

ENGLISH

TRANSLATIONS

Gaelic and Welsh

Celtic languages were once spoken throughout Britain. Virtually all speakers in the UK today are bilingual to some degree.

Gàidhlig / Scottish Gaelic is a Celtic language closely related to Irish Gaelic. It was introduced by migrants from Ireland and by the sixth century was spoken virtually throughout Scotland, only to be gradually pushed back by Scots (Scottish English) from the middle ages onwards. Its position today is more vulnerable than that of Welsh. Gaelic speakers represent less than 2% of the Scottish population of 5m. The biggest Gaelic-speaking communities are in the Western Isles (in the 2001 census 72% of the population claimed to understand, speak, read or write Gaelic) and the Highlands (9%), but there are also significant minorities in the major cities (Glasgow 1.8%, Edinburgh 1.4%, Aberdeen 1.2%). The census showed an overall fall of 11% since 1991 to 58,650, partly due to the death of many elderly speakers. However, while the number of mother-tongue speakers still gives cause for alarm, the rate of the language's decline has been slowed and, some argue, potentially reversed by the response to policies to secure its position, many of them implemented relatively recently. These include funding for Gaelic medium education and broadcasting. There are fifty primary and a dozen secondary schools offering Gaelic medium education, plus a growing urban demand outside the Gaelic heartlands. The place of the Gaelic medium higher education college Sabhal Mòr Ostaig on the Isle of Skye is central to plans to secure the language's future, and the annual Gaelic cultural festival, The Royal National Mod / Am Mòd Nàiseanta Rìoghail, plays a significant role.

Aonghas Macneacail

the lost tower

swimming in the clangorous mud
 between the roots of my two languages
 the one that is red
 sprinting swift lightnings through my veins
 and the other

alien, indifferent, familiar
 wrapped around my skin like prison clothes, as i
 stretched out the fingers of my reason, my vision
 across wavefurrows
 to reach all the bays of the world
 to reach all the shores of the world
 across broken shellmounds of syllables
 to reach the languages of the world

though you should be but
 across a kyle¹
 a sharp blade lies
 between our words

let us hymn the
tongue that stood sweet
let us sing blunting
to the sunderer

¹ *kyle*: a narrow strait

(Translation: the author)

Maolios Caimbeul

3.3.2000

In Mozambique
terrible floods. A baby
was born in a tree.

We don't know
we're living. We're not
living, perhaps, dry.

From now on
trees will scream at me
when it rains.

Feathers Falling

Beginning to understand
it isn't enough to sing
although the song is beautiful –
that singing isn't much good
when there's a gun to the brain
and the fowler is a spar of the cage
in which we whistle.
Seeing the distant skies
through magnanimous windows;
crying for the heights.
Hearing near and distant reports
and then the messengers –
feathers from far away
falling from space.

(Translations: the author)

Meg Bateman

Elgol: Two Views

I looked at the old post-card,
the houses like a growth from the soil,
the peaks towering above them,
a sign of the majesty of God,
before an amenity was made of the mountains,
or a divide between work and play,
between the sacred and the secular...
and I passed the picture to the old man.

“Does it make you sad, Lachie?” I asked
as he scrutinized it in silence.

“Sad? Bah! Not at all!

I couldn’t place her for a moment,”
and he pointed to a cow in the foreground.

“That’s the Yellow Lady, the Red Lady’s second calf –
I’d know any cow, you see,
that belonged here in my lifetime.”

(Translation: the author)

Cymraeg / Welsh is a Celtic language closely related to Cornish and Breton. Its precursor, Brythonic, was once spoken throughout Britain. However, the incursions of the Romans and later of Angles, Saxons, Vikings and others resulted in its survival only in the western peninsula which came to be known to the English as Wales. Today it is spoken by 576,000 of the 2.9m people in Wales, and by others where Welsh-speaking people have settled, including Patagonia. The middle ages saw a great flowering of Welsh literature, but one of the key texts in maintaining the language has been the 1588 translation of the Bible. Welsh was suppressed for four centuries, but in the second half of the twentieth century vigorous policies to secure its survival have been implemented, with some success. The 2001 census reveals the first rise in the number of Welsh speakers, halting the steady decline from about a million in 1900. Now 21% of the population of Wales define themselves as speaking at least some Welsh, of whom 16% claim to understand, speak, read and write the language. The highest proportion of population is in Gwynedd (69%), and three other areas show over 50% (Isle of Anglesey, Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire). More alarmingly these Welsh-speaking heartlands of north west and west Wales show an overall decline in speakers of up to 7% since 1991, and the new figure for Wales of a 2% rise probably masks an overall decline in those using Welsh as their first language. However, the increasing demand for Welsh medium education in the urban communities of south Wales is welcomed. One of the facts to emerge from the report *The State of the Welsh Language 2000* is a widespread positive attitude. The use of the language in many cultural contexts, including literature, is clearly a key growth point. A bard is crowned every year at the National Eisteddfod.

Twm Morys

One Cold Morning

One cold morning, in a fragile lace
 Of his breath and mine,
 We went to see the miracle of the sea,
 Like a storybook¹ opening.

The golden child smiled:
 In the brushwood and the branches
 Were the tiny bones² of spring,
 And a constant cry from the lambing field.

But there was ice in the foam,
 And I could see the far-away places
 Of his storybook opening,
 As he kept gazing at the sea.

¹ In the Welsh the word is *mabinogi* which means “story of events or feats of youth.” It is used for the collection of ancient Welsh legends, about Pryderi and Rhiannon and Brân, first written down in the middle ages.

² To be “nurturing tiny bones” is a Welsh expression meaning that a girl is pregnant.

On Hearing an Englishman Speak¹

He asked the company whether anyone knew
Of a gap to look quickly
At the house he was to buy: Hill of the Gold?
The yellow field was in the clouds.

And yellow, yellow, between the clouds,
The green grass rusted over its acres.
They remembered fieldfuls falling,
A man's skin yellow as apples.

And they closed their narrow, monoglot hearts,
Half-spat, stared, and turned away,
Sang badly for a long time, decided
They could forget about the bastard stranger²...

When the language is at the end of the headlands,
Where will they go, the gabblers of names,
And at their lips the string of villages,
And all of Wales a song in their mouths?

A few days later, there was a couple tidying the old house,
And then they changed its name:
Where the gold coloured hill and doorstep,
They could see nothing through the gap but bracken.

¹ R. S. Thomas, a Welsh poet who wrote in English, has a poem entitled "On Hearing a Welshman Speak."

² The Welsh word *anghyfiaith* means "stranger," but in a particular sense. In every day usage it means "non-Welsh-speaking, English."

To My Translator

Now you've received me, doctor,
With my brain and my insides

Removed, with no more blood
Or breath, in ice,

You can go ahead
And operate without nausea.

Perform a tidy transplant
Of yourself into the hole.

And when the needlework is done,
Nobody will see a trace of your hand.

Then you can make up
A name for me.

(Translations: the author)

South Asian Languages in the UK

Not surprisingly the languages of the Indian subcontinent's north, its most populous region, are the most widely represented in the UK. However, all its languages are probably represented in Britain. Several of them are high on the world list of those with the biggest numbers of speakers, giving writers working in them in the UK potentially huge readerships. Ancestral languages tend to remain particularly significant as markers of identity to people of South Asian origin in Britain, many of whom are sensitive to the political status of their language historically. Hindi, the most widely spoken language of India with 275m speakers, became the focus for anti-colonial politics in India from the start of the twentieth century and was chosen at independence in 1947 as the national language, but since it was understood by only a third of the population, English was also soon adopted as an official language. Urdu is very similar to Hindi but uses an Arabic script, and is particularly associated with Islam. After partition it was designated the only state language of Pakistan, thus marginalizing the Bengali spoken by the 120m people of East Pakistan. The status of Bengali / Bangla played a major part in the politics of secession there, leading to the establishment in 1971 of independent Bangladesh. Bengali is also the language of 70m Indians in the neighbouring state of West Bengal. In Sri Lanka the politics of language have also played a key role. The language of the Buddhist majority, Sinhala, was designated the official language in the 1978 constitution, with Tamil, the language of the Hindu and Muslim minorities, also having official status, while English was designated the link language. However, differences of language were conspicuous cultural markers in the long-standing hostilities which have troubled the 17m people and led to emigration.

Immigrants from the subcontinent came to Britain in substantial numbers from the middle of the twentieth century, bringing their languages with them. Those of Indian ancestry remain the single largest group of immigrant origin in the UK, with just over 1m (2001 census). There are 746,000 of Pakistani background, and 283,000 of Bangladeshi origin. All groups are resident principally in England. The Bangladeshis are the most recent to arrive, and therefore the group least assimilated linguistically. Almost 60% live in London, where Bengali is the second most common home language for schoolchildren after English. The overall population of Londoners of subcontinental background is 734,000. For Greater Manchester the equivalent figure is 131,000. Those of Pakistani background are most populous in the north of England, particularly in the towns of Yorkshire and Lancashire where their labour was important in industry. In Bradford, for instance, 85,000 of subcontinental background, of whom 68,000 are of Pakistani origin, form a significant minority in a town of 468,000. However, with the decline of industrial production, this group is suffering economic marginalisation. Throughout the UK those of Indian background tend to be more dispersed than those of Pakistani and Bangladeshi ancestry. Those of Sri Lankan background are also widely dispersed. Estimates suggest 200,000 overall but there are no figures on the proportion whose ancestral language is Sinhala.

Many young British Asians are now the third generation, at home in English and with varying degrees of attachment to their elders' languages. Ease of movement between Asia and Europe will be crucial if these languages are to continue to be used for creative purposes within the UK.

Shamim Azad

Companion

I tried hard to remember
 how this year had been:
 each month, the days, the hours.
 Who was with me
 and were they, like me, strangers abroad?
 I tried to reflect
 on what was in my mind, in the frost-filled night,
 in the valley of daffodils,
 in the carnival, in the dense dark
 of the subway tube's bottomless abyss.
 Who came flying
 to Trafalgar Square,¹ tiptoeing pigeon-like?

I wander beyond eastern shores.
 What is this that Mother tied at the end of my sari?
 It always holds me close
 and won't ever let go of me;
 it has never left me,
 in happiness, in sorrow and in regret,
 in the blazing flames of this foreign land,
 it clasps my mind to calm it.
 In my dismal heart
 a sure and habitual pendulum seems
 to swing above the lips on a sleepless night,
 the night's poetry
 is my birthright – it is my Bangla alphabet.

¹ *Trafalgar Square*: in central London, where tourists feed the pigeons.

(Translation: Debjani Chatterjee)

Saleha Chowdhury

A Poem About God

When I go to Divinity Street I cry “God, God!”
 In Almighty Lane, “Almighty! Almighty!”
 At Allah Rakha Corner I pray “Allah, Allah!”
 In Khuda Baksh¹ District, “Baksh!”
 One Sunday I went to Christ Church
 and to Nazrul's Meat and Bread Mosque.

