

Poetry Series

**Ndrek Gjini**  
**- poems -**

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## Ndrek Gjini(01/10/1963)

Ndrek Gjini was born in Albania. After his graduation from the University of Shkoder in Albania, with a BA (Honours) in Language and Literature he worked first as a teacher and then as a journalist. During these years he published four books in the Albanian language, and many poems, reviews, essays and articles in Albanian newspapers and magazines.

In 2002, he moved to the West of Ireland. In 2004, he undertook a course at CCFE that led to a National Certificate in Print Journalism; at GMIT he earned a BA (Honours) in Heritage Studies.

In 2011 he received an MA in Writing at National University of Ireland, Galway. His research and teaching interests are in digital humanities, book history, textual studies and bibliography, scholarly editing, and 20th-century literature. His poems, short stories and reviews have been published in Journals and Magazines in many countries. Ndrek's first collection of poems in the English language, *The Death of Night*, was published in 2011 by EMAL. He was selected to read at the Strokestown International Poetry Festival in 2011, and was a featured poet in the 'Cyphers' Magazine, Issue 71. His work has also been published in *The Mayo Anthology (Present Tense)*, in 2006, and in the *Writing4all Anthology, "The best of 2011"*. 'The Connaught Telegraph', 'Galway Advertiser', 'Galway City Tribune', and 'Sin' are among other newspapers and magazines where his work has been featured. He has been invited to read at the Galway- Mayo Institute of Technology on both Galway and Castlebar campuses and at the Culture Night events.

During 2012-2013, he worked, as the Arts Office Assistant, in the Community and Culture Department of the Galway City Council. Currently he works for the Galway Education Centre and is the webmaster and editor of and Managing Editor of *The Galway Review*, ()

# Calendar

Calendar

My grandmother had a true calendar,  
a meaningful, eventful one.  
"You were born four moons  
after the heavy flooding  
which killed half of the town,  
twelve moons before  
the communists dynamited the church.  
It was just two moons after  
the grapes were ripened, "  
she used to say to me.

As a child, until I began school,  
I knew nothing of the fact  
that I was born on October 1st 1963.

A heartless man it must have been  
who invented the calendar,  
a man without memory, I think.

The names of days, weeks, months, years  
are meaningless things,  
only signs. Nothing more.

If I tell you my birthday  
with the current calendar,  
I tell you nothing about myself.  
But what if I use  
my grandmother's calendar?

Ndrek Gjini

# Challenge

## Challenge

If you live locked up  
in the prison of hate  
and feed your days  
with the milk of love,  
this means that you  
have emerged victorious  
from your great battle  
against Satan's spirit,  
and reached out to collapse  
the walls of malice.

Ndrek Gjini

# Dark Feelings

## Dark Feelings

Into the bog of bad habits,  
I am swimming every day.  
Mosquitoes, marsh plants and mud,  
are pestering me, from my feet to my eyes.  
From here, I can see only some slaves  
building a statue for the devil.

An old bull-cart filled up  
with all my broken years  
stands on the shore of this bog  
waiting for me to pull it.

Sleepwalking, I leave the bog,  
and towards the bull-cart I go.  
Pulling it through the mire  
alongside of this bog land  
its wheels begin to write  
some very boring stories  
on the mud's umber paper.

While the night falls  
the voices of frogs begin to be  
the only cradle-song of my hopes.

Ndrek Gjini

# Game

## Game

There is a forest with lots of birds.  
Somewhere down,  
at the foot of this forest, is my home.  
In the distance lies a railroad, not far,  
and then the sea.

Some birds migrate from the forest each autumn  
and come back in the spring.  
I leave of my house every morning  
and return in the evening.  
A train passes by at the break of day,  
returns at noon,  
only to leave again just before midnight.  
The sea recedes from the shore  
whenever the moon is full  
and comes back with wild waves  
once the new moon begins.

In this come-and-go game,  
life revolves around itself perpetually.  
The first to tire out  
in this roundabout motion  
is going to be me,  
and one day I am going to take an endless break.

Ndrek Gjini

# Gm Products

GM Products

(and maybe GM verse)

It must have been night, definitely,  
when some mad scientists,  
like crude thieves, broke in to God's garden  
and hastily began to make  
fruits, vegetables, butter, even meat,  
out of chemical substances.

Afterwards, other crooks  
filled up all the shops with these  
hermaphroditic products.

When all is said and done,  
one thing still bothers me:  
are we eating this food  
or is this food eating us?

Ndrek Gjini

# How To Read The Wind

How To Read The Wind

My mother did not die of old age,  
nor did any illness lay her low in bed.  
Her worries for us, the fugitives,  
broke her heart,  
and one day she decided  
to not breathe anymore.

Her last breath became wind,  
and it's blowing wild  
on this November day,  
whistling and singing to my ears,  
sometimes as a lullaby,  
other times a lament.  
And very often her voice in the wind  
says to me:  
'Why so late my son? '

Ndrek Gjini

# Lesson 1

## Lesson 1

### Acrostic

Try at least to go  
right, not be right, since no one is  
always right. While  
value can be found in the everyday, as long as you traverse the roads of  
every village, city, meadow, mountain or sky,  
leaving behind empty bottles and full memories.

