

Text Publication

Qazim Shemaj's "Veronica's Dream": A Contemporary Albanian Fairytale

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“There is a proverb both in Montenegro and in North Albania: ‘Every herb has its disease; every disease has its herb.’” [Durham 1923: 131].

Introduction: A Brief Overview of the Socio-Political Factors Contributing to the Development of Contemporary Albanian Literature

Until 1991 Albania had long been the most rigidly controlled and impenetrable country in Europe. Ruled by the Stalinist leader Enver Hoxha for over forty years, Albania eventually turned away from her Communist allies, the Soviet Union and finally even China, preferring to go it alone. It is not surprising, therefore, that little was known about Albania outside of her borders. Communist Hoxha's death in 1985 and the fall of communism throughout south central Europe led to widespread changes within Albanian society. In 1991 the Albanian government began to seek closer ties with the West in order to improve economic conditions, and initial democratic reforms including multi-party elections were introduced. In 1992, following the sweeping electoral victory of the Democratic Party, Sali Berisha became the first democratically elected President of Albania. Berisha began a deliberate program of democratic reform and launched an ambitious economic reform program meant to transform the country's centrally planned economy into a market economy. His comprehensive package of structural reforms included privatization, enterprise and financial sector reform, and the creation of a legal framework for a market economy. It was during this time that Albanian writers and intellectuals experienced a period of relief, joy and apprehension [Elsie 2005a: 4]. But freedom came with a great price. As Robert Elsie writes, “as the country's socialist economy collapsed like a little matchstick house, so too did the modest institutions of Albanian culture: the state publishing companies, the Writer's Union and the national theaters. Funding for libraries,

concert halls, theaters and higher education vanished overnight" [Elsie 2005a: 4]. Throughout the 1990s private printing houses were set up and a new type of Albanian literature was being published. The days of state control and censorship of publishing were finally over; anyone with funds or a sponsor could publish virtually anything.

Commenting on the current situation of Albanian literature, Elsie writes, "Never in Albanian history have there been so many books on the market and never has so much Albanian literature, prose, poetry and other genres, been produced and published. Never has freedom of thought and creativity reigned throughout the Albanian world as it does today. And yet, it is often said that Albanian literature still finds itself in an age of profound crisis, of loss of identity and of disintegration" [Elsie 2005a: 4]. In my view, the situation is not so bleak, as contemporary Albanian writers such as Ismail Kadare force the world to take notice of their homeland, a country that has endured geographical, cultural, political and ideological isolation throughout its vast history.(1) Justifiably Albania's best known author, Kadare, who currently lives in France, began his literary career in Albania as a poet. His current reputation in Albania and on the international scene rests almost entirely upon the strength of his prose works. Kadare has been nominated several times for the Nobel Prize for Literature and in June 2005 was named the winner of the Man Booker International Prize. He has also recently published two twelve volume editions of his collected works, one in English, the other in French. Like Kadare, other contemporary Albanian authors (such as Dritëro Agolli, Fatos Kongoli, Luan Starova and Qazim Shemaj) have recently moved away from writing poetry in favor of prose.(2) "Verse collections, until very recently," writes Elsie, "accounted for over fifty percent of literary output in all the major centers of Albanian-language publishing: Tirana, Prishtina, Skopje, Shkodra and Tetova." [Elsie 2005b: 9]. Modern Albanian literature is for the first time in many decades free to develop in its own unique way.

Deeply rooted in Albanian's beliefs in medicinal herbs and their folk uses, Qazim Shemaj's "Veronica's Dream," a contemporary Albanian literary fairytale, is one of the many works of literature now flowing from the once isolated landscape of Albania. Shemaj's beautifully crafted tale is a fine example of what Elsie calls "the tender plant of Albanian literature, whose stalks and roots have been torn out of the sparse soil so often over the course of history, [but is now] blossoming anew" [Elsie 2005c: 14].

Qazim Shemaj was born on March 5, 1950 in the village of Qesarat in the Tepelena Region of Albania. He graduated from the Eqrem Çabej Pedagogy Institute with an undergraduate degree in Languages and Literatures and received a post graduate degree in Literary Criticism from the same institution. He worked first as a school teacher and then as an adjunct instructor at Eqrem Çabej University. Since 1986 he has been employed as the editor of the literary journal *Hosteni* and editor of *Drita*, the official newspaper of the Writer's Union. Shemaj is the founder and editor of the literary journal *Mjellma* (the Swan) and *Kacamici* (Tom Thumb), a magazine for children. In 2002 he founded *Ag*, a literary encyclopedic journal for children. He is also a frequent contributor to the journal *Cicërima* (Chirp). Shemaj has published numerous books of poetry including: "Who Taught Me the Song" and "Our Troubled Night" and has recently published a children's book entitled "Brides and Waterfalls". He has recently submitted "Veronica's Dream," a contemporary Albanian literary fairytale, to the Albanian publishing house *Mësonjtorja*. Shemaj summarizes the tale as follows: the characters, all beautiful medicinal flowers, experience joy, friendship, get married, fight and love each other and with their superior knowledge of medicine, decide to build a great health center together.

Shemaj began writing tales in the early nineties, a time he asserts "when with the opening of wounds all else was opened—including his own instincts from childhood." With a gleam in his eye he reminisces about the special magic fairytales held for him, and why he decided to write tales— "when people get old, they look for magic," he asserts, and then recalls a well known Albanian saying, "The one who doesn't have knees flies with fantasy." Shemaj's tales are created for the "sons and daughters of Albania;" as he believes that it is only through the "next generations that Albania will have a chance to change for the better." While remaining cautiously optimistic about Albania's future (he remarks that the crossing of such a vital nation with the larger world culture will bring forth positive results for Albania), Shemaj's "Veronica's Dream" is in fact both a plea for an end to the current corruption in Albania's medical system and a tribute to Mother Nature's unique ability to cure a vast number of diseases. Specifically, Shemaj harnesses folk botany and native plants in this work to show the value of turning to Mother Nature for healing. Hinting in an interview that current medical degrees can be "purchased" and that doctors are no longer necessarily well trained, Shemaj reveals his underlying theme of anti-corruption and the pureness and superiority of Mother Nature's cures.

Shemaj's remark that, "In my tale all the doctors (flowers) have earned their diplomas from Mother Nature, they aren't fake as in present-day Albania," reflects the idea that the best, most inexpensive cures for ailing health can be found only in nature. Likewise, the message of Shemaj's tale, "The world can be saved from ugliness and horrific diseases only by following the example of beauty," is a reflection of Shemaj's belief that only by turning to the simple, yet beautiful plants in nature can one truly be saved (cured).

I began this introduction with an epigraph penned by anthropologist Edith Durham that best summarizes the Albanian belief in medicinal herbs and their folk uses. Herbs are commonly used throughout Albania for medicinal purposes, in the preparation of food and even decoratively. As will become apparent in the notes to the following translation of "Veronica's Dream," there is a remarkably close connection between the characteristics of the flowers/herbs that are used to treat various afflictions and the symptoms of the ailment that the plant is said to cure. It is appropriate in Shemaj's text, therefore, that the thorny red raspberry which in Albanian folk belief is able to cure boils and help heal skin abscesses caused by thorns, is the winner of the "Miss Elegance" award at the flower festival [Pieroni, Quave 2005: 265]. For a discussion of the relationship of plant appearance to herbal usage among the Slavs see Valeria Kolosova, "Name – Text – Ritual: The Role of Plant Characteristics in Slavic Folk Medicine," published in the Fall 2005 issue of *Folklorica*. The notes that follow my translation of "Veronica's Dream" focus on Albanian herbal beliefs and the folk medicinal aspects of each of the herbs/flowers mentioned in the text. As the sources for Albanian folk botany are somewhat incomplete, at times confirmation of the plants' usage had to be obtained from sources for the Balkan/Mediterranean region. In addition, the sources that relate to Albanian communities in Italy (Pieroni's research) are also somewhat problematical, given that the Arberesh (Albanians in Italy) might not always have the same beliefs as Albanians in the Balkans. However, sources relating to Albania proper confirm that, for the most part, the Arberesh do in fact share similar folk botany beliefs with Albanians in the Balkans.

*Veronica's Dream(3)*Aguliçja(4)

An April morning, the mist is dripping with a rainbow in its midst; it is a little chilly. Frail Aguliçja is dressed in green clothes with a little fuzz; over her head is an umbrella with yellow flowers. She flutters her eyelashes, fluffs up her wheat shaft and looks around. There is silence everywhere.

“Ah,” little Aguliçja sighs sadly, “no other flower is awake! With whom am I going to play?”

