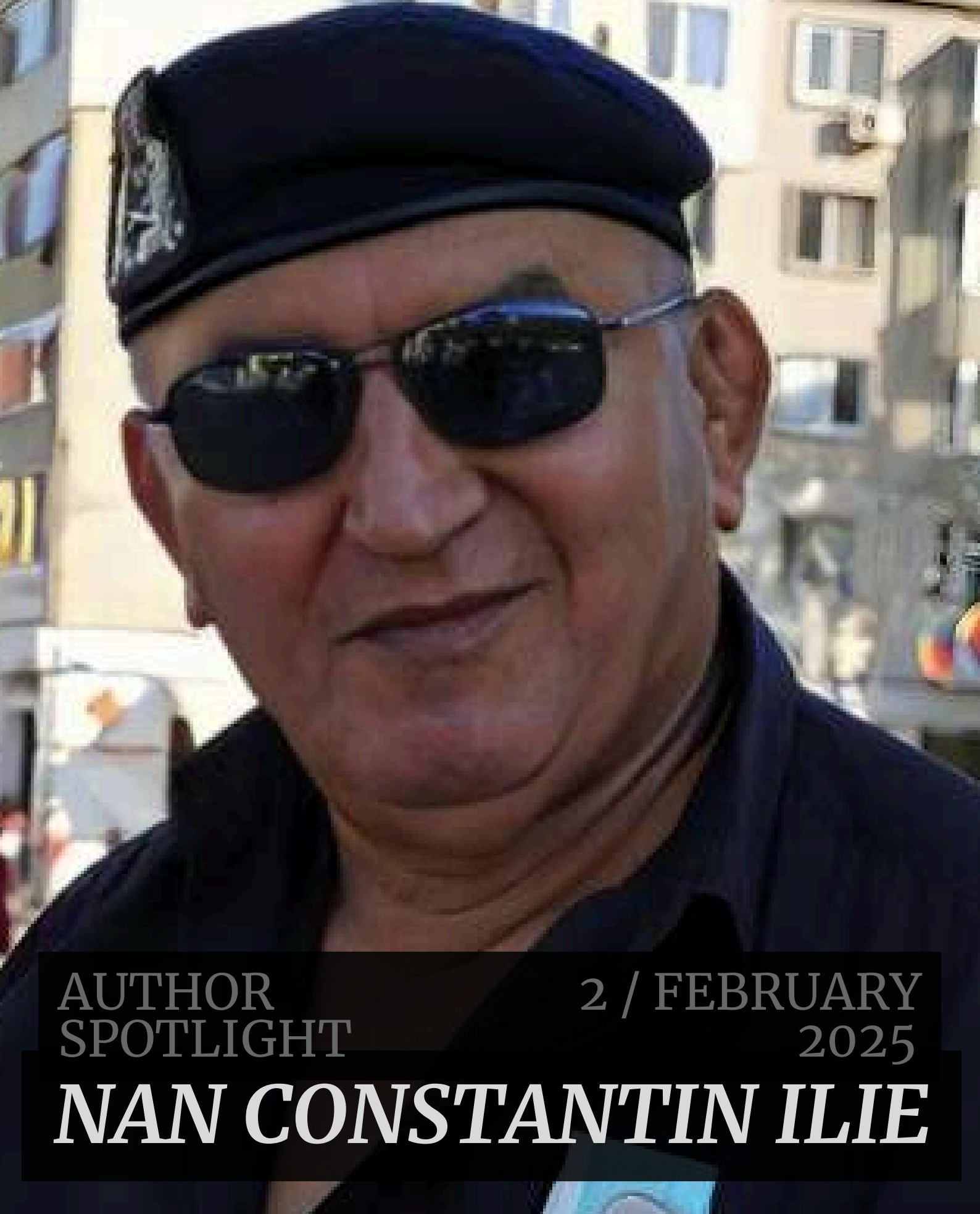


# NEW LITERARY SOCIETY



AUTHOR  
SPOTLIGHT

2 / FEBRUARY  
2025

**NAN CONSTANTIN ILIE**

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# NEW LITERARY SOCIETY

## THE CON TENT

THE LITERARY LEGACY OF NAN CONSTANTIN ILIE

DEDICATION

INTERVIEW: REMEMBERING NAN CONSTANTIN ILIE  
MAYBE IN ANOTHER LIFE, POEM BY GAROFIȚA JIANU

HOW I BECAME A WRITER

BOOK REVIEW: DON'T SHED NO TEARS, BROTHER

PRESENTATION: DON'T SHED NO TEARS, BROTHER

BOOK REVIEW: BORN ON THE DARK SIDE

BOOK REVIEW: LETTERS WITH THE SCENT OF WAVES

BOOK PHOTOGRAPHY

MEDIA COVERAGE

*ISSUE 2 – FEBRUARY 2025*



**Dear Friend,**

I'm at a loss for words to express what I feel. Your story has traveled across all corners of the world—America, Australia, England, and Romania, where your loved ones reside, and Asia, where your exotic experiences unfolded. It's more than history; it's literature, and we, the characters, live on within it.

Your story will never be forgotten.

Rest in Peace





# Nan Constantin Ilie



Nan Constantin Ilie's life is a testament to resilience, creativity, and an unwavering dedication to his passions.

From his early days supporting humanitarian causes in Constanța to his literary accomplishments, his journey has been marked by both triumph and adversity.

With the founding of the "Real People" Foundation, Nan made a profound impact on the local community, transforming the organization into one of Constanța's most powerful NGOs.

His ventures into journalism with the "Real People" newspaper and the creation of "Caritas" Taxi showcased his entrepreneurial spirit. Despite facing financial ruin and political conflict, Nan rebuilt his life, turning to the construction materials industry and later opening various businesses, including a mobile phone store, and a restaurant.

His passion for writing became a defining element of his later years. Starting with *Letters with the Scent of Waves* in 2005, Nan delved into stories of old Constanța, capturing the spirit of the city and its people. His literary output grew steadily, culminating in acclaimed works such as *When the Swallows Return*, *Deep Waters*, *Born on the Dark Side*, *Seventeen*, *Don't Shed No Tears*, *Brother*, and *ADAGIO*.

THE LITERARY LEGACY OF NAN CONSTANTIN ILIE

# Nan Constantin Ilie

His evocative storytelling and deeply personal narratives earned him recognition from literary circles and a place in the League of Romanian Writers, Dobrogea branch.

Even after relocating to England with his family in search of a better future, Nan's heart remained tied to his homeland. Returning to Romania, he continued to write, driven by the experiences and emotions that defined his life. His words, like the hidden treasures beneath the Black Sea, remain an inexhaustible source of inspiration.

In 2019, the Japanese awarded him the "Yasunari Kawabata" Literature Prize.

In 2020, Nan began collaborating with Julia Kalman to translate three of his novels: *Don't Shed No Tears*, *Brother*, *Born on the Dark Side*, and *ADAGIO*. This partnership marked a turning point in his career, introducing his work to a wider audience. What began as a professional collaboration gradually transformed into a friendship. In addition to the translations, interviews, and other articles, he was invited to participate in public events in Bucharest, including two art performances—which included public readings and author presentations.

Nan Constantin Ilie's legacy lives on not just through his novels, but in the lasting impact he had on his community and everyone he met. Wherever he went, all eyes turned to him—his charismatic energy made him impossible to forget. His remarkable life could one day inspire a movie, and that's a legacy we all owe him.

THE LITERARY LEGACY OF NAN CONSTANTIN ILIE

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# Author Portrait



THE LITERARY LEGACY OF NAN CONSTANTIN ILIE

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# Interview

**Life Motto:** Writing, showing the world something intimate and unique, is an act of courage.

## 1. That Special Moment

*One fine day, you started writing stories. How exactly did it happen?*

**NCI:** In 1996, I established a charitable organization called "Real People", aimed at providing material assistance to underprivileged people, particularly children with AIDS, physical or mental disabilities, and street children.

Two years later, I created a weekly social newspaper with the same name, hoping to bridge the gap between the fortunate and the unfortunate.

As director of the newspaper, I began writing, starting with the lead article, and progressing to short essays and stories about Constanța and its people.

This activity fascinated me.

In 2005, I published my first book, *Letters with the Scent of Waves*.

Today, I am the author of 18 books, including three series (five books in total), now available in English.

## 2. Art Is Work

*What does your work as a writer consist of?*

**NCI:** If you're not rigorous in your work and put off a project you've set out to do, it's better to do something else. Writing without emotion, trapped in the commonplace, serves no purpose.

# Interview

### 3. Without Projects, There Is No Future

*What are your representative projects? What projects are you working on?*

**NCI:** A plan is created before any work begins. In all of my works, I have endeavored to be alive, to speak directly to the souls of those who read them.

A collection of stories or a novel requires thorough research, work structured in space and time, followed by the author's ability to build tensions between the book's characters, thus giving life to the project.

I am currently working on another personal challenge — the book *I Believe in Angels*.

### 4. The Scent of Creation

*Describe a scent that immediately transports you to a moment of inspiration or creativity. What emotions does it evoke, and how does it influence your creative process?*

**NCI:** I have spent my entire life on the shores of the Black Sea, in Constanța...

This is where I first learned about the world, fell in love for the first time, experienced loss, and celebrated success.

The scent of waves, seaweed, shells, salty and deep water, shores, rocks, sand, fish and mystery, hope, white seagulls in flight, and innocent kisses of lovers on the seashore accompanies everyone who lives here, including me.

In my books, the sea is a distinguishing aspect that I will never abandon.

# Interview

It's like a charming spell that stimulates and calms my soul.

## 5. Ink and Intimacy

*If your writing style were a tactile experience, what texture would it be?*

*How does the act of putting pen to paper or fingers to keyboard make you feel on a deeply personal level?*

**NCI:** I don't think I'm any more special than others in this regard... yet 7 years ago, when I was in Manchester, England, my younger son Robert got me a cherry wood pen and a pack of refills, which I still have.

I begin the planning and research for a new book with a pen, always prompted by an emotion... then, when I start working on the laptop, my fingers know exactly what to do, and inspiration becomes as natural as breathing.

## 6. The Harmony of Silence

*Think about a moment when silence spoke louder than words in your creative journey. What were the circumstances, and how did it shape your understanding of your craft?*

**NCI:** Yes, it happened when I wrote a large collection of stories titled *Seventeen*.

Why seventeen?

Because I share 17 stories about 17 young individuals, both boys and girls, who have reached the age of 17.

When I only had six more pieces to write, based on what I had previously written, I experienced writer's block for the first time.

# Interview

I couldn't write any more lines, not even one letter.

Later, I discovered by chance that it was related to the 'marathon wall'.

The marathon is unquestionably one of the most prestigious athletic competitions, a 42.195 km long-distance running event named after the legend of the Greek soldier Phidippides, a messenger of the Greek city-states who brought news of victory over the Persians to Athens in the Battle of Marathon.

"We have won!" he exclaimed at the end of his continuous run, before collapsing breathless...

