She is a child there now
Holding hands with her parents
Even there as before
Here.

Running after butterflies
Picking flowers

Nana loved Flowers so much
Almost named me Flower.

Nana is four years old
She still isn't speaking
Every time I go to the grave.

How hard it is
when Nana won't answer
when you call her.

I try to teach her
Once again to talk to me
from the beginning
Like she taught me then.

She has been spoiled
Stayingg all day
on her Nana's lap

I am angry at you Nana
You should know.

But why?

I'll tell you when I get there

I wonder
How soon she forgot me

* *Nana* – Mother in Albanian

Talk to russian poets

(Letter to the Ukranian poet, Dmytri Chystiak)

Dobry den Dmytro
Talk to Russian poets or make a palimpsest
To Svetlana Aleksievic that
“War has no face” of a Poet.

Talk to Russian poets for they
Will stop that war.

Poetry is more powerful than army than war.
Vera Polozkova knows that
Pushkin was stronger than Putin.

It's winter
Russian poets should know
That it's too cold
for the red and white game

Sms

Hi honey,
The sun is close to me
One meter away only

You, a drop of water
That can melt the hell

Prayer

Who can
Tie me up
Harder
For Hana
with
a rope
as a commodity
that won't break

Selfish

More beautiful dreams
Than me
One never sees
While you
You are frying me in the embers

Know this

I swear to God
I'll get into a sack
All your words
And I'll give them away
To a beggar

(Translated by A. Spahiu)

Lulzim Tafa (1970) was born in Lipjan near Prishtina, Kosova. He graduated from the Faculty of Law of the University of Prishtina. He completed his doctoral studies at the Law Faculty of the University of Sarajevo. He serves as the Rector of AAB University. His primary occupation is literature. He is the author of **books and collections of poems, fiction and literary criticism**. His poems are translated into several languages, including English, German, Italian, Serbian, Croatian, Montenegrin, Bosnian, Romanian, French, Arabic, Greek, Turkish and Swedish. He is one of most famous Albanian poets and the most translated. He is a member of the European Academy of Sciences and Arts. He received many international awards and recognitions. He is a member of Kosova PEN Center.



Naime Beqiraj

A coat with two faces

I was worse off than you
That's why I put the coat on
The one I didn't buy for you

My arm tightened
The clothes fit me tight
Then I was not upset
I couldn't be - you
The only time I ever wanted to be
Your skin

I don't know how much you wore it
But close to the skin
It touched me softly
The narrowness of your things
It never bothered me

As I was taking it off
Overturning it
There was solemnity
Like our second date
Not far from the border
In Alsace

Homeland

Let the mistake also flow
As if I were the most gracious you have
I still have to kiss away
or close
Both of your eyes

Luggage

I only talked to three friends about it
One said, leave it
The other told me, forget it
Third, carry and hold it
It's for you

I never wished to be in between
I am saturated with moral
And filled with absence

An airless airport

Like when spring starts
somehow
They get better trained
Not just the beloved animals

And at the airport
Its air got altered
The night you left me alone
Between planes
In the ocean

(Translated by A. Spahiu)

Naime Beqiraj (1967) is a poet born in Peja, Kosova. She completed her studies in the Albanian Literature and Language and her post-graduate studies at the University of Prishtina. Her overall work experience includes involvement in prominent newspapers and magazines in Prishtina. Her work is published in the anthology dedicated to Mother Teresa published in 1985; in the Anthology of Kosovan woman poets published in 2001 and in 2003 in Kosovo anthology of poetry of the nineties. Her poetry has also been **included in many anthologies of Albanian poetry**. Many of her poems were transformed into songs sung by famous interpreters of Albanian music. Her poems have been presented in foreign languages and she has received numerous awards on poetry. She is a member of Kosova PEN Center.



Fahredin Shehu

Augmentation

they stretched their wings
beneath whom the tiny bells rang
the smell of Ozone evaporated and the crystalline
echoes shuddered my skin
The day was long, longer than any...
The night was long and dark as ink
The hours were counted by the appearance of dandelions
The days counted by eggs in every morning

I saw the sky showing the entire Avesta page by page
I took the dew with my tongue from the last green leaf of the
Amaryllis
The Maelstrom twisted me entirely and projected me in her
dream

Yes my phoenix we shall raise again

When the worm turned into butterfly
in the far lands and my bruise turned yellow
here in the middle of my chest, I knew that day will transform my
pain into word for the bleeding World needs my word- the healing
words of my terrestrial vocabulary I often lack to envelope all
I have
seen through my long time Celestial quest.

Do you remember my dear You - the all color Flame - how we stood
firm when the wind blew the red maple leaves and undressed from
leaves the lianas embracing the trees just like snakes curve
trying to
reach the tree top and catch a fallen colors of that huge
rainbow
which vanished in the air.
...and we counted stars in the starry sky
while nipples appeared in our hands.

Now I nest all Living in my breath that
disperses in visible, semi- visible and invisible layers of
Existence.

This one is my last defile in this earth when I rubbed
my head-top you remember my Phoenix
together we came, together we got burned
and into ashes turned and together
we shall raise again to share love
for eternity and a Human day more

The lament of the earth

How zealfully you've preserved
the foreign narratives
you've adopted them
to sell them later like a fog of all colors

Even today there are other -
Sufficient to compete as who shall more
and who shall better keep the foreign past,
and
there are others who strive to break
every membrane
to create new bio-algorithms
to uplift the life to another plane
to another dimension

Yet there will be Men
that will observe the World
here with the borrowed eyes they
will fold new images

in layers just like the fog thickens up
in this sky with a sole Sun

...and those who still want degustation a fresh wine and
dry artisan cheese, petals of the May's roses
for a refreshment drink and a jam

When one day the exodus occurs
will Earth colonies remember the homeland
they left behind or they will only like a snake
that chucked its skin, never turn their head back

Go, experience the emptiness you've created,
but go aiming the return because
This Mother again shall await you open-armed
Shall long for quite some time accompanied
with sounds of Cello, Santoor, Piano and
the chirping voices of the birds with the wings
of all rainbow colors

When in your recesses you told your child
tell them that somebody here knew your repentance
tell them a bit about the greed you took away

like the dowry which will fly above the weight-less Souls of
yours
and that you've measured everything with the human
scale

tell them about the Dice of Life and Death
...and the Death that defiled bearing heavy shadow
wearing black brocade gown spreading fear all over

tell them about the World with the two Suns and
with the pointing finger toward the Earth- toward Me,
this blue dew of Mercy that buries every evil in her chest

tell them about the stars you've counted
while in your fingers nipples appeared
tell them about the balloons of snivel from
your noses while playing the sweat drops
leaked down the neck

tell them about wasps buzzing in your curly hair and
about the pond where swans were playing
while blue metallic color demoiselle mingled among cattails

tell them about Love you've tasted
but never succeeded to understand

...about death for God's sake
the death of your most beloved and
the pain it caused

tell them at the end about the Separation
and the wounds it incurred.

Go, try the emptiness you've created solely
but go with the aim of return because
this Mother shall again wait openheartedly
will long for some plus time
under the shade of wild Chestnut Tree
while bees collect the nectar
for some other life

Fahredin Shehu (1972) was born in Rahovec, Kosova. He graduated from Prishtina University with a degree in Oriental Studies and an M.A. in Literature. He is a world renown poet from Kosova who authored over 20 books: His published books include **Nun**, a collection of mystical poems, **Invisible Plurality**, a book of poetical prose, and numerous other works, including a collection of essays, columns, opinions, presentations, and academic papers on culture, art, spirituality. His poetry has been translated in around 30 languages which brought him many literary prizes. For his unique philosophical and Artistic expression he was awarded Doctor Honoris Causa and Lifetime Academic in Switzerland and was nominated for Pulitzer prize in 2017. He is the Poet Laureate of Gold Medal for Poetry as bridge to Nations, Axlepin Publishing-Philippines, 2014. He is Director of International Poetry Festival in Kosovo.



Dije Demiri Frangu

As long as the lightning

As long as the lightning
When the skies are enflamed, I remember you
So briefly, unexpectedly
So little, we exist for each other
I've placed you somewhere in the corner of my memories
And sometimes you're coughing like a cold memory,
Flu or not, whatever
That flower alongside the road, will blossom again
Every spring
The world is breathing the same way
Its lungs full of bronchitis
And I remember you as long as the lightning
And naturally afterwards
I can endure the whole rainfalls

We're stuck separated

Like an oxygen tank at the bedside of a sick person
Love is outpouring, outflowing
Like the white cloud
That becomes rain in an instant and is dispersed eternally
afterwards
In these pathways of accidental deaths
Of downhearted people walking vertically
Love lost its way and fell down in a niche of snakes

In the sky of the past month
We had scattered dreams to blossom in spring
And the spring came with some traumatic rain
Traumatizing the sun and moon
And we're stuck separated from each other
With the river that has run dry, between us

Sown in my eyes

Like the egg yolks in a frying pan
My heart was crumbling
Inside my chest
When his eyes gazed mine
Worse than the steepest rock of the mountain nearby
My heart run away burning along the path of my ancient
flames
Turned into pieces like a glass plate
Down my pretty legs
When I saw his eyes sown in mine
And I don't know any more
With what eyes do I see the world?