She heard a voice, “Good Morning, little Aguliçja!”

“Good Morning!” she answered, startled, and turned her head to where the voice was coming from, but she didn't see anything. In the open pasture there were no people, animals, or flowers, only the recently blooming grass.

“Nobody is talking to me, maybe my ears are playing tricks on me?” Aguliçja murmured to herself.

“Good morning, good morning, little Aguliçja, it's me,” said Gishto(5) from behind a small bush.

Aguliçja's face lit up as she longingly bent to embrace Gishto.

“Welcome, Gishto! I am very happy to see you. I had nobody to play with. You arrived just in time.”

“Yes, little Aguliçe I couldn't wait to see you, but I can't stay for too long. I'd like to catch up with you and then head off because I am tired and my head is a little achy.”

“Why my good Gishto, you're crazy, have you stayed up all night again, have you ...?”

“Ah, no, this time I have waited all night and day for you and Violet to blossom. You are the first young women and brides of the spring. Without you forests, meadows and pastures seem poor and gloomy, the air lacks that pleasant smell, and the birds and bees disappear when you fall asleep.”

“Thank you dear Gishto, but wait, I'd like to serve you some tea, because it is good for you. You know that my tea soothes not only headaches, and dizziness, but also inflammation of the kidneys and rheumatism. Also, you seem to have a cold. Drink some tea.”

“Well now, happy Spring little Aguliçe! I am very happy to see you like this, on cloud nine, beautiful, and pure like gold. May your hands be blessed; what pleasant tea!(6) Your tea has the aroma of your soul.”

“Don't indulge me too much; I know you're also joking.”

"It's from my heart, Aguliçe."

"Drink your tea then, it's good for you."

"I was only a little tired, I don't have any health problems. I can't stay longer, because I need to go see what those sleepyheads, the other flowers, are doing; why aren't those lazy ones awake... - Goodbye, Aguliçe!"

"See you later, Gishto."

Veronica's Dream(7)

Miss Speedwell, also known by the names Medical Veronica and Forget-me-not, was sleeping very soundly and did not intend to wake up with those first flowers--the blue ones or the rosy white ones--until the beginning of June.

In fact she slept, while many of her friends were blossoming and flowering, but, as she would later relate, she was having a very, very beautiful dream about a great white palace. In the main entrance she would sometimes see a red cross and sometimes a red half moon.(8) Suddenly she found herself inside the palace and surprisingly she started to serve as a nurse in the emergency room, then in the gynecology department where she met Goldhair Santolina or Valentina as they call her in Tirana.(9) Valentina was wearing a white shirt and a white hood, under which light was radiated by her golden hair, so thick that the hood couldn't hold it. Oh God, how beautiful doctor Valentina was, how courteous and affectionate with the diseased! Somewhere, Shepherd's Purse(10) was advising a young girl, while Periwinkle(11) was running with a syringe in her hand to quickly help somebody with high blood pressure... What was this dream!? Was it perhaps Miss Veronica's premonition?!

At Violet's(12)

As soon as he left Aguliçja, Gishto started to hum a familiar song:

You flowers, how many flowers / which is the first in line /
the first is Aguliçja / the second is Violet / then the Rose
and others...

"Oooh, I smell Violet. Violet, you beautiful one, whom are you shying away from, hiding like this among the bushes and fences?"

Violet was dressed in a bluish-purple suit, with bubbles made of mist and light. She exuded a scent that could revive one's soul. Not only this, if you drink the liquid (juice) from her leaves and flowers you will never have a headache. Her tea also serves as a remedy against coughs,

abscesses and epilepsy. It cleanses the blood and kidneys of sand and stones. But Gishto did not have time for tea. He was there only to remind Violet that the time for the dance of the flowers was approaching.

“Sweet Violet,” he coddled her, “tell me where to go and whom to notify first about the festival of flowers?...”

Violet gazed with those beautiful eyes of hers and replied: “I don’t know what to say. There are many beautiful and sweet-smelling flowers, all perfect dancers in the spring breeze. You’ll be very tired, little Gishto. Nevertheless, for now notify Lily of the Valley,(13) Clean Nepeta,(14) Periwinkle, or Bedi as they fondly call her, Nigella of Damascus,(15) Pomegranate Flower(16) and ... I don’t know, do you know these flowers well?”

“Lily of the Valley is frail, clean and amicable like a teardrop. She is, as they say, a remedy for the heart and does not let you forget her; she is the enemy of memory loss (forgetfulness). In the months of April and May she dresses in bridal white and smells very pleasant. You can find her in Thethi Valley, Tropoja, Luma,(17) on Dajti Mountain(18) and sometimes in other places.”

“In the months of May and July Nepeta dresses in white, sometimes in pink. You cannot find her everywhere. You find her rarely in Tropoja, Kukës,(19) Tepelena.(20) In other places, it’s very hard...”

“Almost all year long, except for during the months of May and June, Bedi is dressed in green. From March to June she is covered in light blue flowers and has made her home in the region from the Mediterranean bushes up to the oaks. If you are tired from the trip and get thirsty, she will serve you a juice that satisfies your thirst. Her juice reduces the amount of sugar in urine and lowers high blood pressure.”

“Nigella has the aroma of a strawberry. From May to June she dresses in blue and green or dark violet and is distinguished among pastures and shrub lands.”

“If you need Nigella perfume, you can ask her for it. I believe you know the Pomegranate Flower. And you would recognize the taste of her fruits.”

“Don’t get weary, Violet my dear,” interrupted Gishto, who had been listening attentively so far, “I know the flowers well. I am leaving right away.”

With Churchsteeple Agrimony(21)

Within three days Gishto notified more than half of the flowers. All of a sudden, upon his return, he saw Churchsteeple Agrimony. She was

wearing a long green thick pleated dress down to her toenails. On her head was a yellow cloth as she had not finished the housework yet, that is the mopping and sweeping.

"Where have you been Gishto, we haven't seen you at all?! Where are you coming from and where are you going?" Agrimony spoke with her piercing voice.

Gishto was short: "I needed to alert some flowers about the upcoming festival."

But Churchsteeple didn't give up: "Did you forget me? Do you mean to tell me that you couldn't meet me, that you couldn't find me?! I'm everywhere - in Kukës, Peshkopi, Krujë, Tiranë, Durrës, Elbasan, most often you can see me in "Kulla e Lumës"(22) where we have our headquarters. Tell me what's in this festival. Only dancing? Don't you think I have the body of a dancer? Look how lean I am, look at my thin waist. I'm wearing a puffy dress just perfect for dancing, and this yellow head kerchief... Have you not heard the song, 'Here goes the yellow kerchief'? It is dedicated to me. But you, Gishto, are not taking me into account." Churchsteeple was talking and grabbing at him; she was not going away. From time to time Gishto sighed from irritation.

"What's wrong Gishto, did I upset you? Or is it that you are sick? Why are you crouching like that? Are your kidneys hurting? You look pale. No, tell me. I can cure your diarrhea, kidney and gallbladder, as well as your jaundice. Ah, I wish there were a skill contest at the festival of flowers!"

"Say something Gishto, or are you afraid that you'll lose your voice? I can cure you, even if you have inflammation of the tonsils or a sore throat. Don't try to spare me, Gishto!" and Churchsteeple put her arm around him. Gishto hunched down even further. "Oh, you don't know this Gishto; a few days ago a well known singer who was suffering from a sore throat came to me. I had him do some gargling and immediately he got his voice back. A Nightingale voice, as they say.(23) So do not be afraid to talk at length here. You can even sing the whole day and night and still your throat will be as clear as amber."

"You'll have to excuse me my dear Agrimony," said Gishto, "it is getting dark and I need to go. We can talk about the festival another time."

"No, no, today you'll stay for dinner at my place!" insisted Churchsteeple. Holding on to Gishto's buttons, she wouldn't let him go. Gishto politely removed her hands from the buttons of his vest and promised that he would come back within a week.

“I barely escaped the Churchsteeples’ claws,” he said to himself leaving. “She is really hospitable, but hard to get rid of.”

Maidenhair of the Springs(24)

Next to a silver spring, on a lime stone, slender Adonis or Maidenhair of the Springs, son of the eminent family of Ferns, was sitting and thinking. He noticed as Gishto turned to drink some spring water and greeted him kindly.

Gishto told him that around the middle of the month of May, when most of the flowers have bloomed, they will have a festival and Maidenhair should go there because they were thinking to appoint him as part of the judging committee.

“Thank you, Gishto.”

“Good night young man!”, said Gishto smiling as he disappeared into the dark.