Today, the marathon, a significant endurance athletic event, is far from accessible to everyone. Even the greatest athletes can be hit by the mythical marathon wall. Simply put, when they still have to run seven or ten kilometers to the finish line, they collapse to the ground, unable to move even a centimeter, due to exhaustion, both physical and mental.

This is exactly what happened to me.

For the first time since I began writing, I became blocked, as if I would never be able to recover.

Then I left the house to experience the people and the sea that surrounds Constanța from three sides, including the waves, coastlines, breakwaters, and seagulls gliding in flight.

Silence spoke to me...

As a high-performance athlete in my youth, I was taught to always strive to win.

I learned never to give up and to fight till the end.

## **7. The Palette of Dreams**

*Imagine your creative mind as a painter's palette. What colors*



# Interview

*dominate your artistic spectrum, and how do they represent the different facets of your imagination?*

**NCI:** My color palette is simple.

I prefer bright, vibrant hues that appear to have something to say... But when I write, I am carried away by waves of pastel imagery that speak of peace, optimism, and love.

## **8. The Quill of Vulnerability**

*If your creative expression were a handwritten letter to your inner self, what truths and vulnerabilities would it unveil? How does the act of exposing your innermost thoughts contribute to your artistic identity?*

**NCI:** Even though the world has changed dramatically in recent years, particularly in the realms of love and respect between individuals, including between boys and girls and children and parents, I have remained an incurable romantic...

For me, love is about the heart and soul; for others, particularly young people, this lovely sensation is associated with sex.

That is why, when I write, my characters understand the difference between a night of sex and everlasting love.

## **9. Symphony of Shadows**

*Consider a character or theme in your work that embodies the shadows of your own psyche. What does this shadow teach you about your fears, desires, or unexplored dimensions of your creativity?*

*Is that the case?*



# Interview

**NCI:** Yes, such characters exist, but I have always punished them as an example, thus I have never allowed such evil beings to evolve. As for anxieties, I learned to cope with them from a very young age... there was a moment when I had no one to defend me, but over time, I learned to overcome my fears and handle my own problems via experiences.

## 10. Echoes of Childhood Whispers

*Recall a childhood memory that resonates with you as a writer. How do the echoes of your early experiences manifest in your work today?*

**NCI.:** My father disappeared when I was four years old. My mother would go to work at four a.m. and not return until around six p.m. For years, I remember my mother grieving for my father and chanting, “Costică, Costică, you died and left me with two boys!” Then, immobilized and attached to my younger brother, George, I reminded myself to never harm a girl. In my books, girls and moms are loved, respected, and safe from abuse.

## 11. Melodies of Memory

*If your memories were composed as a musical score, what instrument would represent your most cherished creative recollections? How does the melody of your past influence the composition of your present work?*

**NCI:** At first, I preferred simple songs that were easy to sing and



# Interview

remember.

I played the guitar and even practiced singing for a bit.

Then I found the violin and piano...

This has fascinated me my entire life; I am a devoted music enthusiast.

Listening to old classical music helped me develop the ability to construct mental images that I was able to put on paper.

Five years ago, I created a two-volume novel named *ADAGIO* or *An American Story of Love, War, and Revenge*, which was mostly inspired by 'ADAGIO' — a musical piece by Albinoni, composed about 200 years ago.

## 12. The Dance of Words

*If your writing style were a dance, what would be the rhythm and tempo? How does the cadence of your sentences mirror the beating of your creative heart?*

**NCI:** Since 2000, I've stated unequivocally that I'm a romantic lost in today's society and the past.

But, to be entirely honest, I've never enjoyed loud, metallic, screaming music.

Slow music with soul-stirring words has always quietly transported me to the most intimate aspects of our existence...

My musical preferences have remained consistent until today, whether at home, in my personal automobile, or at public concerts. When I write, this type of music inspires my imagination, transporting me to a world, typically better than the one I live in, where my characters value truth, honor, and the courage to never give up.

# Interview

## 15. Admiration Exercises

*Which writers do you admire? What are your favorite books?*

**NCI:** I've been reading my entire life...

I trembled, sobbed, laughed, and then trembled again.

Many authors have found their way into my heart and will never be forgotten.

Ernest Hemingway, Michael Ondaatje, Alexandre Dumas, Albert Camus, Victor Hugo, Honore de Balzac, Jane Austen, Emile Zola, Lev Tolstoy, Homer, Arthur Conan Doyle, Jules Verne, Charles Dickens, William Shakespeare, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Daniel Defoe, Theodore Dreiser, Emily Bronte, and countless others...

Like everybody who reads, I have my favorites: *The English Patient*, *Wuthering Heights*, *The Count of Monte Cristo*, *Les Misérables*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *The Iliad*, and *The Odyssey*, among many more...

## 16. An Indiscreet Question

*With which influential author or inspirational figure from life, past or present, would you most like to share a cup of tea and a captivating conversation?*

**NCI.:** Without thinking, I'll say this: Ernest Hemingway!

## 15. A Story in Ten Words

**NCI:** Maria, my eternal love, I loved and forever love you.

## 16. A Favorite Fragment

**NCI:** This is an excerpt from the novel *A Gentle Spring Wind Was*

# Award of Excellence



THE LITERARY LEGACY OF NAN CONSTANTIN ILIE

# Interview

*Blowing.*

— How do you feel right now?

— Um...

— I mean... Is the wound still bleeding?

— No, Marița bandaged me up, he said, pointing to a lovely gypsy girl.

— So, what's your name?

— Alain Delon...

— What, really?

— Yes, that's his name, the gypsy girl responded immediately. Ever heard of this name? Look, the guy in the corner is called Belmondo. The one on the edge? Jacky Chan. And Florin Persic... why can't we have names like these?

— Okay, okay, I get it, Maxi replied, suppressing a laugh. Let's move on, I don't have time for this nonsense.

— Did you check what's in the bag?

— No, we're not authorized...

— Don't make me mad, okay? What did you see when you opened his bag of dough?

— A little brown ladies' purse with around ten wallets, five wristwatches, necklaces, bracelets, money, and two rings...

## **18. Blog/Author Page/Social Media Profile**

*Where can we read your works?*

**NCI:** For Romanian and English editions of my books, please contact the bookstore Prăvălia cu Cărți, on Ștefan cel Mare Street in Constanța.

# Interview

## **19. What exactly would you like to convey to a fellow writer/editor/screenwriter/film producer?**

Present your writings in a few words.

**NCI:** *Don't Shed No Tears, Brother* is a romance drama inspired by the 1950s tuberculosis pandemic, depicting the separation of families, hospitalized patients, and orphaned children.

The plot alternates between an adult love tale and a teenage romance, depicting the drama produced by illness, family alienation, and difficult conditions ranging from a shortage of food to cruel punishments faced by youngsters locked in boxes and attacked by rats.

*Born on the Dark Side* is also a romance drama but draws inspiration from the Romanian Revolution of 1990 and incorporates historical aspects.

*ADAGIO* or *American Story of Love, War, and Revenge* is a two-volume military romantic drama inspired by the Vietnam War. It contains aspects of horror.

## **20. Embers of Endings**

*Envision the conclusion of a significant project. How do you feel as you pen the final words or brush the last strokes?*

**NCI:** Happy, emotional, yet tormented by the dread that I had forgotten to add something... I believe I feel the same terror as a woman who has given birth and is counting the fingers of her child...

—Nan Constantin Ilie, for *New Literary Society*, 2024



# At the Literary Cenacle Metafora, Constanța



REDMI NOTE 9 PRO  
VALI MATEI

**Nan Constantin Ilie**, at the center, is flanked by two prominent writers from Constanța: to his right (front), **Traian Brătianu**, doctor in History, and to his left, **Cornel Pulbere**, director of "Metafora" Magazine Constanța

THE LITERARY LEGACY OF NAN CONSTANTIN ILIE

# Maybe in Another Life

## by Garofița Jianu

***Dedicated to my dear friend, Nan Constantin Ilie (Iulian)***

It's hard to find words that won't fade away,  
It's hard to say goodbye when you are no longer here to stay!  
Still, in my mind, I hear your voice loud and strong:  
"I know, my dear, you have been right all along."

But the life we live is filled with sin,  
A tapestry of losses we can't win.  
You never liked your coffee bitter—  
"Make it sweet, Garofița, make it glitter!"

Even sleep would find you late,  
With words of wisdom, but not of fate.  
"Sorela, I still have books to write,  
My dream's not done, it's just in sight."

Today you ascend toward skies of blue,  
Where sufferings fade, and peace is true.  
No burdens now rest on your soul,  
You've left behind the heavy role.

Your walk of life was far from light,  
Yet in your silence, you'd still fight.

THE LITERARY LEGACY OF NAN CONSTANTIN ILIE

# Maybe in Another Life

## by Garofița Jianu

May your wings be soft, your flight serene,  
As you soar to the peaceful scene.  
Maybe in another life, you'll find,  
The happiness you left behind.

Perhaps the sun will brush your face,  
Wrap you in flowers, an endless embrace.  
Live the dreams you never could here,  
And feel the love of skies so clear.

**—Garofița Jianu – President of the Literary Foundation  
"METAFORA" Constanța**

# Event Poster

**Pentru o carte excepțională**

*Aproape că doare întinsa mare  
spre cerul albastru de nepătruns,  
doar pescărușii, rotați în cercuri  
de nori și de valuri, ne dau iluzia,  
că am ajuns...*

*Din seninul incert o adiere-n furtună  
ridică valu-n talaz,  
unde va în abisuri fără catarge, și fără de glas.  
La țârm, farul stins, oameni în neceaz,  
o liniște sumbră, sălbatică-n adânc  
îmi fură speranța...*

*Nu, nu mai plâng,  
marea-i a mea, albastrul vibrează-n  
plane celeste.  
Soarele și luna valul petrece  
două abisuri, în menuet înveșnicite...  
Și-n vremea care trece,  
mai cutează-n poeme,  
mai cutează-n viori, mai cutează-n fiori  
simfonii în culori...*

**Nan Constantin Ilie**  
**ȘAPTESPREZECE**

**Neli Crozavu**  
**Poetă constănțeană a spațiului marin**  
**(al 18-lea veșnic îndrăgostit)**

# How I Became a Writer

## Obstacle Course Towards Another Life

I was born in the commune of Topraisar, Constanța County. According to my paternal grandparents, I am Transylvanian; according to my maternal grandparents, I am Dobrogean from the Quadrilateral (Romanian: Cadrilater, meaning Southern Dobruja).

In less than four years, my father disappeared from the landscape of our family. Seriously ill with lung disease, he drifted among strangers, struggling through hospitals and sanatoriums to survive, to heal. To live! But he failed! He distanced himself from my mother, he didn't want her anymore... Then, he got lost, he faded away. That's how my younger brother George and I were left fatherless, a reality that has followed and influenced us throughout our lives.

I attended the first two elementary classes in Southern Dobruja, in my mother's village, or Ghilingic, as the Turks once called it. There, Sora, my grandmother, the daughter of a priest, taught me to read before I started school, starting at the age of five.

By the age of six, I had already finished reading my first book – *Cristek from Warsaw*. I did the third grade in Constanța, and the fourth grade at a sanatorium near the village of Halânga, close to Drobeta-Turnu Severin, as my mother had also fallen ill.