On the other side of the temple door live the low caste people;
 I believe they don't have a bell tied to them now,
 yet in Varanasi, Gaya, Vrindavan
 I have to keep my purse safe from temple touts.
 I am bankrupted in the clutches of the Ajmer religious business lot.
 The mosque clique have made millions out of their red carpet trade.
 It's useless crying "God, God!" in Divinity Street.

Returning home laden with two heavy bags
 a youth of today with pierced ears gives up his seat.
 A tattooed man opens the door and helps as I get off.
 Returning home in the cold Uncle Karim calls out
 "Come and have a cup of tea to get warm!"
 A neighbour I scarcely know takes my heavy bags to my door.

God's existence is like a tiny spark –
 not in Divinity Street nor at Allah Rakha Corner,
 not at Christ Church nor in Meat and Bread Mosque
 where one can eat one's fill –
 in a cup of tea, in a seat given up on a bus, in the help offered,
 in such small things.

¹ *Khuda Baksh*: a standard phrase in Arabic for God; the name of a street in Calcutta.

(Translation: Ranjana S. Ash)

Basir Sultan Kazmi

Ghazal¹

Those tender shoots, crushed by the hurricane at dawn,
 held tomorrow's trees, bushy with leaves and blossom.

In search of new companions I forsook your friendship
 and left your city, but nowhere could I meet your equal.

The same customary coldness is here, the same dark night.
 What is the point of burning here, O lamps of my city?

I chase new dreams; my seashore lies under water.
 What will you gain, my friends, by walking by my side?

In this half-ravaged house, in this flickering heart,
 here in this very heart – too many suns have set.

Now through the evening hours someone speaks to my heart:

“Some moon should surely rise, some cup should overflow.”

This is what I have observed in my life’s journey, Basir:
those who tread with greatest caution are the ones who stumble.

¹ *Ghazal*: a classical lyric poem in strict couplets, not normally given a title. Derived from Arabic and Persian literary tradition, the ghazal (literally “the cry of a stricken deer”) has long been the principal genre in Urdu poetry and is popular also in other north Indian languages. Ghazals are often performed, the audience responding to each couplet. Despite the ghazal’s metrical unity, each couplet is self-sufficient and may be quoted independently. The last couplet usually includes the poet’s name. [P.B.]

(Translation: the author and Debjani Chatterjee)

Saqi Farooqi

The Sweet Smell of Death

Separation is
 a tributary
 of love’s river of blood
Faithfulness
 coils around
 the coral branch of memory

Dilaram and her lovers
stand in a circle of fear
in the air, a stale smell of kisses
in their eyes, broken dream-mirrors
in the islands of their hearts,
hidden sapphires of tears
in their veins flows a river of grief

But seeds of pain will keep falling
people will meet and part
All these old griefs
the old times of meeting and parting –
new griefs entwining with old
new bruises on the lips
new knots entangling the heart

In the hostile sky
are whispers of enemy ships
are the burning cities of stars
and on the eyes’ radar
only dark shadows

The sharp sweet smell of death has maddened us –
fearful, in the red submarine of hope
we float on the black sea of ruin

Earth, where is the magic of your soil?
From shore to shore thick acrid smoke

(Translation: Frances W. Pritchett)

Padma Rao

The Wait¹

Didn't say anything.
Just watched
The little stream of the tap
And the two untouched beams.
You held a small sea in your palms.
A face floated
In search of the liquid dreams.
As I baked the islands of bread
Blood melted like mercury
In my warm fingers.

"I'll come and eat it."
The orchestra of the broken gate
And your words
Danced around the fire.

Mirrors of silent fear hung on the wall
With countless faces.
The broken gate beat against the wind
And the flames kept burning aimlessly all night.
I hide two millet breads
In my *anchal*²
And wait for that familiar knock,
... the crunch of a stray leaf.

¹ The poem was inspired by the Iraq war of spring 2003 and depicts a mother who waits for her son.

² *anchal*: the draped end of a sari.

(Translation: the author)

Daisy Abey

Woodland Grove

It was where we spent our millennium
 Cold winds rolling round Woodland Grove
 A house with a white face on a waterlogged land
 Isolated, lonely, not even a door knocker,
 Abandoned on the edge of birch woods.

From the graveyard beneath derelict walls
 Shadowy figures rose from hidden tombs
 Muttering and whispering, hazed in night vision
 Arms on shoulders, hand in hand, staring
 Women cradling their babies in slings.

Numbered in hundreds the mass graves of
 Chapel Town's¹ plague, three centuries gone,
 Their scattered bodies buried in haste,
 Corpses thrown like wind blown leaves.

There was a hush, a hum, rumbles and cracks
 In the Mandela Centre's grounds smouldering
 The sky burning orange with fireworks, sparks
 All night war between storms and stars.

A dream house mute flushed with winter light
 The moon had drawn in receding tides
 At dawn, a decade and a century
 Dust beneath the bones of the drowned.

A magpie glided by, pecking frozen grass.
 I boiled the kettle, condensation dripped on the glass.
 The day after, we locked the doors for the last time
 Our minds on fire, a "Sold" board stapled to the fence.

¹ *Chapel Town*: a district of Leeds.

(Translation: the author)

Picard Language and Literature

... in *Francia et Picardia et Burgundia*
St. Thomas Aquinas

The days are long gone when, in Lille, an oath had to be taken in Picard. Who now remembers the fables of Gauthier le Leu? Who could complete *The Journey to Sicily* which death prevented Adam de la Halle from finishing? Picard was the language of Philippa of Hainault, wife of King Edward III of England. The *jeux partis* inspired Chaucer, and it is easy to imagine the dinners with poetry as entertainment such as those celebrated by the “Brotherhood of St. Candeille” at Arras. It was also in the Picard language that the great Passion Plays were performed at Mons from 1501, and later at Amiens. With its fertile countryside and prosperous towns, thanks in particular to textiles, the bourgeoisie was to be granted its charters of privilege from the eleventh century onwards.

The golden age of Picard literature seems to reach its peak in the thirteenth century: fables, chronicles, drama, and lyric, epic, didactic and allegorical poetry. At that time the arts faculty of the university of Paris recognised four “nations:” the French, the English, the Norman and the Picard; and Roger Bacon, travelling on the continent, classified the *langues d’oïl* as Frankish, Norman, Picard and Burgundian.

In the fourteenth century, Barthélemy l’Anglois locates Picardy between France, the Rhine and the sea... frontiers fluctuate in response to alliances and battles. We are always “between.” On the fringes of the Germanic and Romance worlds, a good number of invasions and conquests have resulted in our *harmonious hybridisation*—I claim the purity of this oxymoron. The scene first of battles then of cosmopolitan festivals, such is the fate of border regions.

Like all the place-names which have disappeared off the map, Picardy dreams of a resurrection. But the Picard language is no longer used in public life (school, army, administration, tribunals). My four grandparents were already bilingual, educated in French. My father knew by heart some of the poetry of Henri Tournelle and some saucy fables by Bosquètia – to our great delight at family reunions. My mother still subscribes to a magazine as slender as it is lively: *El Borain*. I collect vocabulary, lists of proverbs – relics of a language which has not survived its self-censorship. In a book to be published in 2003 I tell how, scarcely twenty years ago, I looked for someone to talk to in Picard at a literary gathering in my native district: I finally found one... an immigrant from Abruzzi!

—Rose-Marie François

Rose-Marie François

The Punishment

Rue du Temple, Douvrain, the end of the forties.

—Ta-ra!

—Ta-ra to you too!

—If we don’t see each other, we’ll write!

—On a cabbage leaf with a cat’s feather!

We laugh like mad, as you do at that age: seven, maybe eight... but the sound of a dry knock makes me jump: my mother has rapped on the window pane with a bent finger, which she straightens to show that she’s cross and to call me indoors. I mustn’t play in the street, I mustn’t speak Picard. I know, but it’s such fun....

So that’s how I come to be going indoors, inspecting my shoes covered with grass and mud. This time she doesn’t have anything to say about that.

—Get your slate and your chalk.

Misery! A punishment!

—Write out ten times: *I must not speak patois*.

Ten times! She must be barmy! I’ll never get it done today!

—Is there an -s on patois?

—Larousse is behind you.

Larousse, the Larousse... Larousses! There are two dictionaries, very very big, perched right at the top (not of a cherry tree, unfortunately, but) of the bookcase. Usually I’m not allowed to have them. That’s why they’ve been put up so high, as out of reach as the heights of the covered perch.¹ I push a chair over: climbing up I can reach the huge book, just about, but how heavy it is! And I’d better be careful not to open it at the page with the fierce creatures that frighten me so: “reptiles” – a blue boa-constrictor with yellow spots that moves on the page without ever going away.² My mother’s voice rings in my ears: *You mustn’t speak patois. You mustn’t speak. You mustn’t...* It does have an -s on the end. She might’ve just told me straight off what I’d guessed anyway! Now I’ve got to put the mammoth back in its place, or sparks are going to fly.³ Ten times, and it’s such a lovely day outside. My tears, dropping on the slate, transform my writing into nasty scribbles.

I wrote every line of it. But as you see, I didn’t submit, on the contrary: I can well believe that my taste for languages dates from that moment. At this point in my life, I have tried to learn about a fifteen. My mother is still alive. I often thank her for that punishment. Certainly it didn’t have the desired effect. But it seems to me that when she reads this anecdote, my mother will be saying in that still firm voice of hers, “You see, good always comes out of evil.”

¹ Perch installed on a building (often in a café courtyard) plated with iron and decorated with wooden birds stuck with dyed feathers, which archers would aim at with their arrows, not only during the annual “king’s shoot.”

² See Rose-Marie François, *La Cendre* (Brussels: Editions des Eperonniers, Coll. Ecrits du Nord, 1985).

³ Literally “or else there’ll be a scattering of clog nails” – an allusion to the days when children got beaten with a clog wielded by the hand of retribution.

(Translation: Paula Burnett)

Walloon

Walloon was “born” between the 8th and 12th centuries from what remained of the Latin language brought into our region by soldiers, merchants and Roman colonisers. In this period, the native speakers referred to their language as “Roman.” It was at the beginning of the 16th century that the term “Walloon” spread as a term to denote our language. It is one of the family of Romance languages and belongs to the romano-gallic sub-group of *oïl* languages, of which the most familiar is French.

Walloon is closely related to French but should not be regarded as a dialect of that language, although the mistake is often made. The similarity between Walloon and French is comparable to that between Asturian and Castillian in Spain, or between Luxembourgish and German in the Grand Duchy of Luxemburg. There are at least three distinct levels of language in Wallonia: ordinary French, Walloon in its different modes, and our own regional French... to a greater or lesser degree influenced by Walloon. (Cited from <http://www/wallonie.com/wallang/wal-fra.htm>)

The number of Walloon-speakers stayed proportionately stable until the First World War. In fact, the majority of the population spoke the language. Subsequently, as education became more and more widespread, there has been a rapid decline. The percentages given for Walloon-speakers on the website cited above seem unduly optimistic.

