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Gritty Stage Play Takes Asylum Debate to the USA

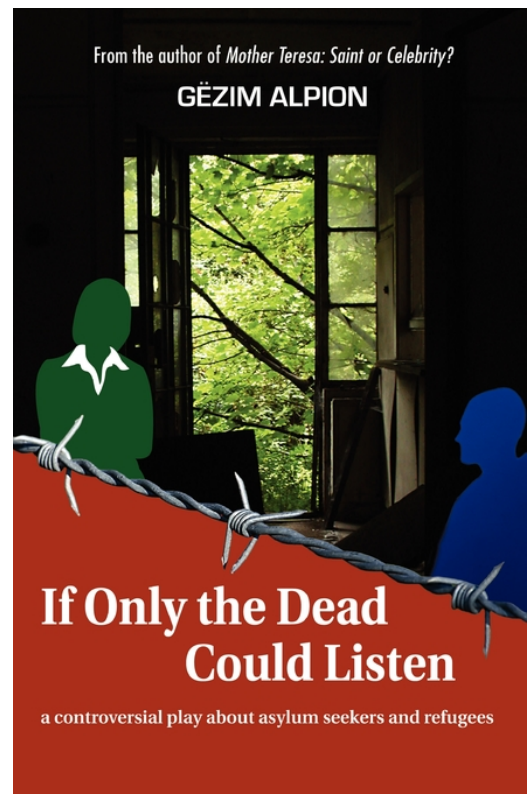
The critically acclaimed *If Only the Dead Could Listen* will go Stateside when it is published in the USA today.

Dr Gëzim Alpion from the University of Birmingham enjoyed theatrical success after his stage play challenging the perceptions and realities of Albanian asylum seekers in the UK was produced at the MAC Theatre in Birmingham and the Arena Theatre in Wolverhampton in February 2006 and again in March 2008.

The play is based on Dr Alpion's book *Vouchers* which also examines the British asylum system. The main plot surrounds a Kosova Albanian refugee fleeing to the UK after his Serbian girlfriend is murdered.

If Only the Dead Could Listen explores the sensitive issue of immigration without the political correctness of today's society. The audience is invited to 'eavesdrop' into the intimate sorrows of immigrants who are often seen as statistics, spongers, or a threat. This bold new writing gives the opportunity to see what it means to be stranded in a strange land.

Dr Alpion says: 'My intention is for the spectators to leave the theatre at the end of the show with questions whose answers they have to find for themselves. The play is about the sacredness of human life and dignity, and if viewers/readers are disturbed, I take it to be a good sign. Art is at its best when it is therapeutic and therapy is not always a pleasant thing to go through.'



Albanian-born academic and playwright Dr Alpion, is an expert in the media representation of asylum seekers at the University of Birmingham's School of Social Sciences. The production of the play in the UK was the result of a collaborative project between academics and artists from Britain and from across Eastern Europe (Croatia, Serbia and Albania) who are all connected to universities across the UK.

The American edition of *If Only the Dead Could Listen* is published by Globic Press, Chapel Hill, NC, in March 2008.

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Notes to Editors

Dr Gëzim Alpion, of the Department of Sociology at the University of Birmingham's School of Social Sciences, is a renowned academic, writer, playwright, reviewer, journalist, and a media, political and culture analyst. He has given talks and lectures across the world and his work has appeared in many scholarly journals and other publications. He is the author of the acclaimed *Mother Teresa: Saint or Celebrity?* (Routledge: London & New York, 2007; Routledge: New Delhi, 2008; Salerno Editrice, 2008). Dr Alpion's other books include: *Vouchers* (2001), *Foreigner Complex: Essays and Fiction about Egypt* (2002), and *Encounters with Civilizations: From Alexander the Great to Mother Teresa* (2008).

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