In the fifth grade, I came back home and didn't go anywhere else. I stayed in Constanța without leaving again. Almost daily, my

# How I Became a Writer

mother cried silently, mourning for my father...

"Costică, Costică, you left me alone with two boys, Costică..."

She never considered looking for another man to rebuild her life. She struggled alone to raise both of us. She had come to the city, an honest peasant with four grades of education, to make a better life for herself, but only with unskilled labor. No matter how much she endured and fought against life's hardships, she never succeeded. We lived for years, all three of us, in abject poverty.

That was our reality! We had nothing of our own. Neither a house, nor a bed, nor a table... Not even a shabby little radio, there, small and worn out.

She would bathe us in a cracked wooden tub, lined with strips of rags to prevent leaks..., and cooked with a worn-out kerosene lamp. A potato stew took two-three hours to be ready. But ironically, despite everything, as beaten by fate as we were, Mom knew how to make us happy, and we loved her like the apple of our eye. In the modest, old little house she rented in the Coiciu neighborhood, we didn't have much to do.

My brother and I were mostly alone because our mother left for work at three in the morning and returned around six in the evening. After school, we wandered with other poor children, just like us—some barefoot—wandering the unpaved streets of the neighborhood.

Sometimes we stole fruit or vegetables; other times, we got into

# How I Became a Writer

fights with others... The neighborhood was full of bullies, thieves, and other scoundrels. We used to go to the wood and coal depot to help the cart drivers for a couple of lei, a slap, or even a kick in the butt.

Other times, I would rummage through the trash for small things... One day, I found some books thrown away... Well, yes! That's how I discovered books, and I didn't need anything else. I started reading all the time. Without any plan, without anyone coordinating my readings, taking my age into account. No! I was reading randomly.

I read Boccaccio's *Decameron* when I was ten years old... I was always chasing after books.

I didn't put on airs—I read everything I found, everything that fell into my hands. When someone was demolishing an old house, I was the first to come and help. I knew that most of the time, in the attic of the house, I would find a dusty chest, an old trunk forgotten among other old things, full of books. Yes! Yes! I read voraciously. I didn't need anything else. And I didn't care that I hadn't eaten anything for hours, I didn't need it, because I was discovering worlds and characters that fascinated me...

I read many Russian authors, along with European and American classics. When I completed the seventh elementary grade, I took the entrance exam for “Mihai Eminescu” High School in the city, where I got in without any problems and made my mother happy. Later, however, when I did some calculations, I realized that it wasn't possible.



# How I Became a Writer

Ah! How much I wanted to learn, to know, to understand more. I was too poor, and during high school, for four years I needed "a lot." I thought about her, dear mother—I feared I would hurt her, so I decided not to do it. I withdrew my documents from high school. That fall, I took the entrance exam for a vocational school, which I would finish in three years. I received a free uniform and a daily lunch—small comforts that meant the world to me.

Mom cried and struggled to hide her pain. My God! How much she suffered... Then, one day, she hugged me and begged me to forgive her, to never condemn her, because no matter how much she wanted to, she couldn't do more. Then I cried too. How could I ever think of blaming her? Where does this come from? ... Mom was my angel, she was everything, and I loved her unconditionally, always.

In vocational school, I started playing sports. I practiced handball, basketball, athletics, weightlifting, Greco-Roman wrestling, and freestyle wrestling. At 16, I started working. At 17, I became a junior champion in freestyle wrestling, and at 18, I voluntarily joined the army, called by the Dinamo Bucharest Club.

At 19, I bought my first pair of shoes from a store—simple shoes with rough canvas uppers, but they meant everything to me.

At 20 years old, I fell in love for the first time, completely unprepared, and I got married...

After less than a year, it was all over. Her love for me didn't last long.



# How I Became a Writer

She was a painter, she was beautiful, she didn't like to work at all, and she wanted more than a worker without an education, even if he was a champion.

It ended sadly—with the birth of our baby girl, Iulia—and left me facing the worst possible consequences for someone my age.

My father-in-law, a cruel man who once tortured peasants refusing to join the collective, dragged me into countless absurd lawsuits. Wasted time, nerves, suffering. After only a few months, my first wife passed away... Despite everything, I still loved her.

I continued practicing freestyle wrestling: three years at Dinamo, four years with the national team, and another three at Farul Constanța.

At 25, I enrolled in evening courses at Mircea cel Bătrân National College.

At 26, I built a house by myself and... I became paralyzed! For six months, I was in a wheelchair.

The patients at Grant Clinic in Eforie Nord told me I was going to die, as others with much milder conditions hadn't survived.

But I didn't die. A brilliant doctor saved me. He found my case intriguing.

One day, while visiting my ward, he asked me immediately:

*THE LITERARY LEGACY OF NAN CONSTANTIN ILIE*

# Event Poster: RED



THE LITERARY LEGACY OF NAN CONSTANTIN ILIE

# How I Became a Writer

"Boy, do you want to live?"

Of course, I wanted to, of course... I let him experiment on me as much as he could and however, he wanted.

Twelve treatments a day, dozens of medications, 4,000 injections...

So one day, I walked out on my own.

In my second year of high school, during a Romanian literature test on "Plumb" by G. Bacovia—a literary analysis—something miraculous happened.

My Romanian language teacher at the time, Pop Doina, a corpulent woman in her forties, feared by students for her tenacity and intransigence, stopped at my desk at the end of the exam. She stood there, eyeing my paper for a long moment.

"Nan, you've written an exceptional essay! Where did you come from?" she exclaimed. Then, she read it aloud in front of the entire class.

By the end of my third year, all my Romanian essays were being read in front of the class.

I loved and respected my dear teacher until the very end. Her Romanian language classes were like music to my ears, a true blessing. However, in my fourth year, I lost her. In her place came someone else—a beautiful young woman, admired by many—but in vain. The charm of Mrs. Pop Doina's lessons had vanished...

Five years later, after the baccalaureate, I hurried to Bucharest

THE LITERARY LEGACY OF NAN CONSTANTIN ILIE

# How I Became a Writer

to take the entrance exam for the Faculty of Law. I had been preparing for three years. But, as it had been so often in my life, misfortune followed me once again. During the final history exam, I was expelled by the Security for a reason that today seems absurd, even ridiculous. The reason? I was not a member of the Communist Party.

But back then, in the '70s, things were different.

"Comrade Nan, the Faculty of Law is a state-run, political-ideological institution... join the party, and you can return next year to reapply."

How could I return the next year? I was sure I would begin my studies then. I spent the whole day crying at the dean's office door. I knelt, prayed, and humbled myself... In vain, however.

I never joined the Communist Party (PCR), not even later, just for show, like others did. I have always despised communism. So I continued my professional studies, still attending evening classes.

After another five challenging years, I completed the courses to become an Export Furniture Industry Technician. It was a time when furniture factories in Romania exported over 80% of their production to help pay off the foreign debt.

In 1977, I was 29 years old. It was then that I got married for the second time. That's when my children, Georgia and Edward, were born. I increased my workload significantly.

# How I Became a Writer

After a year, I bought a four-room apartment, which was enough for me. I bought color televisions, audio-video systems, carpets, furniture, and even a car. At the beginning of the '80s, I had finally entered the ranks of the more affluent.

Yes! I had escaped poverty... My wife didn't work, but I worked for both of us. In the factory, I had become a chief technician, and section head, and I was leading more than 260 people.

I lived in Constanța, so I also did "other things"... My free time was drastically limited. I never had days off, I never had vacations, and I never wasted my time on anything at all. I always wanted to escape poverty. I was young and I was very strong. It was a special time in my life. I acquired "a lot" and very quickly... In December 1984, my best friend, an engineer at the same furniture factory as me, put an end to my ascent, peace, balance, and well-being.

He turned me in to the Security out of envy for my wealth... Then, everything unfolded quickly. Based on Law 18, Ceaușescu's hollow law for controlling personal wealth, I was stripped of all my possessions. That's how I ended up without an apartment, without furniture, a car, and above all, without a future...

Four years of horror followed! Trials, relentless investigations, beatings at the prosecutor's office, and other humiliations. Desperate and helpless, in the winter of 1986, I went into the snow, dressed only in a tank top and shorts, with my hands up, holding a 17-page petition to Ceaușescu, in the CC of the PCR square. I was arrested on the spot! In the basement of the CC, after six days and

# How I Became a Writer

six nights of uninterrupted interrogation, I faced my final ordeal. Standing, naked, exhausted from fatigue and lack of sleep, I was left alone in an empty room, next to a chair guarded only by two wolf dogs, who were watching my every move, ready to pounce on me. "Be careful, boy, don't move!" The wolves are trained... "You can sit down for five minutes until I come back," said the officer equipped with boots, diagonal, and Kalashnikov, closing the door behind him.

I was feeling sorry for myself. Where had I ended up? Where could I find my justice, where? I hadn't stolen anything from anyone, I hadn't cheated anyone, I had just worked like a madman outside of working hours. I couldn't stay awake any longer, I couldn't possibly stay awake, so I fell asleep instantly. It was just a few seconds...

When I opened my eyes, I was thrown to the ground with the chair still attached, and the wolves above me, ready to tear me apart... "You moved, didn't you, what did I tell you, huh?" the policeman sneered. "Come on, enough, get dressed, go wash yourself in the bathroom. Then you look for comrade Petre. Today you go home!" I was shaking all over, I couldn't calm down at all.

In the bathroom, when I splashed water on my face and head, I dirtied the sink with grime. Damn, this life! Damn, this life! Curse it all... All my hair had fallen out, and my heart had gone crazy.

In the long, deserted corridors, apart from the armed militia, there was no one I could ask about comrade Petre. I saw a woman dusting the windows, ugly, and with a mustache. With hope

# How I Became a Writer

in my heart, I approached her shyly to ask about comrade Petre:

Damn you, you scoundrel, you found me to be the fool, huh?" "Get out of here or I'll pour this water over your head! Look at that, what audacity!"

Since then, I have known that ugly women with mustaches are also mean. Comrade Petre was the janitor, an important man, a veteran underground activist... and the woman with the mustache, what can I say, she was the same, they both had salaries like those of directors...

I didn't make it home. At the North Station, I collapsed. The snow had melted, so the floor was covered in dirty black water. Around me, the air was thick—stale sweat, cigarette smoke, and urine. The cold floor seeped through my clothes, sticky with mud and filth. Boots splashed through the sludge, voices echoing sharp and cruel, cutting through the sour stench of unwashed bodies. Many spat on me, saying I was as big as a mess, that I was an animal, that I had drunk my mind away. Others were playing football with my hat in the dirty mud of the station... Someone, however, an old man, a nobody from that whole crowd that was mocking me, made his way to me.

Left on one knee above me, he asked, sniffing me, looking intensely into my almost extinguished eyes...

"Hey boy, but you haven't drunk anything..." Isn't that right? ...

My mouth was clenched shut and I couldn't speak in any way.

With my eyes fixed on him, I slightly shook my head, and then, before I knew it, I lost consciousness.