—*Paul-Henri Thomsin*

Paul-Henri Thomsin

Youth, you're still with it!

Youth, you're still with it! Stop getting stressed:
 The fleeting seasons will make your troubles go.
 Don't squander your strength. If life's just a mess
 Rake through your soul for its embers' glow.
 Drop by drop let fancies gather! Gently, there's no panic!
 If you demand all in one go, your pride will evaporate.
 Draw a veil over your fears, I know your heart is brave
 But if you only do what desire dictates, happiness will suffocate.
 Take time to sip your joys from the spring of what you believe,
 Without letting yourself be knocked off course by any destructive mind.
 Ignore the primrose path when you have to choose your way,
 Go straight ahead without faltering: bad dreams will be left behind.

(Translation: Deborah Philips and Paula Burnett)

Meuse

How lovely you are, Meuse!¹ I don't know why, but I have always looked on you as a lover sees his sweetheart, or a child its mother!

When I go out with you, riding together,² at every stage I pause briefly to listen to your sweet nothings... And my heart loses itself in your tides, and your waters with one lick carry troubles and worries far away... And I, as is only right, I let it happen... And I feel good... How I feel good!

Like a young girl who dons her dress of new silk, that is how Meuse begins to dance... Gently... Very gently... Lightly... Very lightly... On tiptoes... It's a waltz... A waltz which slips into me inch by inch. A waltz which sweeps me up into the arms of its three-beat rhythm. And which swells, with a nonchalant air, until it carries me off into the swirls of its melancholy... A music which giddies me until I lose my head... and there I am, stock still, without speaking, and watching Meuse spin, spin, and spin again... To inhale her warm scents... To believe that she is dancing for no-one but me... Yes, for no-one but me!... To imagine that she is laughing, for me alone... Yes, for me alone!... To dream that she reveals her woman's body to me... to none but me!... To none but me!... And so I forget that time is running out, as swiftly as these waters... To hell with this boat which comes to drag me away from my dreams!

But Meuse won't let me down... She is still the one who can comfort me at the moment when reality clouds my fancies... And I feel good again! As good as could be! As good as when she takes me on her knee and whispers the words that are needed to bring back a smile to my face... To bring serenity back to my soul... So, like a child, like "her" child, I let myself be consoled by her caresses... I let myself be cajoled... I let myself be mothered... I can tell you: she has never been niggardly when spoiling me.

So – what do you say? She has even given me the loveliest of her treasures... Treasures which no prince on earth could buy! Yes, just for me, before evening falls, she has made her waters sparkle with thousands of tiny glints from a red sun. For me, she has captured an image of the lights of Liège, in the heart of a blue night. For me, she has refreshed the afternoons of a suffocating July. She has sung me lullabies with her warm voice when fevers and torments stopped me closing my eyes. She made the strength of her blood run in my veins. She taught me to speak her tongue, a clear language which has been on her lips for so many years. A fresh language, like water from a spring, which has quenched the thirst of a stream of generations and which tomorrow, God willing, will still sweeten the throats of little children to come... She held out her hand to let me go when I took my first steps on the road to being a writer!

Meuse, where would I be without you? I owe everything to you, and along with me, the entire city of Liège has the good fortune to nestle in your arms.

"Mother" Meuse... Meuse, "my beloved"... I love you!

¹ The personification of the river as a woman – the Meuse (Maas in Dutch) on which Liège stands – is a more familiar concept in a gendered language than in English.

² *a cabasse avou vos* in the original is, literally, "on horseback with you." Note that Walloon does not use the familiar second-person pronoun, *tu*, except in the coarsest insults. Just as in Argentinian Spanish, it is the *vous* which is used to express intimacy.

Marcel Slangen

The Treasure Bin

Scene 1

EMILE: What a lovely peach! Fit for a king, mate, it goes down your throat like honey. Shut your eyes and you can see the fruit, the flower, the grass at the foot of the tree and yourself, there you are, reclining, far from the madding crowd...

LAURENT: So that's how you get your kicks, eating a peach the Italian gave you when it was already half rotten... and you, you get a glimpse of paradise...

EMILE: Excuse me, dear sir, but you lie! Don't go and spoil my pleasure, you idiot. He gave me a tray of peaches, some of them a bit too ripe to be sold, that's all. Rotten? Am I to throw this away, because of a little bruise? And the knife? What's a knife for, Laurent? The knife, our everyday partner, which cuts off titbits, which carries the crust of bread to the lips, which frightens, sometimes, when you flourish it like this! at the mad addicts with their shifty eyes, who would stab you for some small change, when their veins cry out for mercy!

LAURENT: What a fuss over a knife... and a peach!

EMILE: You must never miss an opportunity to lick your fingers, my good friend Laurent, nor to think about what we are. Look, there goes a housewife with a bag of peaches in her basket: she's the one who's paid for ours!

LAURENT: Whatever are you on about?

EMILE: OK, listen: Lino, the Italian, sells them at quite a price, knowing that he's going to lose a few, because of the heat or something. Then the woman who's paid a good price for them, with this heat, will be eating hers tomorrow like I eat mine today!

LAURENT: You're always rattling on about something or other...

EMILE: We've got plenty of time for that, haven't we?

LAURENT: Oh sure, we've got tons of time...

EMILE: Look, just one more thing: did you know that in posh houses, people eat peaches with a knife and fork?

LAURENT: A fork? A knife, OK, but a fork... Sure you're not pulling my leg?

EMILE: No, they really do. One day I even saw someone trying to copy the others, he skidded his peach off the plate and it rolled right under the table!

LAURENT: Enough, Emile, now leave me alone. You're wearing me out talking so much this early in the morning. I'm going to have a cigarette. You've no idea how it does you good to have five minutes without a thought in your head and feeling your mind lighten up...

EMILE: Ah, so isn't it light enough already? No, I'm just teasing. But how come you're always smoking, in spite of your morning cough?

LAURENT: Bah, it's all we've got left...

EMILE: All we've got left! You sound like a little old man clearing his conscience only to allow himself a small vice! All we've got left! What about eating, drinking, breathing in the air and the sunshine?

LAURENT: Just don't go on at me for smoking.

EMILE: No, mate, that's the one thing I should do.

LAURENT: Because the other day, as I was begging for some change for a meal from a couple of women, I hear one of them say as she walks on: “He asks for money for food, but he’s got enough to smoke!” What do you make of that, the old battleaxe!

EMILE: So what, all excuses, even stupid ones, are good enough for respectable people whenever they want to save a penny. Lucky for you she didn’t tell you to get a job! That’s what I got the other day: “Go and look for a job instead: he who searches always finds.” Ah, madam, I said:

I’m always thinking, racking my brains
To find a way to end up rich.
For me it’s clear it’s not gonna happen
That work will pull me out of the ditch.
In the past perhaps it worked like a dream
But today you need some other scheme!

You should’ve seen her face!

LAURENT: I don’t know why you ever left your acting career... You did that with real talent... That’s how you could have success, money, women, I’ll bet...

EMILE: And then what? For every actor who lives like that, there’s a hundred acting for nothing, in front of three relatives with short back and sides or friends who’re as hard up as us, but they’ve had all that hassle, all that hard graft. To grovel for a part! And to perform what? Not every play is by Shakespeare, you know – patronage plays, cock-and-bull stories, plays that wouldn’t even bring a tear to your grandmother’s eye, others that are only put on to please the playwright, who’s made his name doing what, I ask you! Directors who leave you standing there like a post, on stage, and the other sort who think they’ve got ideas but go and massacre the play. Then the worst of all, you see, is when you bust a gut to cram the part into your brain until you can say “Got it!” and then the curtain rises on a handful of spectators more embarrassed than you are that they’re so few. While here... Come on, would you like a peach?

Scene 2

A figure crosses the stage without our two men paying any attention. He hides something under some papers in a bin and goes off.

FIRST POLICEMAN: Come on, you dossers, have you seen anyone go by?

EMILE: I’m sorry, chief, but we’re not dossers, we’re homeless, as they put it nowadays: the “of no fixed address.” Can’t you tell the difference? Today, we don’t have blind people, they’re “visually impaired”, you’re not handicapped any longer, you’re “differently abled”... With us it’s the same, once we were tramps, these days we’re the homeless: already it almost sounds as if our problem’s solved!

SECOND POLICEMAN: Right, have you finished going on? – because I didn’t get a word of it. You were asked if you’d seen anyone go by, yes or no.

LAURENT: Well, you know, of course you can see people go by... If you knew how few of them stop to give us a bit of change, or whatever, like Lino, the Italian, who gave us a tray of peaches, hardly damaged...

FIRST POLICEMAN: But what are you on about? What weirdos! We’ll leave you be, busy doing nothing, while respectable people complain that you’re blocking

the public right of way and setting a bad example to the children... And the one time society needs you, we can't get a straight answer out of you! And the small change you do get only goes on getting drunk, I bet!

EMILE: Oh that, officers of the law, I do drink once in a while,

But if I have a glass, it's only one at a time.

If you've seen me pissed, that would indeed be proof

That I'm telling you nothing but the truth.

SECOND POLICEMAN: But what language! Chief, I think we're dealing with madmen.

FIRST POLICEMAN: Right, for the last time – and leave your nonsense out of it – have you seen anyone?

LAURENT: Yes!

SECOND POLICEMAN: Ah, finally, and who was it?

LAURENT: The woman who bought the peaches from Lino! Do you remember, Emile?

FIRST POLICEMAN: We'll never get anything out of these two idiots. We're talking about a man who's just robbed the bank on the corner, and run off with the loot.

LAURENT: Oh right, you should have said so straight away...

SECOND POLICEMAN: Did you see him?

LAURENT: No.

FIRST POLICEMAN: Right, that's it, we really are wasting our time with this pair of imbeciles.

(Translation: Paula Burnett)

Lingala

Lingala is an African *lingua franca* belonging to the Ngala group in the family of Bantu languages (classed as C36 by Malcolm Guthrie).¹ We read under the name of Elisabeth Farges, responsible for a French foreign language course at the new Sorbonne, Paris: “One of the most important of some 360 Bantu languages used in central and southern Africa, Lingala is today spoken by dozens of millions of speakers in the vast region comprising the Congo basin. By origin Lingala is not the mother tongue of an ethnic group but is a vehicular language, resulting from a linkage between several Bantu languages, and used by merchants and riverside people. It is in consequence of this mode of communication, vital to the region’s economy, that the language has spread, from the two banks of the river to the big cities, such as Kisangani or Kinshasa. The first Europeans to arrive in this region... probably contributed to this expansion: the modernisation of the means of communication by river favoured commerce and the displacement of the ‘river people’ and resulted in contact between the different Bantu languages of the region. Becoming the language of the military and of administration, and a mother tongue once it had expanded over a large territory, Lingala is widely used in the media and in official discourse. Modern Congolese song, extremely creative and popular, also helps to make Lingala a vibrant language, constantly evolving. It is one of the four national languages of Congo-Kinshasa, and is also spoken in Congo-Brazzaville and in Central Africa. This language can also be heard in Europe, in particular in France and Belgium where numerous Congolese live.”