The modern cain

The words like void intestines
Kept on protracting
And we, wearing big size black designer sunglasses
Wouldn't let our eyes speak up
For their harsh language was so dreadful

We did not baptize anything that day
Every single name fell down from the system
And turned into grave's silence
Sounds extinguished like cursing stones of a castle
Verbs, conjunctions, unraveled, running fast in the fields
Like people running away from the beach in the summer
After the storm begins
All of a sudden we became like mummies
Like two planets full of fear

And you thought that in that day
You were putting me on a new shirt
Let the world have mercy even if he does not forgive me
Let her big heart rest in peace
I cry Abel still aloud
You, modern Cain, the smiley Cain

The massacre of when we broke up that night

I don't know why we broke up in such a massacre
Our hearts smashing each other
Our innocent bodies turned into pieces
You gouged out my eyes and took them with you

Along the dreams envisioned within
I cut out your heart
Never again to beat you up for anyone
Now I cannot see the world anymore
Now you've become such a mummy
We broke up in such a massacre
Our hearts crying out like little birds
And no storms broke out in that moment
Because they were immured inside us
And everything we had was being torn off
Our windows shattered
Our kisses, hand held tight together, our gazes
Trampled down altogether
Our pathways were paved on cutter glasses
Why we once had fallen in love
Why were we breaking up?
The whole universe was laughing at us aloud

I detached myself like the fetus does
I run away from the uterus of my dreaming
You fell down like an oak after the lightening
And the torrent took you away
We broke up in such a massacre that night

I go away myself

The water where we used to rinse out
Our loving eyes
And the insects shake their wings upon it
Washing their poisonous vomits
Like some tiny fascist soldiers

Not even the divine touch of Christ
Could clean up this kind of water
I'm leaving you like a burned down stump
Alongside the road
To free myself from the you
Like I did with the vomits

The sun still shines upon you
For it does shine upon dead corpses, also
But, I'm going away
You'll be forever stuck in your curse
You, the wolf who feeds himself with voles
You ought to know, that you didn't leave
A single trace in my heart
But, I'm leaving, you nasty stubborn
Your words, kleptomania from book pages
Are like trees with rotting roots
You, filthy gnawer
I'm not that girl of Shkreli
Who lives in poems instead of greetings
I go away myself

This year

The nymphs are mutilated this year
Everything metamorphosed like Kafka once wrote
Nasty boredom languidness
On earth and the sea surface
Many curses lying naked
Like pruned grass
And birds falling down one after another

Stuck on the trees like if they were embalmed
Like unsold tickets on the pavement
And the sky turns into a crumpled love letter
Breaking my heart into a thousand pieces
Life ejaculating poison like a snake
Some of its days whirl around like devils
I beg you moon, transform me into a color
To turn into a flower, not to be damned by the curse
To not fall down upon these nettles, not to become a nail
Where they could hang up their sins
The sinners

The weary days

Like sour dwarfs, as the wild apples
They stink like rotten milk
Coming to me like a woman unwashed
With ragged clothes
-Brutalized, slimed, battered, they come to me

Leisurely I rotate them
At the coffee cup bottom
My days as usual
Writhing like accursed bumblebees
Until when my neighbor
Terrifies me with her gloomy fortune-telling
The table moans, reviles, more stormy than ever
The windows vehemently wide open
From this fortune-telling
From this nervous watching days
Like the ash in the eyes of the Jewish ladies

That I had once seen
At the Majdanek crematorium in 1999
Remembrances of the weary days
Walking along like a heart with arrhythmia
This gloomy fortune-telling reminds me of this
And that's how it will be
Until you smile anew

Dije Demiri-Frangu, is a professor at the Faculty of Philology of University of Prishtina, Department of Albanian Literature. She has published **13 books of poetry, and studies on children's literature**. She has participated in various seminars and conferences with works on literature. She has been the Secretary of the International Seminar on Albanian Language, Literature and Culture. Her name has been included in several literary study books by various authors, as well as several anthologies of poetry published in Kosova and abroad. Her poetry has been translated into a number of European languages. She is a member of Kosova PEN Center.



Ilire Zajmi

Advice to myself

Don't expect that all the men who fall in love with you
call you courtesan when lust darkens their eyes.

Don't trust anyone by your feelings.

Don't pretend that you know it all.

Learn something useful for yourself.

Celebrate even for trivial reasons.

Don't be bothered with daily routine.

Don't leave home without putting on earrings,
lipstick and cherry perfume.

Forgive a lot.

Forgive yourself for your mad behaviour

Don't be silly.

Accept your own shame.

Don't hide anything from the mirror.

Be human with those who like you. Stick out your tongue
at the snobs and hypocrites.

Don't kiss someone who spends only one hour with you

because it's worthless.

Discover mysterious places to hide from the crowds,
everyone needs their own nook.

Never regret. Don't seek pardon for your mistakes.

Don't put the blame on yourself for other's faults.

If possible, don't sleep without having sex.

Feel that you are a queen on your throne.

Read what you like and don't trust the taste of others.

Take care of your ego, Musine,
and fight till the end for what you believe.

A recipe

I chose to be the woman I would become
stubborn, selfish, capricious, crazy cat
for my body, my desires, my dreams
without ever doubting myself
I always got what was due to me
without giving up in the name of any nonsense
I jealously guarded something sacred inside me.

But to become the woman you love
means to go through the eye of the needle
to tread on your pains as on the graves of your enemies
to find strength in weakness
to laugh when your soul has been broken to pieces
to stand up every time someone turns the world upside down
in the name of a damn morality or canon
to be honest
to become the woman you love
it is a very difficult homework

but I was sworn from the beginning
to become what I want.
You do it too!

Unknown Helen

I am an unknown Helen
No one remarks my absence.
No man killed for my beauty
and didn't try his strength in a duel.
A war trophy or a victim,
did not result from the beauty of my body.
No one devised a Troy Horse,
no city was burned for my fault.
I am an unknown Helen
who expects to be abducted by any Parid
I am a disdained woman,
an unknown Helen among you.

Terrorist act

The silence of a poet is a terrorist act,
said Dan Fante.
But I want to say
the silence of the woman is a suicidal act,
the devil's supper,
a stranger's door,
a man's property,
a bitch,
the mother of your children.

Whatever they call her,
she doesn't utter a word
even if they try to kill her like a mosquito,
she tosses like a scared bird on a tiny branch.
Dan Frante is silent, the woman is silent too,
unaware that omission is a terrorist act
according to international conventions.

Wishes

Wishes are children who never grow up,
bubbles that float in the air,
boats turned upside down in the sea,
temptation to taste the sinned apple,
lost memory, tinder turned into ashes.
Wishes are ancient hieroglyphs like earth,
messages in bottles.
The true wishes are those
we can't make come true
and we can't accept that.
Deep inside ourselves in the farthest nooks
with closed eyes in the dark room
we ask ourselves whose are these wishes,
ours or the shadows surrounding us.
Wishes are scared migrating birds
coming from unknown places and returning back there.

Colors

She will come solemnly dressed in white
with the blazing love crimson
the azure of the skies, volcano grayish
the door wide open, extend your hand
remember the taste of that last kiss
the aroma of boiled coffee in the morning
lipstick spots in the white cup
the colors of the ivory dreams
the golden leafs in autumn
the scent of wet soil after rainfalls in spring
snowflakes in the winter dusk
tempting red dress
lustful glances
longing locked in the suitcase
endless travels in the quest of yourself
the glass of tonic gin left at half on the table
ashtray filled with cigar tugs
recalled and everything forgot
closed your eyes and stretched your hand to Him
then let the world sink.

Make up

I owe so much to the make -up inventors
I thank them every morning
for discovering this miracle that has no price
thanks to it I hide torments of a sleepless night
eyes swelled from headache, the paleness of the fatigued skin
those thin wrinkles on the lips that deep line embedded in my forehead

the first gray hair on the eyebrows,
the faded cheeks lipstick colored eyebrows, peach colored
cheeks
black-tinted mascara, terracotta color eye shades
I wipe out all the traces of crime and show myself with
amazing grace smiling as I come to face the world
my friends kill me with sweet words
for the unique style, my freshly feminine appearance
no one asks me how do I feel
why my heart aches, what afflicts me so much
Oh, those questions are not asked in modern times
The world is solely interested in the appearance since it tells
everything for us and words make no sense anymore
So what else can I say, praise to the inventors of make-up .
Uh, I almost forgot. How come did they not discover a special
makeup for the human soul?!

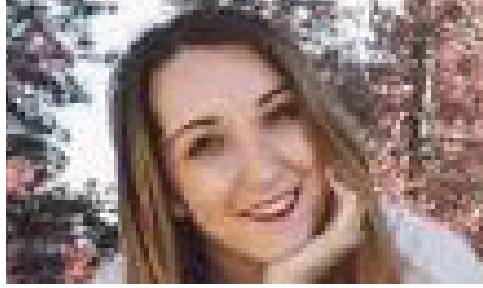
Spring is a woman

Adorned with brown chestnut gilded reddish colors
greenish gardens moistened with mature fruits
gleaming foliage, overcast heavens paint
gold drizzle rivers
Autumn is a woman
those graceful women
that men await all along, in winter, spring and summer
altogether
to enjoy them as the sweetest fruit from the tree of life.

Hometown balad

I hear your voice from afar
feeling the scent of your soil
In my fingers clenching your soil
images transform into longing
memories take my breath
Where I was born, in that old slab house
Oh I know My land
Never will you change,
although archaeologists shall discover traces of dinosaurs in
your veins.

Ilire Zajmi is a writer and journalist from Kosova. She studied social/public media at the University of Sofia. Author of **eleven books, including poem collections and novels** in Albanian as well as “**Amnesia**”, Corpos Editora, Portugal, 2011 in English; “**C’est la fin**”, l’Harmattan, France 2014, in French and “**Un treno per Blace**” (**A train to Bllace**), La meridiana, Italy, 1999, as a co-author with the Italian journalist Filippo Landi . Currently she works as Director Of Online Media in the public broadcaster Radio-Television of Kosova.



Fortesa Latifi

i(phone)

you've left so many angry voicemails
that you're starting to wonder if your
voice ever sounds any other way.
you send a reckless text (read: truthful)
then turn your phone off for three hours.
you change your ringtone so it warns you
when it's actually worth answering.
you're superstitious about what to set as
your background picture so it's never
a person. you don't want to have to change it
later. you use the same emojis
every day and they don't make any
sense. why is the monkey hiding their face?
who are the red lips for?
you change your passcode every time
someone in your family figures it out.
you and your friends get high and talk

about how crazy it is that you have
serious conversations through text messages
and promise to never do it again but still,
that night you all send a series of ones and zeroes
through space and somewhere along the way
they are coded into the perfect words to tell your ex
that you're still angry. you fall asleep
with your phone still in your hand.

hands still sticky

when it gets bad enough, we take the subway
to the Bronx and beg a fortuneteller to say the things we need
to hear like one day someone will love us in a way
that we can show our families
and no one will want to cover their mouths.
this time all she says is that I don't have
any color left in my cheeks.
that night, I drink too much and leave blurry
red lip prints on everything I touch
what else is there to do?
I swallowed love whole like a peach,
juice dripping down my face.
the pit is rotting in my stomach
and here I am.
hands still sticky.
heart still reaching.

ephemeral

a child learns to walk for the first time
and stumbles stumbles falls.
we have something in common here
but she has an excuse for it.
I try to remember when to water the plants
and if it's time again to wash the sheets.
people have stopped asking questions.
people have started turning their eyes.
it's too obvious, this hurt, it's too grand
and violent and no one has their sunglasses.
my god, we loved each other, didn't we?
my god, we made a mess of it.
I can see it even now
in the pile of dishes in the sink.

what depression looks like

carrying a pack of cigarettes and not smoking
them / wearing clothes that are three sizes
too big / losing twenty pounds and laughing
about it / scaring my mother / buying plane tickets
with the only money I have / crying in the soda aisle
of the grocery store / frantically making plans
and then canceling them / sleeping for five hours
in the middle of the day / draping blankets over
the windows / forgetting the sunscreen / e-mailing
professors about absences / driving towards the mountain
but never up / too much coffee / falling asleep with a cup
of wine next to the bed / the same sweatshirt for weeks
and then suddenly, a new one.