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# Scene from RED



**Nan Constantin Ilie**, left, pictured with friends from Bucharest—authors all—next to **Julia Kalman**, his translator, **Adriana Macsut**, doctor in Philosophy, **Irina Spilca**, journalist, and **Otilia Elena Borș**, fine artist.

THE LITERARY LEGACY OF NAN CONSTANTIN ILIE



# How I Became a Writer

I spent three weeks in the intensive care unit at Floreasca Hospital. I was in paroxysmal atrial fibrillation, leaving me one step from death... They brought me back to life, only with repeated electric shocks. In the autumn of 1987, out of the 150 investigated under Law 18, I was the only one who won, without a lawyer, ironically, after going through all the stages of communist justice. So I got back everything that had been confiscated from me: house, furniture, car, and three years' worth of salaries because during the entire duration of the trials, I worked without receiving a single penny at the end of the month. If I hadn't worked, I would have gone to prison under Article 152 for vagrancy.

For four years, I struggled to discover who had caused me so much suffering, four years of nightmares, helplessness, and injustice, but I didn't find anyone.

After December 1989, everything about my life was turned upside down. Much to my colleagues' astonishment, I walked away from the factory without a second thought. I was free, with an open heart. In January 1990, I got my first passport. In line at the county police station, there wasn't a single Romanian around me. At the county police station, I stood among Turks and Gypsies. The first trip I took was to Vienna to see the city of Beethoven, Mozart, and Brahms... To stroll through the famous Prater Park, which I had read so much about. The train ride cost 750 lei, a modest sum, and there was no need for a visa.

Then, when I returned home, I set off for Istanbul, eager to see the Fanar, Topkapi, Stephen the Great's sword, and the Old Bazaar.

# How I Became a Writer

In the following years, I went about 35 more times, this time for money. I learned from the Turks and the other fellow travelers on the bus how to make a lot of money, dollars, real money. Romanians weren't exactly rushing to get involved. They sat in front of the televisions because, well, it was democracy. They drank beer, munched on puffed corn snacks, and marveled at how well Petre Roman spoke French and how much of a 'good guy' Ion Iliescu seemed. When they snapped out of their daydreams, they were utterly astonished that the Gypsies and Turks were driving Mercedes cars proudly. And I... had two...

Eager to see and directly experience other cultures, I traveled all over Europe. I had spent a lifetime reading up to that point, so I knew what to look for. In the old bazaar in Istanbul, filled with the beauty of intricate gold jewelry, my fair lady—'bless her'—fainted, overcome by the sheer splendor of it all. Some said she had gold fever, though I never understood why. In Paris, Rome, or Venice, I traveled alone because my wife preferred the gold in Istanbul.

She was incredibly beautiful, and the Turks would fawn over her as if she were a queen. She laughed at them, enjoying the attention. In stores and bazaars, if she merely touched or looked at a dress, bag, or jacket, the owners would offer it to her for free, with bows... yes, she was beautiful, desired, and dreamed of...

So, Nely was living her moment of glory as a woman, fully embracing it. She had mesmerizing green eyes and many called her the "Ice Princess"... And while she was in Istanbul, I walked on the Great Wall of China, dined on boats in Thailand, and touched

# How I Became a Writer

the pyramids in Egypt.

In the fall of 1990, I had a fortune saved up, so I started building the first private bar in Constanța, on Soveja Street, and a shop. With just one day left before the inauguration, a devastating fire destroyed everything we had built, in under half an hour. Many laughed then and rejoiced... But I had no time to waste on that. In just 20 days, I rebuilt it, making it even more beautiful and elegant than before, and soon after...

I started making serious profits.

I bought two trucks and personal cars from Germany and the Netherlands, and I set up two video cassette rental centers for the public, as cable television was just beginning to test its signal.

In March 1994, I turned 46, while my beautiful wife was 36.

In July, I obtained the last cable television license in Constanța, signed by Răzvan Teodorescu, then the director of Romania's National Audiovisual Council.

Among those on the Council back then were rhapsodist Tudor Gheorghe, and Ecaterina Oproiu (who wrote the play 'I Am Not the Eiffel Tower' in 1969), along with film directors and politicians. I had the chance to meet them all personally.

I was extremely busy and had a lot on my plate, leaving me with little time to spare.

I felt trapped because I had lost control over my time.

In September, after 17 years of marriage, we decided to separate.

# How I Became a Writer

We had entered different phases of life, and my fair lady saw things differently than I did.

I don't want to go into details, as the children may read this one day.

She left for Bucharest, where she was from.

Following the divorce, the court determined the custody arrangements for the children.

Edward, the younger one, to my despair, stayed with his mother. He was thrilled at the thought of going to Bucharest by truck, but Georgia chose to stay with me, as that was her wish.

She graduated high school with top marks, got into Journalism with top scores, and graduated at the top of her class.

She completed a master's degree in Paris and another in New York...

Today, she lives in London. She's stunningly beautiful, speaks five languages fluently, and sells 'skyscrapers' worldwide.

I take no credit—it's all her effort. I contributed a small amount, but that's all.

After some time, I finally brought Edward back

Without him in the house, I couldn't eat, breathe, or catch my breath from missing him.

It was the time of my absolute happiness—and his too.

There was never a better time than this... Today, he is a manager at a complex of clubs and restaurants in Manchester, after spending 7 years in the resorts of Cyprus, Ayia Napa, Larnaca, and the capital Nicosia.

# How I Became a Writer

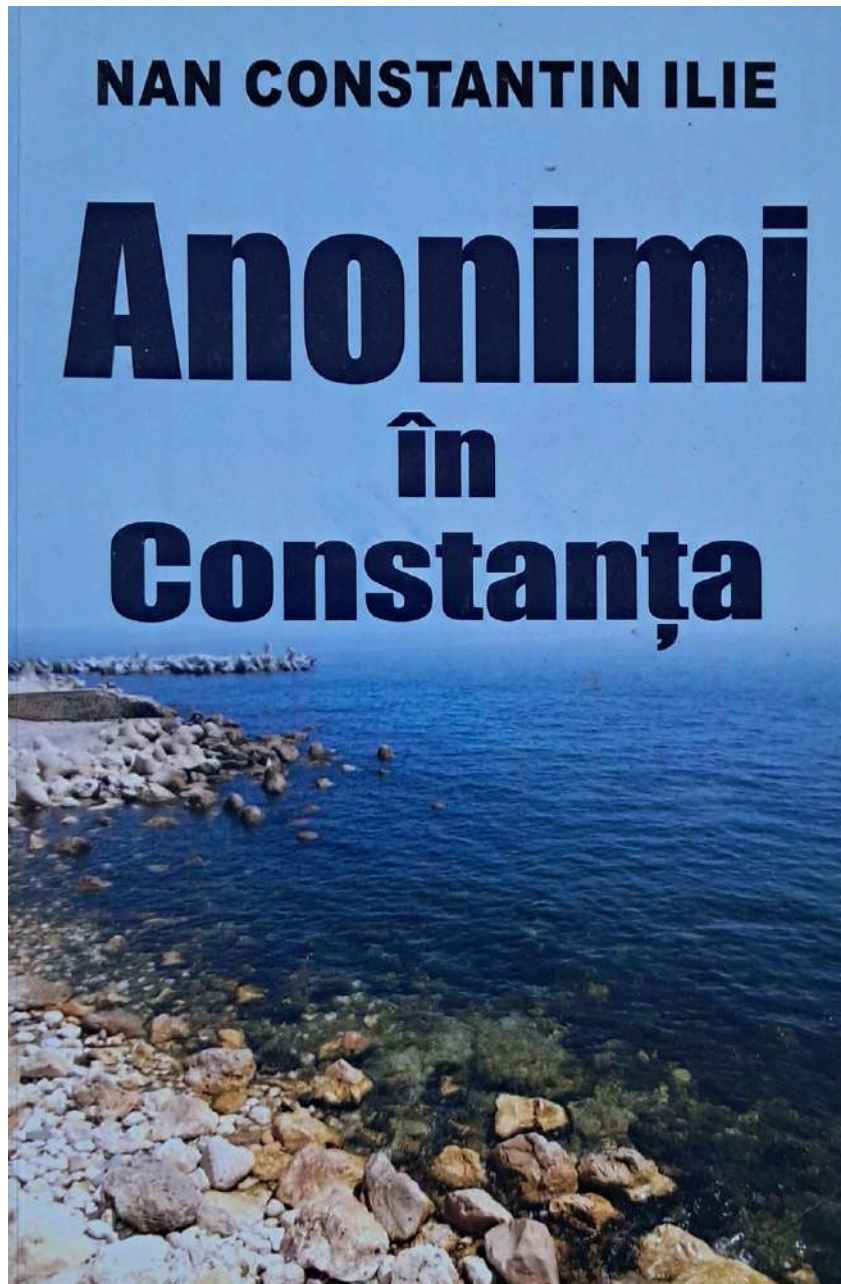
Nely, his beautiful mother, also passed away after some years, just like the first one. She is no longer here!

I didn't want to remarry, I didn't want to... I fought in my life with many bad men, but I never cursed or hit a woman, yet this, over time, proved to be irrelevant. I grew up without a father, I had no one to learn from... I've always believed, based on my readings—the hundreds, even thousands, of books I've read—that love always conquers. But real life, as it is, has painfully shown me that far more is needed... Even today, I haven't learned my lesson, not even today! Did I suffer? Oh, yes! ... Of course, I suffered. More than anyone could imagine. Back then, I lost a lot... Balance, social status, friends, possessions, money. I hated her for that, I admit, I hated her! I was once again in a state of bankruptcy, I had nothing left. Everything was gone again, down the drain...

One night, alone at home, exhausted, tormented by nightmares and uncertainty, I wrote an essay, “Gold and Hope” - from the perspective of a lonely, unlucky man, just to wallow in self-pity, to try to calm myself down. Over time, especially before 1990, I had written many pages just to amuse my fair lady. But with the passing years, they were lost—discarded, forgotten, or torn up by my own hand in moments of doubt. But this one, I have kept to this day – forever.

I left the past behind, it was hurting me, suffocating me. I looked straight ahead and focused on my own business. I renovated the bar and turned the store into an arcade – American Poker. The cable television network, totaling 300 km, which has its own

# Book Photography



THE LITERARY LEGACY OF NAN CONSTANTIN ILIE

# How I Became a Writer

special story, I sold to a Swede. At that time, it had 24 channels and 2000 subscribers. In July 1995, I started to calm down, but fate had other plans. I met a very young substitute Romanian teacher... Tall, brunette, beautiful. She came from a forgotten village in Tulcea County.

She was humble and spoke eloquently.

What can I say? ... I fell madly in love with her, but marriage was out of the question in any form, because Liliana was – is, 28 years younger. One day, while we were walking along the Southern coast of the Black Sea, she slipped over the stones of the dam surrounding the lake at Neptun, cutting her knee deeply on the mussels stuck everywhere. She was bleeding, it hurt and stung from the salty water, but she said nothing, just smiled shyly, she didn't utter a word!