Drink clears the smog inside your head;  
repeat this saying like you're praying it. Drink  
in pubs and wine bars as though they were temples,  
newly built by the religion of joy, to please and  
keep us closer to our souls.

Eat not just food, but good recollections too  
at your travel trips and drink sessions, by grabbing  
time before time grabs you.

Ndrek Gjini

# Letter From Prison

Letter from prison

My dear friend!  
This letter for you  
I've written down  
here in this green jail  
where my word smells like grass,  
and my dreams are getting wet in the rain.  
Here, where the life and death  
have no demarcation line.  
Here, where the grass, the rain and flowers  
are giving up the ghost  
and being born again into a day  
as if by magic.

Ndrek Gjini

# Lucky Dogs

Lucky Dogs

I witnessed a love moving  
from a man to a dog.

Some month ago,  
our neighbors got married.  
Happiness, kisses,  
flying in and out.  
It seemed like endless love.  
Last week my neighbor's scratched face,  
the blood dripping down his face like tears,  
killed my sleep.  
His screams and mad exit,  
were THE END signature  
of this love story.

Yesterday his ex-wife  
stopped her BMW in haste.  
She came out of her car  
passionately kissing  
a big dog.

Ndrek Gjini

# On Holidays

On Holidays

I was looking through a recipe book  
trying to find out how to cook a good fish.  
I started to wonder...  
what if a fish was looking up  
a good recipe  
on how to cook a man.

Delirious, I left the kitchen  
and my feet brought me to the sea.  
I splashed into the world of fishes  
and forgot to eat; I felt no hunger at all.

Ndrek Gjini

# The Death Of Night

Ndrek Gjini

The Death of Night

Selected poems

The death of night

The day is downing.  
My insomnia and I

are gazing at this night's body and eyes  
waking its last moments of life.

Lamps glow inside and outside houses,  
and neon lights on the roads and squares  
are like bandages on its injured body.

The sun starts opening  
the gates of light bit by bit  
and the night's last breathing  
ends as a blissful spirit.

The night just died.  
Let its soul rest in peace.  
Amen.

The Balkan View

I have just passed

the Old City of Dubrovnik.  
The beautiful hill of Cilipi,  
like a green hand waves at me.  
Then a small river near Gruda  
guides me towards Herceg-Novi.  
A checkpoint appears here,  
like mouth of a gigantic bear.  
then, after just 50 meters  
another checkpoint  
and then, another one.  
After that sheep grazing in peace,  
like small white flags  
move on the stunning lawns of Bijela.  
On the roads of Radovici  
drunken soldiers and police officers  
chew up war with their nonsense talk.  
Near Kotorr a wonderful waterfall  
stretches its hands towards the sea.  
In Mjastori a cloud of gunpowder  
swims slowly in the sky.  
Then, while passing through Budva  
the blue face of sea appears and hide  
and then appears again as in a children's play.  
On the roadsides of Ulcinj  
shadows of killed loves emerge  
walking slowly, in silence.

These rare beauties of nature  
can make not only the humans  
of every race, nation and religion,  
feel like flying towards eternity,  
but birds, flowers, rivers and lawns also;  
all together, in peace.  
Yet, the war is the most ruthless  
and powerful King  
of this beautiful land.  
The killings and the death  
are the air, the drinking water,  
and the daily bread and butter  
of the inhabitants.  
The only Balkan's resident  
enjoying full freedom is THE HATE.

It's rich, powerful, and immortal.  
It is the only citizen  
living here with no fear.

.....

uncountable micro planets  
are  
circling around the earth  
a heavy stone  
on their shoulders time is full stop  
the death appears exclamation mark

The parents do not die

Mainly the parents do not die.  
They just feel lonely  
when their children leave the nest,  
and they start to miss their own parents.  
They go to meet them  
and forget to come back.  
That's all.

## Closed Doors

It happened years ago.  
I left.  
After I walked just two or three steps,  
I heard the door  
anxiously being closed.  
I don't know why  
but ever since that moment  
the sound that the door made  
echoes in my ears  
like the clang of a handful of pebbly soil  
thrown on a coffin.  
It was then  
that I started to hate the closure of doors.  
To me they sound like coffin lids.

## Winter Eve

Cherry branches in my yard  
swept by sea breeze,  
swaying in the wind  
like a drunkard's arms.  
Leaves attempt to fly like birds,  
realise their error then fall.  
Horse-clouds run in a sky race  
towards the horizon.  
The sea squirms and turns  
like a wounded tiger,

its mouth spewing masses of foam.  
Trying to escape this violent cold  
I begin to dream of summer heat.

Words and Waves

Words and waves  
are the most heartless migrants.

The only thing they know  
is the path of their escape.  
They flee, just flee,  
and never come back.  
leaving behind memories  
and debris.

Why I write

My little town  
is a world in its own,  
set apart from the wider world.

It is a town with no heroes,  
but a town that never fell in love with fear.

The extent of its history is limited to  
two or three poets,  
an architect,  
three blacksmiths,  
and six stone-carvers.

I am a carved, walking pebble  
of this heroless town,  
not strong enough to fight—  
that's why I write.