Lexington avenue

in new york, we wear skirts that are too short
and talk to drunk people on the street who want
to know where to find the train. we drink beer
on the roof and talk about what it would take for us
to jump off. we switch boroughs when we're bored
and have a different set of friends in each. we drag
ourselves through the streets until there's no excuse
to be out that late then we laugh in the lobby with
the doorman. we only have to go to the second floor
but we take the elevator anyway and remind ourselves
to stand up straight- after all, there's a camera in the corner.

wreckage

we want to be ruined.
there is something that
appeals to us about being
the main character in a story
this awful. we put on our best
dresses and wait in the street.
you'll destroy us and afterward
we'll kiss your neck

86th street

my grandmother has lived in Brooklyn longer than she
has lived anywhere else but still refuses to twist her tongue
around English words too often. I admire her for this.

I have written two books she can't read. she curses
more than my brother does because it makes us all laugh.
my grandmother can tell you how to put a baby to sleep
and how to make yogurt using only milk and the stovetop
and also how to love your children even when you don't like
them.

once, she came to visit and gave me a gold bracelet and slept
in my bed for a month. once, I drove four hours through a
storm
to find her alone in a 5-bedroom house. once, I came home at
6 in
the morning and found her slicing fruit at the kitchen table
and
crying into the cracks I kissed her forehead and she told me I
smelled like cigarettes. two showers later, I still couldn't
get the smell out of my hair.

home

home is at least 3,000 miles away at any given moment.
it is not easy to know where to be once people stop
telling you. we asked for this and now that it's here,
we don't know what to do with it. we find ourselves
looking through old photo albums and envying our
younger selves which is not a comfortable feeling.
once, in a lecture, a professor named the exact
sensation. exaltation of the past: the tendency to
view the past as ideal and feel the intense desire
to return to it. even last month seems perfect
and today, hopeless already.

facebook thinks you know this person

you should be angrier, but you're not. in this situation, people expect you to scream or throw something but mostly you're just crying at stoplights with the windows rolled up. you are supposed to feel something sharp, something you can use as a tool, but you just ache which is no use at all. years after the fact, you still find yourself feeling sick when you realize all that is left of you and the person you loved are rotting apologies thrown across state lines. there was a better way for this to end but you can't change the story or explain it away. mostly, it comes down to this: there are things that grow with water and there are things that drown. in this story, he is the water and depending on the day, you can either breathe or you can't.

family

in my family
we catch airplanes
to be there for the
important moments.

in my family
we have brown eyes
and blue and green
and we all look the same
or in some light, completely
different.

in my family
we wear each other's clothes
and sleep in each other's beds
and grind the coffee beans
the night before so we don't
wake each other up.

in my family
we put our feet on the table.
and eat in the backyard
and grow tomatoes in the garden.

when we're all together
I can't believe that this all started
because my parents fell in love
as college students.
when I think of it this way
I feel something close to hope.

Fortesa Latifi is an Albanian-American young poet working as journalist based in Los Angeles, California. Her family came to the United States from Drenica of Kosovo. Her work has been featured in **The Washington Post**, **Teen Vogue**, **InStyle**, **Bitch Media Persona**, **Words Dance**, **Rising Phoenix**, **Vagabond City Lit**, **The Fem Lit Mag**, **dhe To Write Love On Her Arms**, among other publications. She is a graduate of the University of Arizona. She is a Faculty Associate at the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism & Mass Communication. So far, she has published two books of poetry: **We were young** and **No matter the time**.



Engjëll I. Berisha

Reiteration of nothingness

You finished the whole color of the world
Pencil drops black
Growing black and dark
Yellow flowers red flowers
White flowers
And a blue sky

The words are screaming
From misanthrop's vase
To fall out from a bottle of writing
Poison with stomach and lungs
I am, growing
Under an oak shade
Cutting my hand so I would release
A sigh
A word of response

Perhaps you may be tired
Possibly you cannot see
How the pretty
Are setting the bed
Over my body
A river with a sky of blue
With the clock's arrow never stopping

View it in depth
As a value of inheritance
Place rotten wood
And returns the face
To the north with freezing winter

Oh Nothingness, nothingness
Fumes with stress without stop
And spits
Near the window without a house

The color of writing

Just like the eyes of a child with sea color
The color of writting
A deep pond
How cold is the depth
There with a stone the tiger's teeth
Diamont and topaz
And the color darkened, darkened
And comes a white blood
Of clinical death

Just like the kid's eyes with longing color
The color of writing exhausts whiteness
With the beautiful view of birth
Cuts with a black line
The small peace of happynees

Send me a letter - Violet
A color of the sky
Lastly drawing the words
The river where they drink
The herded animals
And wild people

O God! where did you find,
That plume which in place of sweet color
Drops poison and tears

The letter lost throughout time

I am leaving all my wealth
In a road side
I am building a temple of goodness
I am leaving my name as inheritance
In the face of my child
Will arrive your delayed letter
And will open as a testament
The wet hands of the builders

Then I will sing
A symphony and music
The chamber of happyness

Over the grass of my body in that world
Completely the same

Is the writing unraveling the truth or lies
Come and testify

The body undusted

Are you that anonymous
Author of the lost letter
That opened at the future time
And cleaned it just as the body
With the sick wound
Of your hatred

The first line of it
Homo Hominus Lupus est
And the wolf with a tale at the stairs
In a legend leaves me behind
In front of the eyes as long as alive

Aren't you the one leaving a testament
To your generation born unguilty
This witting, black, black, black
As a testimony of your blindness
And hated

Time heals
But words are not dead in a book
The black color of your writing
Is defended through the shelves

Aren't you who melted the oil
And extinguished the fire
Darkened the time that became forgetful
And testimony of your blindness
Where they will find you
To respond
You are not today, not tomorrow
Is unraveled only your shame

Summer

Drunkening the fish at the hook
Olives and cheese
Wallnuts and holy blood

In another the unkown dimension
World
I walk on my feet in this world
See the old furnishings how they shine
The view not enjoyed with the language of a tree
Reprises the euphoria of childhood

Where am I
To take me sleeping in the fields
And to throw me in the shallow creek

A random who had a house
In the world's streets
Gave a wife to tear appart Geisha Edgar Poe
Left the soul to its hand
For five silver coins

Run and run throughout the planet
Always near the door
Without trespassing once the gate of Nirvana

A good work
Did not see the death by itself

Who ruined throughout the world
With his yellow body

Euphoria

From the bed of longing for nine years
An instant arose with its feet
And came around the house just as the mill
The wolf screamed above in the mountains
Was a great day and a *jorgovan* like wind
Before the night of chaos

How a few turned that world into nirvana
As a dark dot of universe
Up to the bed of nine years of sorrow
Brought a spoon of breadth
After that is the door of death

While entering in that space without weight
The body would bother you
The six organs are looking
Touching in the fifth dimension
Those who return
Forget all the languages.

Tranquilizer

The strong scent of medical treatment
Just as the smell of soil when emerging from grave
You are not a dream neither death
Nor heavy and quantity
I can call you freely a man with a name
Responds and falls from the roof
Just as the balancer in the circus

The sweetness of words took my mind
What is drinking my soul that doesn't know to become awake
From the static world of wind with freshness

Deceptions leave me on Earth
The words that describe the flower
Breadth is ending by storm actions
What did I do

Drunken time

I gave water the time to drink
from the palms of my hands with cracks
as if my fate

savage whistled over us the time
the broken ribs and the hand slaughter like the weather
they are good indicators
node connects life with body and weather
life dries your ribs

time told me walk a little faster
that I am drunk from yesterday
with turbid water I am drunk
someone has dug deep
up to the veins of the earth
it has touched me in the flow
i need spring water
where it does not touch foreign hand

dry in the morning sun your hand told me
when a new day is born
transcend even yourself
clean water and good season
you will find at the old well
where the foot of the Father and the Son has trespassed.

Story

in the temple of prayer sins are forgiven
on my knees I prayed and repented for love
of greed
for the roads that intersected the horizons
cold
for the guilt that befalls me without guilt point
only the sins of greed remain nailed down

I confessed to the deeds in front of the icon
hanging on the wall facing the sky
the icon and my loneliness was sadly tempted
in the temple full of torn thoughts
I did not know what the smallest sin was

and the greatest truth beyond
lusts of peace
beyond selfish desires
beyond light and darkness

the sound of the bridge beyond the grilles
it turned to me gently as if the icon were speaking
*“Sinful nature fights against the soul
and the soul is protected against the sinful nature.
(From philosophy).*

The sinful nature and the lush bird
go where they want
we all fight against each other
nor the nature we do not leave untouchable.

Teaching a dog to do as a human,
you have to do it with gestures,
slightly doing yourself like a dog
a little to make him making like you
(from philosophy)

thus the little ones grow up and imitate
and begin to identify themselves with others.

Prayer in ecstasy

Through the labyrinths prayers are like
small steps
desires burn
and they do not get any luck

to hold it in your hands
like we used to run after the stars when they fell
behind the hill of the sun
they fell from the sky
I reached out to grab it
Like the fate after the fallen tooth
I shot it behind the mountain.

They are thrown off the hill
running after the stars
with lips pierced on the tongue
right nirvana
those who made love secretly
as in the story “godliness”
neither were they hurt
nor did they die
nor did they ever return.

New moon
like a bride in a white dress
found me old
and the brook was silent
not hiding the spring.

