

Lasgush Poradeci.
The death of the pelican
[*Vdekja e nositit*].
Prishtinë. Rilindja. 1986. 278 pages

At the end of 1987 the last great classic of 20th century Albanian verse, Lasgush Poradeci, expired at the age of eighty-seven. He had lived the final years of his life in his beloved town of Pogradec on Lake Ohrid, not far from the Yugoslav border, tending his garden à la Candide and studying the ever-changing moods of the lake. The rhythmic and gentle lapping of the waves had always been among the fundamental sources of his pantheistic verse.

Poradeci was born in Pogradec in 1899, being three days older than the 20th century, as he once remarked. He attended a Romanian-language school in Monastir (Bitola), Macedonia, a French Catholic lycée in Athens and the Academy of Fine Arts in Bucharest, where a sizeable colony of Albanian exiles had arisen. His stay in Bucharest was to have a decisive influence on his literary development. It was there that he met and befriended the Albanian romantic poet Asdreni (1872-1947), began publishing verse in various Albanian-language periodicals (*Shqipëri e Re* of Constanza and *Dielli* of Boston among others) and revealing a certain theosophical affinity to the Romanian lyric poet Mihai Eminescu. A scholarship provided by the Fan Noli government in 1924 enabled him to continue his studies of Romance and Germanic philology in Graz, Austria. From 1934 to the end of the war, he taught secondary school in Tiranë and thereafter worked for the state-owned Naim Frashëri Publishing Company until his retirement. His two major collections of poetry, *Vallja e yjve* (The dance of the stars) and *Ylli i zemrës* (The star of the heart), were published in Romania in 1933 and 1937 respectively.

Though lauded by many a critic and connoisseur, this romantic aesthete, devoid of any redeeming ideological values, never enjoyed the total approbation of post-war Marxist dogmatists. An eclectic child of his age, Poradeci was and remains one of the many paradoxes of southeastern European literature. Kosovo critic Rexhep Qosja notes aptly that he felt like a Romantic, thought like a Classic, was as solitary and spiritually hermetic as a Symbolist and as precise as a Parnassist in the form of his verse. His stylistic finesse was indeed decisive in enriching and diversifying Albanian poetic metres.

Poradeci's position in Albanian literature has never been precisely defined. He had little in common with his contemporaries: the romantic Asdreni, the political Fan Noli or the messianic Migjeni, and imbued Albanian letters with an exotic element of pantheistic mysticism, introducing what he called the metaphysics of creative harmony. What other Albanian poet of his period would have devoted so much energy to the study of Sanskrit to comprehend the Veda?

Vdekja e nositit (The death of the pelican) is the first major edition of Poradeci's work to date and a befitting testament. Its editor, Kosovo poet and critic Sabri Hamiti, laments however that it is not yet his *opera omnia*. A few of the Albanian periodicals of the forties in which he published are not accessible for one reason or another and some of his later work is generally omitted, said not to be up to the standards of the Bucharest editions. The present volume offers, nonetheless, an unprecedented collection: 106 poems, an overview of criticism, notes from an interview with the aging poet in 1980 and a bibliography.

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