I told myself then that this girl was special. So I picked her up and ran with her to the nearest medical aid station. Of course, we got married, of course... It's been 25 years since then. Who would have believed that? Who? Some were convinced that we wouldn't last even 6 months.

I started another life.

At times easy, at times hard — interesting, complicated, and later full of surprises and fulfillment.

As a sign of joy, of my new happiness that had taken over my existence and of a good thought kept since childhood, in October 1996 I founded the humanitarian foundation "True People."



# How I Became a Writer

We helped hundreds, even thousands of children with various disabilities or AIDS. We helped the elderly forgotten by everyone, families with many children, chronically ill patients, and even Serbian refugee children on the Romanian Black Sea coast following the NATO bombings.

This was the time when I started writing. Short stories, reflections, controversies, dramas... I started with "I love you, Constanța" and continued with the second, a legend set somewhere beyond Costinești, "Saint Helena of the Sea"...

One day, one copy ended up in the hands of the renowned journalist and writer, Ovidiu Dunăreanu, who was then the president of the Dobrogea Branch of the Writers' Union of Romania, contacted me by phone: "Hello!" ... "Who are you, Mr. Nan, where did you come from, Constanța?"... Then, we met and talked. "And how is it, sir, can you still write, do you still want to write?" Yes, no problem," I replied. "Then, write something else"...

That's how I wrote my third piece... A parody: *Don't laugh! The director is no different...*

In a year, I wrote another 10 stories and essays. Small booklets, about half the size of A5, which we printed at the Foundation's headquarters and distributed by the Foundation's volunteers in Constanța and throughout the county. More than 80,000 copies were printed this way and sold at that time for 10,000 lei each. The money obtained was periodically regularly doubled in bank deposits due to the high interest rates of that time.



# How I Became a Writer

Authorized by the Constanța Court to award diplomas to those who materially support the humanitarian activities of the Foundation, I contacted companies and individuals. In a very short time, "Real People" had become the most powerful non-governmental organization in Constanța, in terms of both financial strength and activity.

In 1997, I founded Caritas Taxi, a commercial company with six taxi vehicles, with the foundation as the sole owner. In 1998, I edited a weekly community newspaper, with the same name, Real People, consisting of six A3 pages... After nine months, it had reached 24 pages. The editorial staff comprised enthusiastic young journalists led by an editor-in-chief with a degree in the field – Paula Buzoianu, who guided us all in the art of writing.

Soon... I had to write the lead article every week. I had unintentionally become a public figure. I had a weekly hour-long social program on a radio station in Constanța, interviews in local newspapers and on newly established TV stations, as well as invitations to high schools and nightclubs to talk about AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases...

Then, I started writing more seriously. I started my first short story collection, *Letters with the Scent of Waves*, in which I talk about old Constanța, Mamaia in its early days, customs, and people living by the sea, published by Metafora Publishing House in 2005.

Later, I started writing a documentary book... Anonymous in Constanța, but after a while, I abandoned the project.

# How I Became a Writer

My life had fallen apart again... terribly. Bad, very bad... I was once again bankrupt and in a pointless and absurd conflict with the city hall, particularly the new mayor, Radu Mazăre.

Under pressure from all sides, we were left with nothing, having spent all our savings.

I closed the Foundation, the taxi line, the newspaper, and the Edward company, which had funded everything. We donated the cars to the County Council for the orphanages in the city.

We had nothing left, we had spent all the money.

In 2002, Robert, my child and Liliana's was born, so we all moved without protest into the old house of my mother in the Palas neighborhood, on the outskirts of the city. Disappointed and even depressed, I still sought to find another path, to look for new ways of existence. In 2003, I made a firm decision! I will build a factory for construction materials. First, I rented a huge warehouse in Ovidiu, and then I leased a large piece of land in the Lumina commune, along the road to Tulcea. In 2004, everything was already in full swing.

How I did it, with which people, and what money, I brought my project to completion, well, that's another story. I wouldn't wish what I went through back then on anyone...

In 2005, I bought a new SUV for which I paid 50,000 euros. I started paying installments for the purchase of the leased land. Everything

# How I Became a Writer

went well until 2007 when the economic crisis struck hard — a plague that swept across Romania, leaving many others in this country struggling.

In 2008, I sold the factory and the land, then bought a villa by the canal in Năvodari, in a luxury area. I started to occasionally write a different kind of book – a true novel, *When the Swallows Return*. In 2010, I opened a store with mobile phones, electronic accessories, bill payments, car and property insurance, as well as electronic top-ups for prepaid mobile cards.

And at the same time, my younger brother George died.

In 2011, I designed a men's t-shirt collection. I produced several thousand pieces in 35 designs, all of which sold out. In 2012, I started a catering business – twenty hot packaged dishes, including fish specialties. In 2013, despite all my efforts to develop new business facilities, I was achieving nothing. It felt like I was running alone on the track and always painfully finishing in second place.

That's when I made the definitive decision to change my path. I took my family and we all left for England, to the city of Manchester, in search of a new life and a secure future for my boys.

Now Robert is an award-winning student at Lostock College in the city, Liliana works at a private clinic while simultaneously pursuing her degree in English and Mathematics.

Edward, specializing in Nicosia – Cyprus, in tourism management,



# How I Became a Writer

is, as I mentioned earlier, a manager at the Piccadilly Center in Manchester. There I wrote a few novels, but how can I put it better? I simply can't become British, no matter how hard I try.

I have always missed my sea, the streets of the city filled with memories, the sun, the sour soup with lovage, the Romanian girls, my everyday language, and even a good curse, so I returned to the villa in Năvodari.

The vast distance between them and me bred estrangement... No comment! This is my life. Since then, 7 years have passed. We didn't break up, we didn't divorce, we remained kind of friends, that's it! We talk... Without arguments or insults.

In 2016, I published my first novel, *When the Swallows Return*, in 2017, followed by *Deep Waters* and a book featuring 400 images, *Anonymous in Constanța*... In 2018, I published *Lost in the Dark (Born on the Dark Side)*, a compelling two-volume novel about which Professor Dr. Olga Duțu, as well as other prestigious names in the Dobrogea literary world, said at the time that it should be adapted for the screen.

In 2019, I also published and presented on June 20, at the "Mihail Sadoveanu" Literary Circle, a 400-page volume entitled *Seventeen*, an exceptional volume that includes seventeen stories about seventeen young people, boys and girls, who turned seventeen. In the fall of 2019, I also published a novel, *Don't Shed No Tears, Brother*, which I presented on November 7 at the County Library in Constanța.

# How I Became a Writer

I never stopped... I am currently working on another two-volume novel, titled ADAGIO, an obsessive love story, one that haunts me personally, with dire consequences, inspired by the classical piece, Adagio in G minor, by Tomaso Albinoni, later adapted after World War II by Remo Giazotto, his biographer and also a musician, in a deeply moving arrangement, which I first listened to 30 years ago...

What may follow, though I can't say for sure, is *The Curse of the Years*, a meditative novel, probably this one too, in two volumes, then another and another, for as long as health allows...

From 2016-2017, I began to be promoted as a writer at Radio Constanța.

In 2018, I was accepted into the "Mihail Sadoveanu" Literary Circle in Constanța, and then in 2019, in the League of Romanian Writers, Dobrogea branch.

Gradually, my novels began to find their place in readers' hearts and minds. I have donated books to the libraries of the University of Constanța, Chișinău, Năvodari, and others.

I have been invited to the radio a few times and to television. I have published excerpts from my novels in 8 magazines and in 5 anthologies. I have written more than 40 essays and short stories.

One day, while visiting the writer Ovidiu Dunăreanu, he asked me with a smile if my literary vein still had substance, if I hadn't grown tired...

My response was direct, honest, and simple:

THE LITERARY LEGACY OF NAN CONSTANTIN ILIE

# How I Became a Writer

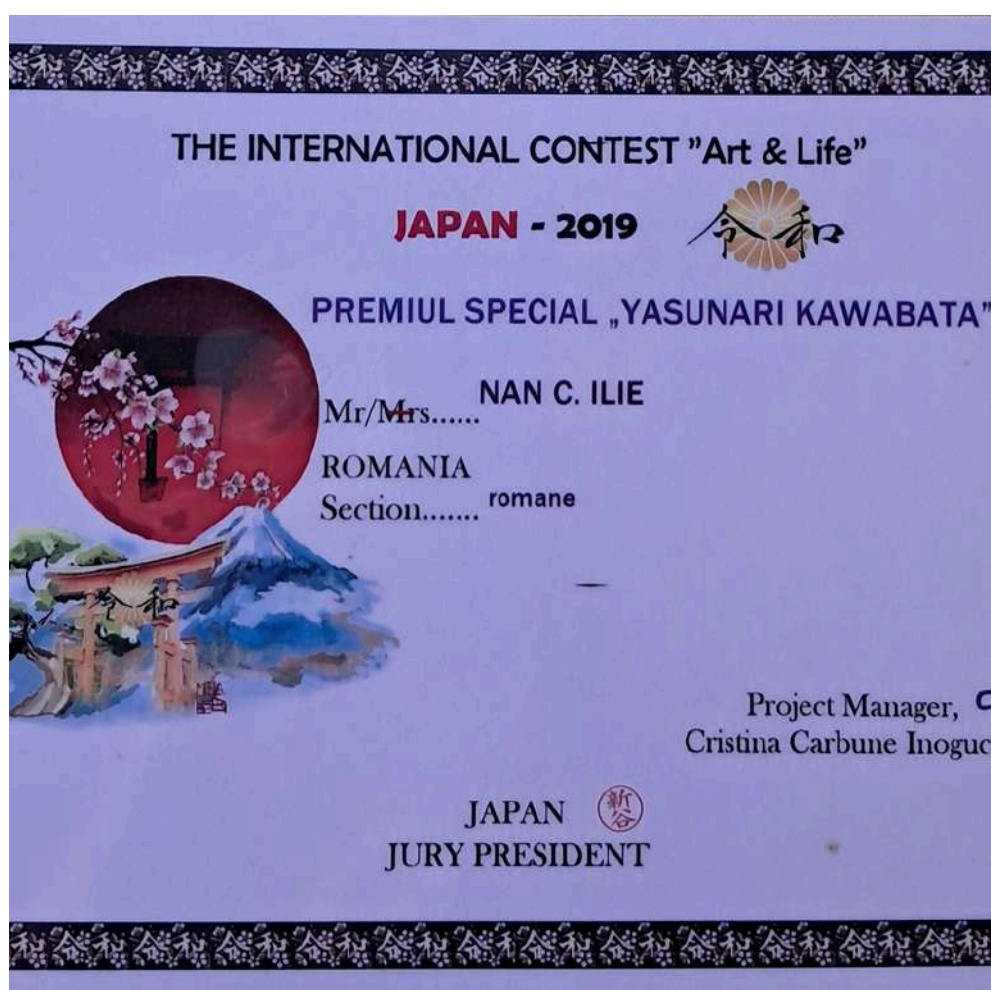
No, sir, not at all! My lifelong harsh experiences—the love affairs, the betrayals, the disappointments, the hopes, and my constant struggle for existence—I don't believe they could ever be exhausted.