Thirsty time

Give the land water to drink as much as it wants
it drinks like an ocean, and yet remains thirsty
it drinks its own water, the water of heaven and of human
and it shines by itself as if it loves
it hides paradoxes through the holes

where fools put their noses
and they do not take it off anymore
time changes the mores and flow of water.

Planet earth, stars and waters have been here for a long time
my friend the memory machine is changing the world
and hungry remains only history
for the plundered truth
who knows where they hang it dries it black

Time and voice cross the boundaries of silence
not even the wall stops as strong as it can be
vast roots
scratching wounds of what sound they emit
on top of solitary silence

Stay awake do not be silent
the time and speed of light are always close
open the window.

Engjëll I. Berisha (1962) was born in Korenica of Gjakova, Kosova. He completed his graduate studies in the Language of Albanian literature at the University of Prishtina, and his post-graduate studies in Zadar, Croatia. In 1993, he founded the literary magazine “Gazeta letrare” and was its editor-in-chief. In 2002, he was elected chairman of the Literary Club “Gjon Nikollë Kazazi” in Gjakova, founded in 1964. The club’s culminating activity is the organization of the largest literary event, the Poetry Meeting. He is included and presented in the Encyclopedic Dictionary published by the Academy of Sciences of Kosovo in 2017. His first book of poetry, (**“A Day with a Moon and Bride”**) was published in 1989. He is a member of Kosova PEN Center.



Nerimane Kamberi

We, the girls, daughters, sisters...

We, the girls, daughters, sisters,
we go out into the streets, squares,
of villages, cities,
screamin,
as our body dies,
Ours, hers,
We, the daughters of our mothers,
And the mothers of our daughters,
we get up and shout
when for a braid,
our heads are cut off.
We cut the hair
for they want to cut out our tongues,
let's go out and shout
and they cannot stop us.
we dance
when a free body dances,

and they laugh at it, mocking it,
we speak out
No, they can't stop us,
Like a volcano, we wake up,
at once
full of rage,
We pour the milk boiling like lava.
We overflow the place
like a river
that cannot be stopped.
No, they can't stop us,
We, girls, daughters, sisters,
We take out the nails,
We take out eyes
For our girls, daughters, sisters.
When you get up there,
We get up here,
As you'll get up there,
When we get up here.

To the queen

Queens are gone like that,
noiseless, quiet, easy,
pew...
without annoying anyone,
leaving everyone sad.
So you went a year today,
our queen,
my queen.
How much we're missing you,
mother!

A poem to the sky

When I came to the village as a bride,
My mother asked me: «Why in Kosova?»
Because I love the sky in autumn evenings,
I told her
And you, mother, in which sky are you today,
and since forty days
I am looking for you,
As I, your child, am lost without you.

Ladies don't cry

Ladies don't cry
Not even when they turn the world upside down
The one they had drawn when little .
Not even when they want to rule the world
Once, again, many times,
And they don't let them, letting the dogs loose.
They don't even cry when their dreams are broken,
when they disturb her afternoon sleep,
with bad news.
No, they don't cry, because they happen to be ladies,
Even when they say ladies they are not,
in a way, indirectly, with cunning, humor, with jealousy and
spite.
No, ladies don't cry
Except for biting their lips
Buying the first mimosas in the square, when cobblestones are
still covered with snow

Ladies keep silent, tightening their silk scarf in the pocket of
an expensive coat.
They drop their heavy leather bag on the ground
They release a sigh, release their arms, release their whole body,
And they straighten up again, straightening their body,
straightening the world.
No, ladies don't cry.
Ladies curse.

(Translated by A. Spahiu)

Nerimane Kamberi (1967) received her PhD from the Department of French Language and Literature at the University of Prishtina, and she is known for her work as journalist, translator and writer. She is a recipient of the **Prize for the Best Young Adult Book in 1989**, and awarded with the medal **L'Ordre des Palmes académiques** (The order of Academic Palms) in 2019. Ms. Kamberi is a professor of French Literature in the Department of French Language and Literature at the University of Prishtina. Raised and brought between two different cultures, Nerimane Kamberi says that complementing each other has influenced her to overcome all challenges, but still remain herself: original, modest, but persistent, and again. sensitive. Her books of poetry include: **One Day Maybe, Ripped Jeans, Grand Hotel**. She is a mother of two and lives with her family in Prishtina. She is a member of Kosova PEN Center.



Blerina Rogova Gaxha

The white tulip

my body is a universe
memories are older than me
I have born a lot of history
I hear my voice repeated
in a thousand years
in a thousand lives
in all the sleep of the world
here peace is great
I hear my voice
in all the years
in all the hearts
in the sleeping lives
I see
my dreams in the dreams of others
in a thousand nights
a lighthouse goes on and off
my eyes

can sleep
a thousand years can they sleep
my life dwells here
in great peace
and I gather how to be a flower

(Translated by Lucilla Trapazzo)

Married

Married people don't talk about sex
don't talk about madness either
married people behave kindly
as good old friends
or sworn enemies in the midst of quarrels
accreted by time
an unwritten agreement between heads of household
hatred is not spoken of however
and there is no talk of love
nor of lovemaking
much less of the solitary soul
dead dreams or boredom
married people are stones worn away by waters but
they are there

(Translated by Vlora Konushevci)

Station in the east

The crowd comes out, the crowd enters the subway station in
the East
A stop in Stephansplatz, a stop at the Museum Quartier
A stop somewhere further up
Traces of body and soul are lost in the procedures of entry and
exit
Among those people without a trace it is me also
In all of them no one is waiting for me
Moving from one station to the other sitting on my train
Each body arrives somewhere, however. Mine too.
In the streets and squares near people
No one is waiting for me anywhere, but I am
At another station, a part of it dies
In another a bit of it dies out
Then, all stations are the same
From hour to hour I can be at any time
I walk up and down, no one, absolutely no one, not even I
Do not seek another country in any day, at any time
Streets, faces, are the same as ever
No one bears any of them
In the next station dies out another piece
Then all of them are created variably
Faces, bodies, clothes and movements change
Passengers exist and streets ahead of me - I feel, I see

Lady, you have to get off, this is the last station!

I sit on the bank of the river
Danube keeps silence and magic
It does not talk to me, and flees away hastily

I walk beside, and behold, another subway station
Far from my East
Another one sits, then other gets off, and another one flees
At each station a part dies out
I am not leaving my seat
No one is waiting for me
East is far
I am trying to reach there
But again that voice
Lady, you have to get off, this is the last station!

The drunkard

A drunkard once roamed the streets of this town. His name was Ali. He had a habit of touching women's tits and ass. Hey, o God, how many women you've sent on my streets! Hey, o God, forgive us, because women have fallen like steep rain, and I love you all like a beast. I love you in carnivorous way. Hey God, forgive me o God, I want to die at their feet!
Ali sang of love.

He stank of grape brandy, quince brandy, pear brandy and all kinds of brandies. He had a hairy chest and he wore a leather coat all the time. Once he told me that he went nuts after a woman left him for another man. And that this stinky man once was handsome.

Sometimes we would sit on the side of the road for a glass of brandy and some chatter.

Ali sang of love – *A glass of brandy for a love...*

When the war was over he was still there. Nothing happened to him. Once he told me that he had crossed the border, and then he said he was staying in gypsies' quarter. But he often

said that the police and soldiers were too lazy to shoot an ordinary drunkard.

His name was Ali. Love has driven him mad, but Ali was fond of singing about love. *A glass of brandy for a love...!* Hey, o God, forgive us, because women have fallen like steep rain, and I love you all like a beast.

Sometimes we would sit on the side of the road for a glass of brandy and some chatter. He used to say that women kill you in the most banal way, but I love them as a beast, I smell them everywhere. Hey o God, forgive them all their sins!

One day he told me that he had a new lover. God almighty – Hey o God, multiply women on the earth!!

Then I left him and I didn't see him.....

Ali didn't sing of love anymore. Ali didn't sing of brandy anymore...

I asked many people where he was buried or where were his bones, but nobody pays a visit to his grave. One says that his heart stopped beating upon the body of his new lover.

Ali didn't sing of love or brandy anymore. And as it seems he was forgiven for touching women's asses and tits in the town that will not have another Ali.

(Translated by Fadil Bajraj)

N.

N was a beautiful woman

She had two kids and a man who abused and beat her daily

They live in an apartment where the rent was cheap

The only consolation was her job and bread for children

He touched them softly. He fucked her whenever he had a

chance

Bitch, don't talk, bitch! I'm sorry, I was drunk. He didn't have a job

N never talked. She was holding her kids tightly

She never looked at her man in the eyes

One day he beat the shit out of her because she didn't give him a blowjob

N came home with her boss and a driver to get a paper

Bitch, you are fucking with others. Who's the man waiting for you outside?

The driver, she said. He beats the kids and her

N begged him not to touch them.

They are my kids, or maybe they are the children of the guy who is waiting outside?

He grabs them and keeps them near a window on the fifth floor of the building

Say you'll marry me or I'll push them down

N cries out and tries to pull him back and save them... He drops them down

N was a beautiful woman.

The next day she went out to clean the blood of her two kids

In the afternoon she threw herself from the fifth floor with the third one she was carrying in her womb.

(Translated by Fadil Bajraj)

Cancer of the balkan spirit

It was in school in 1990 when we learnt about the cancerous
Balkan spirit

We repeated this, year on year, for days and hours

But, we didn't know which spirit filled the Balkan's lungs
Until the nineties passed
And to the lungs of motionless bodies, the fault clung
It was 1990 when the teacher showed us a table of fatal
diseases
And she did this, year on year
Among the thousands of questions
There was always one absent answer— whose is this spirit
It was the nineties. We drew it backwards for fun
We didn't know our answers would be taken away by
motionless bodies
It was the nineties when we declined the name 'cancer' in
Albanian language class
We didn't know what surname would fit it best
And then, we giggled and made fun by turning the number
nine into six
Imagining the year of the devil

(Translated by Alexandra Channer)

Blerina Rogova Gaxha is a poet, essayist, journalist and literary scholar. She graduated from the University of Prishtina and has a PhD in literary sciences. She has published four books of poetry: **Gorgonë**, **Kate**, **She Comes from the East**, **Sacks** and several monographies. She was a laureate of the International Literature Prize “Crystal Vilenica Award 2015” in Slovenia, and the National Poetry Prize in 2010. Her last book “Thasë” (Sacks) was awarded with the National Literary Prize for 2020 by the Ministry of Culture of Kosovo, and her monography **Death in the Modern Albanian Literature** was awarded the National Prize in 2021. She has been a guest writer at the International Writers' Residences in Vienna, Split and Novo Mesto. The author had numerous presentations at literary festivals in Europe, and her poems and essays have been published in anthologies and magazines in German, English, French, Slovenian, Croatian, Greek, Romanian, Turkish, etc. She is a member of Kosova PEN Center.