## Calendar

My grandmother had a true calendar,  
a meaningful, eventful one.  
"You were born four moons  
after the heavy flooding  
which killed half of the town,  
twelve moons before  
the communists dynamited the church.  
It was just two moons after  
the grapes were ripened, "  
she used to say to me.

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I knew nothing of the fact  
that I was born on October 1st 1963.

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are meaningless things,  
only signs. Nothing more.

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with the current calendar,  
I tell you nothing about myself.  
But, what if I use  
my grandmother's calendar?

## Unfair World

A man and a tree died yesterday.  
The man was killed by the tree  
when a wild wind knocked it down.

Evening News:  
Millions of people heard  
about the death of this man.  
Not a word was mentioned  
about the death of the tree  
or the millions of trees being killed by men.

## War Against Doubt

Every time we believe,  
we extend our lives a little bit.  
Whenever we doubt, gravewards we go.  
In this, belief/disbelief game  
Old Age waits at our door,  
while Death lies like a fox in ambush,  
ready to lead us to the grave's gate.

Not in vain an old man said:  
"Do not open the door to doubt  
in order that Death you may keep out."

## Game

There is a forest with lots of birds.  
Somewhere down,  
at the foot of this forest, is my home.

In the distance lies a railroad, not far,  
and then the sea.

Some birds migrate from the forest each autumn  
and come back in the spring.

I leave of my house every morning  
and return in the evening.

A train passes by at the break of day,  
returns at noon,  
only to leave again just before midnight.

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whenever the moon is full  
and comes back with wild waves  
once the new moon begins.

In this come-and-go game,  
life revolves around itself perpetually.

The first to tire out  
in this roundabout motion  
is going to be me,  
and one day

I am going to take  
an endless break.

## On Holidays

I was looking through a recipe book  
trying to find out how to cook a good fish.  
I started to wonder...  
what if a fish was looking up  
a good recipe  
on how to cook a man.

Delirious, I left the kitchen  
and my feet brought me to the sea.  
I splashed into the world of fishes  
and forgot to eat; I felt no hunger at all.

## Wires

I was fourteen  
when our literature teacher said:  
'For today's homework  
you have to write a poem about your arms'.  
The next day I stood up before the class and recited:  
'My arms are like very, very long wires  
with which I can embrace the whole world.'  
The teacher said: 'Very good, great metaphor'.  
He died peacefully  
just a few years before the Wireless Era.  
Lucky for him, he escaped the struggle  
of all these wireless things,  
even wireless loves.  
Meanwhile, I mourn for the death  
of my first great metaphor.

GM Products

(and maybe GM verse)

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when some mad scientists,  
like crude thieves, broke in to God's garden  
and hastily began to make  
fruits, vegetables, butter, even meat,  
out of chemical substances.

Afterwards, other crooks  
filled up all the shops with these  
hermaphroditic products.

When all is said and done,  
one thing still bothers me:  
are we eating this food  
or is this food eating us?

## Lesson 1

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keep us closer to our souls.

Eat not just food, but good recollections too  
at your travel trips and drink sessions, by grabbing  
time before time grabs you.

### Lucky Dogs

I witnessed a love moving  
from a man to a dog.

Some month ago,  
our neighbours got married.  
Happiness, kisses,  
flying in and out.

It seemed like endless love.  
Last week my neighbour's scratches,  
and his blood dripping down his face  
like tears,  
killed my sleep.  
His screams and mad exit,  
were 'THE END' sign  
of this Love Story.

Yesterday his ex-wife  
stopped her BMW in haste.  
She came out of her car  
passionately kissing  
her big dog.

## The Train of My Life

It departed at 8: 32PM on October 1st 1963  
from a maternity hospital  
in a small town in North Albania,  
stopped at a crèche to collect some cries,  
toys, ink spilled on shirts and trousers,  
a broken pencil.

Other stops included  
dull classes with mountains of books,  
copies, fights, loves, hates, mistakes,  
first kisses, white dust from the chalk,  
lost shoes on football pitches.

Then it stopped again  
at different workplaces  
where the head was not needed at all, just the arms,  
because the bosses were the ones  
who were always right.

This train passed through many  
strange countries and cities,  
regretful, unable to enjoy  
the thrills and luxury that those places held.

During a long stop on a rainy island,  
everything—feelings, memories, the body—  
began to rust away beneath an endless rainfall.

The train will move on soon,  
scheduled to arrive at? ? : ? ? ,  
on an uncertain day of an uncertain month  
during the 21st century,  
but I hope not soon,  
at a not decided yet graveyard.

## Zero

I was with her. Together  
we harvested the joy of life.  
I do not know if it was Satan or God  
that planted the thorn of hate in her soul.  
However, when it became dark she left.  
She locked herself into her dark house.  
She rang.  
'Very quiet here, '  
she said, 'only me and solitude.'  
I replied, 'You are one, the solitude is zero,  
so tell me what result will you get  
when you multiply yourself with solitude.'

While answering her I was lightening the night,  
and my head too, with some drinks,  
celebrating with five of my friends.

## How To Read The Wind

My mother did not die of old age,  
nor did any illness lay her low in bed.  
Her worries for us, the fugitives,  
broke her heart,  
and one day she decided  
to not breathe anymore.