As is understood from his first and last names, one can find Maidenhair of the Springs near water, springs and fountains. Besides the ability to prepare cough and cold syrups for children, he has another quality, he likes beauty very much, and therefore meditates near springs where beautiful flowers like brides gather, bath and play in the evenings. Probably because he can recognize beauty, they thought to elect him to the Misses competition committee.

They say that for a time Maidenhair was seeing Malva, Mallow of the Forest,(25) but she couldn’t stay by the water springs all the time, so they split up. Now he is looking for another beauty. Rumor has it that he has his eye on the flower Shepherd’s Purse. Some say he’s interested because she has a purse full of gold, some say its because she is beautiful, others say its because she is very capable of curing hemorrhages.

The Fairytale of Aunty Burnet(26)

Even though it was a short spring night and it was late, Aunty Burnet was reciting a fairytale to Pyrethrum,(27) Bird's-foot Trefoil(28) and Lungwort.(29)

Once upon a time there was a witch dragon.(30) You know, the dragon is our greatest enemy. She burns and dries up the flowers because she is mean-spirited, hideous and cannot stand beauty. She does not like flowers that are admired and sung about by people.

The things that this witch dragon had done! What a big mess she had created! Poppy Flower heard about her deeds.(31) The frail and

beautiful Poppy had heard about those brave men who had cut the witch dragon's head and decided follow their example. She went to fight the witch dragon. But the witch dragon being a witch dragon defeated the poor thing. If you could have seen the Poppy - all in blood. Poppy has two sisters: Iris(32) and Valerian.(33) Valerian has the ability to put people to sleep. After she soothed her wounded sister, she put on servant's clothes and went to the witch dragon, pretending to look for a job, because she didn't have any parents and had no other means to support herself.

The witch dragon ordered Valerian to bring her a glass of water to see how good a servant the little Miss was. Valerian secretly mixed in her medicine in the glass and the witch dragon fell dead asleep. As the witch dragon slept Valerian ran to call Iris. Iris arrived in a hurry, just in time to cut the witch dragon's head.

"That is why Poppy, Valerian and Iris are called the 'three sisters of life,'" Aunty Burnet explained. "They saved us from the witch dragon."

Fairytales in your ear, health wishes from us.(34)

The Black Widow

By the beginning of May Gishto had notified all of the flowers about the festival. In order to complete this task, he got help from the butterfly Machaon Swallowtail(35) especially on the long trips: from Pashtrik in Kosova, to Qelqëz in Frashër, from Tomorri and Korabi in Theth and Lurë, from the Sharri mountains to the mountains of Bozhur in Çamëria, from the Valbona in Kallama.(36) With Swallowtail Gishto made many visits and delivered many invitations, but out of the blue there was an unfortunate incident that almost took Swallowtail's life.

As soon as she landed on the wings of the slim Red Raspberry,(37) a spider web thread trembled. The spider, as soon as she got the signal, attacked and wounded Swallowtail gravely. She was one of those dangerous spiders called the Black Widow, because of their dark deeds; they even tear their husbands in pieces. Missy [Swallowtail] was lucky to escape.

Miss Swallowtail Orders Drugs

Machaon, who gives his last name to this creature with "painted wings" (Swallowtail), was grandson of Apollo, the god of light, poetry and music. The swan, eagle, wolf, snake, bay tree, and olive tree are dedicated to Apollo ... Machaon was the son of Asclepius, god of health.

How could the Swallowtail not be like her predecessors?!

Gishto was devastated; he thought that he had lost his precious friend of divine blood, when he took her to the medical center of the Foxglove brothers (also known as Finger Flowers).(38) But she, being a Machaon and a great-granddaughter of Apollo, did not give up.

“Go ahead, Gishto,” she said, “look for these drugs in pharmacies. Look for insect bite medicine at Dr. Parsley’s(39) and Houseleek’s.(40) The venom of the Black Widow could even surpass that of the venom of a snake, therefore you should look for medicine at lady Kingela’s;(41) she is also known as Vuzhë, Shpëndër, Beshtë... Get some medicine to prevent hemorrhaging at St-John’s-wort.(42) At Comfrey,(43) Violet and Nepeta get anti-venom medicine, at Drug Fumitory (44) ask for medicines to stimulate heart beat and appetite, while at Lungwort you can find medicine to regenerate lost tissue. Also go to Blackberry’s Pharmacy;(45) her medicine helps slow healing wounds.”

Gishto immediately complied with her requests and his Swallowtail friend felt much better within three days. Nevertheless she had to relax a few more days at the medical center of Gishto’s friends.

The Foxglove Brothers

The foxglove brothers, or “Finger Flower”, as we like to call them from now on, look very much alike. They have a straight pilose body. Grecian Foxglove and Yellow Foxglove grow their body to one meter, as if they are cut to that height. Rusty Foxglove grows to one meter twenty centimeters. Even their tastes and aspirations are more or less similar. All five of them are dedicated to the treatment of heart disease. In the Summer they wear each other’s tones.

The Grecian Foxglove differs a little from the others in taste; He wears a grayish white shirt with bell shaped flowers and reddish or purple dots and lines.

Yellow and Rusty Foxglove wear shirts with yellow and yellow-to-rusty flowers. Until June, before his flowers come out, the Purpler (Purple Foxglove) wears a suit with bluish gray or grayish green leaves. In the months of June and July he wears a reddish purple shirt. That is why his brothers call him the Purpler. We must also add that he is a blazing adorer of Miss Veronica.

The brothers took great care to give Miss Swallowtail everything she needed because they were close friends of Gishto’s. Gishto says that they are his steadfast friends, in good and in bad times, now and forever.

One can find Rusty in Valbona Valley, Korabi field,(46) Mirdita, Polis Mountains, Guri i Topit and Vora; Grecian Foxglove is found from

the lowlands of the coast to the beech region: in Maja e Hekurave, Middle Albania, Libohova, Mursi, etc.; Yellow Foxglove is in Luma, Qukës, Bërzheta Mountain, Valley of Upper Devolli, Maranaj, Prekël of Shkodra, Vermosh, etc; Purpler lives mainly in the sparse mountain and shrub forests, in the sun covered plains and hills; only Straw Foxglove, as a capital city resident, doesn't go further than the Tirana meadows, but there he serves you with no hesitation or laziness.

Gishto in the Bumble-Bee's Trap

As soon as Swallowtail's health improved (in three days as we already mentioned), Gishto started working on his last few announcements for the festival. As he was hurrying to get some help from a worker bee, he fell in a wasp's nest and got wounded pretty badly by an angry bumble-bee. Gishto had never made a mistake like this, but here you go ... He barely escaped using a trick -- He pushed a beetle that happened to be close by in front of the bumble-bee and hid behind the Purpler. Lucky for him... once again he found himself in his friends' hands.

The Washerwomen

Just as people communicate with words, flowers communicate with aromas. The word all over the place was that the Purple Willow(47) had hooked up with Traveler's Joy(48) and they were on the verge of getting married.

Gishto and Miss Swallowtail were strolling along the stream. Over there, dressed in white, yellow and green they saw Churchsteeple Agrimony, Soapwort,(49) Stork's-Bill,(50) Winter Savory,(51) Auntie Burnet, little Lawn Daisy,(52) white Wild Strawberry,(53) Bird's-foot Trefoil, Chicory,(54) Purple Deadnettle(55) and Bugloss(56) who were bathing themselves in preparation for the wedding.

The sweet breeze that was blowing that morning was ruffling their thin dresses. Their whispers were mixed with the rustling of the water and were very much muffled. Meanwhile Stork's-Bill, started to sing jokingly:

Flow silver water!

Where is the bride, where is the groom ...

Bugloss, who could not wait to vent, responded:

Among friends

They say many words:

“The groom is a dark man,
The bride is as white as an eel”

“They are right to say our groom is like a gipsy; you find him along steams and rivers , with gypsies making baskets,” joked Stork’s-Bill.

“Leave others alone in their business, why are you gossiping?” grouched Aunty Burnet.

“It’s not fun unless you can gossip about the couple, Aunty Burnet, what are you talking about?” Soapwort said. “Washing and rinsing, that’s all we do. They will love each other more this way.”

“And she knows how to twirl!” Chicory replied and started to sing:
As white as the milk,
twirling is your specialty.

“Ha – ha – ha!” laughed Churchsteeples Agrimony. “If somebody were near her she would jump in his arms and twirl like an adder.”

O silver thin thread,
something bad fell on you:

You jump on everybody’s arms...

“Look who’s talking!” replied the Purple Deadnettle,
“Churchsteeples that clings on you and becomes like a burr. If somebody else said it, maybe...”