Not even in two lifetimes, because they are like the hydrocarbon deposits in the Black Sea, 'patiently' waiting to be brought to light...

— **Nan Constantin Ilie, 2020**



# The Special Prize



THE LITERARY LEGACY OF NAN CONSTANTIN ILIE



# Review: Don't Shed No Tears, Brother

This summer, I received two simultaneous requests for literary translations from people I didn't know.

I chose to work on Nan Constantin Ilie's novel *Don't Shed No Tears, Brother* for the story—and, why not, for the story behind the story. I now congratulate myself on this decision and feel honored to collaborate with such a powerful and sensitive storyteller.

*Don't Shed No Tears, Brother* is a foray into the inferno of innocence, inhabited by children saved from communism by their love. It is a book of destiny.

The autobiographical novel undoubtedly stands out due to its timely exploration of healthcare issues, and the author-character imposes himself at first sight, through his personal charisma and magnetism.

Nan was born in 1948 - the year of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the London Summer Olympics, and last but not least, the year of the Establishment of the World Health Organization. He is a writer with an epic life. [...]

This hard-fought existence led to the writing of *Don't Shed No Tears, Brother* - an authentic and original book, meant to preserve and perpetuate the collective memory of the communist period. I motivate this first argument, by the presence of the specter of the Stalinist Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej on the panoply of characters.

THE LITERARY LEGACY OF NAN CONSTANTIN ILIE

# Review: Don't Shed No Tears, Brother

The author captures aspects of the cynical amorality of communism. Interestingly, some injustices are punished.

Another compelling aspect of the book lies in its psychological insight.

Nan's writing possesses a certain psychological depth, particularly shaped by studying human behavior at the school of life.

Here I would give two examples, without going into details to spoil the plot.

First, I would like to refer to the characters' development, observing the author's appetite for the inner, gradual, subtle, but radical transformation of the characters.

The Preventorium proves to be an environment that fosters anti-social behavior and juvenile delinquency, and all children who have ever been there experienced emotional abuse and the erosion of their identity.

Secondly, I would say that the novel brilliantly reflects a certain everyday aspect. We discover many types of lies, both innocent and guilty, beginning with official lies.

The third argument in favor of the book concerns both its structure and content.

The novel's climax is unpredictable, powerful, and multifaceted. Even when you think nothing odd can happen and everything is

# Review: Don't Shed No Tears, Brother

heading downhill to a predictable conclusion, horrors strike. There's nothing more to be said—well, except for a warning. *Don't Shed No Tears, Brother* is a foray into the inferno of innocence. It's a book about children, but is it age-appropriate for kids and teens? Definitely not.

In conclusion, I find that the author entices the reader with the simplicity of language and the clarity of emotions, but consistently surprises with the alternation of opposing emotions. I would say that love is put to the test in *Don't Shed No Tears, Brother*, a test that only a few couples pass. [...]

Well, there are many mysteries in this world, including this great book of confession, emerging now after more than 50 years. *Don't Shed No Tears, Brother* is a traditional novel—cohesive and untainted, and its author is a magician of emotion. Nan practices soulful writing, aiming to move the reader. He sheds a tear on every page, and the reader can really feel it.

- How did you come up with the idea to write about the TB epidemic, just a few months before the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, I asked him.
- *Don't Shed No Tears, Brother* is a prophecy or the future in the past, he told me sibilantly.

— **Julia Kalman, 2020**

THE LITERARY LEGACY OF NAN CONSTANTIN ILIE

# In the Art Studio Light and Color by Vali Irina Ciobanu



<https://valiirinaciobanuart.com/>

THE LITERARY LEGACY OF NAN CONSTANTIN ILIE

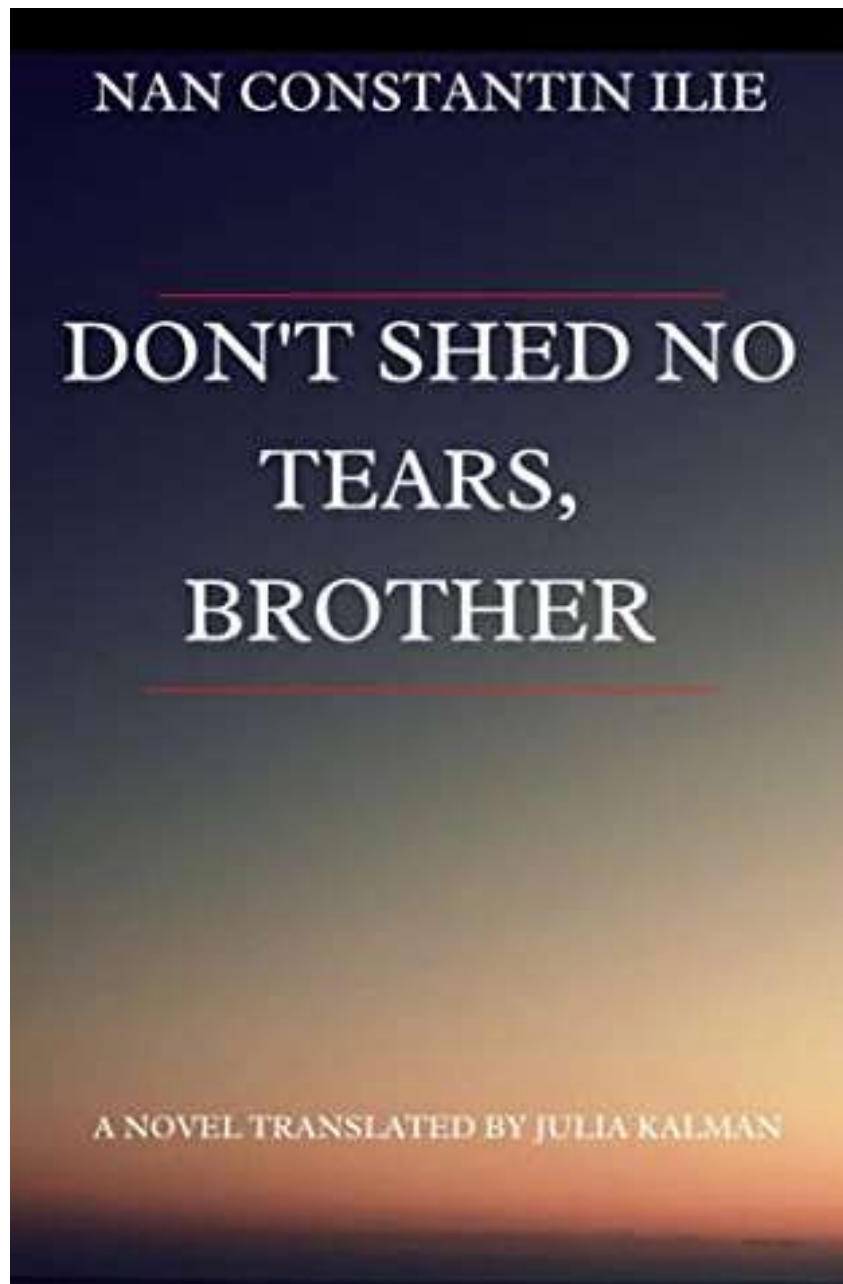
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THE LITERARY LEGACY OF NAN CONSTANTIN ILIE

# Book Photography



THE LITERARY LEGACY OF NAN CONSTANTIN ILIE

# Presentation: Don't Shed No Tears, Brother

The period referred to in Nan Constantin Ilie's book is one of the most difficult in contemporary Romanian history. The 1950s, during which the novel's action takes place, were the years of Romania's complete break from its previous openness to the Western political, economic, and cultural world. Romania had already experienced difficult crises in the 20th century.

Among these hardships were the difficult war years 1916–1918 and then the terrible years from 1941–1945, when Romania was drawn into the life-and-death struggles between the Great Powers of those times. Somehow, for Romanians, the war did not truly end in 1945.

Romania found itself, starting in August 1944, under brutal Soviet control. In March 1945, with the establishment of the government of Dr. Petru Groza, a government imposed by Stalin, Romania slowly but surely became an oppressive state under Soviet control.

The country was divided into factions. A sense of distrust took root in this new society, apparently a society of equals. No one trusted anyone anymore. A deep rift occurred between the new communized institutions and the ordinary people of Romania.

But, at the same time, we are also dealing with pockets of brave, upright individuals who oppose the new regime. In the mountains, as we well know, heroic acts against the Soviet occupation took place, while in prisons, the martyrdom of the intellectuals, as well

# Presentation: Don't Shed No Tears, Brother

as other social categories in Romania, occurred.

In the novel by the writer Nan Constantin Ilie, we are dealing, on an intimate level, with the struggles and daily fight of a family trapped by the new regime. The novel focuses primarily on a particular category of citizens: children. And, very insightfully, the writer Nan highlights a paradox of that time: a regime that sought passionately to shape the new man but ultimately achieved the opposite.

This regime did not value children from families deemed politically unreliable, broken families, or orphaned children. The novel, among many other things, shows us how, in fact, the communist regime disregarded its own future.

Ultimately, the most important asset of any state, at all times, is its children. And here we had yet another confirmation that Stalin and his clique had begun a meticulous plan of extermination not so much of the Romanians, but especially the suppression of independent thought.

Stalin and his successors needed Romanians without a conscience. In short, they needed a mass of people who would blindly follow the Marxist-Leninist doctrine.

Thus, a deliberate suppression of education and critical thinking

THE LITERARY LEGACY OF NAN CONSTANTIN ILIE



# Presentation: Don't Shed No Tears, Brother

took place throughout Romania.

The novel shows us multiple facets of Romania immediately after the death of dictator Stalin (March 1953). We see a society that had not yet healed from the years of war (1941–1945).

We read in the pages of this book about the World War II mutilations, the maimed, about former soldiers struggling to survive in communist Romania.

The novel describes a whole series of characters.

Alex is the main hero.

He is accompanied throughout the pages by his brother. Another central figure in the novel is the mother of the two boys. But, besides the heroes, we also encounter the archetype of the antihero in this writing. And here, perhaps unwittingly, the author refers to the classic archetype of the antihero, as produced by the Soviet Union under Stalin's leadership. It is about that apparatchik, that man of the system, the ferocious Stalinist in his methods, none other than the head of the NKVD, and later the KGB, the feared Lavrenti Beria.

Beria was an official notorious for his brutal actions, including harassing citizens on the street. He was a sadistic official who systematically tortured those deemed enemies of the state.

# Presentation: Don't Shed No Tears, Brother

Like Stalin, Beria was Georgian, infallible in his own mind and almost a demigod in the Soviet Union. Beria abducted innocent action is set.

Here, in the Preventorium, we encounter a local Beria, a doctor who is also a party secretary. Doctor Pompiliu Stoian, a local Beria from Turnu Severin, beats, tortures, and inflicts suffering on the children in the Preventorium. Torture of children and an attempted rape of a female educator occur in this semi-orphanage.

Other employees of the Preventorium suddenly disappear between chapters.

Most of them, as revealed in the novel, are arrested by the party's security forces. Specifically, in the pages of the novel, we encounter a man of the system, a figure with the power of life and death over those in the Preventorium.