Her last breath became wind,  
and it's blowing wild  
on this November day,  
whistling and singing to my ears,  
sometimes as a lullaby,  
other times a lament.  
And very often her voice in the wind  
says to me:  
'Why so late my son? '

## The Smell of My Thoughts

My thoughts wear the smell of sunlight  
every time it rains.  
They wear rain's smell  
whenever the sun shines.  
They wear the ice's smell  
whenever it's hot,  
and warmth's smell they wear  
during the days with frost.  
The smell of flowers they wear in winter  
in the summer they wear snow's smell.  
My thoughts are the only things that keep  
my world and me in balance.  
Without them I would fall down  
like a rotten tree.

## Dark Feelings

Into the bog of bad habits,  
I am swimming every day.  
Mosquitoes, marsh plants and mud,  
are pestering me, from my feet to my eyes.  
From here, I can see only some slaves  
building a statue for the devil.

An old bull-cart filled up  
with all my broken years  
stands on the shore of this bog  
waiting for me to pull it.

Sleepwalking, I leave the bog,  
and towards the bull-cart I go.  
Pulling it through the mire  
alongside of this bog land  
its wheels begin to write  
some very boring stories  
on the mud's umber paper.

While the night falls  
the voices of frogs begin to be  
the only cradle-song of my hopes.

Challenge

If you live locked up  
in the prison of hate  
and feed your days  
with the milk of love,  
this means that you  
have emerged victorious  
from your great battle  
against Satan's spirit,  
and reached out to collapse  
the walls of malice.

The house of my verses

Somewhere, inside my chest,  
in the valleys of my heart  
there is a house  
decaying everyday.  
The worms of nuisance  
are gnawing its roof joists  
and the chilly wind is kissing  
its glassless windows.

The stones of its walls  
are falling like rotten teeth  
from an old man's mouth.  
Yet bashful it stands there  
in its solitude, as a cherished nest  
of my yet unborn stanzas.

I vowed to be my childhoods' soldier

Last night, my sleep  
slammed the door shut  
and ran out in haste,  
leaving my memories  
and me in a desperate state.

The yearning of my youth  
entered in calm,  
and dragged me by hand  
towards an abandoned house.

The morning came  
and caught me there,  
bewildered, shuffling through  
some dark and bright files  
of my childhood days.

I worshiped that journey  
to this vanished house  
because I miss its guilt,  
and its pride,  
I love going there  
neither drunk nor sober,  
as I vowed to be  
my childhood's soldier.

## February

The frost under our feet  
doesn't cough that loudly,  
yet it sounds more like  
an old man's mumbling.

The wind is not breathing  
fast and chilly like last month.

Undressed trees  
do not look that pretty  
yet they seem shy, hiding within  
thousands of pregnant buds.

It's February,  
the daylight  
has emerged victorious  
from its great battle  
against dark.

The stone is my father.

Do you not know me?  
I am the son of the stone.  
Stone is the father and my vertebrae.  
He raised me,  
and taught me the art of patience.  
Seasons come and go  
as storks,  
but the stone and my patience  
like an ancient oath stand here.  
The fortitude is our God,

and the fatherland our faith.

Letter from prison

My dear friend!

This letter for you  
I've written down  
here in this green jail  
Where my word smells like grass.  
And my dreams are getting wet in the rain.

Here, where the life and death  
have no demarcation line.

Here, where the grass, the rain and flowers  
are giving up the ghost  
and being born again into a day  
as if by magic.

The field and I

The field and I had cut our hair  
last afternoon.

We had a shower by rain  
last nigh.

Today, the field was woken up  
by a kiss of the rainbow  
Me, by my mother's  
phone-call.

## Confession

I am not the one who killed the wolf.  
Believe me.  
Do you remember, long ago,  
when some strangers came?  
They were many.  
With their axes and saws,  
rushing toward the forest  
and they cut all trees,  
took them and fled.  
And the wolf slinked  
in a meadow covered with fog.  
When the fog went away,  
the wolf gazed at the murdered forest.  
and died of anguish.  
I'm not the one who killed the wolf.  
Believe me.

## Prison

Get your day,  
put it in an office,  
sat it down on a chair.  
Say to it, obey the boss,  
and your food is paid for,  
Your rent is paid as well.  
The drinks  
at your dinners are paid too.  
This is the prison.  
The prison of soul  
this kind of structural design has.

The rain

And the rain came,  
no one can remember when.  
Here, with us,  
in us,  
no one knows how long it's going to stay.  
Making our nights starless,  
our days grey.  
and us walking fish,  
in this soggy space which is rotting  
everything.

I am a tree

I am a tree,  
a walking tree.

The leaves of my thoughts and feelings  
have their date of birth called 'Spring'

and their date of death called 'Autumn'.

I am a tree.

My green heartstrings  
die and rise again within me,  
again and again  
until the wind of time  
will knock me down.

The refrain of a pensioner.

Sitting on a bench, lonesome  
in a corner of a park  
he fills his lungs with green air  
and idly he drinks the milk of light.

He rises slowly, and he puts the path,  
as a fiction book, in his pocket  
walking towards the gate of twilight  
where his white-dream night lies ahead.

Every day he repeats this journey  
without betraying the day, air or wind  
until the twilight runs away from him  
or the night locks him in forever.

