

Rudolf Marku.

*Vdekja lexon gazetën, Poezi.*

Elbasan. Onufri. 1995. 104 pp. 100 ALL.

Rudolf Marku (b. 1950) of Lezha made a name for himself in the eighties as one of the leading poets of the post-Kadare generation. It was a generation of intellectuals, born and raised in an atmosphere of intimidation, who learned to show patience and to bide their time until the Stalinist regime in Albania, the last of the dominoes, would fall. The poet's previous verse collection, the well-received *Udhëtim te vendi i gjërave që njohim* (Voyage to the land of things we know), 1986, was published in this climate of reserved expectation.

Since the collapse of the dictatorship, Rudolf Marku has not allowed himself to be pressed, but has rather taken his time to return to the surface, to the pensive pleasures of creative literature. The interval was marked by a career in the public service, in teaching and in journalism, during which his critical voice helped put his chaotic country back on track. Rudolf Marku has also held functions at the Albanian Foreign Ministry, exercising wide-ranging international activities, and has served as a Member of Parliament.

The present verse collection, 'Death reads the newspaper,' is composed of five cycles: 'The crucified descending from Golgotha,' 'Lonely are the lovers,' 'Have you found no world?,' 'Ars poetica,' and 'Death reads the newspaper,' a total of sixty-eight poems composed from 1970 to mid-1995. It is verse of ideas and messages rather than of abstract description and figuration. Marku takes a cold look at modern society in the Albanian context and does much to expose its deceit, self-righteousness and vanity. From such a perspective, it is understandable that his poetic irony, at times, turns to sarcasm.

In 'A poem which should have been written the day the statue was toppled' he concludes: "We all created Enver Hoxha / Even you who hated him while he was alive / And yet never assassinated him. / When a tyrant dies of natural causes / It means that his people / Are a bit sick themselves."

Rudolf Marku's literary activities have not been limited to verse of his own production. He has recently introduced the Albanian public to many essential works of twentieth-century English literature, including ambitious Albanian-language versions of complex, one might say untranslatable authors such as T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, W. H. Auden and William Butler Yeats.

The Onufri Press in Elbasan, one of the most successful of Albania's new private publishing companies, is to be congratulated not only for this volume, but for the many verse collections it has chosen to publish of promising young authors, among whom are Agron Tufa, Andi Bejtja, and a good representative selection of female writers: Flutura Aça, Lindita Arapi, Mira Meksi, and Irena Vreto. Many facets of Albanian culture have gone under in the chaos of the last five years, but Albanian poetry has survived the transition.

Robert Elsie

Olzheim / Eifel, Germany