It is therefore a question of a sort of double or divided language. On the one hand, there is the official language, written, and to a large extent imposed by the colonial administration—it is also the language of the churches, the language of the one god, revealed, the language of the bible and of the schools, the language associated with the coloniser and his constraints. Elsewhere, Lingala is also, for its speakers, the language of daily life, which cannot quite be translated at the level of the written in a language comprehensible to everyone, and it is under this heading that it forms the principal medium of modern Congolese music, the singers often succeeding in marrying the oral Lingala with the written form disseminated in school; but they are often obliged to outwit the censors by employing metaphors or *double-entendres* in order to convey a message which might be seen as subversive. This situation of confrontation between two levels of Lingala illustrates the language’s two official worlds.² The two texts presented here belong to a third world which is situated at their point of encounter and at the same time escapes their respective constraints.

—*Boyikasse Buafomo*

Boyikasse Buafomo

Take the Plunge

My dear brothers and sisters, here in the centre of the universe, in the West, in the white people's world, life is nothing but fire and flame, a constant danger. You offer a dog a passport and visa all in good order, the dog says no thanks! Water, the liquid for drinking, transforms, here in these lands, into stone.

Children of water, my dear brothers and sisters, do you really want to know everything?

No problem! Just open wide your two eyes and your two ears. That's the price you have to pay to hear me properly. My topic gets to the heart of the matter: the problems of the asylum seeker and some real-fake papers. No, this isn't only about Africans, other people are involved. (But then, faced with this drama, what are our great big beautiful black Africans to do? Should they consider the situation and search for global solutions, or alternative or parallel ones?)

But above all, to take the plunge, become a political refugee, what is it exactly?

Who set off one day for the West, to find Miguel? (You, you handsome black man.) And everyone recognises you at Porte de Namur metro station in Brussels, in the middle of the Matongé area, or else in Paris in the 18th district. Nice hairstyle, nice shave. And since it's the brand that makes the man, from head to toe you're labelled. By the great designers, Gianni Versatché³ or Yamamoto or perhaps others.... Do you ask yourself, even for an instant, if your papers are in order? No, that kind of problem isn't for you. You're not the sort to chase after a bone like a dog. Not you, you're carried away with the new philosophers for our time, singers like Werasson, or Kofi Olomidé. The old masters, the greats of Congolese music, Kabassele, Luambo-Franco, Shungu Wembadio, Simaro Masiya, I don't give a damn about them.

Second question: and how will you find a job?

What an idea. To busy yourself with the ordinary, to take a job washing-up or doing housework to pay the rent and the gas and electricity bills, that's not the sort of occupation for someone of your standing, that won't do, no! You, you're a delicate being, ethereal, how would you cope with such a load on your shoulders? You already have the sun in your eyes, isn't that enough?

Third question: what else is there?

Go back to college, which you gave up so long ago, learn to read and write again? That would be a good path, but will you take it?

If not, what choice is left to you (to permit you to live in the West, in the centre of the Universe)? Only one, iniquitous and unique: throw in your body, become a political refugee. Are you already getting rid of the real-fake papers (which could support your application in this pitiless universe)? As you do not know how to read or write, how will you decipher the laws, procedures and techniques to attain that status. When a boat goes up-stream, does it face the current?

Inside or Outside?

- ◆ So, are you inside or not?
 - I'm well inside.
- ◆ Unfortunately I can't feel you there.
 - I'm fully inside, like a chicken in a pot.
- ◆ Are you really sure? You wouldn't be more like soup in water?
 - Really, how come?
- ◆ *Impotence is a confirmed fact*
So, brother, don't act the stud, admit the truth
The column is shattered, fucked
*So, brother, don't act the stud, admit the truth*⁴
 - No, that's not true, I'm not im-potent. Women in the West, I've got them at my feet. No problem.
- ◆ So are you inside or not?
 -
- ◆ In the West, are the women as powerless as you or don't they make formidable partners? Brother, watch out for sock itch!⁵ How then will you be able to get a shoe on your foot, my poor shagged-out friend?

Note to the reader: These two short texts—"Bwaka Nzoto" ("Take the Plunge") and "Okoti To Okoti Te" ("Inside or Outside?")—demonstrate a discourse that is specific to Congolese immigrant societies. In both cases there is dialogue with several voices.

"Bwaka Nzoto" ("Take the Plunge")⁶ was an expression invented by the Congolese community in Belgium around 1985 to refer to an act heavy with consequences, that of becoming a political refugee. This act is not only, as politicians and citizens of Europe tend to think, a means of obtaining papers and of leaving behind poverty in Africa, it is in fact an act of suicide, both physical and spiritual. The political refugee can never return to the country of origin. The original text is longer, and is part of a collection of fifteen short stories bearing the same title. The original version was written on the 19 November 1987.

"Okoti To Okoti Te" ("Inside or outside?") confronts African eroticism. The text is one of consummate irony, and is also an illustration of the power that the female sex held in Kinshasa in the 1970s. It is a woman's confession, derived from a true story, which speaks of male sexuality with great brutality. Although she is cutting, she has not lost a sense of irony. The tale has undergone a takeover, in the right and proper way, since from the feminine it has been appropriated by the masculine. Street talk has conveyed it to the *ambianceurs*,⁷ those men who pass the night between dance halls, parties and music events, etc., who have transformed it into a great joke. A great joke or a provocation?

The dialogue in two voices, in its written form here, dates from February 1995. It should, in the end, be noted that it is the humour, simultaneously delicate and brutal, that the woman exhibits in the act of accusation which paradoxically demonstrates her power.

In the two texts, but above all in the first, the frequent use of proverbs or time-honoured expressions should be noted, such as "Opesi mbwa mbwa aboyi" (You give to a dog, the dog doesn't want it), "Soki masuwa eza ekonana moto ezalaka liboso to makolo" (When a boat goes up-stream, does it face the current?), the importance of references to popular music, and the entirely *kinois*⁸ concept of Miguel, "na Miguel," the name of the Belgian chef of Spanish origin becoming symbolic of the whole concept, not just of immigration to Belgium, but of the departure for Europe.

—*Boyikasse Buafomo*

¹ Malcolm Guthrie, a Baptist missionary, became Professor of Bantu at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London. His 1971 study refined the classification of his 1948 work.

² These two official universes seem to correspond to two types of group or social class. The first emerged after independence on 30 June 1960 and is composed of political people whose professional language is French, and whose status derives, directly or indirectly, from the possession of diplomas. The second emerged in the 1990s during the national sovereignty conference. It is the civil society. Usage of the national languages, Lingala, Swahili, Chiluba and Kikongo, was authorised there under the same title as the official language, French [B.B.]

³ The text uses this phoneticised spelling of Versace's name.

⁴ These four lines are a well-known *kinois* refrain (see n.8).

⁵ This image makes complete sense if the reader knows that in African French, a condom is currently termed a "sock."

⁶ The choice of this text was an unhappy one. It is important to recognise that it uncovers a black African universe which is struggling under the weight of western clichés and that Africans themselves do not dare to challenge them, because they lack the words of their own mother tongues [B.B.].

⁷ The French-African term *ambianceur* connotes more than just a DJ or promoter, but someone who creates an ambiance, over more than one evening.

⁸ *kinois*: of, or from, Kinshasa.

(Translation: Deborah Philips and Paula Burnett)

The Sorbian Minority

The Sorbs are a Slavic people living in the east of Germany whose settlement history dates back a thousand years, when Slavic groups populated vast areas of central and northern Germany. Today one of the settlements of the Sorbs is Niederlausitz in the Federal State of Brandenburg, with the cultural centre in Cottbus/Chošebuz. The dialect spoken here is lower Sorbian. The other settlement is Oberlausitz in the Free State of Saxony with the centre in Bautzen/Budysin, where higher Sorbian is spoken. The Sorbs are the smallest group of West-Slavic people with a population of about 60,000.

The German political attitude towards the Sorbs was for a long time characterised by the desire for assimilation, and attempts were made to integrate them fully. Today the Sorbs have the status of an ethnic minority. Their most important representative body is Domowina, the national organisation of the Lausitzer Sorbs and the umbrella organisation of all Sorbian organisations, which mainly concentrates on the preservation of the Sorbian language and culture.

All Sorbs are bilingual today. Sorbian cultural activities are manifold, especially in literature. There are a number of well-known authors who cover a wide spectrum of topics and literary forms.

(See also: <http://www.sorben.de/> and <http://www.sorben-wenden.de>)

Róża Domaścyna

Influence of outer space on desire

in the year of the invasion of the May-beetles
with their tortoise-shell and metallic wings
the lice took up weapons in free
fall the May-beetles fell onto their backs
gazing into outer space having lost the desire
for the daily battle and so
the victory indisputably belonged to the lice

When I wanted it to be

at the lake it was, you said
nice things. At every
moment I thought: this is mine.
Hour upon hour passed,
instantly I stood
by the water, the unsaid words
standing between us. A movement,
a step backwards was the only thing
I could do. Rigid as I was,
I wanted it to be, thought:
all time challenges

me, accompanies me. Every hour
 leafs through me, undresses me.
 I waited and wanted, and
 you said nice things,
 which I was supposed to accept

In the blue house at Bismarck's Tower

for F.P.

almost like origin: camomile and dried dill
 in the oven the fire in front of the door the picture: willows
 in the meadow the easel turned away
 in the post the notches of our growing up
 with grown-ups somewhere and gravestone names
 as witnesses around the kitchen table we
 crack nuts like words
 all blue the world and god
 white a dog prowls around the house
 with steely teeth at the slope
 the grass matts uncut
 you say we still have paint
 and fit a new canvas
 the house grows over
 the notches crust
 the nuts crumble
 the canvas ages
 only the dog
 keeps the scent

(Translations: Christiane and William Leahy)

The dead are being reburied

In memory of the Čelno cemetery

We've draped the cemetery with shrouds.
 We've violated our own dead,
 with stop-signs blocked up every way –
 they end at the brink of the other world.

Around, the screens are high and dense.
 In the midst bulldozers bring to light
 the bones of the dead, cleansed from sin,
 buried in honour, as is certified.

Creatures, the victims of twilight greed,
 scrape the heritage into iron pots.
 "We take all and more," I hear them shout,
 and "not buried, cremated we want to be!"

Who stands aside, lies in wait –
 thus bravely we're silent about our grief.
 Feeling our ancestors' gaze on our nape,
 clutching a mattock, cord, a rope.

The graves become narrower and even deeper.
 The square of the sky gets smaller and steeper.
 We're growing tumours in the house of screens.
 The children play burying and digging us up.