“Mind your own business!” Aunty Burnet scolded them again.

“It is not tasteful to talk like this,” intervened Winter Savory.

The Stork’s-Bill who couldn’t stop pecking (talking), responded:

Who is throwing us from bank to bank...

Be careful of the Bumble-bee...

Little Lawn Daisy was listening in astonishment to the teasing and jokes of the older ones directed at the couple and at one another.

Smart Purple Deadnettle could not take it anymore and interrupted the gossipers:

“Whoever has the evil in himself,
Gossips back and forth.”

Meanwhile, somewhere near, the rustle of the Purple Willow’s arms was heard and the washerwomen fell silent.

The Hunchback [Black Henbane](57)

“He’s got it right, he minds his own business and does not mess with others,” said Swallowtail about the Hunchback.

“He even doesn’t let you come near him,” Gishto added, stirring the conversation...

The Old Man Hunchback, known in many places as Matërgona or Matërgora, is a bent old man, about one meter tall. He usually wears dark green clothes, full of buds. His arms and forearms are also navy green and pilose. He likes to live as a wild man in places that are uncultivated, abandoned, near ruins, like a loner, in the midst of bushes or in between oaks, where it is cool and on lime soil. No other places. He can catch your eye in the months of May, June and July. During these months, to protect himself from the sun, as many ancient old men do, he wears a yellow kerchief with navy stripes on his head. Then, slowly, like magic, he pulls some fruits in the shape of eggs, as big as a turtle, only not white, but yellowish green, as if they are full of poison out of his kerchief. If you touch them even slightly they pop in your hands and gray colored seeds burst in your face like pellets.

"People who waste their time," rants Old Man Hunchback, "don't let you work. And then, they want you to keep them alive with medication. But, it is not their fault, because I also cure fools and trembling creeps."

He doesn't want you to come near him, because he is busy at the lab, preparing vitamins A, C, essences, oils and substances that are not known yet.

The Hunchback has real hypnotic qualities. With his medications he can cure shivering, manic and asthmatic people, people that suffer from rheumatism etc., but be careful, ask an experienced physician, because, if the dosage is even a little over, that's it.

The old man magician is as capable as he is mysterious and a trouble maker.

A Nightingale Sings at the Door

The couple decided not to separate the bride's from groom's day; they would celebrate the wedding together, with guests and relatives from both sides.(58)

Apart from the relatives: Wild Strawberry of the gardens, White Willow,(59) Mr. English Ivy,(60) the Cornflower brothers,(61) Honeysuckle,(62) who would treat guests with sweet and good smelling drinks, the tailor that cut the outfits for the bride and groom, Mrs. Musk-scent Stork's Bill, Calamus,(63) the musician of the party, and the honorary guests: Mrs. Oleander,(64) Mrs. Myrtle (65) and Mrs. Bitter Orange,(66) in the beautiful evening of May 12th, under the light of the moon with a slight river breeze, the holy Patriarch brothers and the divine sons of the Nymph: The White Lily(67) and the Yellow Pond

Lily,(68) with its residence in the lakes of Shkodra and Prespa, as well as the lakes of Lura and Dumre arrived. And then, carrying royal gifts for the bride and groom, the Beautiful Centaury(69) of the Gentian family of the King of Illyrians Gent, the victor of the August fever, arrived.

It really was a wedding of royal and divine proportions. That night, many sweet songs, as only the flowers in the breeze know how to sing, were sung:

The groom's cousin, Purple Deadnettle, began to sing
 Your dress
 Buttercup-o-buttercup,
 Why weren't you made a sun
 To warm up the world
 Instead you were made a moon,
 To take my brother(70)

After a while, the Wild Strawberry, a cousin of Traveler's Joy, started singing:

A nightingale sings at the door,
 Listen to what it is saying:
 "Best wishes to the couple!"

Also Lily of the Valley sang a very beautiful song:

Hey you white cut-waste,
 Why are you so beautiful!
 Along the river banks,
 The little song of the dove flows.

On the wedding night, many aromatic drinks were poured: juices and wines from the red raspberry, bilberry,(71) strawberry, anis flower, and grapevine... a group from the wedding party became very tipsy.

The quarrel between Black Nightshade(72) and Bittersweet Nightshade(73)

A wedding is never without joy, singing and dancing, but it is also hard to get by without a squabble. Quarrels do not belong in the world of beautiful and aromatic flowers, but somehow they happen even there. The wedding planners did not pay enough attention; they put Black and Bittersweet Nightshade next to each other. They were probably thinking of the last name Sweet. Hog-wash, there is no sweet Bitter Nightshade. A Bitter Nightshade is a Bitter Nightshade. If he is black, it is even worse.

The Black Nightshade says to the Bittersweet: "I don't know why they call you Nightshade too. While I am so swift, straight bodied and well known in the Malësia e Madhe and Lugu i Rjollit,(74) you are a

bush that crawls in scrublands and near waters. You have become annoying in places from Bregu i Matit, Fushë-Kruja, Divjaka Forest to Velipoja and bottom of Shkëlzeni.(75) You old thing.”

“That’s right,” responds the Bittersweet, “and you, poor dwarf, cannot grow taller than sixteen centimeters, while I can grow up to two meters. As far as beauty goes, don’t forget, that you are also known as Dog’s Grapes, while I am known as Snake’s Coral. You can’t compare us: me a coral, a precious thing, while you are dog’s grapes. A snake represents bravery and agility. To whom do you belong to, tell me! The dog! He squashes you and then pees on you before he leaves. You are a miserable plant, while I am a bush. Have you heard how poets write about shrubs, about flowers that hide in the shrub’s armpits?”

“I have heard,” responded the Black Nightshade enraged, “but listen you bush-o-bush, you cannot even support your flowers for two months, from June to August, while my white flowers and my fruits that look like black diamonds give joy to people even into the Fall. No animal could mess with them, because it would be poisoned immediately. And I am so useful for people! In me they find medication for rheumatism, ulcer, tumors, swelling and burn wounds.”

“Live as much as you want, you are still a Dog-grape as long as you live,” interjected Bittersweet Nightshade. “Like I am less capable than you are? Don’t I also poison the animals who mess with me? And don’t brag about medications, because I have more than you. With my help, besides what you mentioned, others can be cured, people who suffer from bronchial problems, involuntary trembling and eczema etc.”

“You yourself are an eczema, scabies, creeping climber,” unleashed the Black Nightshade onto the Bittersweet one, wanting to whip him with his branches.

The affair would have been a lot worse if the holy Patriarch brothers had not interfered. It turned into a big mess. Also, Tansy(76) the mountaineer, who comes from mountain areas of Razmi and Oroshi, well known as a balsamic soother and determined fighter against the parasites; Goat’s Rue,(77) who knows how to reduce the amount of sugar in blood like insulin and increase the flow of milk in mothers; Houseleek, known everywhere by the names Thonja (Alb: Thonja) or Ear Drug (Alb: Bar Veshi) got between the Nightshades. Ear Drug was constantly saying to them “Listen, listen”, but they were turning a deaf ear. Only the critical look of beautiful Snowball Tree,(78) the one that beautifies the gardens of Tirana, Korça and Shkodra, made the two Nightshades, those pompous roosters, stop talking nonsense.

Three Days of the Flowers' Festival

Next to the Rainbow Waterfall, three days after the wedding, and the wedding guests had settled down, Nightingale Valley woke up more beautiful than ever. This was the place where all the beautiful flowers arrived from all over the country: Lily of the Valley, Yellow-hair Fenugreek,(79) darling Esmerina, as they call Rosemary(80) in Tirana, slim Red Raspberry that makes those red fruits like rubies, delicate and quiet Dandelion,(81) Clary,(82) Peony,(83) and Mallow of the Forest also known as Malva Sylvestris, aromatic Sage(84) and many, many others that cannot be counted.

The festival continued for three days and three nights under the sweet sounds of the nightingales, the fluttering of the butterflies, the twinkle of the fireflies and the buzz of the bees. There was a parade so big that “there was no place to drop an apple”; you couldn't tell the participants from the spectators.(85)

The evaluation committee, composed of different personalities with fine tastes and knowledge in the fields of esthetics, music, costumes, choreography and medicine, had difficulty determining the winners.

Thanks to the temperate spirit of the beautiful and good smelling flowers, there was no quarrel or jealousy. It was said that there was some interference by the Black Nightshade, but Dr. Celandine(86) cut him short. There was also some word that the Shepherd's Purse flower had paid somebody under the table, but this was not true. Nevertheless, the jury decided to give these prizes:

Miss Greatness went to Peony,

Miss Aroma went to Violet,

Miss Elegance went to Red Raspberry,

Miss Smile went to Agulicja, who is the first one to smile to the spring.

