

Kim Mehmeti
Fatusha's fate.
[*Fati i Fatushes*]
Tetovo (Macedonia). Fi & Ga. 1994. 133 pages

With a conscious attempt underway to eradicate Albanian culture from the fertile fields of Kosovo, writing and publishing in western Macedonia have taken on greater significance as heir to Albanian literary traditions in former Yugoslavia. The official results of the Macedonian census, released in November 1994, point to the fact that the Albanians now make up about a quarter of the population of (the former Yugoslav Republic of) Macedonia, and although they still have few of the linguistic rights which their Macedonian-language neighbours enjoy (government services, road signs, normal access to radio, television and higher education in their own language), they are able to write and publish freely. Once in the cultural shadow of their compatriots in Kosovo, the writers of Tetovo, Gostivar and Skopje are now coming increasingly to the fore with their publishing activities to take up the slack, so to speak.

The first serious generation of Albanian writers in Macedonia included such noted figures as prose writer and poet Murat Isaku (b. 1928), poet Abdylaziz Islami (b. 1930), both of the Tetovo region, and subsequently writer and scholar Luan Starova (b. 1941), poet, prose writer and playwright Resul Shabani (b. 1944), both of Skopje, and Xhabir Ahmeti (b. 1945) of Tetovo. Among the many rising names of the present generation (poets in particular), mention may be made of: Nehas Sopaj (b. 1954), Shkëlzen Halimi (b. 1961), Avni Halimi (b. 1965), and last but not least of prose writer Kim Mehmeti (b. 1955).

Kim Mehmeti was born near Skopje where he now lives and works. Among his early publications are the short story collections *Pluhuri që mbin* (The sprouting dust), Skopje 1986, *Dënesje* (The sighing), Prishtinë 1988, *Bolero* (Bolero), Prishtinë 1991, *Fati* (Fate), Skopje 1992, and the short novel *Shtatë net dënesje* (Seven nights of sighing), Prishtinë 1990, as well as a number of works in Macedonian.

The present volume, *Fati i Fatushes* (Fatusha's fate), is a collection of five short stories in the original narrative style for which Kim Mehmeti is now recognized. Life in the remote Albanian settlements of western Macedonia, upon which Mehmeti focusses, evolves at its own pace and is marked by custom and tradition. The ominously abandoned 'House at the End of the Village,' as the first tale is entitled, makes the villagers ill at ease and confronts them with a gnawing sense of guilt and shame. Indeed, ponderous instincts, sexuality and deep-rooted neuroses lie at the heart of much of Kim Mehmeti's prose, latent forces which the author takes delight in exposing with the help of the delirious village drunks and other slightly deranged figures who inhabit his tales. It is this obfuscatory atmosphere of unconscious or partially unfathomed instincts which the slightly deranged reader, for his part, should enjoy in the disturbing tales of Kim Mehmeti.

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