

Ardian Christian Kyçyku.

*Lumenjtë e Saharasë.*

Tirana. Onufri. 1999. 109 pp. ISBN 99927-30-77-3. 300 ALL.

The anonymous protagonist of Ardian Christian Kyçyku's latest novel is constantly thirsty, craving for drink and whatever else the snow-bound city has to offer. A landslide has blocked all routes of departure, forcing him to spend a week in his place of birth. Here he prowls the streets in search of adventure. Here, too, he meets Sonila, who becomes his companion and lover, replacing, at least for the time, his distant girlfriend Ela, of whom he seems emotionally obsessed.

*Lumenjtë e Saharasë* 'The rivers of the Sahara,' written in Tirana in 1991, is a short novel in twenty-four chapters in which we follow the renegade protagonist for a period of twenty-four hours. It is composed to a good extent in the form of a dialogue, although much of this is more accurately a gripping monologue in which the protagonist reveals his impulses and observations without reserve. Kyçyku's language can be delightfully vulgar but it is never devoid of elegance and sophistication. Indeed what distinguishes 'The rivers of the Sahara' from other works of contemporary Albanian prose is the candidness and sincerity of the narrative. There is no past and no future involved, simply the present, twenty-four hours of our hero's isolated existence. It is an emotional journey to nowhere through the 'microchaos' of one life.

Ardian-Christian Kyçyku was born in 1969 in Pogradec on the southern bank of Lake Ohrid. He has spent the last decade of his life in Bucharest where he finished a doctorate in theology on 'The relationship between God and the cosmos in monotheistic religions' and is currently editor of the literary periodical *Haemus*, published in Romanian and Albanian. Despite the fact that he is extraordinarily productive and has earned a good reputation in the otherwise chaotic and often puerile Albanian literature of the nineties, Kyçyku has remained little known as a prose author in Albania itself. Two of his novels, *Mortët* (The dead) and the well-received *Nata pas vitit zero* (The night after the year zero), were published in Kosova in 1997 and 1998, but few copies reached Albania because of the 1999 war. A good number of his works have also appeared in Bucharest in Romanian-language versions. The present volume is, thus, the first of his works to which the reading public on the banks of the Adriatic has been given direct access. One can hope that others will follow.

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