Also, three prizes were given for Miss Intelligence: to Dandelion, Esmerina and Shepherd's Purse flower.

While testing for intelligence, it was identified that the most beautiful and aromatic flowers also had the most profound knowledge in the field of medicine. On this occasion Dr. Celandine proposed that, over there, between the mountain and the sea, a big medical center providing all kinds of services be constructed.

The Health Citadel

Just as they spread their pleasant smell and provide the nectar for honey, the beautiful and good smelling flowers, straight forwardly,

without interference and violence, without malice and jealousy, taking into account only their values, elected the board of directors for the different wards: Doctor Anise(87) who is said to increase the flow of milk in mothers and therefore reduces breast pains, the Purple Willow, Gold-Hair Valentina, Nepeta and Shepherd's Purse would constitute the board of directors for the physicians in the gynecology ward.

Neurology would be directed by the team composed of these doctors: Rosemary Esmerina, Lily of the Valley, Wild Thyme(88) and Yellow Pond Lily.

Traveler's Joy would lead the ward of the skin diseases; Pediatrics – sisters Robert Geranium(89) and Bloody Geranium(90) as well as Peony and Chamomile.(91)

During the inauguration of the Hepatology ward in which the following doctors were to lead: Dr. Dandelion, Agrimony, Soapwort (in the infection section), and Horsetail(92) against cirrhosis, Dr. Dandelion, among other things, said: *"The world can be saved from ugliness and horrific diseases only by following the example of beauty"*.

At the Oncology Hospital they decided to put Dr. Celandine, famous for fighting tumors and Cuckoo Pint,(93) known for fighting nose and breast cancers in charge.

Other wards were also inaugurated at the Health Citadel:

Toxicology with Dr. Kingela and Dr. Parsley;

Cardiology with the Foxglove brothers, Dr. Hawthorn,(94) Dr. Magnolia(95) and Dr. Valerian;

Urology with Black Spleenwort(96) and Bearberry;(97)

Hematology with Centaury and Goat's Rue;

Laryngology with Bellflower(98) and Sage;

Gastrology with Dr. Ricini(99) and Thorny Cocklebur or "The White Eye";(100)

Stomatology with Marshmallow;(101)

Surgery with Anesthetic Asparagus,(102) Morphinic Black Bryony(103) and the Lumpy Bladder-cherry.(104)

The Birthing Center was going to be directed by Ergot(105) and St John's Wort.

In the Health Citadel, there is order and exemplary cleanliness, health care is free of charge, polite and dedicated, because none of the doctors received their diplomas unfairly; their degrees were granted, based on their unique abilities, by Mother Nature herself.

Sorry, I almost forgot the Emergency Room. Agulićja was appointed director. She was greatly moved by the decision of the board

of directors and cried because she only had fifteen days until her vacation started and she could rest, as she had been blooming since the beginning of spring.

“Don’t worry,” Rosemary said to her, “in fifteen days, at the beginning of June, Veronica can replace you.”

And that’s what happened. Waking up, Veronica started rubbing her eyes. Was this really a dream, or was it like a dream!?

“Goodbye for now, my sister flowers, until next April,” Aguliça replied, “even in my sleep I will not be able to push from my mind the wise words of Dr. Dandelion: *‘The world can be saved from ugliness and horrific diseases only by following the example of beauty.’*”

THE END

NOTES

1. Albania has traditionally been geographically isolated within its mountain ranges. Cultural isolation was most prevalent during the period of the occupation of the Ottoman Turks. She has just recently emerged from over forty-seven years of political and ideological isolation under Communist rule.
2. Other contemporary Albanian authors worth mentioning include: Musa Ramadani, Beqir Musliu, Zija Çela, Jusuf Buxhovi, Eqrem Basha, Sabri Hamiti, Ylljet Aliçka, Diana Çuli, Mehmet Kraja, Visar Zhiti, Zejnullah Rrahmani, Bashkim Shehu, Kim Mehmeti, Preç Zogaj, Teodor Keko, Besnik Mustafaj, Ridvan Dibra, Lazër Stani, Mira Meksi, Elvira Dones, Mimoza Ahmeti, Arian Leka, Agron Tufa, Virion Graçi, Ardian-Christian Kycyku [Elsie 2002c: 13].
3. This text is translated from the Albanian original, “*Ëndrra e Lulemizës*”. I am thankful to Faith Wigzell, editor of *Folklorica*, for her comments and suggestions and to Union College for providing me with a timely grant for in-country research. I remain especially grateful to Qazim Shemaj for the informative interview he gave me in which he offered valuable insight into the making of a contemporary Albanian literary fairytale and information on Albanian herbal medicine. I would also like to thank the author for the opportunity to offer his work to an English speaking audience. It is my sincere hope that this translation does justice to the beautifully crafted Albanian original.
4. The notes that follow provide the Latin, English and Albanian botanical names of the flowers. All translations from the Albanian are mine. The photos of the flowers that follow are courtesy of Wikipedia (www.en.wikipedia.org) and are in the public domain.



Lat. *Primula Officinalis*; Eng. Cowslip; Alb. *Aguliçe*. Cowslip is used mainly to treat nervous conditions and headaches [Vangjeli et al. 1993: 127]. *Aguliçe* (from *agim*) means “little dawn” and is the first flower to blossom in spring. The juice from the plant is used to heal insomnia, cough, chest pain, bronchitis, internal organ pain,

inflammation of the kidney and bladder and rheumatism [Sejdiu 1984: 188-89].

5. Gishto is a mythological figure from Albanian fairy tales. He is as small as a little finger (*gisht*: finger) and is similar to Tom Thumb. Despite his size, Gishto is always able to outsmart everyone.
6. The Albanian expression "*Të lumshin duart*" [May your hands be blessed, i.e. well done!] is typically used as praise for someone's cooking.

7. Lat. *Veronica Officinalis*; Eng. Speedwell; Alb. *Lulemiza* (fly flower). The stems, leaves and roots are used as an astringent, expectorant and diuretic to treat coughs, stomach and urinary disorders, rheumatism and as a general tonic [Pieroni, Quave 2005: 266].



8. The Red Cross organization is well known to Albanians as one that provides medical assistance. The author has chosen to represent Christianity in the image of the cross, and has added the image of the crescent moon to represent Islam, the dominant religion of Albania.

9. Lat. *Santolina Chamaecyparissus*; Eng. Lavender cotton; Alb. *Santolina* or *Valentina*. Lavender cotton is used as an antitussive to suppress coughing [Pieroni, Quave 2005: 265] and is said to be effective against snake bites [Pieroni, Quave et al. 2004: 337].



10. Lat. *Capsella bursa-pastoris*; Eng. Shepherd's Purse; Alb. *Kacimadja* or *Qesja e Bariut*. Shepherd's purse is a common herb native to Albania [Pieroni, Nebel et al. 2002a: 179], and is believed especially useful in preventing kidney stones and urinary tract diseases. It is also used to cure fever and hemorrhages [Sejdiu 1984: 63].



11. Lat. *Vinca Minor*; Eng. Periwinkle; Alb. *Meneksheja Vogelueshe*. Used in folk medicine to ease constipation, stop bleeding and to improve upset stomach [Sejdiu 1984: 252]. Shemaj's text supports the idea that the periwinkle's ability to help with high blood pressure is also well known in Albanian folk belief.



12. Lat. *Viola Odorata L.*; Eng. Violet; North Alb. *Meneksheja*; Alb. *Manushaqja*. The violet is used as an anti-inflammatory and diuretic and also as a facial skin toner and perfume [Pieroni, Quave et al. 2004: 340].



13. Lat. *Convallaria Majalis*; Eng. Lily of the Valley; Alb. *Lotzonja*. Apart from its use in perfume, in the Albanian folk tradition, of lily of the valley is used to regulate the functioning of the heart and other cardiac functions, as well as treating epilepsy and being a diuretic and purgative [Sejdiu 1984: 82].



14. Lat. *Nepeta Cataria*; Eng. Catnip; Alb. *Nepeta Dlruese*. Apart from the use of catnip as a strong perfume, it is used in the Albanian folk tradition to strengthen the nervous system against headaches, coughs and irregularity of the digestive system [Sejdiu 1984: 157].



