

An abstract painting featuring a complex composition of warm, earthy tones including ochre, terracotta, and burnt orange. The background is composed of large, textured rectangular blocks. Overlaid on these are several sharp, dark, angular lines that intersect to form a central, dark, triangular shape. In the upper left, there are three thin, vertical white lines. The overall effect is one of dynamic tension and layered meaning.

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DOVES & DEVILS

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INTRODUCTION

After “discovering” the inscriptions of the British Cemetery, at the Church of St. Archangel Michael in Skopje, I spontaneously sensed the urge to respond to them from my “standpoint”, with an imperative of inspiration that emanated from my personal and family awareness about wars and their effects on human being, on their homeland and the world. I began an exchange of written impressions with “the lives” of those long departed. I opened an imaginary dialogue about life and death, war and peace, joy and suffering - with these defenders of peace (1915-1918) connected both with Macedonia and the world. My lines, my reconstructed conversations and impressionistic exchange with those who gave their lives for a better life for others, felt as a natural reaction paralleled to contemporary concerns for peace, freedom, human rights, for life above daily threats, attacks and destruction, on international or Balkan grounds.

The common historical memory of the past and during the then terror, and errors in South East Europe, intensified my quest for personal traces and hidden stories of those fallen individuals. The need became irresistible to take notes about those foreigners buried in the land of my ancestors, Macedonia, to record the found notions and to identify my emotions about them as human beings who sacrificed their lives in a land foreign to them, for causes that remain absurd to some and idealistic to others. More so, my compassionate curiosity developed a goal that reached far above those grounds: to focus on the phenomenon of life and death, trying to generalize messages of countless other victims from other times and places, who lost their lives for their own ideas and ideals, vindicating them or becoming victims because of them, but also triumphing

above all tragedies, like my native and my adopted country, like my own and only, beloved child Emilia...

The causes of war throughout history, the bloody WWI and WWII battles, or the numerous local wars and conflicts, or the global War on Terrorism in the 21st century, the reasons for the killing fields, or the killing fronts (or their "rear grounds"), appeared in a kaleidoscope of absurdity as to who must side with whom, who won and who had to lose, and why.

From a human point of view I attempted to establish an imaginary vision focusing on the victims' hearts and minds. I felt the need to expand my understanding about human suffering from an angle outside hospitals, outside prisons, in the open air of silenced history: through reconstructed communication with those fallen soldiers (as people connected to others, as beings who want to know each other above and beyond the sombre consequences of death, the hallmark of the graveyard). Across the span of almost a century, I began interpreting their own brief signs of existence, as implying what it means to die for peace, to sacrifice for freedom, to believe in God and humanity, to love mankind and give one's life for the good of others, for the good of one's neighbours from the next block or for one's "neighbours" from another part of the world.

I felt compelled to consider all the human lives engulfed by the horrors of war, appearing in the "brief history of time" unfolded through my visions, together with those lost from WWI on the Salonika front, also known as the Macedonian Front. For me, those fallen soldiers buried in the church yard were not only names chiselled in metal plates but rather members of human family, children of God, humans who died for the right to peace and prosperity, freedom, and future, who died with hope to return one day to the arms of their beloved ones, to forger in their embrace the race with death and the horrors of the living hell.

The question of generic but honourable sacrifice also appeared on this horizon of human suffering. These lost lives reminded me that aligned with them, other hundreds of thousands were asked to fight under the flags of other nations, for someone else's goals or interest zones, for someone else's false or fair promises for the well being of the people from those lands.

In this summer day of 2001, I came to the church to hide from the loud clashes in the Arachinovo suburb of Skopje. The Macedonian government forces and the Albanian paramilitary Muslims were using weapons to tell each other and the world who was right and who was not. As my Macedonia seemed to be facing another crucifix, I entered the church and began praying for my daughter, for my parents, for my country, so that sanity prevails in the war-or-peace solutions in Macedonia.

I was sobbing and praying for the health of my Angel Emi whom I left in the nearby dialysis center "Zhelezara". I prayed for victory in the health wars that my only child was fighting in her own battle with the cunning Lupus "wolf" enemy. I prayed also for the lives of daughters and sons now at war, defending the sovereignty, integrity, identity and independence of Macedonia. I realized a paradox: they were defending the same ideals: peace and freedom in 2001, as the soldiers during world war one. Ultimately the soldiers in the Macedonian Front of WWI gave their lives to "pursue happiness" yet in the same land that again seemed destined not to know peace.