(Translation: Christiane and William Leahy with Paula Burnett)

Kito Lorenc

My short winter's day

You spray amber light
 over blueing shadows
 under the dun grass
 you hide the hair
 of animals in the field
 the big eyes
 rest in the valley

You let mistletoe
 fruit in the tree
 after the harsh night breathe
 secretly in my
 numb hands
 You put a gleam
 on the hazel
 tint the willow twigs

That I do not disturb
 your course
 when I take care
 cast off
 the track from my sole
 snowlight

Great Forest

Dobry the Giant
 steps in front of the wooden roof
 puts the horse on his shoulders
 and trudges

into the pines

His little wife
with the milking stool
under the cow, soon
will ring with a clatter
the milk bells in the village

Above the lamp post
rattles the windmill
along with the stork's beak
behind dusty leaves
twinkles the lake

And around the corner
the scent of wild caraway
awaits. Hello
holidays. Goodbye
childhood

“The pigeon has got two white feet”

and one day I took my lover
home with me introduced her to
my wife My wife brown eyes Hers blue
My wife ginger Her pepper
My wife liked her She liked her too
Is it funny neighed the horse
Nobody cried sadly From then on
we had breakfast together from the three
Little plates Little bowls with the three
Little spoons shared lust and burden cleaning
and dishwashing Soon they gave us
the bigger flat and my wife
brought her lover and my lover
brought her lover and both lovers
brought their lovers with them When
we got the tower block (oh
the lifts went up and down singing
Adam's apples) Heavens above
we were many Then we took over
the city and eventually the country then
we were finished and lived under
new social conditions
Only then did I receive anonymous
letters: You poetic customer, you!
took pigeon ginger pepper horse
back and found myself dying publicly
away Children people bye bye keep loving

And this is the oven

that I gave her
 because I had not used it
 for two years
 I lit it for her
 the oven and said
 I had not lit it
 for two years
 and had forgotten completely
 how to light it
 and she said see
 you don't have to die
 to forget
 and I said you know
 you might as well
 stay alive

(Translations: Christiane and William Leahy)

Lubina Hajduk-Veljkovićowa

Raphael, the little spirit

Monica lived in the old part of town. The houses there are damp with an attic under the roof. Mothers hang their washing up to dry in the attic and everyone has a small room to store old stuff. Monica's dolls rested there too.

One day Monica wanted to make a new dress for one of her dolls and rushed up to the attic to fetch her little darling. There in the corner, in the twilight, she discovered a ghost. Not a ghost, no, rather a little spirit.

"Who are you?" she asked.

"You can see me?" replied the spirit.

"Sure. Very well indeed. Your hair is curly and chocolate brown."

"Curly, really? I have never seen myself," the little spirit said happily.

"You are wearing a green shirt, and your trousers are brown," Monica described in detail.

"And what colour are my eyes?" asked the little spirit, full of curiosity.

"Kind of green. But tell me now who you are," Monica was also excited.

"I am Raphael and I have been living here for a long, long time."

"And why do you hide here?" Now Monica was curious too.

"Because, oh, well, I'm ashamed to say," mumbled Raphael, the little spirit.

"Don't worry. I'm ashamed because of my scribble, the teacher is always telling me off," admitted Monica.

"As for me, I'm ashamed because I can't fly," confessed Raphael.

"You're a real spirit who can fly?!" wondered Monica.

"No, I cannot fly. That's the problem. That's why I sit here lonely and hide."

"I would be scared up here. Aren't you?"

"Me? What should I be frightened of?" replied Raphael, the little spirit.

“Of humans.”

“Ridiculous. As long as the attic is here I can stay. But that doesn’t help me.”

“Why?”

“Because I don’t age. As a spirit you have to return to the place you were born every year. Only then do you grow a year older. My mum always used to take me. But then I became too heavy for her and since then I haven’t grown older.”

“So what!” said Monica, “what more do you want? You can always stay a little spirit.”

“Would you like to be a child forever and ever?” Raphael, the little spirit said sulkily.

“No, not at all!”

“Day in, day out, I watch out of the skylight how birds travel through the air. But when I try to take off nothing happens.”

Then Monica said: “But Raphael, you haven’t got any wings.”

“Spirits don’t need wings.”

“Ah,” Monica had an idea, “you have to really wish for it and you will fly.”

Raphael, the little spirit wished to be able to fly until his head hurt. But nothing happened. Little Monica looked at him helplessly.

“Tell me about the place where you were born.”

“Ah, that was a splendid old castle. It had been deserted a long time. The walls were thick and cold, beautiful ash-grey, dawn-grey, mouse-grey, sometimes even silver-grey. We hid downstairs in the dungeons, chased one another through the dark passages, the doors creaked marvellously and we could rattle the chains on the walls to frighten ourselves. We flew through a tiny crevice into the courtyard where nettles grew....”

“Oh gosh,” Monica cried, “you’re flying.”

And indeed, Raphael, the little spirit rose a little into the air.

Monica’s cry of joy disturbed his beautiful picture and he landed again.

“I don’t feel any different.”

“As long as you talked you flew a little, then you got scared and you came down again.”

“I don’t get scared,” said Raphael, the little spirit determinedly.

“Don’t tell fibs. I’ve seen it with my own eyes.”

Monica insisted on her view of things. “Do carry on with your story.”

“Alright then. We played football in the yard, not with a ball of leather but with a ball of dew. I rolled the nicest balls of all of us. Look here,” and Raphael, the little spirit wanted to show her how he did it. But he had to look down to see her. Down!

“Damn,” slipped out. “I really can fly!”

And then he started soaring through the attic like a whirlwind. “Wowie!” Monica was amazed how suddenly he had changed. Raphael did not sit depressed in a corner, just the opposite, he was fooling around and making a noise like a puppy.

“I have to go downstairs again,” Monica said after a while.

“Many thanks for teaching me how to fly,” Raphael said from high above her.

“That’s too much. You could already fly, only you didn’t believe it,” replied Monica. She was already on the stairs when she turned around again and saw how Raphael, the little spirit floated away through the skylight.

She remembered her doll, fetched it and left the attic.

The Turkish and Greek Minorities in Germany

Because of the “economic miracle” in the Federal Republic of Germany in the 1950s, many West German businesses could not find enough employees to fill vacant jobs. In the mid-fifties, therefore, German business started recruiting so-called “guest-workers” from Southern Europe. In the following years the government drafted legal agreements to regulate immigration and length of stay. In 1960, such an agreement was signed with Greece and in 1961 with Turkey. The employment of foreign workers reached its peak in 1973 at 2.6 million, 155,000 of whom were Greek and 605,000 Turkish. Initially the rotation model was accepted by all sides which specified that foreign workers would return home after one or two years. In practice this model was uneconomical, because all new workers needed training and those employed could not save enough money in such a short time. Therefore the model was discarded, leading to foreign workers staying longer and allowing for the immigration of family members.

During the recession in the mid-seventies, the government ordered a halt to the recruitment of such workers. Two parallel measures were taken to enforce and support this: either to return to one’s home country or to integrate into German society. In 2001 there were 82.4 million people in Germany, 75.1 million of whom have German citizenship; 1.9 million Turkish citizenship and 362,000 Greek citizenship. The Turkish minority is the biggest in Germany, followed by citizens of the former Yugoslavia, then Italy and then Greece.

The Turkish and Greek minorities are culturally very active and represent an important part of contemporary German culture. The literature of these groups dealt initially with the problems of “being foreign.” Recently, however, third-generation Turks living in Germany see themselves either as an integral part of today’s Germany or, through their writing, attempt to come to terms with their own identity in a foreign country. In Greek literature produced in Germany, one often finds an analysis of Greek political history or, likewise, writing about life in a foreign land.

Michalis Patentalis

The One Opposite

My neighbour
bought a new car
Shares
A wife
A house
Furniture
Viagra
A heart
A grave
Only his God he did not change.
“God bless him.”

**GILETTE CONTOUR or
The first advert in Afghanistan**

“In the name of the Father and of the Son”
and of the global madness.

The night shaves off its beard
with a blade out of the chalice.

Smearred with a little peanut butter
“in His image.”

At the foot of the hill the day in fancy dress erroneously counts
the whisper of silence

While a slave returns his transitoriness
Uncreased.

And just this once you look in the mirror
and comb your thick furry tongue.

Descendent of Cain, are you really
the mountaineer of limping Death?

(Translations: Christiane and William Leahy)

Giorgos Lillis

The deepest robe of the sea

Outside the city walls
and accompanied by the sound of the wind
I climbed up and reached the point
where I would attend the sacrifice of the sun for the night.
The mermaids played the stone game with a handful of stars
and from afar the moon cycled closer.
Buried in the side of the hill I watch
the deepest robe of the sea.

What sinks is outside my fortress

The sun was a traitor again and threw on us the black net.
Sudden rain,
like a breeze at midday, when you are asleep,
you are cold
and look for the sheet to cover yourself.

My fortress is a window. Even if small,
 still big enough to secure the picture of the world for me.
 To say no, whatever may happen, today I will sit here
 and watch, as I may, the rain and later
 the night, as I see it steadily coming galloping
 and out of its basket
 scattering stars and darkness,
 it too is a sower of the sky.
 Not to talk about the moon on the left,
 that rubs its back against the tower blocks, takes the corner
 and becomes the crown of the mountain behind.
 Just for a short time.
 Then I cannot see it any longer. The tenant next door has nicked it.
 The lucky devil could admire it as a king
 but I have never seen him look outside.
 Funny people. The magic poses in front of their eyes
 and they look for it elsewhere.
 In vain.

The raindrops have dressed the windowpane.
 A plant with morning dew
 on its glassy leaves.
 The room a garden and I a gardener.
 The stanza fills up with heavenly scent, many colours,
 the soul calms down.

I can see from here the cars and the pedestrians
 on the pavement, also the houses stretching into the distance,
 the lorry that comes every day and how they unload it
 down there in front of the house,
 but I do not do it.
 I concentrate on the birds that peck at the blue,
 they get covered with heavenly dust in their flight,
 on the wind, that dances with the trees
 on the cup, that pours the violet of the descending sun
 on the rain, that fills the gutters and can be heard in the evening
 the strange sound of the water like a river.
 Don't think that I have a special view, from here, where I live.
 Necessity forced me, like you,
 to live in these cities that were hastily built,
 they have nothing important to offer
 but big streets for the cars,
 dwellings one after the other.

One day I did decide. To fetch the little table,
 to put it next to the window
 to place my typewriter here and while writing
 to help my thoughts access the devastation of silence.
 Later I caught myself getting lost for hours

not in concrete pictures of the world outside
but in things that I cannot describe easily
fissures of memory,
photos of the inner sky
like a cameraman, who films an unknown, far away land.
In those hours my coffee went cold
and I did not hear music or voices.

Nothing.

A strange floating between the hardly perceivable and the real.
The wind blew, I remember, and inside was a white darkness.
And I was on a tightrope. From the window to the other side of the mountain.
Without hurting myself I went through the window
to the far side of the world.

Constantly the neighbours insisted maliciously
that I had gone crazy
but I knew
and I felt sorry for them, that they could not see, the poor souls,
what I could not describe, as I feared
they could not hold out, if they
reached the multitude.