15. Lat: *Nigella damascena L.*; Eng. Love-in-a-mist (or Devil-in-the-bush); Alb. *Nigelë e Damaskut*. To date, no known documented source for Albanian folk medicinal use. The herb is related to cumin, native to the Mediterranean region and is used mostly as a spice and in perfume [van Wyk, Wink 200: 216]. Shemaj's text supports the idea that devil-in-the-bush is used in Albania for its aromatic qualities.



16. Lat. *Punica granatum*; Eng. Pomegranate; Alb. *Luleshege*. Used as an anti-diarrhoeal and regarded as valuable for helping with stomach problems and heart pain [Pieroni, Dibra et al. 2005: 389].



17. Places in the Northern Albanian Alps.
18. Near Tirana in mid-Albania.
19. Town in Northern Albania.
20. Town in Southern Albania.

21. Lat. *Agrimonia Eupatoria*; Eng. Church Steeples or Agrimony; Alb. *Rodhëza*. The Albanian word for this flower is a diminutive of *rodhe* which means both a "burr" and a "pest" (human or otherwise). Agrimony is believed to help ease swelling, diarrhea, gallstones, appendicitis, and incontinence [Pieroni, Quave 2005: 264].



22. The Luma Tower, a place in North Albania.
23. "A voice like a nightingale" is an Albanian expression for someone with a good, strong voice.

24. Lat. *Adiantum Capillus-Veneris*; Eng. Avenca (or Maidenhair Fern); Alb. *Shapkeziu i Krojeve* (Blackhat of the Springs) or *Fier Krojesh* (Spring Fern). Although documented Albanian sources only mention its use in enhancing uterine contractions during delivery [Pieroni, Quave 2005: 264], Shemaj's use conforms to general European herbal usage in pulmonary disorders [Grieve 1931/2006].



25. Lat. *Malva Sylvestris*; Eng. Mallow; High Mallow; Alb. *Mullaga e Pyjeve, Malva*. Used as a mild laxative to treat menstrual pains, sore throat and bronchitis and as an intestinal depurative to relieve bloating and reduce flatulence [Pieroni, Quave 2005: 265], mallow is also believed able to intensify uterine contractions during childbirth [Pieroni, Nebel et al. 2002a: 179].



26. Lat. *Pimpinella Saxifraga*; Eng. Burnet Saxifrage; Alb. *Pimpinelia Iriqëz* (*iriqëz* means "little urchin"). Juice made from the root is used to cleanse wounds, cure kidney and bladder diseases, free the lungs from phlegm and to help with asthma [Sejdiu 1984: 176].



27. Lat. *Chrysanthemum Cinerariifolium*; Eng. Pyrethrum; Alb. *Barpleshti* (flea drug). White-flowered Pyrethrum is widely used as a natural insecticide [Keskitalo 1999: 15].



28. Lat. *Lotus Corniculatus*; Eng. Bird's-foot Trefoil; Alb. *Thuapula* (Chicken's Claws). To date, no documented Albanian folk medicinal uses.



29. Lat. *Pulmonaria Officinalis*; Eng. Lungwort; Alb. *Lulelepuri* (bunny flower) or *Bar i mushkërisë* (medicine of the lungs). While there are no documented Albanian folk medicinal uses for lungwort, Sejdiu does refer to the flower as “medicine of the lungs” [Sejdiu 1984: 191].



30. Popular dragon-like character from Albanian fairytales (Alb: *kuçedër*).

31. Lat. *Papaver Rhoeas*; Eng. Poppy; Alb. *Lulekuqe* (red flower). The poppy is used as a mild sedative for children, mostly to relieve pain from teething [Pieroni, Quave et al. 2002b: 229] and to help heal sore throats [Pieroni, Quave et al. 2004: 338]. It is also used to induce sleep and is given to infants at night so that they will not cry [Durham 1923: 132].



32. Lat. *Iris Germanica*; Eng. Iris; Alb. *Luleshpata* (sword flower, because of its leaves). No documented Albanian medicinal uses.



33. Lat. *Valeriana Officinalis*; Eng. Valerian; Alb. *Valeriana*. Mainly used in Albania to treat insomnia, it is also believed to prevent witches from entering a home if it is stuffed into keyholes [Canziani 1928: 213].



34. "Përralla në vesh, shëndetja prej nesh" is a formulaic expression in the closing of Albanian fairytales.

35. Lat. *Papilio Machaon*; Eng. Swallowtail; Alb. *Krahëshkruara* (painted wings). The name for this butterfly comes from Greek mythology. Machaon was the son of Asclepius, the Greek god of health [Arieti 1983: 125].



36. Albanian lands in Albania, Kosova and Greece.

37. Lat. *Rubus Idaeus*; Eng. Red Raspberry; Alb. *Mjedra*. The red raspberry is used as a diuretic, to cure boils and to help heal skin abscesses caused by thorns [Pieroni, Quave 2005: 265].



38. Lat. *Digitalis* (Species); Eng. Foxglove; Alb. *Luletogzi* or *Lulegishti* (finger flower). There are no documented Albanian folk medicinal uses for the foxglove. In the Balkans foxglove is a widely used herbal medicine with a recognized stimulatory effect upon the heart [van Wyk, Wink 2004: 125]. Flowers of this species mentioned here as brothers are:

1. Lat. *Digitalis Lanata*; Eng. Grecian Foxglove; Alb. *Luletogzi Leshtak* (pilose, furry)



2. Lat. *Digitalis Lutea*; Eng. Straw Foxglove; Alb. *Luletogzi i Verdhë* (Yellow Foxglove)





3. Lat. *Digitalis Purpurea*; Eng. Purple Foxglove ; Alb. *Luletogzi i Purpurtë* (Purple Foxglove)



4. Lat. *Digitalis Ferruginea*; Eng. Rusty Foxglove; Alb. *Lulendryshku* (Rusty Flower)



5. Lat. *Digitalis Grandiflora*; Eng. Yellow Foxglove; Alb. *Lulemadhi* (Big Flower).

39. Lat. *Petroselinum Crispum*; Eng. Parsley; Alb. *Majdanozi*. Recorded Albanian sources only attest its use to treat insect bites and to induce abortion [Pieroni, Quave 2005: 265], but Shemaj's text suggests that its use elsewhere to heal skin inflammations [Grieve 1931/2006] is known.



40. Lat. *Sempervivum Tectorum*; Eng. Houseleek; Alb. *Burgulli i Pullazeve*. The juice of the houseleek leaf is applied in the ear to treat earache [Pieroni, Dibra et al. 2005: 390].



41. Lat. *Sambucus Ebulus*; Eng. Dwarf Elder; Alb. *Kingela*. Recorded Albanian



sources only attest its use in external washing for its antirheumatic effect [Pieroni, Dibra et al. 2005: 231] and to heal swollen feet and hands and cure burns [Pieroni, Quave et al. 2004: 339], but Shemaj's text suggests that its use elsewhere as a purgative [Grieve 1931/2006] is known.

42. Lat. *Hypericum maculatum*; Eng. St John's Wort; Alb. *Lulebalsami*. Recorded



Albanian sources attest to the use of St John's wort to treat digestive troubles, stomach ache, the flu, sore throat, coughs, bronchitis, and burns, as an anti-diarrhoeal, a tranquillizer, and a diuretic [Pieroni, Dibra et al. 2005: 386] and to strengthen the legs of infants [Pieroni, Quave et al. 2004: 336], but Shemaj's text suggests that its use elsewhere to treat hemorrhages [Grieve

1931/2006] is also known.

43. Lat. *Symphytum Officinale*; Eng. Comfrey; Alb. *Lulevathi i egër* (wild earrings-



flower). Comfrey (both the plant and roots) is used to relieve inflammation and to help heal burns [Pieroni, Quave et al. 2004: 339].

44. Lat. *Fumaria Officinalis*; Eng. Drug Fumitory; Alb. *Lulepëllumbi* (pigeon-flower).



A tea made from drug fumitory is used to help heal diseases of the liver, cleanse the blood, as a tonic and diuretic, and to regulate appetite. It is also used in the form of baths and compresses in skin diseases, against eczema and hemorrhoids [Sejdiu 1984: 113].

45. Lat. *Rubus Fruticosus*; Eng. Blackberry; Alb. *Manaferrë*. Used as a diuretic, to cure



boils and to help heal skin abscesses caused by thorns [Pieroni, Quave 2005: 265], the blackberry is also believed effective in treating hemorrhoids [Pieroni, Quave et al. 2004: 339].

46. Highest mountain in Albania.

47. Lat. *Salix Purpurea*; Eng. Purple Willow; Alb. *Shelgu Purpurant*. No Albanian folk medicinal uses given in Pieroni [Pieroni, Dibra et al. 2005: 390].