As war and terrorism descended, or were imposed on Macedonia, I was compelled to embark upon my time-machine journey and conduct my imaginary interview with all 123 British soldiers that had been buried in Macedonia. The inscriptions on their grave sites conveyed moving messages mutely reiterating that they died for the same causes that the Macedonians were fighting and were massacred, in the times of my prayers. As the

echoes of this cruel irony leapt and struck me from those 123 helpless graves, I was witnessing a violent and brutal reality facing innocent, 21st century Macedonians. The severe repercussions from the ever more painful reality of the battle at Arachinovo, June 26, 2001, had now grown beyond my capacity to express why fighting again, why not living together telling the world that we all learned in history how to accept our differences. Those grave tombstone inscriptions carried me back to a time in 1913, several years after Macedonia was divided and parcelled out among three neighbouring countries. "Compassion without borders" whispered in me, asked me to bridge countries and centuries, to attempt to connected the perpetual need for peace, against the recurring failure of freedom's promise. My imaginary bridge connected me with sufferers pining for God's mercy and for mankind's goodness and fairness, it bonded those yearning for God's justice and those championing man's right to life. As a spectator of this time/space panorama, my heart kept protesting terrors and errors in the confusing and conflicting "melting pots of politics". Eloquently or not, my writing simply became a merciful resistance against merciless madness of the world that leads to death: physical, spiritual, cultural...

This epic in verse, these miniature essays that result from my encounter with the notions of annihilation, do not merely serve the formal mention of western European soldiers who died for the Balkan issues. My notes were taking the shape of a content that came from the inner knowledge about outer, war-stricken destinies. The essays are not just about raising the awareness of generations of young Macedonians about history lessons in right and wrong. They are about illuminating the ethnic and geographic heritage that their forefathers defended but ultimately lost, or were about to lose now. All these records re-occured against the historic background of "Macedonia's



division” in that fatal year of the Macedonian division and occupation: 1913... and, while world audiences witnessed this division historically, or attempt for division in present times, the living truth about Macedonia remains buried around me as these tomb plagues.

This book is also about those innocent American victims from the Twin Towers terrorized by political games or by conflicting aims of the world’s divergent or opposing cultures and creeds, irreconcilable interests and needs, irresistible drive to dominate, to create a custom-made world according to destructive tyranny.

I am neither a historian nor a politician. But I am a concerned human being, a champion of ethical defence of all just

and good in men, a daughter of honourable ancestors, and a mother of the best daughter in the world, who puts her writing in service of the human endeavours for the best on earth.

These essays tried to share my writing service with the best human values that elevate justice and order, understanding and love, peace and freedom over bestiality and chaos, deception, corruption, war, oppression, discrimination and artifice, either at home or throughout the world. My “writing service” is backed up by my belief that moral responsibility for peace and prosperity should keep removing duplicity from political struggles, fraud from economic competition, deceit from cyber wars, frustration from moral strife and greed from medical machinations. The core concern in this epic, written in short rhythmic essays, remains to be the rhythm, the pattern, the potentially tragic repetition of unlearned lessons in history. My spiritual inquiry into the souls, hearts and creeds of those who die in the disasters of war, in conflicts at anytime, anywhere, is a record outside any military files, diplomatic sources or development efforts, but is can not be disregarded by them either.

My belief in God and in the best in us, the human beings, makes me aware that the history of this world is a record of “Evil” in ascendance, despite of the “Good” that the best nations in the world try to instil, install, demonstrate and defend. Nevertheless, I steadfastly believe that the Creator and Master of the Universe, the Saviour of Souls, and the Lord of the “Land” beyond earth, where all humans are free and equal “for good”, is and always will be, mercifully triumphant and forgiving – for the sake of his children who first learned how to make killing machines before reasoning to not need them.

By positing imagined conversations, and by activating interactive observations and intimate confessions among those

123 lives and their ideals buried in war, this literary construct results in a humanitarian effort that utilizes “poetic license” and personal rights to keep reviving the spirit of GOOD vs. EVIL in any given conflict. It is intended to uphold peace against chaos, love against hatred, and freedom from tyranny of any kind.