> studies/reviews



Haqif Mulliqi

ANTHROPOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF MYTH AND LEGENDS AND THEIR CORRELATION WITH CONTEMPORARY ALBANIAN DRAMATURGY

Myth in our dramaturgy, among others, contains the truth in the form of beauty as an image of our thinking with observations telling different stories as the spiritual and cultural heritage of our nation

The purpose of this essay is to identify and evaluate the anthropological aspects of drama which is interrelated with myth and old Albanian legends, which in our dramaturgy have been introduced with its inception as a literary genre. Myth, as the oldest form of creativity, since its origin in antiquity, observed the human spirit throughout the perspective of divine phenomena and events. As researcher Mark Tirta states, there are more than five hundred definitions in this regard. Therefor

it is this fact that creates the space for different authors to write books and through them create completely different contexts, be it in anthropological, philosophical, political or social one. Because, myths possess a special kind of etiological nature, and through them, as noted by the researcher, it is brought the secrecy of the beginning or the metamorphosis of numerous phenomena in society.

Therefore, in reviewing the dramatic works of Rexhep Qosja, Anton Pashku, Ymer Shkreli, Beqir Musliu, Milazim Krasniqi and Ajri Begu, who are the subject of this paper, we approximate with the judgment that within the myth, the truth is recognised as a symbol, as an image of our thinking, and their observations tell different stories, which are the spiritual and cultural heritage of our nation - on the events and experiences of human-beings and Gods, and therefore these images and these events are those which through the poetry, place the anthropology in the essence of drama.

Throughout these dramatic texts, in the focus of our analysis, we can say that we have realized that the myth in our dramaturgy, among others, contains the truth in the form of beauty, where it appears that the myth itself, is above all, the oldest poetry, the sublime poetry of a nation and its culture. In this study, we wanted to make it clear that the myths and legends created in Albanian drama in Kosovo, are real but also artistic and poetic while trying to find the truth in the contents of a myth or a legend, whereas the poetic and dramatic poetry in the forms of these dramas.

The dramatic plays of Qosja, Pashku, Krasniqi, Musliu, Shkreli, Dervish and Begu, whose works are the focus of this paper,

among others, make us realize that Albanian myths for a long time, besides the artistic function have carried also a crucial function, which has to do with the fact that these plays were the foundation of faith and conceptual image through which presentation of an ancient myth is intended, by creating new social contexts.

These conceptual images, through which the myth unfolds, indeed are not true, but imaginary, and through them, a great contribution to the poetic of drama and anthropological discourse in approach towards the events from the distant past. By analysing the books of Rexhep Qosja, or those of Beqir Musliu, Milazim Krasniqi, and Ymer Shkreli, in particular, we wanted to conclude that the mythology, as science on myths, has enabled these authors to understand the fact that in this rich anthropological foundation lies the treasure of traditional culture and that there lies the spiritual truth of culture and tradition of a nation, which leads to definitions that relate to identity.

Therefore, we did not hesitate at all that through our research to get to know that through this interesting and fruitful creativity of these authors, already acknowledged in the theatre, to understand that even though from the perspective of modern science, mythical visions and mythic truths are wrapped with poetic magma and that essentially is not reliable, however, once, at another time, these mythical stories could have been considered true and real. And exactly in this respect, these precious dramatists, by trying to look from the perspective of our time into the faith of “ancient people” are striving to bring into our contemporaneity some imaginary pictures of events, which is believed to have occurred once upon the time, and brought luck or misfortune to the people by supplying them with new

ideas and sensitivity. They brought in our contemporaneity, not only in the dramatic context but also in the anthropological, characters from Albanian popular tradition and not only by bringing them as true human beings.

During the analysis of the texts of the mentioned authors, we understand that although the mythology of a nation develops together with it and within the culture of the same nation, the language and the universal message of the myth, as can be seen in the plays of these authors is limited neither in space nor in time, but always flows into new contexts.

In this essay, we have analysed the myth through the books *Besalam, why are they sacrificing me?* of Rexhep Qosja, Beqir Musliu's book *I Halil Garria*, Milazim Krasniq's *A new Antigone*, *Pyros* by Ymer Shkreli, *The shore of sorrow* by Teki Dervish, *Gof* by Anton Pashku, and through *The snake of the house of Ajri Begu*, that are represented in conjunction with the process of development of traditional tribal societies, those pre-modern and post-modern societies and concluded that, despite everything, no society, never, not even the contemporary one was not immune and could not be released from the mythology.

Beliefs related to mythology can be studied through an anthropological approach

While the books of these authors show that myths and legends always have managed to survive, even in societies like ours, be it in the form of prejudice, or by finding shelter in superstitions which recycled in the culture of the nation, either through stories, visions, signs or even through the creation of taboos that generate different puzzles that, after a while, somewhere,

sometime turn into belief (as we have the case of the sacrifice in the foundation of a new house). Mythological beliefs and knowledge with which these authors play in their books, and through which attempt to produce or disseminate ideas and messages, as a matter of fact, sometimes we experience them as a particular belief or known practice through which a myth or legend is projected. What emerges through the analyses of the dramatic opus covered in this essay is that beliefs in general, including our own, that are related to mythology, and whose existence is not related to an aboriginal or tribal community in particular, can be studied through an anthropological approach, as these books are built through signs, various human and superhuman (divine) figures and metaphors.

As for the anthropologist and cultural theorist, Claude Lévi-Strauss, the ethnodrama, or the setting of mythology within the essence of dramatic poetry, is the cultural foundation, whereas, the “production of metaphors” according to him, is a rationale that enables harmony within anthropology, even of the phenomena that sometimes are not in harmony with each other. If we refer to the theory of this author, we can say that, in the books of these authors, not once do we find that the world is experienced in contrasting pairings of interdependent notions, such as the: night/day, summer/winter, male/female or even life or death. Because, by entering into the very essence of this dramaturgy that speaks for itself, we realize that what is most understandable here, is that life takes place in both contradictory symbols. Birth implies death, while death and birth, appeal to each other. In these books, we also find the elements where the female and male souls are attracted to one another by creating in this way a dependency on one another. And, to prove this empirical relationship between death and life (*The Living*

sphinx and *Beselam, Why are They Sacrificing Me?* of R. Qosja, *A new Antigone* of M. Krasniqi, *The Little Theater of Deli Uka*, *The Exhumation of Pjeter Bogdani* of T. Dërvishi, *I Halil Garria* and *Owl Clock* of B. Musliu as well as *The Snake of the House* of A. Begu) and life and death, of night and day, and between the construction and demolition, we found out that, myths, art, philosophy, as well as dramatic poetry are built and reproduced on these events. As we delve deeper into the subject, to discover the real mediators of these events, it seems that the characters of these books, within the certain forms of the writings of these authors, as well as the style that identifies them, are the efforts of these authors, to share some of the phenomena with which myths have been identified over the years and centuries, drawing new ideas and creating changes in known phenomena. In a new philosophical and conceptual discourse, we reflect through a new reality, the reality that coincides with us and with our time. Thus, R. Qosja, for example, in this way brings his dramatic story about the myth of the woman buried alive in a wall, the myth, which carries in it the brotherhood infidelity, family hypocrisy and above all the history of sacrifice. Indeed, in the version of this legend, which is brought by R. Qosja, we become conscious about the fact that this author, through a myth which, perhaps, exceeds the borders of the Balkans, talks about the sacrifice of the women, about something that matters much more than the fate of a family or that of an individual, who is selected to become a sacrifice within the community. The book, *Beselam, Why are They Sacrificing Me?* presented to the reader as a national project, requires woman's sacrifice for a higher calling. The history is unfolded through the construction of an architectural building (i. e. a bridge), which, being cursed, cannot be built, and which, according to the philosophical and political ideas of the author, requires the sacrifice of a woman,

to connect separated parts of a country, of an ethnic group, respectively, a nation. The construction of this bridge implies the establishment of a sustainable community, although R. Qosja, allows us to “walk up and down” within the different theories arising from the analyses of this myth. The sacrifice of a woman in Qosja’s book can be interpreted as brutal repression against women in the traditional family of patriarchal societies. On the other hand, if analysed through the anthropology, the legend of can be interpreted in a way that even back in history women’s role is considered fundamental in building one society, as it was fundamental in building a bridge. In this context, we can agree with the anthropologist Dandes Allen, who interprets the destruction of the structure of the bridge that was built during the day and collapsed during the night, as fear to fight against the unknown which turned them into an aggressive guard of social morality, which was strongly hit by R. Qosja. Through his next play, *Death of a queen*, the author made a serious effort to provide interesting clarification regarding the patriarchal tendencies to exclude women from social spheres. During the treatment of this subject, rich in dramatic, conceptual and thematic diversity, we have also concluded that legends of this dramatic opus have been revealed with a kind of dualism, in the Albanian national imagination:

Firstly, as part of an already written Albanian cultural treasure, artistically and literary elaborated, created in a period of not less tense and dramatic social processes, be they political or philosophical. The substantial portion of it resembles with the second half of the twentieth century, when the idea of establishing an independent and sovereign state of Kosovo emanates, as well as the idea of cultivation of a common national culture, a basic element for the preservation and development of Albanian national identity; and, Secondly, it is about various myths and

legends, which indiscriminately had an approximate goal - to talk about the creation of some form of human community, which has been used by these authors to articulate their ideas and intellectual and artistic goals.