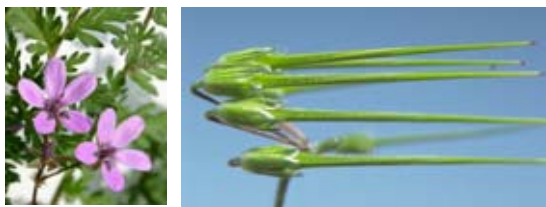
48. Lat. *Clematis Vitalba*; Eng. Traveler's Joy; Alb. *Kulpra e Bardhë* (White Kulpra). The fruit is used to heal mouth inflammations [Pieroni, Quave 2005: 264] and warts [Pieroni, Quave et al. 2004: 335].



49. Lat. *Saponaria Officinalis*; Eng. Soapwort (or Bouncing Bet); Alb. *Shkumbake* (little soapy foam). Aside from being used to make soap, soapwort is a diuretic, diaphoretic, depurative, and tonic, and is believed to cure hepatitis, rheumatism, strep throat, eczema and cysts [Sejdiu 1984: 216].



50. Lat. *Erodium Cicutarium*; Eng. Stork's Bill; Alb. *Sqepçafka* (Heron's Beak) or *Gjilpërëqyja* (Cuckoo's Needle). Stork's bill is used as a diuretic, to prevent bleeding, and against tuberculosis and rheumatism [Sejdiu 1984: 103].



51. Lat. *Satureia Montana*; Eng. Winter Savory; Alb. *Trumza e Bletës* (Bee's Shrub). Most often used as a culinary herb [Pieroni, Dibra et al. 2004: 339].



52. Lat. *Bellis Perennis*; Eng. Lawn daisy; Alb. *Luleshqerra* (luledele). The fresh juice of the leaves is applied to the eyes to treat eye inflammations [Pieroni, Dibra et al. 2005: 383].



53. Lat. *Fragaria Vesca*; Eng. Wild Strawberry; Alb. *Dredhëza*. A tea made from the leaves is used as a treatment for diarrhea, while the fruit is eaten raw or in jams [Pieroni, Dibra et al. 2005: 385]. Strawberry is also believed to be an excellent remedy against sore throats [Pieroni, Quave et al. 2004: 336].



54. Lat. *Cichorium Intybus*; Eng. Chicory; Alb. *Këmbëdhia* (Goat Foot). Chicory leaves are used as a mild laxative and to purify the blood [Pieroni, Quave 2005: 264].



55. Lat. *Lamium Purpureum*; Eng. Purple Dead-Nettle; Alb. *Hithra e Purpurt* (Purple Nettle). The Purple Nettle is believed to cure sciatica. Edith Durham writes that the affected limb must be beaten with the nettle [Durham 1923: 132].



56. Lat. *Anchusa Officinalis*; Eng. Bugloss; Alb. *Gjuhëlopa* (cow's tongue). No known documented Albanian folk medicinal uses, but the fresh flowers are sucked on as a snack [Pieroni, Dibra et al. 2005: 383].



57. Lat. *Hyoscyamus Niger*; Eng. Black Henbane; Alb. *Kruspullak* (Hunchback),



Matergona. The plant is used in soothing stomach, liver, bladder and gall bladder pain, and to treat kidney stones. Juice made from boiling the leaves is used to treat bronchial phlegm, neurological pains, tuberculosis, epilepsy, asthma, paralysis and rheumatism, while the roots are used to heal infected wounds and burns [Sejdiu 1984: 126]. Shemaj's text

supports the idea that Albanians share the general Mediterranean belief that Black Henbane is both useful (as a narcotic) and dangerous [van Wyk and Wink 2004: 174].

58. It is customary for the bride and groom to spend the first night of the wedding reception with the bride's family and friends and the second night with the groom's family and friends.

59. Lat. *Salix Alba*; Eng. White Willow; Alb. *Shelgu i Bardhë*. Albanian folk medicinal



uses are listed as unknown in Pieroni's study, but the bark is well-known as the source of salicylin (the basis for aspirin) [Pieroni, Dibra et al. 2005: 390].

60. Lat. *Hedera Helix*; Eng. English Ivy; Alb. *Shermashek* or *Urth*. There are no



documented Albanian medical uses for ivy, but an infusion of the leaves is used in external washes to give a gloss or color to white hair [Pieroni, Quave et al. 2004: 336].

61. Lat. *Centaurea Cyanus*; Eng. Cornflower or Knapweed; Alb. *Kokoçeli ngjyre qielli*.



The cornflower is used as an anti-fever remedy and against the evil eye [Pieroni, Quave 2005: 264], as well as being known for its anti-inflammatory and immunological properties [Pieroni, Quave et al. 2004: 342].

62. Lat. *Lonicera Caprifolium*; Eng. Sweet Honeysuckle; Alb. *Dorëzonja e ëmbël*.



While there are to date no documented Albanian folk medicinal uses, in the Mediterranean area, the leaves and flowers are believed to be antispasmodic, emollient and expectorant [van Wyk, Wink 2004: 415].

63. Lat. *Acorus Calamus*; Eng. Calamus or Sweet Flag; Alb. *Kashtëfryza* or *Kallem*. Used to increase appetite and to prevent frequent bowel movement and heartburn [Sejdiu 1984: 30].



64. Lat. *Nerium Oleander*; Eng. Oleander; Alb. *Landër* or *Landro*. No known documented Albanian folk medicinal uses to date. In the Mediterranean area, oleander is used to treat functional disorders of the heart, as a substitute for digitalis [van Wyk, Wink 2004: 215].



65. Lat. *Myrtus Communis*; Eng. Myrtle; Alb. *Mërsinë*. An infusion made from boiling the dried leaves of this bush is used against bronchitis, diarrhea and anal fissures. It is also believed to help with diabetes [Sejdiu 1984: 155].



66. Lat. *Citrus Aurantium*; Eng. Bitter Orange; Alb. *Nerënxë*. Used to treat sore throats and coughs [Pieroni, Quave 2005: 264].



67. Lat. *Lilium Candidum*; Eng. Madonna Lily; Alb. *Zambaku i Bardhë* (White Lily). The tubers are used to treat liver disease [Pieroni, Dibra et al. 2005: 387].



68. Lat. *Nuphar Lutea*; Eng. Yellow Pond Lily; Alb. *Zambaku i Verdhë i Ujit* (Water's Yellow Lily). The tubers are used to treat liver disease [Pieroni, Dibra et al. 2005: 387].



69. Lat. *Centaurium Pulchellum*; Eng. Centaury; Alb. *Trikë e Bukur*. Believed to reduce fever [Pieroni, Quave 2005: 264].



70. Each of the following songs rhyme in the Albanian original.

71. Lat. *Vaccinium Myrtillus*; Eng. Bilberry; Alb. *Boronica*. The fruits of the Bilberry are dried and used to treat intestinal troubles and as an anti-diarrhoeic. Other uses include to strengthen the stomach and the eyes and as a blood cleanser [Pieroni, Dibra et al. 2005: 392].



72. Lat. *Solanum Negra*; Eng. Black Nightshade; Alb. *Idhanku i Zi* (Black Bitter), also *Solanë e Zezë* (Black Solana) or *Rush Qeni* (Dog's Grapes). In Shamaj's text Black Nightshade and Bittersweet begin arguing beauty versus usefulness, and then the quarrel turns to a battle about each plant's medicinal uses. Slices of the Black Nightshade (or Sunberry, Wonderberry) are placed on the forehead to sooth headaches and decrease fever. It is also believed to be helpful in healing wounds caused by burns and curing anal fissures [Sejdiu 1984: 226].



73. Lat. *Solanum Dulcamara*; Eng. Bittersweet (Bittersweet Nightshade, Climbing Nightshade); Alb. *Idhnaku i Ëmbël* (Sweet Bitter) or *Koralë e Gjarpërit* (Snake's Coral). Bittersweet is helpful in curing cough, asthma, leprosy, rheumatism and is used to cleanse the blood [Sejdiu 1984: 226]. Ground Bittersweet is applied topically to help cure skin conditions and dry eyes [Pieroni, Auave et al. 2002b: 231].



74. Regions in mountainous Northern Albania.
 75. Places in Middle, South and Northern Albania.
 76. Lat. *Tanacetum Vulgare*; Eng. Tansy; Alb. *Karajpel*. Tea made from tansy is used



to expel parasites, help irregular menstruation, headaches, inflammation of the kidneys and for clearing dandruff, while a dry powder made from the leaves is used against insects. [Sejdiu 1984:234]

77. Lat. *Galega Officinalis*; Eng. Goat's Rue (or Professor-weed); Alb. QuerbashBallëbreshka. Recorded sources for Albania only attest its use in treating hemorrhoids and muscular pains and as an anti-diaphoretic [Peroni, Quave et. al. 2004: 339], but Shermaj's text suggests that its use elsewhere to increase the flow of milk in mothers [Grieve 1931/2006] is known.



