

Mimoza Ahmeti
Especially tomorrow
[*Sidomos nesër*].
Tiranë. Naim Frashëri. 1989. 80 pages

Women writers and poets are no matter-of-course phenomenon on the literary scene in Albania, a traditionally Moslem country in which virtually all women were illiterate forty years ago. There is therefore some justification here in treating them as such rather than simply as writers and poets (who happen to be women).

The first volume of verse for adults published by a woman in Albania was *Ëndrra vashërie*, Tiranë 1963 (Girlhood dreams) by Adelina Mamaqi (b. 1945). Other contemporary Albanian women poets of note include: Zhuljana Jorgaxhi (b. 1946), Natasha Lako (b. 1948), Adelina Balashi from Korçë, Elsa Ballauri, Beatrice Balliçi from Elbasan, and in Kosovo, Flora Brovina (b. 1949) and Edi Shukriu (b. 1950). Prose by women was even later to develop, the first Albanian novel to be published by a woman being *Një lindje e vështirë*, Tiranë 1970 (A difficult birth) by Elena Kadare (b. 1943), wife of noted novelist Ismail Kadare.

Mimoza Ahmeti (b. 1963) from the famed citadel town of Krujë, north of Tiranë, might almost be considered the second generation of women writers to have arisen in mountainous Balkan country. She finished her studies of language and literature in Tiranë in 1986 and now teaches literature. Her first volume of verse entitled *Bëhu i bukur*, Tiranë 1986 (Be beautiful), was well received by critics.

I had first heard her name mentioned by the literary critics not of Tiranë, but of distant Prishtinë on the other side of the impervious border which is busy dividing one literature into two. "Something new on our literary horizon, young, female and full of talent," they whispered. It was through the billows of cigarette smoke which always seem to shroud the established (male) poets of Albania that I caught my first glimpse of Ahmeti in November 1989 as she entered the headquarters of the Union of Writers and Artists in Tiranë to take part in a round table discussion on contemporary Albanian verse. In her demure blouse, pleated skirt and white socks, she cut more the figure of lanky Mediterranean schoolgirl attending a British public school than a reputed Albanian poet. Her views were listened to attentively and by no means condescendingly as one might have expected of the older literati.

The vision of poetry of which Ahmeti spoke on that occasion is exceptionally well expressed in *Sidomos nesër* (Especially tomorrow), her second book. This new collection contains 59 poems on intensely personal though at the same time universal themes, which have proven her to be a virtuoso of poetic technique. The directly accessible and by no means verbose language of her verse as well as its rhythmic perfection do seem to rise above the occasionally limp poetic production of some of her male contemporaries. Symbolically perhaps, Ahmeti begins her collection with the simple stanza:

*"We are young plants,
To be found everywhere.
We have burst into blossom."*

from a poem entitled 'Song of my generation'. Whether the modest transformations and attempts at renewal underway in modern Albanian prose will also affect poetry and evince Ahmeti indeed as a new generation remains to be seen.

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