The Beria model from the Soviet Union was replicated in Romania just ten years after the communists took power.

The Turnu Severin Beria, like his Soviet counterpart, was defended and protected by a higher authority within the communist party. His beastly behavior was endorsed by a "small Stalin," either the county head or the leader of the Workers' Party in that province. (The Romanian Communist Party was called the Romanian Workers' Party from 1948 to 1965.)

# Presentation: Don't Shed No Tears, Brother

These situations repeated themselves on a different scale, in a different place and country. And the result remained the same: the citizens from the streets and raped them in villas under the jurisdiction of his institution. The only power greater than Beria's was perhaps that of Stalin himself. And, returning to Mr. Nan's novel, similar events take place in the Preventorium in Turnu A creation of the "new man" through suffering.

A particular chapter in the novel even references the Pitești Phenomenon (This 'Beria' of Turnu-Severin forces the two brothers to fight each other). The two brothers briefly become executioners to one another.

Overall, Mr. Nan paints a picture of Romania in the 1950s as seen by ordinary people in the 1950s in his novel, a picture of Romania as seen by ordinary people.

We see that neither these people nor intellectuals or other disadvantaged social groups receive better treatment from the regime that was supposedly established to protect the working class and the peasantry.

In the Sanatorium, the novel depicts a struggle for survival. The struggle for food is a daily battle.

But wasn't all of Romania suffering the same hardships at the time?

# Presentation: Don't Shed No Tears, Brother

The final moment of the novel depicts the apparent liberation of our heroes.

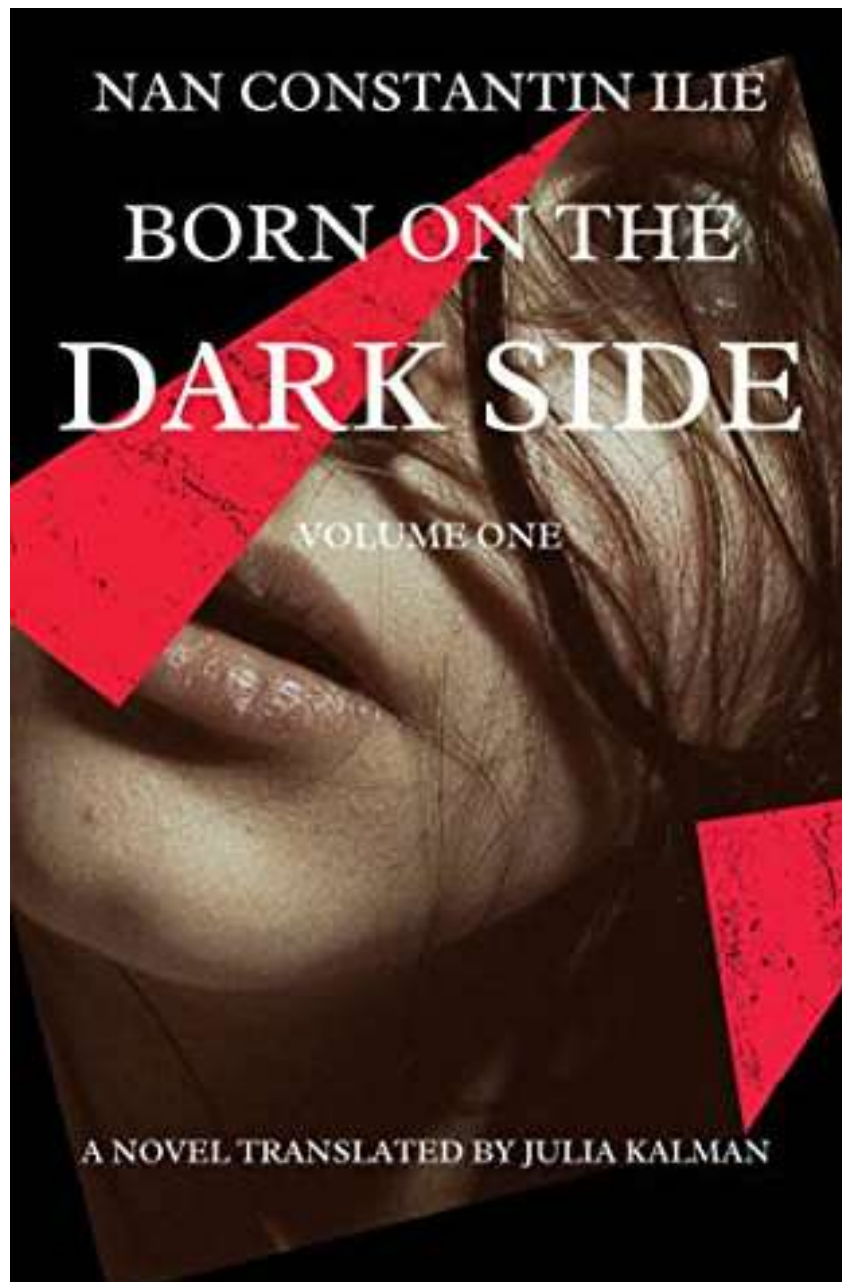
And the reunion of the children with their mother can be seen as a kind of rebirth.

However, freedom is just an illusion.

Our heroes remain trapped in that vast Preventorium known as communist Romania until 1989.

**—Mark Perpits, Presentation during “BEASTY Performance”,  
“Orizont” Gallery, Bucharest, Halloween 2022**

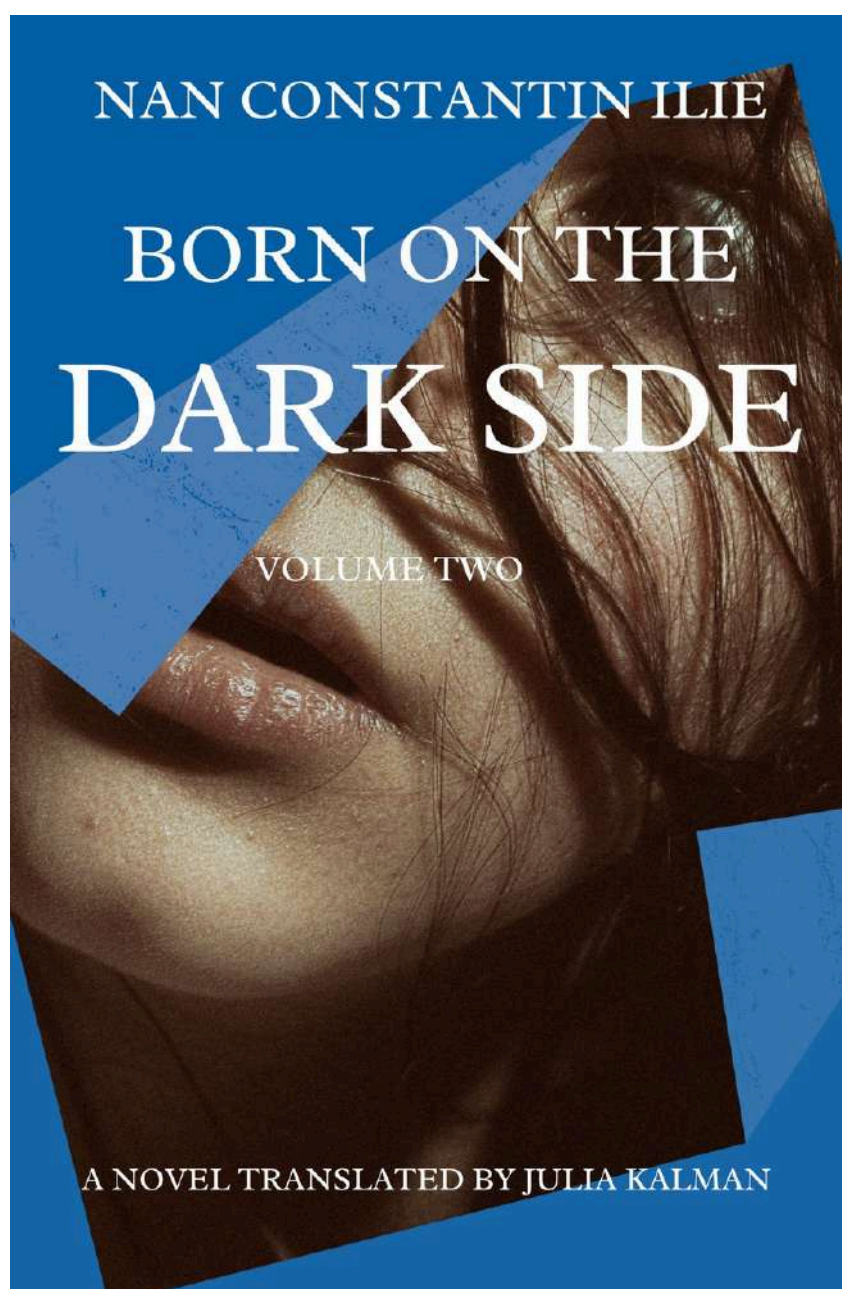
# Book Photography



THE LITERARY LEGACY OF NAN CONSTANTIN ILIE

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# Book Photography



THE LITERARY LEGACY OF NAN CONSTANTIN ILIE

# Review:

## Born on the Dark Side

*Born on the Dark Side* by Nan Constantin Ilie is a novel of temptations—an adventure through space, time, and creative imagination—featuring seemingly familiar characters who leave their mark on us in unexpected ways.

The book gathers valuable information, even for historians of recent times.

Details about the Romanian Revolution, insight into the tragic destiny of the Romanian nobility, and fragments from recorded documents aim to restore and recover as much as possible from that difficult period.

This work of fiction is valuable for its historical character, as well as the structure and development of its characters.

Nan Constantin Ilie transforms reality into fiction, recomposing history with narrative verve.

He invites us to take part in events that go back in time, starting from Brâncoveanu's reign, winding through centuries to communism in the eighties, the Revolution of 1989, and the post-revolutionary period.

The writer presents exotic aspects of that time, often forgotten, but of great interest to the reader; an easy and passionate journey. We face cannons, insidious ghostly enemies—the terrorists of the

# Review:

## Born on the Dark Side

Revolution.

We close our eyes, take a deep breath (which I recommend), and visualize the sacrifices made—the wounds of the heroes of the Revolution, even the smell and taste of their blood.

From the first literary meeting with Nan Constantin Ilie, I noticed his technique.

On the panoply of characters, he first sketches the historical figures—His Majesty King Michael I of Romania, Ion Rațiu, Ion Iliescu, Petre Roman, Mircea Dinescu, and Ion Caramitru—then adds the main characters, with his favorite ones in the background: the orphans, the little pickpockets, the thieves, the nurses, and the obsessively recurring Comrade Godmother.

I was saying that *Born on the Dark Side* by Nan Constantin Ilie would be a novel of temptations.

Well, yes.