## My road's death

I am laying my road to rest into the grave, today.  
With it, I am laying to rest the mud, and the sun.  
There are no howls, no sighs.  
There is neither tears nor sadness,  
the silence, like an opened grave,  
is having coffee with me,  
after this funeral.

## Walking by the seaside

While walking by the seaside,  
sounds coming out of the waves' mouth  
enable me, in less than half an hour's journey,  
to meet myself when crying for a broken toy,  
to talk to my mother who died years ago,  
to hug my nephew who will be born next decade.  
to wait in agony before my death  
until my daughter will come back to me  
to say goodbye,  
to see my niece's tear-filled eyes  
while she lays a bouquet of flowers on my grave.  
The waves' tunes are not like our bodies  
They are eternal,  
like our souls,  
like our dreams,  
like our love.  
We do have a sea inside  
with great waves  
which create incredible, eternal tunes.

That's why

we do not die,  
we just pass by.  
from earth to sky.

I'm not the black cat.

I am not the black cat.  
There were four of us;  
my grandmother,  
a black cat,  
a myth,  
and I.  
My grandmother often  
told us a myth.  
When you are ill, she said,  
if a black cat  
comes and sits on your bed  
it means that you  
will die soon.  
I was only six,

seriously ill.  
Our black cat  
came and sat on my bed.  
I just remember  
some crashes and screams  
and a handle of the brush  
hitting that poor cat.  
Years passed.  
My grandmother,  
and the black cat,  
died.

I,  
and the myth,  
not yet.  
But, I am not the black cat.

Fugitive

Yes, I can go. I can leave right now.  
An airplane or train ticket  
for 10 or 15 pounds of flesh and bones,  
including some clothes  
and some necessary domestic things,

and ....good-bye.

However, I'm not gone,  
as my memories and feelings  
are disobedient. They never leave,  
and I can't dictate anything to them.

So, when you'll see me leaving  
don't even think I'm gone.  
It's not me.  
It's just a heft of myself  
escaping from fighting with me.

## 'Stop' signs

'Stop' signs horrify me.  
Every time I look at them  
I start thinking about a great disaster  
which could happen, if those cold metal signs  
with just four letters applied  
to our thoughts, our feelings and our dreams.  
All the roads within the world of our souls  
would be trapped in big traffic jams.  
Warning sirens, crashes, fires,  
would appear everywhere  
in this endless fast-moving network.  
The world of our souls would go crazy,  
and within a few days time  
a sign with ten letters would appear,  
'Extinction'.

Walking not permitted

I know that,  
when death will knock  
at the door of my house  
I will be in bed, in agony.

Oh, how much I would like  
to be standing up,  
when I will hear this unexpected knock.  
Perhaps searching on my bookshelf  
for a book to read,  
or making a coffee for myself.

I would love be able to open the door  
to this rare guest and invite it in.

However, God made us  
unable to walk when we were born  
and that's why he wants us lame  
when we are dying.

Death is indeed like birth,  
a world full of mystery,  
where walking is not permitted.

Swimming in blood and tears

It's raining.

They are not raindrops there,  
they are bullets.

Bullets from pistols, kalashnikovs, mitrailleuses  
fired toward no one. (Sorry,  
they are fired skyward.)

The gunners want to kill the sky.

Not God, no.

(At least they say so) .

However, God owns the sky.

He doesn't like the bullets.

Therefore, he turns those bullets  
down here,

as if they were raindrops.

It's not the Universe

that is gone crazy,

no, no.

It's the humans. I mean the gunners.

There are no clouds in the sky  
but still the rain is falling daily,  
a rain of bullets.

My body, my soul and the sky  
are swimming in blood and tears,

and again.... and again....  
we still believe in God,  
because we hate war.

Memories from the war in winter

Kosove 1999

Some powerful bombs exploded.  
Black out.  
The power is cut off.  
There is no moonlight tonight.  
Inside and out, dark.  
There are neither candles  
nor lighters here in my house.  
My memory is shaking from the frost  
and like an abandoned pensioner  
is sitting on the bench of this night  
and talking to themselves.  
My dreams, are grinning with no reason

like my handicapped neighbour.  
While this frozen night,  
overloaded with dead bodies,  
of murdered hopes, is moving slowly  
on the streets of this darkness  
towards the new century.

The frost of oblivion

The frost of oblivion  
has iced up all the tears in my eyes.  
My words are shaking as willows' twigs  
on the surface of a river flow.  
My smile, bereaved, is dying within me

• .....

While my body is converted to a statue  
where behind it, after-midnight, drunkards vomit.

A shadow of a frightened man

Did you ever think  
how weak are the valiant men,  
the heroes, as we like to call them.  
They rule brutally,  
they shout and scream, they kill  
because they are afraid.  
They do not believe in themselves  
and their ability to compete fairly  
in the battle of this life.

In my hometown a proverb says:  
'To kill is not bravery;  
he who forgives is twice brave'.  
This was repeated very often.  
Maybe that is why  
whenever I hear the word 'hero',  
in my mind's eyes I see  
the shadow of a frightened man  
suffering from paranoia.