Focusing on Tradition and Social Processes

Therefore, in the dramatic work of Qosja, Pashku, Shkreli, Krasniqi, Musliu, Dervishi and Begu, the subject of this study, in which popular myths and legends are recycled, it is clear that they have used them to directly deal with political processes through which the Albanians from Kosovo and other areas outside the borders of Albania of 1913, have gone through, aiming at the creation of a connection with the Albanian nation, just like the one that we have and we know today. While, some of the myths turned into dramatic texts, with some changes in form (*A New Antigone*, *Owl Clock*, *Black Zeka Travels to Babylon*, *The Shore of Sorrow*, etc.), in the philosophical and anthropological perspective, the goal is the same: the rebirth of our mythology, because it is proven that sometimes, even outside of the aesthetic function, this mythology, and mythology in general, also generates tremendous political force. Moreover, through the repetition of well-known facts, these authors make us understand, that tradition - ours too- is very adaptable, although it is difficult to believe in the same way in something that has reached our contemporaneity.

We have heard many times about the myth of Orpheus, who wanted to bring his wife Eurydice from the other world into ours after she died. And, through it, we recall a dozen myths that define death through human error, with a moment of distractions, and so on as it happens, let's say in both books

by Beqir Musliu: *I Halil Garria* and *Owl clock*, or even in *The Living Sphinx* of Rexhep Qosja. In *The Epic of Gilgamesh* we identify the attempt to discover immortality, on one hand, and the theft of the drug of immortality by the serpent. In *The Shore of Sorrow* of Teki Dervishi, by recycling nine circles of the *Hell* of Dante Alighieri, he tries to explain the nature of life and death. Moreover, he questions, in a way, the elementary couples, the life and death, love and hate, freedom and slavery, which are significantly separated from each other, but at the same time are needed to create the necessary harmonization. This, perhaps, can be considered the moment of the creation of mediators between the myth and the audience, since it is clear that in this way, first, it works even with the dramaturgy of these authors. In these dramatic works, protagonists and antagonists grind the topic of myth, through dialogue, in two different perspectives, namely, through the review of the topic that is covered through the dialogue itself in these dramas. This is a juxtaposition, where dialogue brings to the true identity of the substantial part of characters of drama: of Kabil or Habil, Halil Garria, of Teuta, Pyrrhus, Lojtar Lojtari, Konstantin Lojtari, or of Kardhiq Lojtari, of Deli Uka or Antigone, and so on. To us, this is a communication - dialogue, that makes it clear that drama could end with the death of one of the characters, and it can also be completed, with the eternal separation of characters (as in Pashku's plays - *Syncope* and *Gof*). Or illustrated, it is the moment when the character at point A gives up his position, namely gives up his identity, himself (Beselami, Deli Uka, Ali Pasha, etc.), and when at point B, he looks toward point C, (Queen Teuta, Pyrrhus) then it is clear that the drama has already reached its end. And this momentum, in the plays we have covered in this essay, leads to the essential conclusion of the finalization of the story idea, or even to the conviction that,

right now, everything has ended. While, it is clear that, there are still some open issues, which right there mark a new beginning, which, perhaps, can be even more dramatic than the one that has already ended.

In plays written by Qosja, Dervishi, Shkreli and others, myth helps them to bring popular stories created in different historical, political and social contexts, in different Albanian ethnographic regions. These stories talk about human origin and creation, about ethnicity, but also about Gods and heroes of Albanian culture (*Black Zeka travels to Babylon* and *The small theater of Deli Uka* written by Shkreli, *Gof* written by Pashku, *Alive Sfinga* written by Qosja, or *The snake of the house* written by Begu) and the birth of our civilization (*The shore of sorrow* written by Dërvishi). In the drama, the myth, among other things, speaks about ordinary people (such as Beselam and Hana, Antigone, etc.), but also about unusual beings (such as Baltazar, Halil Garria, etc.), about our predecessors (Pyro, Teuta, Bogdani, P. Budi, F. Bardhi, Ali Pasha, etc.) who, in our discursive interpretation, serve as models who are on top of some of the major ideas, and are examples of a certain behaviour when seen from a traditional perspective and more specific about the world that surrounds us. According to this dramaturgy, we can say that, in a certain way, the myth can be seen as a story ready, almost fantastic one, illustrated by images, and which aims to create an opportunity for us to know ourselves, before and foremost, but also the world, by unveiling a certain set of values that are part of the imagination which stems from the feelings and wishes of the writer of drama, in this case. Due to this, authors like Rexhep Qosja, Anton Pashku, Beqir Musliu, Milazim Krasniqi, Teki Dervishi and Ajri Begu, at the end are observed also as myth researchers, as they point out that, even

today the myth can play a specific role and have a significant function. Because, through their drama, myth, seeks to design a mechanism through which it expresses, strengthens and makes more legitimate people's trust in the truth and what they are aiming at. Also, the myth, through the works of the respective authors, also plays the role of a guard of social morality and pursuant to this, it guarantees the impact of ritual even nowadays. Albanian traditional myths, stories about Gods as in *Black Zeka Travels to Babylon*, written by Y. Shkrel, biblical myths and their dramatic history like in *The Living Sphinx* by R. Qosja's, or even the tragic myth of Antigone, presented to us through the drama *A new Antigone* of Milazim Krasniqi, they come naturally because, within itself, they incorporate traditional elements, such as magic and totemic content. Many unexplained dramatic actions are accompanied by the narration of a certain myth in these dramas. Also, cults and symbols encountered or itemized here, often can be interpreted through several other, even shorter myths. While, in dramas such as *Besalam, Why are They Sacrificing Me?, Death of a Queen, Pyrrhus, or The Snake of the House*, but also in the rituals of drama *Russian Roulette for Ali Pasha*, it is evident that there are various mysteries on the very essence of the nature, through which it is noticed an attempt to explain some processes in the development of the human race in general, but also various natural phenomena. These authors of drama, within their works, have used myth and mythology in general, so that through them, they can explain the past, but more the present and the future: the form of the world in which we are and through this the very structure of the cosmos. Thus, the specific factor of mythical narratives, which, except with these authors we can identify among their contemporaries such as Fadil Hysaj, Ekrem Kryeziu, Flamur Hadri, Xhabir Ahmeti, Resul Rexha's accident in the drama *Owl Clock* or *Halil Garria*

by Beqir Musliu, as well as the tragic fate of Pjetër Budi in *The Little Theater of Deli Uka*, written by Ymer Shkreli and the recycling from life to life, from life to death and from death to the life of Constantine in *The Shore of Sorrow*, which come as myths treated through drama, serve as a kind of clarification of contemporary reality.

For this reason, these authors, without exception, these myths addressed in their plays, have not hesitated to mix with the myths of the great religions. As it is well known, myth is a sacred story, which speaks about the events associated with divine beings and partially divine beings, at a time, which comes as undetermined, but can be understood as something that exists outside the ordinary human experiences. In this context, it must be said that the myths that are used in the works of these authors are distinct from all other stories. The myths are generally regarded as a kind of supreme authority of a certain society and, in this respect, may also occur as an important component of our religions.

Mythological narration - non-compliance with the laws of nature and human experiences

Mythological narration in the works of Qosja, Pashku, Krasniqi, Begu, Musliu, Shkreli and Dervishi, comes to us just as it would any religious symbolism, although there is no need for justification, or even to examine their trustworthiness. For this reason, it can be said that in dramas like *A Living Sphinx*, *Beselam*, *Why are They Sacrificing Me*, *The Shore of Sorrow*, *The Snake of the House*, *Young Antigone*, *Owl Clock* or even *Black Zeka Travels to Babylon*, each used myth is offered but also experienced as a factual description, no matter how

many times they have been told and how they have been told these myths when compared with those that are narrated and recognized in popular literature and, how these events in these dramas can be in non-compliance with the laws of nature, or even with usual human experiences. In this way, the myths in these dramas are presented as a “true reality” about our everyday searing experiences, which justifies, and can gain in its sense when supported or even replicated exactly by the myth and mythology. This primary meaning, which, almost gets a religious connotation in these dramas, remains expressive and important even when the myth reveals and helps certain ideological beliefs, and when transformed into one of the most important elements of the poetics of drama, as a separate and secular item of a new religious faith.

This is the reason why these authors, by treating and making the myth a theme in their dramatic works, consider the myth itself as a “sacred story”, unlike other stories, even within their creative opus, the same for the structure, motives and essence, but who are deprived of social authority which is given only to the myth. For this reason, we think that it is correct to say that the drama of these authors, covered through this essay, has a particular emotional effect and also a mobilizing force and has therefore played, and perhaps even continue to play, an extraordinary role in the community, and serve as a strong supporter and the mean through which it can be proven the vision and cohesion of an ethnicity and a nation.

This brings us to the Kasires opinion, which claims that it is not the history that defines the mythology of a country and a nation, but is the opposite of this, for what, not infrequently, mythology is also seen as a fate of a society or a nation, because

as this anthropologist says - a nation has neither the power nor the freedom to select a myth, because, the myth is simply a must. Whereas the goal of this essay was to treat and register the myth in drama, it's meaning for the people, and the need and inevitability, to communicate with the myth through the Muse of drama and theatre.

(Translated by Shpresa Mulliqi)

Haqif Mulliqi (1960) born in Peja, attended his academic studies in Prishtina. He completed his Master's in Psychology, on the topic: **Psychology of characters in the works 'Hamlet', 'Macbeth' and 'King Lear'** in Tirana (2009). He earned his Master's from the State University of Tetova, on the topic: **Types of drama in Europe and America - from Ibsen to the classics of modernism: Beckett and Ionesco (2012)**. He completed his Doctoral studies at The Academy of Albanological Studies in Tirana, in the field of Anthropology of Drama and Theatre. He is a full-time professor at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Prishtina and a visiting professor at several other universities. He has written **over 300 reviews on drama, film and theatre**. He was author and host of the film and theatre show, **Pro Arte**, at Radio Television of Kosovo. He has staged about 25 works in major Albanian theatres and attended over 80 different national and international festivals, receiving numerous awards, including the 58th Edition of the Edinburgh Theatre Festival (Scotland 2004) and his (trilingual) play **The Kosowars**, was ranked on the top ten of the best performances of the year, receiving the main prize. In 2018, in the competition of the Ministry of Culture he was awarded the Ibrahim Rugova Award for his work **Theatre, Drama and Cultural Identity in Kosova**. Mulliqi is a Board member of Kosova PEN Center.