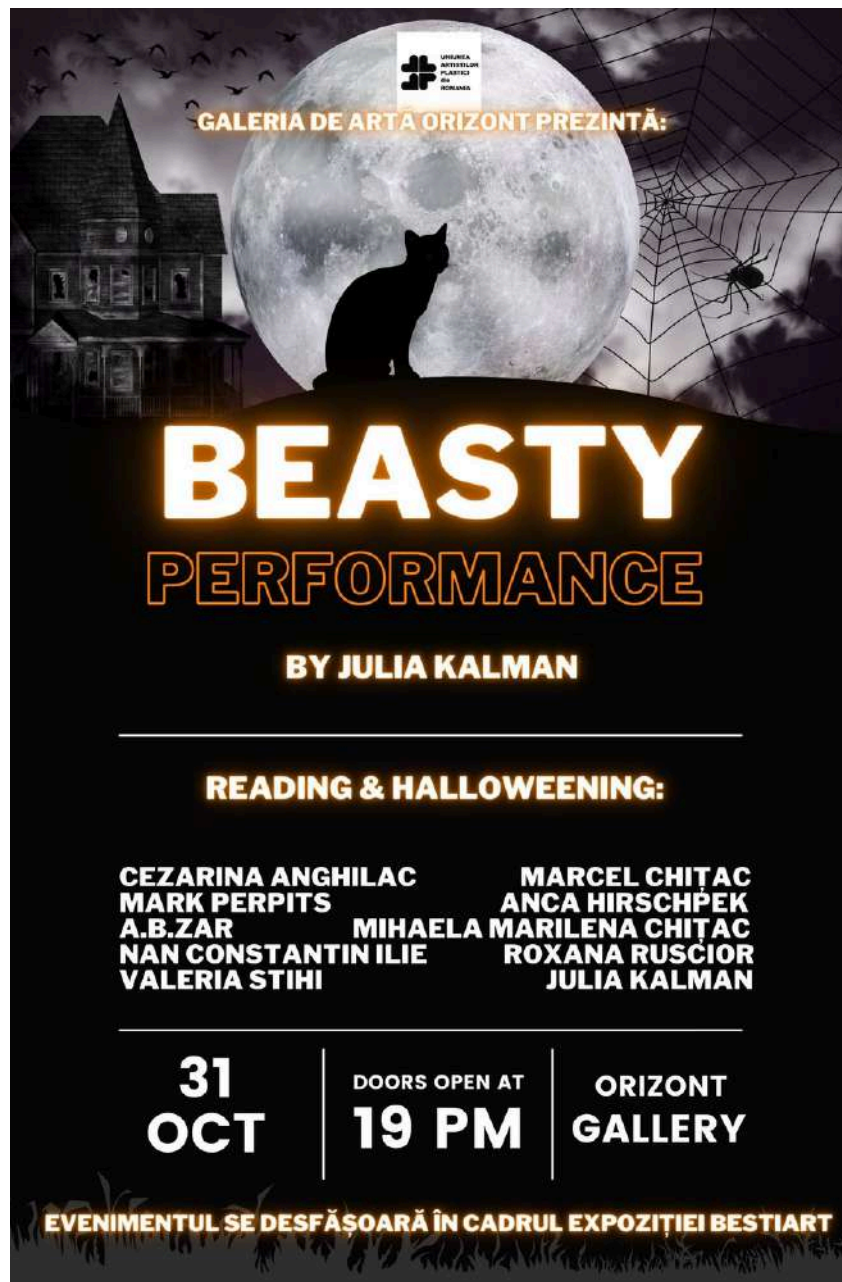
And of all, those temptations faced by abandoned children, being taught to commit crimes in the very institution that should have taken care of their social integration.

Particularly moving is the moment when one of the characters, around the age of twenty, experiences a revelation of evil and decides to change his life.

The writing follows the evolution of the characters, presenting a bildungsroman that depicts the psychological and moral growth of



# Event Poster: BEASTY



# Review:

## Born on the Dark Side

its main protagonists—Christian and Angelina Livia.

Nan Constantin Ilie—a seductive author, a master of emotion, a creator of terror, and a chronicler of love.

I can't help but notice the way he plays with the reader's emotions. He incites, baffles, and attracts with enviable ease, both through art and through his presence.

The book launch caused a stir, and according to him, one of his admirers even proposed to him. It seems that *Born on the Dark Side* by Nan Constantin Ilie has come to light and proves to be an interesting book, maybe even his author's masterpiece.

— **Julia Kalman, 2022**

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# Review: Letters with the Scent of Waves

Nan Constantin Ilie lived his whole life in Constanța, roaming the Dobrogea land by the seaside, with his heart and soul. Left without a father at the age of four, he fully experienced the state of being a poor orphan child at a time when the Coiciu neighborhood in Constanța was dominated by mud, lawlessness, abuses by occupying Russian soldiers, ignorance, communist lies, and daily beatings.

He lived on the streets of the neighborhood alongside his younger brother and the other children who were just as tormented as they were.

Nan Constantin Ilie contented himself with just a little, and he experienced the pain and helplessness of being in an orphanage near Drobeta-Turnu Severin, when his loving mother, exhausted by worries, sleepless nights, and work carried out to the point of sacrifice to raise them alone, fell ill with tuberculosis.

Without an adult man to defend them in tough times, they fought with crowds of tricksters, rascals, and scoundrels to survive.

He fell in love several times with literary treasures found in the city's garbage dumps.

Later, after years of suffering and injustices, in December 1989, he traveled to three continents freely and alone, discovering new and extraordinary values and perspectives on the world he lived in, which until then had been constrained by restrictive communist

# Review: Letters with the Scent of Waves

policies.

In 1996, he finally fulfilled his childhood dream... He founded a humanitarian foundation, which soon became the most powerful in Dobrogea. Named "Real People," its noble goal was to provide protection for orphaned children: children with AIDS, children with disabilities, and street children...

He has thus helped hundreds and hundreds of children, providing them with footwear, clothing, medicine, food, and countless other necessities, and, at the start of the school year, new backpacks filled with supplies.

He also donated four Dacia cars to the Constanța County Council for four orphanages in the city.

Two years later, he founded a weekly newspaper, named the same as the Foundation, to connect disadvantaged individuals with powerful Romanian and foreign people, who rose to prominence after the revolution of December 1989. (as detailed in the book *Anonimi în Constanța*) This is how he began his writing journey...

About Nan Constantin Ilie, the man and friend, as well as his works, I have always written, yes... and every time I had the same opinion:

His novels are for people who are real, and for those who fought against the hardships of fate, for those who have learned over the years that nothing comes without effort and consequences.

*THE LITERARY LEGACY OF NAN CONSTANTIN ILIE*

# Review: Letters with the Scent of Waves

*Letters with the Scent of Waves* was first published in 2005 and, as the author specifies, it marks his debut volume.

However, I was surprised to learn that this volume was published by Metafora Publishing House, which I own today, which once again proves that nothing is coincidental.

Nan Constantin Ilie is known to have started writing late, but this does not diminish his work in any way. On the contrary, the author's maturity and life experience beautifully shape each of his texts, with every 'scene' reflecting the soul of a giant who retains the heart of a child.

The volume includes 15 stories with different themes, all of which share a common element: the fierce struggle for existence. The author sets all the actions of his heroes in Constanța County and its surroundings, specifically the Black Sea coast.

The characters in the book are simple people, who hold a deep fear of God and trust in the values inherited from their ancestors. They struggle against the harshness of fate and the meanness of a corrupt and unscrupulous political regime. Of course, the author's unmistakable style, with its vividness and clear descriptions, makes the stories delightful.

The author subtly explores some fundamental strategies in the art of Romanian survival: cunning, tenacity, and resourcefulness.

THE LITERARY LEGACY OF NAN CONSTANTIN ILIE

# Review: Letters with the Scent of Waves

The age-old wisdom of the common man always finds an explanation and justification for this way of living and surviving. The Romanian is taught from childhood to heroically resist, by any means and through unimaginable methods, the multiple hardships and still remain human.

The most eloquent example is the story 'I love you, Constanța,' which manages to bring tears to the reader's eyes.

You cannot remain insensitive to the pain of children at such a tender age, to the sacrifice of a mother exhausted by work and humiliation.

Life is not fair, and neither are people! The author Nan Constantin Ilie knows this life lesson very well.

Hunger, poverty, and daily humiliation are at the root of all human suffering.

Man adapts and endures unimaginable hardships because of the primal instinct for survival ingrained in him, in his blood.

Whether he wins or not depends on luck, a theme that is explored in depth in the story 'The House in the Onion Garden'.

Mystical elements play an essential role in folk beliefs.

People brought to their knees by fate cling to anything that offers hope. Moreover, in most cases, people turn hope into a means of survival.



# Review: Letters with the Scent of Waves

Unfortunately, the injustice of people combined with an unfavorable fate leads to a predictable ending.

The fifteen stories in *Letters with the Scent of Waves* evoke the moral lessons of the Ten Commandments, received by Moses on Mount Sinai. They can be interpreted as parables, symbolizing the timeless struggle between good and evil. Each story imparts a life lesson, depicting the battle of good against the forces that seek to harm us. This volume of short stories piques the reader's curiosity with its clear and bold style, attuned to the realities of the times.

If we draw a parallel between his works from 2005 to 2024, we can observe a remarkable evolution that has brought Nan Constantin Ilie, both man and writer, to the attention of readers everywhere. The work speaks for itself, and the talent of this passionate writer, a true craftsman of vivid scenes, is undeniable. Certainly, time will reveal the truth as written by the author. It will never perish, and clearly, the talent comes from God!

**—Garofița Jianu – President of the Literary Foundation  
"METAFORA" Constanța, 2024.**

(The text was first published as a Foreword in *Letter with a Scent of Waves*, by Nan Constantin Ilie, 2024.)

THE LITERARY LEGACY OF NAN CONSTANTIN ILIE

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# Book Photography



THE LITERARY LEGACY OF NAN CONSTANTIN ILIE

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THE LITERARY LEGACY OF NAN CONSTANTIN ILIE

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# Media Coverage

- Radiografia zilei (19.12.2018) - Litoral TV (Ro)  
[<https://youtu.be/ZCJowl80HdQ?si=LaDjocdz0z2I5DEB>]
- Nan Constantin Ilie, Interview - YouTube (Ro)  
[<https://youtu.be/drCIWpkN28w?si=-bcfyB97VpA5BIWr>]
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- Nan Constantin Ilie, Interview - New Literary Society (Engl)  
[<https://medium.com/new-literary-society/secrets-of-worlds-writers-discovering-nan-constantin-ilie-440181b64614>]
- Born on the Dark Side by Nan Constantin Ilie: A Journey from Cosmic Dust to Consciousness (Engl)  
[<https://medium.com/new-literary-society/born-on-the-dark-side-by-nan-constantin-ilie-a-journey-from-cosmic-dust-to-consciousness-52e9bfb89785>]
- Nan Constantin Ilie Book Launch - Tulcea District Library (Ro)  
[<https://tulcealibrary.ro/lansare-de-carte-nan-constantin-ilie-adagio/>]
- Three Authors on the Book Wave Beach - Newspaper (Ro)  
[<https://www.replicaonline.ro/trei-autori-constanteni-invita-iubitorii-de-lectura-pe-plaja-culturala-a-targului-valuri-de-carte-397284>]



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