“Doves and Devils” explores a contemporary approach to a victim’s beliefs and the option of justification for self sacrifice. It spontaneously suggests comparisons between issues commonly facing freedom-fighters in search of peace: on the Macedonia’s Salonika Front, or in the noble wars throughout human history: from the legendary King Arthur in England to King Samuil or King Marko in Macedonia, from the slaves who fled with Moses out of Egypt, to the suffering innocents from wars and battles and crises in the Iraq, Afghanistan, the Middle East, Africa or the attacks on the US.

The words in this epic invoke the human pursuit of personal and public well-being. They enlarge on the appreciation of the just cause: living and dying in accord with the divine meaning of life that approximates the most human of concepts: love for life, love for mankind, love for God, family and country.

“Doves and Devils” portray and proclaim by literary means the human struggle to prove that, regardless to the seemingly ever present absurdity of wars, the human genius needs to conquer fear of uncertainty and oblivion by leaving visible traces of honest and honourable fights to conquer death and to celebrate the grandeur and glory of the miracle called life.

The miniature essays in the versified text, seek to release a constructive faith that addresses the ominous notions of hegemony, oppression, aggression, genocide, terrorism and other

noxious impulses particularly when related to ethnic, religious, cultural or political hatred and inappropriate, ill-conceived geo-strategic interests.

Once again, this epic humbly hopes to generate a critically needed awareness against war atrocities, in favour of global and democratic efforts to make peace in today's dangerously volatile and complex political problems of the world. If the poetic essays encourage faithful believers in a better tomorrow, the fragmented voices from war victims suffering on the "peace fronts" of yesteryears and of today, then they just might modestly contribute to a greater human understanding that peace is not solely obtained at tables in the secret rooms of diplomats, but first and foremost reached in the hearts of those millions with the vision to undertake their own pursuit of the essence of happiness, the inevitability of health and the courage to hope to the "end".

The pursuit of peace should not be confined to tombstones and skulls and bones of fallen fighters (kept in the church and washed with wine every 10 years), or scattered around the battle fields of our suffering beauty called planet Earth. This is a reminder for our soul-contribution: to try to prevent atrocities and anomalies from making their headlines in the news and in our literary records. This is a silent, different, distinct but dignified cry over the suffering of our planet and of our beloved ones.

MARIA-EMILIA KUBAISKA

July 26th - Nov. 21st, 2001, Skopje, FYROMacedonia

DEDICATED TO:

The victims of tyranny throughout the ages:

- To all who fought in unjust wars, or for “peace without freedom” in the world today - who remain unsung, unseen, undeciphered, unheeded: from Macedonia to Manhattan, from European to Egyptian, from Babylonian to Byzantine, from Chinese to Russian, from Indonesian to Hindu, from American to African, a grave truth.
- To our beloved fellow citizens of the Macedonian land whose hearts and bones, homes and lands have been broken and burnt for Macedonia, attacked by monstrous traitors or merciless merchants of “justice”, “peace” and “freedom”, throughout history, and, in some parts of Macedonia, even today.
- To my beloved, patriotic Macedonian ancestors:
 - * my great-grandfather Trajko Kukubajski, sentenced to death after the bloody failure of the Ilinden uprising in 1903, and persecuted for organizing, sponsoring and training on his estate - the Macedonian movement for liberation of Macedonia from the Turks and from other neighbouring regimes’ aspirations and propaganda for partitioning of the Macedonian land. He miraculously survived among his 200 VMRO soldiers who were beaten to death in the school yard between the church of St. Mary in Shtip Novo Selo and the school where Gotse Delchev (the leader of the Macedonian Liberation Movement was a teacher in 1894),
 - * my grandfather Mishe Trajko Kukubajski, who died for Macedonian independence in 1927, was tortured in the Shtip jail by the new, Serbian occupation regime, after being imprisoned for three years, with 80 kilo iron chains, after being kept in barrels of icy water, and after being constantly beaten upon his kidneys with wet sand-bags,
 - * my father Aleksandar Mishe Kukubajski (1922-2003), who was the paramount patriotic and patriarchal peace-maker, who advised heads of state, mayors of towns and villages, whose heart was broken after witnessing new adversities even among the old and at one time faithful patriots.