Naim Kryeziu

“I HAVE CHALLENGED DEATH WITH MY BOOKS”

Modern classic Elias Canetti – Laureate of the Nobel Prize
for Literature

Focusing on the impact of Elias Canetti's greatest works in Albania

Elias Canetti was born in 1905 in Ruschuk, Bulgaria, the present-day Russian city downstream of the Danube, to a family of ancient Spanish-Jewish descent. In 1911, his parents, along with their three children, moved to Manchester, England, and in 1913, after the untimely death of Canetti's father, the family eventually moved to Vienna and then to Zurich, Switzerland. In the Austrian capital, Canetti completed his studies in 1929 at the Faculty of Natural Sciences, and later received the title of Doctor of Philosophy. In 1938 he left Austria and lived and worked as a freelance writer in London and Zurich, where he died in 1994. As a novelist, playwright, essayist and sociologist, he was honored with high awards in various European countries and awarded with honorary titles by several European universities. Elias Canetti, whom critics have called a “living

classic” and one of the “greatest humanists” of the twentieth century, was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1981.

Elias Canetti, one of the greatest writers of the 20th century, constitutes, in the opinion of critics, a very interesting phenomenon in the history of world literature. The son of a Spanish Jewish family, he was born in Ruschuk, Bulgaria, in 1905, a city of people of diverse backgrounds and cultures, with as many as eight languages being spoken in a day! Here Canetti began communicating with others in Spanish Hebrew and Bulgarian. In 1911, when Canetti was a 6-year-old child, his family moved to Manchester, England, where little Elias became acquainted with English, which later became one of his major languages. In 1913, after the tragic and untimely death of his father, his mother, along with her three sons, moved to Vienna, and at that time she decided to teach Canetti German, her favorite language, which she had constantly spoken with her husband. Her decision began to exert a great influence on the boy. German lessons were helping him in his rapid intellectual development. German later became the language of his literary work and was at the same time the most intimate language for Canetti. He often says that this was his real mother tongue. German had been the secret language of his parents, the language of their love, youth and happy student times in Vienna. It was this language that served Canetti’s parents to express their feelings, to have long discussions about theater, the art of their dreams. This language became very important to Canetti and played a first-hand role in his life. His long tenure, especially in the schools of Zurich and Frankfurt, strengthened his connection with the German language, enriching with lexical

nuances the knowledge he had acquired about the language and expanding his cultural horizon. His immense cultural horizon begins to stand out more and more. To explain the connections he would later make with the cultural heritage of the past, he would need encyclopedic knowledge that could hardly be found so concentrated in a single person. For his university studies he returned to Vienna, graduated in 1929 at the Faculty of Chemistry, received the title of Doctor of Philosophy, and in the meantime he was determined to continue his path in the field of literature.

With his life and works, Canetti embodies, more than anyone else, Central Europe, for as much as even personifying it. He delivered, without stopping, different genres: a novel, a sociological-philosophical work, a volume of sociological-literary essays, a collection of aphorisms, plays, a travel book, an autobiographical trilogy and several volumes of notes. Canetti lived in major European capitals without ever joining any ideology, program or political movement. As a *sui generis* writer, a cosmopolitan with a very broad culture, Canetti is described as a complex author in 20th century European literature. As one of the most original and persuasive voices of this century, he is amazing with the courage he shows to reveal to the reader even the most animalistic instincts of the human being, its most secret and unspoken desires, and its most insane fixations.

His autobiography, divided into three volumes (“The Tongue Set Free”, “The Torch in My Ear” and “The Play of the Eyes”), is a concise and exciting work, written as if it were a formation novel. The events described in the first volume come from the happy time of childhood, an idyllic world that had not yet known of the world wars. Ever since it was first published

in 1977, this autobiographical trilogy had been hailed as a “classical contemporary work”, as one of those literary works that have been assured a long life and that deeply excite any reader. With a clear, interesting style that touches to the smallest detail, Canetti treats here memories from his life, thus giving us that unique story that is for every person the most secret and most enigmatic, the story of his own life. In compiling this autobiography, which, as the foreign press points out, constitutes a mosaic of powerful and very interesting episodes, described in poetic language full of warmth and light, Canetti used the following creed: “Cowardly, truly cowardly, the one who is afraid of his own memories!” In this regard, he writes: “Unlike many other people, who are particularly subject to the temptation of a rhetorical psychology, I am convinced that memory should not be tortured, paralyzed and squeezed, nor should we try to make it appealing by using glamorous bait; I bow before the memory, I bow before the memory of every man, I want to leave this memory untouched, as it belongs to the man who fights to live free, and does not hide his disgust towards those who have the guts to submit to the memory of a man a series of surgical interventions, until they finally make it resemble the memories of all other people. Let them operate on the nose, lips, ears, skin and hair as they please, ...let them touch, cut, smooth and flatten whatever they want, but never give up on the memory.”

The so-called “school of human cognition” engages Canetti for life in a relentless fight against death, against which he is a savage persecutor, determined to fight tirelessly against. Convinced that an intellectual must do his duty to remove the mask of death everywhere, the writer, Canetti writes, must become “the dog of his own time”, and adds: “The writer must

express his opposition out loud; he must use the scalpel to cut, analyze and extract the excretion.” On the day he completed his major sociological-philosophical action “Crowds and Power”, Elias Canetti writes: “Now I can tell that I managed to capture the face of my century.”

At the beginning of the first volume of the autobiographical trilogy he writes: “I have spent the best part of my life exposing the bad sides of man, as presented to us in the historical course of civilizations. I have analyzed power and decomposed all its constituent elements with the same ruthless clarity that characterized my mother when analyzing the processes that took place within her family. There are few bad sides, both in man and humanity that I might have not noticed. And yet, the pride I feel for man and for humanity continues to be so great that I really only hate one thing: their enemy, death.”

In a long article entitled “A contemporary Nobel Prize-winning writer is added to our library”, written by Prof. Dr. Shefik Osmani, Director of the National Institute of Pedagogical Studies, published in the newspaper “Mësuesi” (“The Teacher”), a central outlet of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Albania, the following is stated, among others: “The autobiographical trilogy of the contemporary Nobel laureate Elias Canetti is the 32-year chronology of a European writer, who in three volumes of more than 1200 pages has recorded the entire deeds of his life: all the ages and historical eras lived before, during and after the First World War, the cities he saw, the museums he visited, the cafes he frequented, the archives he used. He has written about his classmates and primary school teachers, about his now world-famous colleagues, about his family nucleus, where his mother, Matilda, is depicted as smart,

knowledgeable and determined. His living space is packed with books, knowledge, culture and art. The languages he spoke so fluently, the sounds of music that enlivened him, as well as the conversations he made, expanded his circle of friends, and the books he published made him dear to all.”

This article by Prof. Dr. Shefik Osmani was later published in full and with the same title in the well-known newspaper “Koha Ditore” of the Republic of Kosovo, with these editorial subheadings: “Translation, an example to follow”, “Autobiography, impression and memory” and “Characters, worship and love”.

Regarding the translation of the autobiographical trilogy of the Nobel Laureate Elias Canetti into Albanian, an editorial was published in the “New Books” section on the independent Albanian newspaper “ABC”.

“Crowds and Power”, Canetti’s most important work, which will engage its author for 35 years, is a truly special world work, a work that compels the reader to immerse himself in it completely haunted. The author replaces the abstract concept with well-sifted figure, with symbol, with the unity between the thought and the issue it deals with. This work is an open book, what penetrates it awaits fire, water, wheat, gazelles, the Sultan of Delhi, the Mayor of Schroeber, the Shiites on the feast of Muharram, the exalted throne of the Byzantine Emperor, the conductor of the orchestra, Post-Versailles Treaty of Germany, the Holy Fire of Jerusalem, the antipathy of powerful people for the survivors, the rain dance of the Pueblo Indians, Catholicism and the crowds, the core of the parliamentary system, the entrails of power, negativity and schizophrenia, power and

paranoia. The work “Crowds and Power” has been considered by critics as a shocking analysis and a diagnosis of the delirium of the 20th century, as a unique, extraordinary study of an essayist who is also a writer. This work had been the goal of Canetti’s life, for which he gave up his career, with the inspiration of an intellectual, so rare nowadays, as intellectuals, as critics point out, have unfortunately turned into pseudo-intellectuals, willing to make any compromise for the sake of money and glory. “Crowds and Power” is a synthesis of a very broad and elaborate information, extracted from disciplines of the most diverse among them, psychiatry and anthropology, psychology and psychoanalysis, history and sociology, with the aim of unmasking the process that makes the crowds manipulate and rule, and to emphasize the need to fight against power, against its most insidious and secretive forms, present everywhere, in all human relations.

Elias Canetti is not only the genius author of “Crowds and Power” and the great witness of his autobiography, but he is, above all, the author of one of the most important novels of the 20th century, a gigantic and shocking book on the folly of this century. In 1935, at the age of 30, he published one of the greatest works of his century, the novel “The Blinding”, a novel in the full sense of the word, unquestionably unique in modern European literature, both in style and in the characters, with a thematic unity prominent in the entirety of this work, a shocking and prophetic novel, “stubborn and majestic”, as Thomas Mann defined it, an alarming novel, but also a shining example of the unbearable psychic suffering of the man of contemporary culture, who, aware of his fragility, fears life and is locked inside walls that cannot withstand the shocks of stupidity and chaos that rule over reality and that annihilate it.

As the critics point out, with the novel “The Blinding” alone, Canetti could have become one of the most special and greatest writers of world literature.

Regarding the origin of this novel, Canetti writes in the essay entitled “My first book: The Blinding” as follows:

“One day I started to think that the world should no longer be described as it did in the early novels, that is, starting from, as it were, the point of view of a writer, the world was disintegrated, and only if one had the courage to show it in its disintegration, it was still possible to give it a genuine idea. Though, this did not mean that he had to write a chaotic book, where nothing could be understood anymore; these individualities had to be described with all their extremisms, putting them next to each other with the unique characteristics of each. Among the characters in question were a religious fanatic, a visionary technician who lived only on cosmic space projects, a collector, a man obsessed with truth, a scatterbrained, an enemy of death, and finally a man of books in the full sense of the word. If I ask myself today where I got the rigor of my working method, the thought leads me to extremely heterogeneous influences. I had just finished the eighth chapter of ‘The Blinding’, the chapter entitled ‘Death’, when I came across Kafka’s ‘Metamorphosis’. This was the luckiest thing that could have happened to me at that moment. There I found, in the highest perfection, the exact opposite of literary irresponsibility, which I hated so much, and there I found the rigor that I longed for with all my heart. In that book something had already been achieved that I wanted to find with my own strength. I bowed before this model, which is the purest of all models, knowing full well that it was unattainable, but nevertheless it gave me strength.” After the

publication of the novel “The Blinding” at the end of 1935 in Vienna, the world-famous German writer Thomas Mann, the Nobel Laureate, in a letter sent on this occasion to the young author wrote: “I am deeply impressed by the richness of this novel, the amazing fantasy, its artistic courage, its deep sadness and proud curiosity.” In the fate of the main character of the novel, the critics saw “a powerful metaphor on the collapse of civilized Europe”.