## Walking the streets

This evening I walk the streets  
hand in hand with my grief.  
I have left, locked in my house,  
my disabled memories  
and my crazy dreams.  
So, the streets, my grief, and I  
are ruling the world tonight.  
Oh, you cannot imagine  
how relaxed this walk is,  
without those foolish memories  
and those mad dreams.

My last breathe

... And my last breathe is ending slowly  
blowing and blowing on some cinders  
which have been burned out for quite some time.  
With the hope that there remains a burning ember,  
I persevere and strain in vain.

## Learning difficulties

There were two years,  
only two years  
that I needed to learn  
how to speak.  
However,  
now another forty-five years have passed  
and I am not able to learn  
how to keep my mouth shut.

My ashes

My ashes  
you are the faithful guard  
of my dreams and my songs  
which burn inside me like a sigh

My ashes  
you are the silent witness  
of my loves and my hopes  
which die inside me, hugging solitude

My ashes

I light a candle and pray for you every day.

Our cruelty

We never thought, not for one moment,  
that our earth felt, dreamt, loved like us  
We rape its surface nonstop,  
with our cruelty, like no one did in the past.

Our earth is upset; its heart is a banging saga.  
Earthquake's hammers are beating at her chest.  
Its feelings are blowing up in volcanic lava.  
and its dreams are fading as the icebergs melt.

## Death And Rebirth Of Word

Teenage I was when I saw  
violent creatures  
with human faces  
nailing the word  
on a big cross.  
I saw it dying  
nailed there,  
like Jesus.  
Now I pray every day  
for its rebirth,  
Forgetting the crimes  
of those violators and the sneering  
of that heartless crowd.

## Letterbox

While millions of doors' mouths  
are starving for a bite of a letter  
from the fugitives, even once a year,  
our doors' mouths are always full.  
They can hardly breathe  
because of the junk that they eat,  
hysterically, every single day.

In the pockets of my memory

There is such a big mess  
in the pockets of my memory.  
A stanza here, a line there,  
scratched rhymes,  
misshaped metaphors,  
broken assonances,  
sunken carelessly above each other  
within those pockets,  
as if they were seeds  
waiting to be sown  
on the white fields of papers  
on each Friday night  
or at least on the mornings  
of each Saturday.

The most beautiful lady

There was just one key in our house.  
This key was neither for the front door  
nor for any money safe.  
It was the key to a small cupboard,  
where my mother kept her wedding clothes.

I remember her  
opening that small cupboard every week,  
cleaning those clothes,  
putting quinces on them for a good smell,

talking with them as if they were her friends.

No one can remember when it was said  
that brides' clothes from their wedding day  
should be preserved to be worn  
on their day of death.

I do not know how many centuries  
had travelled this feeling, this lesson  
until it comes to my childhood's home.

However when my mother died,  
we dressed her in those clothes.  
With no doubt, she looked  
the most beautiful lady in world.

Looking through airplane's window

An endless blue field down there,  
sowed with immeasurable white fumes.  
Some airplanes like silver worms  
moving in and out this sowed field.

Above, the sun,  
like a soldier's chopped off head,  
fired up and thrown away.

## Graveyard

If by chance you come  
to visit the town of my verses  
don't go just to its pubs  
to be drunk with rhymes, rhythms  
alliterations and happy onomatopoeias.  
Stall even for a short visit in its graveyard,  
where are laid to rest hundreds of dead metaphors.  
Some of them committed suicide because of fear,  
and some other ones, lay there cut off oesophagus  
from some bloody scissors  
in the hands of several heartless-communist editors.  
Please read in silence the epitaphs  
on these gravestones,  
and pray for their souls.

A ruthless rebel is my yearning

My eyes are not like doors  
to just close and sleep.

A ruthless rebel is my yearning.

It desperately keeps fighting with my past.

I close my eyes to welcome sleep,  
yet unconsciously

the pale face of the moon

and that of my mother's

in the agony of her death,

walk the alleys of my memory.

Slowly. In silence. Keeping me awake.

## A Cherry Tree

Spring.

The yearning and the birds are those  
which showed me the path to my hometown.

The old house where I was born  
is still here as an ancient oath.

My mother is dead.

My father has gone to live in the city.

The cherry tree in the yard has grown old  
due to loneliness.

My childhood's soul  
has missed me deeply  
and as revenge for my absence  
has broken  
with its fists

the windows of the house.

A branch of blossoming flowers  
of this cherry tree  
starts to tell me a story  
from my youth.

The story is about my father being upset  
whenever I used to take flowers from the tree:  
'Flowers are dreams of trees.

They are the only children that trees have.  
Breaking flowers from trees  
is the same as if you steal  
a child from a mother, '  
my father used to say.  
I stand before the front door of the house  
gazing at the cherry tree,  
speechless, and motionless.  
My soul and body are bound  
by my childhood-memories' chains.  
My eyes are wet.  
I do not understand,  
if I am crying or if it is raining.

## Freedom

I was a small child  
when a bird flew into our house –  
I caught it.  
It was tweeting and tweeting  
trying to flee.  
'Free it', my grandfather said.  
'No', I replied, 'it is singing.  
Let's keep it in a cage'.  
'It is crying', he said.  
Birds sing only in the forest;  
in the cage they just cry.  
He opened the window.  
I let the bird go.