78. Lat. *Viburnum Opulus*; Eng. Guelder Rose (or Snowball Tree); Alb. *Topbora* (snowball). The



The snowball tree is used to prevent hemorrhages, cure diarrhea and treat intestinal pain and anal fissures [Sejdiu 1984: 250]. Shemaj's text suggests that along with

fenugreek and rosemary and others, it is also valued for its beauty.

79. Lat. *Trigonella Corniculata*; Eng. Fenugreek; Alb. *Trëndelinë*. The flower is widely used to protect clothes against moths [Sejdiu 1984: 242].



80. Lat. *Rosmarinus Officinalis*; Eng. Rosemary; Alb. *Rozmarina* or *Esmerina*.



Recorded Albanian sources only attest to its use to heal sore throats and headaches [Pieroni, Quave 2005: 265], but Shemaj's text suggests that its use elsewhere to heal neurological problems is familiar [Grieve 1931/2006].

81. Lat. *Taraxacum Officinale*; Eng. Dandelion; Alb. *Luleshurdha*. Used to treat diverse skin inflammations and hemorrhoids and to help heal varicose veins [Pieroni, Quave et al. 2004: 339].



82. Lat. *Salvia Sclarea*; Eng. Clary (or Clary Sage); Alb. *Luleshingjini*. The leaves are used as a haemostatic, to stop bleeding [Pieroni, Quave 2005: 265].



83. Lat. *Paeonia Officinalis*; Eng. Peony; Alb. *Bozhurja*. Although there are no known documented Albanian folk medicinal uses, in southern Europe, the peony is believed to help treat epilepsy and to promote menstruation. It has also been used in the treatment of whooping cough and to relieve intestinal spasms [van Wyk, Wink 2004: 223].



84. Lat. *Salvia Officinalis*; Eng. Common Sage (or Kitchen Sage); Alb. *Shërbelë*.



Believed to help heal sore throats and headaches [Pieroni, Quave 2005: 265], common sage is also said to heal gingival and mouth inflammations and is used as an antiseptic on wounds [Pieroni, Quave et al. 2004: 339].

85. In the phrase "there was no place to drop an apple," the author is referring to the parade that was so big that there was little room for anything else.

86. Lat. *Chelidonium Majus*; Eng. Greater Celandine; Alb. *Latrapeci*. Used to treat hepatitis [Pieroni, Dibra et al. 2005: 384], it is also believed to cure warts and calluses [Pieroni, Quave et al. 2004: 335].



87. Lat. *Pimpinella Anisum*; Eng. Anise or Aniseed; Alb. *Anisi* or *Anasoni*. Used in folk medicine to help prevent a mother's milk from drying up and to flavor sweets and alcoholic drinks such as anisette [Sejdiu 1984: 176].



88. Lat. *Thymus Serpyllum*; Eng. Wild Thyme; Alb. *Zhumbricë*. Used as a substitute for oregano, as a diuretic and digestive used to treat coughs [Pieroni, Dibra et al. 2005: 391, 387].



89. Lat. *Geranium Robertianum*; Eng. Robert Geranium; Alb. *Kamaroshja e Robertit*. In Balkan herbalism, the geranium is used for its antimicrobial effect, to destroy or inhibit the growth of microorganisms [Lis-Balchin 2002: 132]. It is also used as a remedy for toothache, nosebleeds and dysentery, and for its diuretic and tonic effects [van Wyk, Wink 2004: 156]. Shemaj's text suggests that its use as an anti-bacterial is especially beneficial for children.



90. Lat. *Geranium Sanguineum*; Eng. Bloody Geranium; Alb. *Kamaroshja Ngjyrëgjaku*. Used to regulate the intestines, against kidney stones and as an astringent [Sejdiu 1984: 117]. See also the previous note on Robert Geranium's anti-bacterial effects.



91. Lat. *Matricaria Chamomilla*; Eng. Chamomile; Alb. *Kamomili* or *Luleshëngjergji*.



Recorded Albanian sources only attest its use as a digestive and a sedative [Pieroni, Quave et al. 2002b: 228] and in healing sore throats, eye and throat inflammations, and shingles [Pieroni, Quave et al. 2004: 337], but Shemaj's text suggests that its use elsewhere to cure diarrhea and ease night tremors, stomach disorders and convulsions in children [Grieve 1931/2006] is known.

92. Lat. *Equisetum Arvense*; Eng. Horsetail; Alb. *Këputja e Arave*. Recorded Albanian sources only attest its use as a haemostatic to stop



bleeding in the nose [Pieroni, Quave et al. 2004: 336], but Shemaj's text suggests that its use elsewhere to heal kidney and bladder trouble, cystic ulceration and ulcers in the urinary tract [Grieve 1931/2006] is known.

93. Lat. *Arum Maculatum*; Eng. Cuckoo Pint; Alb. *Kilikaza*. Recorded Albanian sources only attest its use in treating warts [Pieroni, Quave



2005: 264], but Shemaj's text suggests that its use elsewhere to heal inflammations of the mucus membranes [Grieve 1931/2006] is known.

94. Lat. *Crataegus*; Eng. *Hawthorn*; Alb. *Murrizi*. Used as a tranquilizer and to enhance



blood circulation [Pieroni, Quave 2005: 254], hawthorn is also used to heal sore throats [Pieroni, Quave et al. 2004: 336].

95. Lat. *Magnolia Officinalis*; Eng. Magnolia; Alb. *Manjola*. There are no documented



Albanian folk medicinal uses for magnolia, but in general folk belief, it is said to be an antimicrobial, which is also active against malaria and parasites [van Wyk, Wink 2004: 416]. Shemaj's text

suggests that its use elsewhere as a mild diaphoretic, tonic and aromatic stimulant [Grieve 1931/2006] is known.

96. Lat.: *Asplenium Adiantum-Nigrum*; Eng. Black Spleenwort; Alb. *Fierguri i Zi*. Used to increase urine flow and enhance uterine contractions during delivery [Pieroni, Quave 2005: 264].



97. Lat. *Arctostaphylos Uva-ursi*; Eng. Bearberry; Alb. *Rushi i Arushës* (Bear's Grapes) or *Vesëegër* (Wild Mist). The leaves in the form of a tea or powder are used to heal infections and bleeding wounds. The tea is also used for cleansing and disinfection of the urinary tract system [Sejdiu 1984: 47].



98. Lat. *Campanula*; Eng. Bellflower; Alb. *Lulekëmbanë* (Bellflower). Some species of campanula are believed helpful in curing inflammation of the mouth and throat [Kovačić 2004: 174].



99. Lat. *Ricinus Communis*; Eng. Castor Oil Plant (or Castor Bean Plant); Alb. *Ricini*. Castor oil is used as a purgative and laxative, for ridding the intestines of parasites, and healing wounds and burns [Sejdiu 1984: 200].



100. Lat. *Xanthium*; Eng. Cocklebur; Alb. *Ksanti Gjëmbor* or *Sybardhi* (The White Eye). Used as a remedy for intestinal worms [Durham 1923: 132].



101. Lat. *Althaea Officinalis*; Eng. Marshmallow; Alb. *Mëllaga e Bardhë*. The dried root can be used to help soothe aching gums, especially in children who are teething, and as an external wash to prevent hair loss [Pieroni, Quave et al. 2004: 335].



102. Lat. *Asparagus Officinalis*; Eng. Asparagus; Alb. *Shpargulla*. Asparagus is a diuretic [Pieroni, Dibra et al. 2005: 264].



103. Lat. *Tamus Communis*; Eng. Black Bryony; Alb. *Rrushgjarpëri* (Snake Grapes). The fruits are compressed and crushed to treat bone pain and toothaches [Pieroni, Quave et al. 2004: 335].



104. Lat. *Physalis Alkekengi*; Eng. Bladder-cherry (or Chinese Lantern); Alb. *Fshikakuqi* (Red Bladder). Used to treat external wounds [Pieroni, Dibra et al. 2005: 388].



105. Lat. *Claviceps Purpurea*; Eng. Ergot, Ergonovine; Alb. *Bri thekre* (Rye Horn). Used to control postpartum hemorrhage and cause contraction of the uterus [Pieroni, Dibra et al. 2005: 384].



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