This talk concerns ethnographic material I collected in a network of literary cafes (Rrjeti i Kafeve Letrare) in the city of Tirana, Albania, during summer 2015. My method was to position myself in relation to a loose community of readers in Tirana bookstore-cafes (kafe-librari). My goal was to move past arrested representations of a “reading public” to the shifting literary worlds of particular readers located in specific scenes of reading. As part of a larger international and comparative ethnography of reading, the significant finding I took away from this research was the strong sense in which the literary worlds inhabited by these Tirana readers were at once very local and material—tied to the history and social geography of the city and its publishing houses—and fully global and wired, depending on access to online resources and an international network of translators and other literary institutions.

Matthew Rosen is a Visiting Assistant Professor of Cultural Anthropology at Ohio University. He received his Ph.D. in anthropology from The New School for Social Research in New York in 2014. His dissertation concerned a community of readers in Pune, a city of 3 million in western India, where he carried out 22 months of research with the support of AIIS, Fulbright, and NSF grants. Matthew’s current research examines the changing nature of reading in an age of unrestricted literacy and global communication.