Especially when the typewriter became a time machine
and brought me to the shores
where Odysseus exhausted fell asleep
and dreamed the same dream over and over.

What sinks is outside my fortress.

(Translations: Christiane and William Leahy)

Yüksel Pazarkaya

HORSE CHESTNUTS

You are a Turk

“You’re not a German,” said Stefan to Ender during lunch break in the school yard. Why didn’t he want to play catch with Ender today? Just to give a reason, he simply said, “You’re not a German.” Ender was surprised and hurt. Stefan was his favourite friend in class, his best playmate. “Why?” was the only question that came to mind.

Stefan didn’t understand him. What do you mean “Why?” Does Ender think he’s German? “Because you’re not German,” he said. “You’re not a German like me.”

Ender’s beautiful dark eyes became sad. Something inside him hesitated, as if he had done something wrong. Something in his heart broke. He kept quiet. He let his head hang down. He walked away. All day he did not speak a word to Stefan. He could not follow the lessons. He could not listen to what the teacher said. His head became heavier and heavier.

German Chestnuts

It had happened before, the previous autumn. Where he lives there is a nice little park, full of trees and flowers. In autumn it is really beautiful. At that time of year, all the children from the neighbourhood come for the chestnuts. The children throw stones at the chestnuts to get them down. Whoever collects a lot sells them to the zoo as feed for the elephants and camels. Others take them to school. You can use them in Maths, for example. And the little children, who do not go to school yet, use the chestnuts as marbles.

The teacher said, “Every child has to bring ten chestnuts.” There are thirty-four children in the class. If every child brings ten then it will make exactly three hundred and forty chestnuts. And you can use them well for logic and the four basic arithmetical calculations.

In the afternoon Ender went to the park. Two children were throwing stones at the chestnuts. They were not his friends but he knew them. He had often seen them around that area.

Ender walked closer. He bent down for a chestnut which lay on the ground. One of the two children said to him, “Hands off!” “I want to collect chestnuts too,” said Ender. The second child said, “You’re not allowed, they’re German chestnuts.” Ender did not understand. The first child added, “You’re not a German.” Then the other said, “You’re a foreigner.” They stood provocatively in Ender’s way. He stayed bent with his hand stretched out. If he had bent a little further down, he could have touched the chestnut. But he could not reach it. His head lifted, facing the children, he stayed bent for a while. Then he straightened up. Without the chestnut, of course. Silenced. He wanted to say, “The park belongs to everyone and everyone can collect chestnuts,” but he couldn’t say a word. The other children were getting louder: “You’re a foreigner. These are German chestnuts. If you touch them, you’re going to be in for it,” trying to frighten him.

Ender was totally confused. Should I fight with them, flashed through his mind. He kept looking from one to the other. To fight against two is not clever, he thought. He ran away, without looking at them again.

What am I?

When he came home that day he asked his mother a lot of questions. But his mother did not really respond. She tried to change the subject.

Now Ender was determined to solve the question that had been going around in his head, about what had happened between him and Stefan. As soon as he came through the door he flung his question into his mother's face:

"Mum, what am I?"

This was an unexpected question for his mother. Her answer was just as unexpected:

"You are Ender."

"I know my name is Ender. That wasn't what I asked. What am I?" Ender remained stubborn.

"First of all, come on in. Take off your satchel and your shoes," said his mother.

"Okay," said Ender. "But you have to tell me what I am."

Ender's mother thought that he was joking or giving her a riddle to solve.

"You're a pupil," she said.

Ender became angry.

"You're taking the mickey," he said. "I'm asking you what I am. Am I a German or a Turk, what am I?"

Oh dear! Ender's mother did not like questions like this at all. It made it hard for her to answer. What should she say? It was not really a difficult question. And she knew the right answer. But would Ender be able to understand it? Would he accept it or be able to accept it? Even if he accepted it, would it help him in any way?

His mother and his father are Turks. They were born and grew up in Turkey and went to school there. They only came to Germany in order to get work and earn money. They don't speak German very well. When they speak German Ender has to laugh. For they often make mistakes. They cannot say things correctly.

But it is completely different with Ender. He was born in Germany. He went to nursery in Germany. Now he is in year one in a German school. German children are his friends. There are some other foreign children in his class. But Ender doesn't see a difference between them; he can't say that this one is German and this one is not, because apart from one they all speak good German. There is only Alfonso. Ender feels a bit sorry for Alfonso. His German isn't as good as the other children's. Ender thinks that Alfonso hasn't learned to talk properly. Little children can't speak properly either; Alfonso seems to him like a big baby.

Ender can speak Turkish but not as well as he can speak German. When he speaks Turkish he often uses some German words. He has learned German as his mother tongue. No way different from German children. Sometimes he feels that there is a difference because German children cannot speak Turkish. But when he has a lesson in class or during playtime in the schoolyard this feeling disappears very quickly. Especially when he plays with Stefan, it is impossible to have such a feeling.

That's why he was so surprised about what Stefan said. And what if Stefan never plays with him again? Then he'll be very lonely. And bored.

Ender's father does not know what to do

In the evening Ender's father came home from work. Even before he had opened the door properly Ender asked him, "Dad, am I a Turk or a German?"

His father was speechless.

"Why do you ask?" he said after a while.

“I just want to know,” said Ender determinedly.

“What would you prefer to be, a Turk or a German?” asked his father.

“Which is better?” Ender asked in return.

“Both are good, my son,” said his father.

“But why didn’t Stefan play with me today?”

Finally Ender came out with the problem that had bothered him all day.

“Why didn’t he play with you?” asked his father.

“You’re not a German, he said. What am I, Dad?”

“You’re a Turk, my son, but you were born in Germany,” replied his father helplessly.

“But the names of the German children are different from mine.”

His father began to stutter.

“Your name is a Turkish name,” he said. “Isn’t Ender a nice name?”

Ender liked his name.

“Of course! But it isn’t like the other children’s names,” he said.

“That doesn’t matter, the only thing that counts is that it’s a nice name!” said his father.

“But Stefan won’t play with me any more.”

This choked Ender’s father. He felt as if he were suffocating. “Don’t be sad,” he said to Ender after a while. “I will talk to Stefan tomorrow. He will play with you again. I’m sure he was only joking.”

Ender remained silent.

(Translation: Christiane and William Leahy)

Sicilian

Sicilian dialects belong to the Sicily/Calabria/Salento branch of Southern Italian dialects. As compared with other dialects of the peninsula, they have a distinct and particularly interesting history and evolution. The main reasons for this particular position are:

- a) Sicily's centrality in the Mediterranean region, since ancient times;
- b) very early and special relations with the Greek and Latin languages and civilisations; Sicilian is characterised by a particularly developed vocalism, different from that of any other neo-Latin area;
- c) the extremely heterogeneous cultural and linguistic influences which have characterised the history of the island: Sicily was in contact not only with ancient Greece and Rome, but also with the Byzantine, Arabic, Norman, Catalan and Spanish civilisations, which has resulted in a wide linguistic variation;
- d) the notable ensemble of cultural and linguistic traditions which is still visible in the differences between several Sicilian dialects at present. They can be differentiated in three groups: the Western (to which belong the dialects of Palermo, Trapani, and West Agrigento), Central (the dialects of the Madonie region, East Agrigento and Enna), and Eastern (the dialects of Messina, Catania, Siracusa and Ragusa).

The Sicilian literary and linguistic tradition has been shaped by significant events and personalities: the Sicilian School of Poetry which emerged during the Middle Ages under Frederick II, as well as the dominant figures of Antonio Veneziano (sixteenth century), Giovanni Meli (eighteenth century), and more recently, Domenico Tempio and Ignazio Buttitta. Important authors such as Luigi Capuana and Luigi Pirandello have also written in dialect.

With varying degrees of competence nearly everybody born and bred in Sicily knows Sicilian.

Nino De Vita

Benedettina

At the age of thirteen your heart
falls in love.

Fantasies,
about hugs and kisses
– in the orchard, in the middle of the wild grass,
on the hay of the hayloft –
kept driving me
out of my tiny mind.

Slowly
– oh so slowly –
to avoid my father
("Oh you layabout, layabout,
get on with your studies, layabout!")

I went out.

I closed
the half-door; and by crawling
along the roof, I left
by the broken door
of the chicken-run.

The sun,
far away, stroking the church,
was going pale
towards the salt-pans.

II

Deep holes,
dry, in the track;
pebbles and ruts from the wheels
of carts; and turning
from the chicken-run into Michelino's
kitchen garden, with its
rows of peas, courgettes,
and a fig
tree; papyrus
at the edge of the canals
and the plume
of the broomrape, sprouting
red from the beans.

Coming in, from behind the tower,
along the narrow path of Bartolomeo
Bbaciacca, a corner of land:
marjoram, chicory,
radishes and parsley,
celery in flower, mallow
and clumps of wild asparagus
from the canal, pulled up,
its roots towards the sun

– the sparrow looked around
with curiosity; the wild duck,
moving rapidly,
frightened, flew away –

the small garden
of Nicolo Agghiu
and the dungheap of Alberto
Scagghiajazzi with the fresh manure
of pregnant cows.

III

Ah how I walked
 hands in my pockets
 following a shadow
 – a face – a woman's
 which churned in my head.

Low stone walls
 running down from the heights
 of Cutusio: ancient,
 mossy, the holes
 stuffed with earth, or empty:
 mint and thistle, shoots of wild fig,
 dry brambles...

I heard it
 – I heard it, yes, I heard it –
 that voice like a moan.
 Again and again, in the air,
 a woman's...

I turned round
 to look in the space beyond the
 aloe; then, firmly,
 passing through the gap, I slipped in,
 amongst the ears of wheat: the awns, long,
 spiky, scratched
 my arms.

IV

It was a young girl, lying
 on the wheat: her hands
 on her swollen belly,
 her dress pulled up to her thighs,
 and she threshed
 her head from side to side.

I recognised her.
 Benedetta her name,
 daughter of uncle Carmelo
 Alogna, the labourer
 who lived at the beginning of the road
 with the little votive chapel.
 She walked straight
 – she had eyes like fire –
 whilst crossing the yard:
 her hair in plaits
 and her prominent bosom.
 I had never noticed,
 looking at her

– with a cup full of yeast in her hand
 or clasping a jug to her side –
 graceful, as she expected,
 enclosed in her womb,
 a child.

 “A baby”
 she told me, biting
 her lip. “I’m having a baby.”
 I was stunned;
 then, shy,
 I got all confused.
 I was searching, shifting
 my eyes, looking for words: in a flower,
 a scarlet poppy,
 ears of wheat,
 far away, past the olive trees,
 and on her hands,
 her closed eyes
 and open...

 She sighed,
 Benedetta, straightening
 her head, exhausted.
 “Go to Donna Giulia, my mother’s
 cousin” she told me
 “and bring her to me, but quickly,
 run!”

