

Mimoza Ahmeti.

Delirium.

Tirana. Marin Barleti. 1994. 78 pages.

Emotion and ideas were always an integral part of Albanian poetry, but there has often been a conspicuous lack of sensuality and lust for life in literature, both in Albania and in Kosovo. The watchful eye of the Albanian Party of Labor inhibited any would-be expressions of intimacy and certainly succeeded in eliminating sincerity in creative writing until it was overwhelmed by the tide of frustration which swept into eastern Europe in the late eighties. Since that time, Albania has broken loose and endeavoured to cover a century of social development in a mere five years. All the social and moral values the primly Stalinist country once knew have evaporated in a puff of reddish smoke, and nothing has yet replaced them.

Mimoza Ahmeti, one of the *enfants terribles* of the nineties, has set about to expand the horizons and explore the possibilities offered to her by her own senses. Dragging the nation, in her idiosyncratic manner, down along the bumpy road to Europe, she has managed in recent years to provoke Albania's impoverished and weary society into much needed reflection which, with time, may lead to new and more sincerely human values. The fifty-three poems in the collection *Delirium* take their departure essentially from the senses:

*Sensuality, oh my first victim / Again you lay open, again you imbibe and, purged, /
You return to life. / Brain, like a devil I use you / Conjured for crimes elusive to law. /
Sensuality, oh my sacred victim...*

Mimoza Ahmeti's poetry has been well received by the new generation of readers in tune, for the first time, to Western culture. Her candid expressions of wide-eyed feminine desire and indulgence in sensual pleasures, and the crystalline fluidity of her language have already made a modern classic of her.

Another intriguing and, for the contemporary Albanian reader as yet novel aspect of Ahmeti's work is the sexual ambiguity which pervades many of her texts. This ambivalence, a poetic obfuscation of the male and the female, enables and indeed forces the perceptive reader to sense, experience and enjoy without the strong gender dichotomy characteristic of most earlier creative writing in Albania. Indeed the traditional polarization of male and female verse would seem to mellow under the passionate force of her quill.

Since her early volumes, *Bëhu i bukur* (Tirana 1986) and *Sidomos nesër* (Tirana 1988) [see WLT 64:1, p. 174], Ahmeti has published a volume of prose under the title *Arkitrau* (Tirana 1993) and a slim collection of verse in Italian translation entitled *Il mio grido* (Lecce 1993), but it is without a doubt the present volume *Delirium*, with an appropriately sensuous cover by Gustav Klimt, which projects Mimoza Ahmeti into the limelight of contemporary Albanian verse production once again.

Robert Elsie

Olzheim / Eifel, Germany