Wet paint

3: 40 PM

A man got some paint, a brush,  
and he painted the doors of the pub.  
He got a "Wet paint" sign,  
stapled it to the pub's door,  
and left.

10: 40 PM

There are dozens of ladies  
entering carelessly through the doors of the pub.  
Their faces are wet painted also,  
though no 'Wet paint' signs appear on them.

1: 40 AM

The paint on the pub's doors dried out,  
while that on the ladies faces vanished.  
Having my last drink, I wonder  
how the 'Wet paint' signs  
and the beauty of face-painted ladies  
are just for temporary use.

## Grandfather and Child

When the day took me for a walk towards the twilight,  
I saw my son sowing a kiss on a young lady's lips.  
I felt old.

As if by magic, a grandfather grew within me.  
After two minutes walk, my mother phoned,  
'How are you my son', she asked;  
and I felt young again, like a child.

My homeland

My homeland,  
You and I  
although faraway from each other  
have the same pain,  
the same dream,  
the same destiny,  
because the distance between us  
doesn't measure in miles  
but with love.

## The death of the book

In the beginning was the Word,  
and the Word was with God,  
and the Word was God,  
John the Apostle had said.

But, then, the book appeared  
and the word was with us  
and the word was Us.

... And after that  
a disease of greed emerged  
and the book became bazaar  
and the word became crooked.  
Now my soul feels pain  
while watching the death of the book.

## The Snow

Lately, my home  
is missing me deeply.  
I received many greetings from it  
by the wind's post.  
I saw it in a dream last night  
dressed as a bride.  
'Bride's veil in your dreams  
foretells snow',  
my grandmother use to say.  
In the morning,  
my father phoned.  
'Much snow has fallen  
in our area', he said.  
Though very far from there  
I started to feel cold.

## Celebration

The past is memory,  
dream is the future.  
Only our imagination  
can travel to their lawns.  
So, there is only the present  
where the body, feelings and dreams  
can enjoy each other's worship.  
Thus, to live means to celebrate  
every moment, which the present gives us.

Coffinless

Once, the father had planted a tree.

The son told a coffin maker to cut it  
to make a coffin for his father,  
without planting any tree before  
to replace it.  
He is unaware that,  
his funeral is going to be  
coffinless,  
and, maybe the funeral of his nephew  
peopleless too.

The symphony of the eyes

The symphony of the forest  
with sounds of leaves and birds' songs,  
the symphony of the river flowing,  
and that of the wind blowing  
all through the snowy winters amaze me.

But the most splendid  
and stunning symphony  
is the symphony of the smiling eyes,  
of my baby daughter.

Mothers are immortal

Mothers are immortal.

Their wishes for us become flowers  
we meet with them every spring.

Their love for us becomes sun  
we gather with them every summer.

Their worries for us become rain  
we convene with them every autumn.

Their dreams for us become snow  
we rally with them every winter.

Mothers are immortal.

## Poets

This world is fucked up.

Up there the rich,  
acting.

Down here the poor  
suffering.

Poets in the middle  
trying to fix this mayhem  
with their verses,  
while at one another's throats.

## Running around the sun

I run toward the day.  
The night runs towards me.  
To remain fit  
together we keep running  
around the sun,  
until I'll become tired  
and lay off for a long sleep.

Looking at some grey clouds

From one hill to another extended  
some gray clouds like clothes hanging on wire.

They hide the sun in their pockets and sleeves  
making the day feel sad and depressed.

The birds with their beaks are pecking at them  
in search of illumination and unfettered horizons  
Their love for light and for the clean blue-sky,  
has earned them wings and blessed their flight.

I don't like birthday celebrations

I don't like birthday celebrations.  
Many people, clutter, lighting candles  
Just like a funeral.  
This day indeed marks  
just another step closer to our death..  
What are these mysterious forces  
pushing us to celebrate  
the approach of our death  
which doubtless it will come,  
even without a party?

## Autumn

Leaves are dying  
on the wind's arms.  
Clouds are crying  
and mourning for them.  
The sadness of their death  
is making the days fall early  
and the sun sleep longer  
into night's bed.

It is growing light

The sun like inquisitive child  
raises its head to observe;  
in the beginning the tops of mountains  
then tablelands, plateaus ...  
and after that, fields, houses, rivers,  
people's faces ....

Its shined gaze  
wakes up the day  
like a impish child wakes up  
a sleeping mom...

Ii is growing light

## Two cemeteries

I have two cemeteries  
within my house.

One on the ground floor,  
in a very small room,  
under the stairs,  
where my shoes,  
sole wounded from their run  
through many rough roads  
rest in peace.

The other one is in the attic  
where dozens of my notebooks,

badly face scratched  
with my handwritings are buried.

I know nothing about where  
this mysterious power comes from,  
yet it ties me so close  
with these dead things  
and thoughts.

However, on the first floor I sleep,  
and the cemetery under the stairs  
is my feather-bed,  
and that in the attic  
is my eider-down.

Ndrek Gjini

# The Death Of The Book

The Death of the Book

In the beginning there was the Word,  
and the Word was with God,  
and the Word was God,  
said John the Apostle.  
But, then, the Book appeared  
and the word was with us  
and the word was us.  
And after that  
a disease of greed emerged;  
the Book was haggled and bartered away  
and the Word became crooked.  
Now my soul feels pain  
as I watch the death of the book.