V
 She was in the chicken-run,
 Donna Giulia, with some bread
 and a tomato in her hand.

She was eating.
 The crumbs
 she was tossing to the hens.
 (What squabbles – what cackling –
 pecking and chasing each other...)

A mole with lots of hairs
 big and black
 was at the corner
 of her mouth, small eyes
 like sows have, and a scarf tied
 round her head.

From the holes in the netting
 I spoke to her.
 She dropped

the bread, the tomato,
wiped her hands
on her apron and came out.

VI

We found Benedetta, like an empty
sack, discarded.
Her breath was laboured, moaning.
Her forehead, her cheeks
were wet with sweat and the full length
of her neck; her eyes fading,
pale.

“Move aside” said Donna Giulia.

She was observing,
 touching her...
 She turned

towards me. “The doctor,
run and fetch him, quick”
she said.

“No, not the doctor”
Benedetta burst out.
“Then we’ll bring you
home” said Donna Giulia,
sharply.

 “Not home,
no, not home” begged
the girl, terrified.

 Donna Giulia
got up. “Go and call
someone” she yelled at me.
 “Her mother,
her father, anyone,
go!”

VII

I got back to the veranda
sprinting.
 Two minutes
and pedalling fast
I finally reached the cluster
of houses, at San Leonardo.

I knocked at the door of the white
house where the doctor lived.
Aunt Francesca, aged,
with a smock, her hair
in a bun and her red lips
opened it.

Words whilst the deep blue
 sky was turning
 grey (a small cart
 went by, screeching
 in the street: laden with vine branches
 and hay, the farmer
 with his round hat and small dog
 trotting proudly below the shaft).

Powerless, aunt Francesca shook
 her head while she spoke.
 “He’s not in” she said
 “Later...”

Arms wide open,
 like a cross.

“He’s not in. Later, he’s not in”
 I repeated on the way back,
 slamming
 the wheels breathlessly
 in the holes of the track.

At the noted spot
 – there were cicadas,
 and singing frogs –
 I stopped.

I threw down
 my bike on the
 aloes
 and stepping over
 clumps of wild oats,
 barley, vetch,
 I plunged into the wheat.

No-one was there.
 In a corner a damaged patch,
 large – a massacre –
 of ears of wheat, bruised,
 trampled...

VIII

Donna Giulia’s house
 was silent and showed just a few glimmers of light;
 So was Benedetta’s: weak
 gleams from closed
 shutters.

I took the narrow path
 along the side
 of the tower, and emerged
 in the courtyard round the well.
 On a bench,
 Bartolo Sheep-butcher
 held his son Vincenzo
 astride his knees,
 and was saying to him “Let’s go”
 holding him by the hands
 “Let’s go to Palermo, Rome,
 my little one, on a trip”
 and he bounced his legs up and down.
 The boy laughed
 with just two teeth...

Aunt Dorotea, a wash-basin
 in her hands, full to the brim
 leaned out of the front door
 and threw in a swirl
 the turbid lye
 into the yard.

“Oh Nino”
 she said “I almost
 hit you” laughing
 toothless.

I greeted them making my way
 along the passage between the dunghill
 and the water-tank of my uncle
 Gerolamo.

In a nook
 of the straw-stack, in the dark,
 on dung and urine,
 hay stalks, seedheads
 of millet, the nanny-goat
 of Paolo Ticchiticchi,
 old, with her kids
 penned in the half vat.

IX

Suddenly, wide open
 shutters, day
 filled the room
 with light: St. Leonard
 on one wall, the crucifix,
 and in a corner
 a table, two chairs

beside the bed; a plate
on the chest, empty.

“Is it late?” I murmured
– propped on one elbow
 raising my hand
against the sunlight – drowsy.
“It’s a bad morning”
said my mother “a bad one:
suddenly, last night,
Benedettina died.”
“Is she dead?” I almost shouted.
“Dead” said my mother
“dead: she was fifteen....”

X

I saw her. She was no longer swollen,
she was stiff, Benedettina:
flat were her flanks and her
belly: a short dress
over her knees
 and a rosary
in her hand.

Her mother, aunt Maria,
sitting by her pillows,
fat, double-chinned,
fanning her suffocating
face “I can’t
think about it...” she raved.
“This daughter of mine so wise,
this treasure...
 Oh unlucky one...
And how can I find
comfort...”

Grazia the Cuttlefish and Antonia
Copper-face restrained her,
held her arms.

“Who was it, was it me?”
aunt Maria said
“who planted the nails
in the Lord, was it me, me,
tell me?”

Uncle Carmelo Alogna,
crouched in a corner,
hands on his knees

kept repeating “she will never come back, it’s no use,
she will not” over and over.

Aunt Maria, now calm,
in a whisper
started to tell us the story.
“All day at home
she stayed, busying herself,
this daughter of mine: she did the washing
and the ironing and put
the washing away....

Then in the night,
suddenly. A rupture
of the heart?

Oh my good
daughter...”

They held her tight,
the women who stayed at her side,
and tighter

– “That’s enough, enough....” –
now that aunt Maria,
shaking her head
cried “Oh my own blood,
blood of my veins, my own breath....”

I had not been
wary. Sharply
Donna Giulia’s eyes,
as soon as I raised
my glance, met
mine: entreating me,
in silence, warning....

I looked away,
rebuffed, and took
my leave.

Olive and almond trees,
turtle-doves, skylarks.

And in the valley
eucalyptus, pomegranates,
gardens and stone walls,
lemons on the ground
going soft

(Translation: Emilia Ippolito and Paula Burnett)

The Albanian minority in Italy

Albanian migration to Italy started in the fourteenth century. However, it is only from the second half of the following century that groups of Albanians began to establish permanent settlements in southern Italy. Nowadays these Albanians, fugitives from Giorgio Kastrioti Skanerberg, call themselves *arbëresh*, speak *arbërisht* and live in Arbri, thus perpetuating the ancient cultural identity of Albania (replaced today by *shqiptar*, *shqip* and *Shqipëri*). The Arbëresh language is an autonomous branch of the Tusc dialect which is spoken in southern Albania, and is very different from the Ghego spoken in northern Albania. The areas of Italy where the Italo-Albanian linguistic minority live, and where Arbëresh is still spoken, include fifty centres (forty-one administrative districts and nine part-districts) distributed across seven regions: Abruzzo, Molise, Campania, Puglia, Basilicata, Calabria and Sicily. There are no precise statistics concerning the numbers, at present, of the Albanian-speaking minority resident in Italy, nor are the data drawn from the official census adequate or reliable, since as well as the Albanian-speaking people living in centres of historic settlement there are other groups of Albanian-speaking people in the larger cities and regional capitals. The Albanian-speaking community in Palermo, for instance, is undoubtedly the most substantial, numerically, among those in the province of the Sicilian capital. During the five centuries Albanians have been in Italy, Albanian communities have not only preserved their language, which constitutes a rich and precious heritage documenting medieval Albanian, but have been able to raise it to the level of a literary language, imparting to it a status equal to that which was previously – prior to the establishment (in 1972) of Albanian as a standard literary language – accorded to the other principal dialects. Naturally in the course of so many centuries the influence of other Italian regional dialects has been inescapable. However, this influence undergone by the varieties of spoken Arbëresh has been limited to the lexical side of the language, leaving the phonological, morphological and grammatical structures unaltered. Thanks to the passing of national statute no. 482 on 19 December 1999, the Italo-Albanian minority – along with the other minorities – has at its disposal legislation which protects and favours the teaching of Arbëresh in school, which promotes initiatives to support linguistic research, and which solicits the publication of educational material. In Sicily, where three of the nine administrative districts are Albanian-speaking (Piana degli Albanesi, Contessa Entellina and Santa Cristina Gela), these provisions have gone on to evoke a remarkable level of interest from the general public, who follow with commitment and determination the language classes organised by the Department of Albanian Language and Literature at the University of Palermo.

Giuseppe Schirò Di Maggio

Broom has many flowers

One act drama

Note: The events of 1947 referred to are a part of Sicilian history which is still commemorated annually at Portella della Ginestra ("Ginestra" means "broom").

DRAMATIS PERSONAE: PLAYWRIGHT, ANGELA, GIORGIA, MATTEO, VICTIMS, CHIEF OUTLAW, OUTLAW.

The playwright's studio.

PLAYWRIGHT: (*He sits at his computer, writing. Someone knocks at the door.*) Who is it?

ANGELA: (*Outside*) It's us.

PLAYWRIGHT: (*Gets up to open the door*) Who's us?

GIORGIA: (*Outside*) Surprise!

PLAYWRIGHT: (*Opens the door*) Ah, it's you!

ANGELA: Are you waiting for anybody else?

PLAYWRIGHT: No, I'm not. Come on in, it's always a pleasure to see you.

MATTEO: It's a pleasure to see you too.

PLAYWRIGHT: (*Sitting down at his desk*) Please, take a seat.

GIORGIA: Were you writing something? (*pointing at the computer, still on*)

PLAYWRIGHT: Oh, only an idea, I was getting it down....

ANGELA: We're here to make you a proposal.

PLAYWRIGHT: Tell me about it.

MATTEO: We've already discussed it....

PLAYWRIGHT: That's fine!

GIORGIA: Since we're going to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Portella della Ginestra,...

PLAYWRIGHT: I'm with you, but go on....

GIORGIA: ...don't you think it would be worth writing something for the stage?

PLAYWRIGHT: Loads of books and acres of newsprint have already been written on Portella, and they're already dramatic enough. There's no need for one more drama.

GIORGIA: It wouldn't be "one more drama." It would be our drama, we'd stage it ourselves.

PLAYWRIGHT: It's not easy to write an original play on Portella! It would be like writing a schoolbook: the facts are known....

ANGELA: You could at least try. You already have three characters here.

GIORGIA: (*To Angela*) You mean three actors. The characters are made up by the playwright.

ANGELA: Yes, I mean three actors: then there's the rest of the group...

PLAYWRIGHT: I appreciate your confidence in me, but I'm still doubtful.

ANGELA: Why are you doubtful!

PLAYWRIGHT: It's a delicate subject. Don't get me wrong, please. It's a delicate subject to adapt for the stage. I mean the Albanians from Piana and our neighbours from San Giuseppe Jato and the other villages have lived the tragedy of Portella in the flesh. They have seen their relatives dying, there were even kids, they've seen the colour of blood, they smelt it. Some of the people who were there on that May Day are still alive, even though they're old: they would be a very attentive and critical audience. It's one thing to celebrate this anniversary with speeches, music and songs, quite a different thing to bring those tragic moments back to life—if you manage it at all.

GIORGIA: You could at least try!

PLAYWRIGHT: I don't know.... The subject has been exposed to too much debate already, I don't mean of a political sort, but literary. The text could turn out to be melodramatic....

MATTEO: I don't think so. Every time you've written dramatic roles they've been a success, besides, they mixed in some humour, with a bitter edge, though, ironic.

ANGELA: Maybe you're afraid of not finding the actors who are up to it....

