

Meeting with the Portuguese writer Afonso Cruz as part of the celebrations of the Days of Lusophony at the Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology

As part of the program of the celebration of the Days of Lusophony, once again held at the Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology (FCMP), bachelor and master students, professors and PhD students in Portuguese Philology at the Department of Spanish and Portuguese Studies met with Portuguese writer Afonso Cruz, who was in Sofia to take part in the literary events of the Spring Book Fair. The meeting was organised by the Chair "José Saramago" at the FCMP with the kind assistance of Camões - Institute for Cooperation and Language, I.P – Sofia.

The event was inaugurated by Prof. Yana Andreeva, Head of Portuguese Philology and Coordinator of the Chair "José Saramago". Ms Andreeva presented the work of Afonso Cruz, focusing in more detail on the newly published novel "The Books That Devoured My Father" and the long-awaited premiere in Portugal of his latest work "The Vice of Books". With more than 30 works published, including novels, short stories, essays and poetry collections, Afonso Cruz is one of today's most widely read and productive Portuguese writers. Professionally associated with artistic illustration and cinema, as well as music, he ranks convincingly among the most prominent Portuguese writers today, shaping the original look of new Portuguese literature. Cruz' work has been highly praised, having collected a long list of literary awards both in his country and around the world. Among the most authoritative awards is the European Union's Prize for Literature, which was awarded to him for the novel "Kokoschka's Doll" in 2012. To the delight of the Bulgarian reader, some of the most successful titles of Afonso Cruz have been translated into Bulgarian: "Kokoschka's Doll", "Mess", "The Books That Devoured My Father".

Afonso Cruz presented the latest Bulgarian translation of "The Books That Devoured My Father", an intriguing book for those who read and write, as well as the recently published Portuguese book "The Addiction of Books", which mixes curious, autobiographical fragments, memories, reflections, dialogues with readers. The writer answered many questions related to his creative process, his passion for books and the worlds that shaped his worldview. In regards to his latest work, "The Addiction of Books", Afonso Cruz stated that it is dedicated to the importance of reading and the changes it can bring to the individual and society as a whole. He pointed out that books have changed his life since

early childhood and told several stories proving the impact of reading on the fates of real people he met when he was collecting materials for his work. For his reading career, the writer said that he started by accident when he was a child, and since then books have been a very important part of his life: "When I started reading, I immediately fell in love with books and have been a passionate reader ever since." He spoke about the great impact of adventure stories, which aroused his desire to travel and explore the world, and added that when we open a book, we open the way to the future.

The issue of his books being pushed away from the Portuguese in order to focus on the supranational and cosmopolitan, and hence the question of the presence of national identity as a theme, its unstable place in the modern world of ever-increasing processes, was also touched upon, as it was the topics of the internationalisation and globalisation of culture, including literature. According to Afonso Cruz, cultures and identities are born from a mixture of many factors - both collective and personal, and today we have a lot of freedom to choose our identity, we can create it ourselves. As for the sense of unique identity, Cruz shared his attachment to his homeland, to the images that marked his childhood and adolescence, as well as his interest in one of the languages that shape the unique cultural identity of some Portuguese people, a language with ancient roots. dating back to the twelfth century, preserved today along the Douro River and known as the Mirandês. At the end of the conversation, the participants expressed hope for a new meeting with Afonso Cruz at the premiere of the publication of his next book in Bulgarian.