Ndrek Gjini

# The Field And I

The field and I

The field and I cut our hair  
last afternoon.

We had a shower by rain  
last night.

Today, the field was awakened  
by the kiss of a rainbow—  
Me, by my mother's  
phone-call.

Ndrek Gjini

# The Most Beautiful Lady

Whenever I look in the mirror  
before leaving for work,  
I remember my mother.

Her concept of beauty was wider than entire world.  
'Be beautiful in your soul and your body  
in your life and in your death', she used to say.

And this was our strictest rule. Unbreakable one  
as there was just one key in our house.  
This key was neither for the front door  
nor for any money safe.  
It was the key to a small shelf,  
where my mother kept her wedding clothes.

I remember her  
opening that small shelf every week,  
cleaning those clothes,  
putting quinces on them for a good smell,  
talking with them as if they were her friends.

No one can remember since it was said  
that brides' clothes from their wedding day  
should be preserved to be worn  
in their day of death.

I do not know how many centuries  
had travelled this feeling, this lesson  
until it comes to my childhood's home.

However when my mother died,  
we dressed her on those clothes.  
With no doubt, she looked  
the most beautiful lady in world.

Ndrek Gjini

# The Rain

The rain

And the rain came,  
no one can remember when.  
Here, with us,  
in us,  
no one knows how long it's going to stay.  
Making our nights starless,  
our days gray,  
and us into walk-swimming fish,  
through this soggy space which is rotting  
everything.

Ndrek Gjini

# The Smell Of My Thoughts

The Smell of My Thoughts

My thoughts wear the smell of sunlight  
every time it rains.  
They wear rain's smell  
whenever the sun shines.  
They wear the ice's smell  
whenever it's hot,  
and warmth's smell they wear  
during the days with frost.  
The smell of flowers they wear in winter  
in the summer they wear snow's smell.  
My thoughts are the only things that keep  
my world and me in balance.  
Without them I would fall down  
like a rotten tree.

Ndrek Gjini

# The Train Of My Life

The Train of My Life

It departed at 8: 32PM on October 1st 1963  
from a maternity hospital  
in a small town in North Albania,  
stopped at a crèche to collect some cries,  
toys, ink spilled on shirts and trousers,  
a broken pencil.

Other stops included  
dull classes with mountains of books,  
copies, fights, loves, hates, mistakes,  
first kisses, white dust from the chalk,  
lost shoes on football pitches.

Then it stopped again  
at different workplaces  
where the head was not needed at all, just the arms,  
because the bosses were the ones  
who were always right.

This train passed through many  
strange countries and cities,  
regretful, unable to enjoy  
the thrills and luxury that those places held.

During a long stop on a rainy island,  
everything—feelings, memories, the body—  
began to rust away beneath an endless rainfall.

The train will move on soon,  
scheduled to arrive at? ? : ? ? ,  
on an uncertain day of an uncertain month  
during the 21st century,  
but I hope not soon,  
at a not decided yet graveyard.

Ndrek Gjini

# Unfair World

Unfair World

A man and a tree died yesterday.  
The man was killed by the tree  
when a wild wind knocked it down.

Evening News:

Millions of people heard  
about the death of this man.  
Not a word was mentioned  
about the death of the tree  
or the millions of trees being killed by men.

Ndrek Gjini

# War Against Doubt

War Against Doubt

Every time we believe, we extend our lives a little bit.  
Whenever we doubt, gravewards we go.  
In this, belief/disbelief time-game  
Old Age waits at our door,  
while Death lies like a fox in ambush,  
ready to lead us to the grave's gate.

Not in vain an old man said:  
"Do not open the door to doubt  
in order that Death you may keep out."

Ndrek Gjini

# Why I Write

Why i write

My little town  
is a world in its own,  
set apart from the wider world.

It is a town with no heroes,  
but a town that never fell in love with fear.

The extent of its history is limited to  
two or three poets,  
an architect,  
three blacksmiths,  
and six stone-carvers.

I am a carved, walking pebble  
of this heroless town,  
not strong enough to fight—  
that's why I write.

Ndrek Gjini

# Wires

Wires

I was fourteen  
when our literature teacher said:  
'For today's homework  
you have to write a poem about your arms'.  
The next day I stood up before the class and recited:  
'My arms are like very, very long wires  
with which I can embrace the whole world.'  
The teacher said: 'Very good, great metaphor'.  
He died peacefully  
just a few years before the Wireless Era.  
Lucky for him, he escaped the struggle  
of all these wireless things,  
even wireless loves.  
Meanwhile, I mourn for the death of my first great metaphor.

Ndrek Gjini

# Zero

I was with her. Together  
we harvested the joy of life.  
I do not know if it was Satan or God  
that planted the thorn of hate in her soul.  
However, when it became dark she left.  
She locked herself into her dark house.  
She rang.  
'Very quiet here, '  
she said, 'only me and solitude.'  
I replied, 'You are one, the solitude is zero,  
so tell me what result will you get  
when you multiply yourself with solitude.'

While answering her I was lightening the night,  
and my head too, with some drinks,  
celebrating with five of my friends.

Ndrek Gjini