One thought prevailed over all his other thoughts: the thought of death. He wanted to eradicate death from the face of the earth; he wanted no one to die anymore. He did not accept death, while everyone else accepted it. Regarding this, Canetti writes: “The boldest thing in life is to hate death. Death must be hated, you must hate everyone’s death as you hate your own death, you can agree with everything, but never with death.” He strived to achieve immortality for all people: a concrete, serious, accepted goal, which he aimed at with all his might. In his essay entitled “The Mission of the Writer”, which is included in his work “The Conscience of Words”, Canetti writes the following: “It is not the writer’s job to leave humanity at the mercy of death. The writer, who fears no man, will be shocked to learn that death has an increasing power over many people. Even if it seemed to everyone to be a futile undertaking, he would rise up against such a phenomenon and would not give up in any way. It will be his pride to oppose the barbarians of nothingness, who are becoming more and more numerous in literature, and to fight them better by other means than by their own means. The writer will live according to a law that is his own, but that is not cut according to his measure. This law says: Do not push anyone towards nothingness, not even what he would like himself. Seek nothing in order to find a way out of it, and show this way out

to everyone. To endure sorrow and despair to learn how others are saved from them, but not by despising the happiness that belongs to human beings, even though they are disfigured and torn between them.”

A very important place in the literary creativity of Elias Canetti is given to his notes, published in different volumes, which together exceed one thousand pages. In the preface to his first volume with notes, he writes, among other things: “Man, and this is his greatest fate, is diverse, is a thousand times more diverse, and he can only live for a while as if he were not as such. In those moments when he sees himself as a slave to his purpose, only one thing can help him: he must give in to the variety of tendencies he has and thus randomly mark everything that comes to his mind. These should float in such a way as to come from nowhere and lead to nowhere, in most cases being short, quick, often lightning fast, unverified, unrestrained, without ambition and without any purpose. The one who writes and who usually holds the reins tightly becomes for a moment an obedient toy of unexpected ideas. He writes down things he would never have imagined in himself, things that contradict his history, his convictions, his own ethics, his shame, his pride and his truth, which he usually defends with perseverance. The pressure with which all this starts, finally leaves him, and it may happen that he, so suddenly, feels easy and, with a kind of happiness, throws on paper the most outspoken things. What he throws on paper like that, and that is so much, is best to set aside without paying attention. If he really manages to do so for many years, it means that he maintains the belief in spontaneity, which is the necessary oxygen for this kind of notes, because, if he loses spontaneity once, then these notes are no longer valid for anything, and he can do nothing but remain in his proper

work. Much later, when everything already seems to have been written by someone else, the notes may contain things that may once have seemed absurd, but suddenly make sense to others. And, since he himself is now one of these others, he can select without any special effort the one thing that suits him.”

But his published notes are meanwhile just the tip of an iceberg, the gigantic part of which, about ten times more than that, is in the archives of the Zurich Central Library, in 150 boxes containing his literary heritage: diaries, letters and notes of any kind, made only partially available to scholars. In one of his volumes of notes, published while he was still alive, Canetti writes: “I am disgusted when I think that others will go and dig into my life.” In his will he noted that 20 of these boxes, certainly the “most scorching” boxes, could only be opened 30 years after his death. So, many secrets of the writer will remain sealed until 2024, secrets that will help keep alive the interest on the author, because the notes, published or not, include his finest and most critical thoughts.

Recently, the publishing house “SANTORI” has presented the Albanian reader a special work of the prominent Austrian writer Elias Canetti: “The Conscience of Words”, a collection of sociological-literary essays, the German original of which was published for the first time in 1975.

In this volume’s preface, the author states that it summarizes, according to the chronology, the essays he wrote in the years 1962-1974, with the exception of the lecture on the famous Austrian writer Hermann Broch, held in Vienna in 1936, on the occasion of his 50th birthday. Elaborating briefly on the content of this volume, Canetti writes, among other things: “At

first glance, it may seem a bit strange to find here all together figures such as Kafka and Confucius, Bühner, Tolstoy, Karl Kraus, and Hitler, catastrophes of the greatest magnitude, such as the Hiroshima catastrophe, and literary observations about the way diaries are written or about the origin of a novel. Though, it was the placement of these figures next to each other that mattered to me, because they just seemingly do not match.” The volume “The Conscience of Words” closes with the lecture “The Writer’s Mission”, which summarizes its entire content. In this regard, Canetti notes: “In this lecture, held in Munich, Bavaria, I tried to say something about this issue. As I was writing it, it seemed to me as something self-contained, but when I finished it, I was convinced that its place should be at the closing of this volume, as an embodiment of my hope that others will reach and fulfill its requirements , better than me.” In his lecture “The Writer’s Mission” Canetti writes as follows: “So, the writer would be - it is likely that we made this discovery a little too fast - a man who gives words a very special meaning, wandering among them with the same pleasure, perhaps even with more pleasure than what it is between people, and, giving in to both words and people, but still with greater confidence in words, but nevertheless with greater confidence after the words, he is able to pull these out of their seats, and then let them sit down with even more courage, asking them, touching them with his hands, fondling them, scratching them, carving them, coloring them, and is even able, after all his intimate insolence, to cringe again out of respect for them. Even, as it often happens, when he behaves with the word as a wrongdoer, even then he is still a wrongdoer out of love.”

“If the word writer,” Canetti continues, “had become a bogeyman for many people, it was because they associated it with a false

imagination and a lack of seriousness, with a kind of avoidance of one who does not want to make a living incredibly difficult for himself. The attitude of those writers who continued to deliver the most refined and varied aesthetic whims just on the eve of one of the darkest periods in human history was certainly not very appropriate to inspire respect, that period which they were unable to comprehend even as it plagued them; their false belief, the erroneous assessment of reality, which they tried to treat with contempt and deny any connection with it, their deep alienation from everything that was really happening, all of these were not things that could be understood in the language used by them, though meanwhile one can very well understand the fact that those eyes that looked more persistently and more accurately, turned aside terrified in the face of such great blindness.”

In his essay “The Conscience of Words” Canetti deals in detail with the great importance of keeping diaries for the true writer. Among other things, regarding the issue he writes: “It would be difficult for me to move forward in the work I do with the greatest desire if I did not keep a diary from time to time. Not that I use these notes, they are never the raw material for the work I am doing. But someone who knows the power of his impressions, a man who feels every detail of every day as if it were his only day, so this man really lives with genuine exaggerations, and something like this cannot be said otherwise, while in the meantime he does not fight this tendency of his own, because for him the prominence, accuracy and concreteness of all those things that matter constitute a life; such a man would burst or, in other words, be torn to pieces if he did not calm down by writing a diary. He who really wants to know everything will learn best by utilizing his own experience. He who really

wants to know everything will learn best by utilizing his own experience. But he should not spare himself, less he should treat himself as if he were someone else, with no less, but even greater severity.”

As a novelist, playwright, essayist and sociologist, Elias Canetti, who would be 116 years old this year and who has been resting for 27 years in Zurich, Switzerland, next to another great figure of world literature, James Joyce, has been honored with high awards in various countries and has been awarded honorary titles by several universities. This outstanding cosmopolitan writer, whom critics have called a “living classic” and one of the greatest humanists of the twentieth century, was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1981. Regarding this high award, the motivation of the Swedish Academy states the following: “For his works, characterized by a broad perspective, a great wealth of ideas and high artistic level.”

Summary

In this paper we focus on the most important aspects of the life and creative activity of the world-famous Austrian writer Elias Canetti, the Nobel Laureate in Literature, including the resounding of his greatest works in Albania.

A special place, which has become the cause for the title of the work being dealt with, we have dedicated to a thought that in this polyhedral writer prevailed over all other thoughts: the thought of death, which he wanted to eradicate from the face of the earth, wishing no one to die anymore. The so-called “school of human cognition” engages Canetti for life in a relentless fight against death, as a savage persecutor, determined to fight tirelessly against. The idea of death is encountered, more or less,

in all his creativity, but in full, after the death of the writer, as given by a group of authors in the work “Elias Canetti - The Book of Death”.

In this paper we have treated in more detail the three major works of the author that have been translated into Albanian during the early years of this century.

His autobiography, divided into three volumes (“The Tongue Set Free”, “The Torch in My Ear” and “The Play of the Eyes”), is a condensed and exciting work, written as if it were a formation novel. In compiling this autobiography, which, as the foreign press writes, constitutes a mosaic of powerful and very interesting episodes, described in a poetic language full of warmth and light, Canetti used as a creed: “A cowardly, truly a coward, one who is afraid of his own memories.”

His work “Crowds and Power”, in two volumes, is Canetti’s most important work, a really special world work, which forces the reader to delve into it completely haunted. “Crowds and power” is a synthesis of a very broad and elaborate information, derived from disciplines of the most diverse among them, from psychiatry and anthropology, psychology and psychoanalysis, history and sociology, with the aim of unmasking the process that makes the crowds manipulate and rule, and to emphasize the need to fight against power, against its most insidious and secret forms, present everywhere, in all the human relations.

Canetti’s third major work, translated into Albanian and treated in this paper, is “The Conscience of Words”, a collection of sociological-literary essays. This work includes, in chronological order, the essays that the author wrote in the years 1962-1974,

with the exception of the lecture on the famous Austrian writer Hermann Broch held in Vienna in 1936, on the occasion of his 50th birthday. In this volume the reader finds figures such as Kafka and Confucius, Bühner, Tolstoy, Karl Krauss, and Hitler, catastrophes of the greatest magnitude, such as the Hiroshima catastrophe, and literary observations of how diaries or fairy tales of a novel are written.

(Footnotes omitted for editorial reasons)

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