GIORGIA: Us, for example....

PLAYWRIGHT: Oh no, you're first-rate. Tragedy, however, is more difficult than comedy....

GIORGIA: Yes, it's a matter of definition and interpretation, I get you!

ANGELA: This explains your problem: amateurs aren't made for tragic roles.

PLAYWRIGHT: Let's not exaggerate. If amateurs study their role well, they can do very well on stage.

MATTEO: If you don't think we're up to performing a serious drama, then the case is closed.

PLAYWRIGHT: When you take that serious tone, Matteo, you convince me of the opposite. You're already performing the drama of someone who can't perform dramas....

The VICTIMS of Portella come in: MARGHERITA CLESCERI, GIOVANNI MEGNA, SERAFINO LASCARI, FRANCESCO VICARI, VITO ALLOTTA, GORGIO CUSENZA, THREE BOYS, A GIRL. The woman wears the traditional black dress, the others wear the good clothes of May Day 1947. The GIRL is dressed in white. The six VICTIMS from Piana come centre-stage. The THREE BOYS and the GIRL stay a little to the side.

M. CLESCERI: Here we are, conjured up by your mind, even though you didn't call us by name... We were on your mind, and the mind is the element we can pass through with ease...

ANGELA: I'm scared.

GIORGIA: Who are you?

M. CLESCERI: Can't you see? We are the victims of Portella della Ginestra! Us, from Piana, and the four kids from San Giuseppe Jato.... (*pointing at the THREE BOYS and the GIRL*)

PLAYWRIGHT: Why are you here?

G. MEGNA: You were thinking about us, and here we are...

PLAYWRIGHT: You've come too soon, I haven't made a decision yet.

G. MEGNA: Then make it. We don't want to be conjured up for nothing.

PLAYWRIGHT: That's exactly what I was telling my friends. I don't want to summon you for nothing!

M. CLESCERI: Yet now that you have, you should write our drama.

PLAYWRIGHT: That's exactly what I don't want to do; I don't want to make people die on stage, not even in pretence!

G. MEGNA: But we're already dead. We only want our violent death to be remembered.

PLAYWRIGHT: So much has already been written about the massacre of Portella della Ginestra!

S. LASCARI: I'd like to say something, too. So much has been written on the massacre of Portella della Ginestra, but more on the political aspects than on the human dimension, I mean, than on the real, painful death of each and every one of us....

MATTEO: I don't think so. Here in Piana you have been commemorated as single individuals, who died in the slaughter of Portella! Your names are engraved in stone and in people's hearts! And in the books and articles written about you there is emotion and drama....

S. LASCARI: I know, it's true. Yet I don't think you could ever write enough about us, the defenceless and unwilling victims....

M. CLESCERI: (*To the PLAYWRIGHT*) If you find it difficult, or worse still, to make us die on stage, then try to bring us back to life....

PLAYWRIGHT: It's the same thing, I still need actors....

GIORGIA: That's a good excuse. You already have three here, and the others are ready to take part in the play....

PLAYWRIGHT: It's not that easy. Let me give you an example: which of you three is ready to play the role of those who died in the massacre? (*waiting for an answer*) Aren't you going to answer me? It's straightforward: which of you is ready to pretend to die on stage? How about you, Angela?

ANGELA: Why are you making everything so complicated?

PLAYWRIGHT: I'm not. I'm only asking whether you would be ready to fake death on stage!

M. CLESCERI: I think I've got you. If the actors refuse, they're right to do so. Nobody wants to die, not even in pretence. You can't perform death. Death, in particular a violent one, comes upon you like a mountain, crashing down on you and crushing you.... Myself, for example, I had my life, I had my dreams, I mean my dreams were for my six children, for their future: I could never have imagined becoming the victim of someone else's hatred. (*Film images representing Portella are projected, showing the victims falling.*) I don't even know who killed me. I felt a pang in my chest: I put my hand to it, and touched a warm fluid, my blood.... To say that blood was a red carnation, or like the red of the workers' flag is like making poetry out of it. That was my blood, it was no poetry: the blood of a thirty-seven-year-old woman, a daughter of the people. I was there, in Portella, for the May Day festivities. (*Scenes of the festive beginning of the demonstration are shown.*) I wanted to be there, to take part, show my support by my physical presence.... Instead, I died! I know. My presence is eternal now, there, on the slopes, between Pizzuta and Kumeta; yet will that ever be a consolation for my premature death and for leaving my six kids alone? Do you understand? Six children, six times the bright future I dreamt for them? Instead, I died! And those four children from San Giuseppe Jato (*pointing at them*), they were killed, just like that, at a most tender age, can you see them? I took those poor children with me, like my own children: one of them was nine: do you understand?—nine years old!—the boys were a bit older. What kind of a world did we live in? What kind of world do you still live in, since that happened?

F. VICARI: (*To the PLAYWRIGHT*) I don't know what you would like to write, but couldn't you translate into words what I, and they, felt, when I was shot? The incredible pain of seeing your young body broken, and the even greater pain of having to forcibly, and I mean forcibly, of having to forcibly quit life at the age of twenty-three, when you've everything ahead of you, even though your future is uncertain, even though you'll have to struggle who knows how long, to be able to live from your work in a dignified way? I challenge you to find an actor who can reproduce my sensations when the bullet, or bullets, who counted them! tore into my flesh! (*More images of confusion and death, from the film on Portella*)

PLAYWRIGHT: That's the reason why I think it's impossible to write a drama, or rather, an adequate drama....

V. ALLOTTA: I was twenty years old then. How can it be possible to have to die at the age of twenty! I was always eager to celebrate with my friends and companions—and who isn't, at the age of twenty!—then, celebrating consisted of eating cooked artichokes, the first beans of the season, some pieces of cheese, brought by friends—we didn't produce any cheese of our own. My mother had given me a big loaf that looked like a full moon: a one-kilo loaf! You ask whether I would have managed to eat it all. Can you doubt it? Of course I would have managed! If I'd had some more time! I felt as if the whole mountain was ripping into my flesh! Flesh only twenty years old, my god! A shot doubled me up! Just one thought was on my mind: my mother, where is she? I thought my mother could have tried to stanch the blood, which was flowing out of my body as if from a spring: yes, the spring of “te Kroi i Badeut” actually came to my mind: there, it's water that flows out just the same!

G. CUSENZA: I was forty-two when it happened. I was the oldest of them. If somebody had asked me to give my life for the cause, I might have said no. Instead, I gave my life for real. The fact that my own blood, like that of my friends, has contributed to the workers' cause, is my only comfort for the pain I suffered in losing my life. You want to make a play about our tragedy. I'm not sure what that might be good for. I wouldn't want us to be one of the festivities that are meant to turn Piana into an important tourist attraction. I mean: let's be serious about this. It's one thing to attract tourists at Easter or Epiphany, a different thing to get them to come on May Day. We'd like to be treated not like monuments to be visited, but as people, who still have something to say to the coming generations.

S. LASCARI: I'm curious to see how you would represent me, dead at the age of fifteen! But I was already a man, a worker! To die at the age of fifteen, does that make any sense?

PLAYWRIGHT: That's why I think it's difficult to put your story on stage.

M. CLESCERI: In any case, whether you hold a festival or write, it's still a way of commemorating us, dead up there, in Portella. Even though newspapers will report this fiftieth anniversary, even though books will be written and films made, a symbolic flower, like a drama, is a sign of love. You see, broom—*ginestra*—“our broom,” has many flowers: they have blossomed and grown, for the past fifty years, on its green branches. You would be adding one more flower to that broom.... If you don't write anything, a chance to pay homage is missed.

ANGELA: But who can play your role! I'm beginning to agree with the professor: nobody will be willing to play your role, in particular, dying on stage, even though it's just an act.

GIORGIA: Put like that, the problem is hard to resolve. Who can express adequately on a stage the pain of losing your life, I mean not only the physical agony, but the terror of having to leave this life....

MATTEO: Then let's forget about it.

M. CLESCERI: To do nothing is to miss a chance to pay homage, it's a non-event! Why did you actors come here, then?

ANGELA: We didn't think it would be so difficult to speak about you....

GIORGIA: We weren't in your shoes....

M. CLESCERI: You never could be in our shoes: your play is only a fiction, but a fiction can at least serve to conjure us up, even on a theatre stage.

MATTEO: But from now on, no-one could imagine, from the text, that the actors would be up to it....

M. CLESCERI: I don't think even professional actors would be up to representing us on stage....

A curtain opens in the studio; the CHIEF OUTLAW is seated, the OUTLAW standing next to him. Both of them are armed and masked. Everybody else is surprised. The victims of the massacre withdraw towards the back of the stage. There is an embarrassing silence due to the presence of the two OUTLAWS.

PLAYWRIGHT: Who are you?

CHIEF OUTLAW: Who are we? I don't know. You tell us.

PLAYWRIGHT: Why are you armed and hooded?

CHIEF OUTLAW: If I'm to play my part, I want to remain unknown.

PLAYWRIGHT: I don't want any of my characters to be unknown. Take your hood off.

CHIEF OUTLAW: We can't. We've been commissioned to carry out this deed as a warning. It demands skill and secrecy: we can't take anything off. Because you show the victims, it is vital that the killers be represented too! And we're the ones from the ambush!

PLAYWRIGHT: I can't stage a drama without knowing who I'm dealing with! And anyway, I have no intention of staging anything: I don't want to let you shoot defenceless people even in play!

CHIEF OUTLAW: Defenceless? These people aren't defenceless! These people are dangerous. They are people who think. Who have begun to think, maybe. But think. They have thoughts, ideas, ideals! They are dangerous people! Day by day they grow in numbers; they become a crowd, a populace: a populace that thinks is dangerous! My duty is very simple: to shoot ideas! If I manage to shoot these people in the head, it's even better: that's the centre of their thoughts!

PLAYWRIGHT: But are you actors or characters? From the way you speak, you sound too committed to what you will be doing!

CHIEF OUTLAW: I've learnt my part well. I'm an actor when I act on someone else's behalf, and a character when I act for myself.

PLAYWRIGHT: And in this case?

CHIEF OUTLAW: I've been sent to teach the people of Portella della Ginestra a lesson. They told me to shoot into the air to frighten people. Everyone is scared of shots! Of course an accident could happen and a bullet might hit the crowd, I was told! Shoot into the air! What's the point? If I were to play the part of the actor who shoots into the air: bang! my role's finished! I want to put something of my own into it. This mob doesn't deserve anything else! I will lie in wait beside the Pizzuta mountain face and get them to take good aim! This May Day I'll be the one who calls the shots! (*Footage of the OUTLAWS lying in wait is shown.*)

PLAYWRIGHT: Take off your hood!

MATTEO: They can't: evil has no face!

ANGELA: Too easy: evil does have a face, or to put it another way, evil is a real person! Whether he's the one creating evil through his own initiative, or whether he's just an agent sent by someone else, I don't think it makes much difference.

GIORGIA: That's true, but who is more guilty of the evil perpetrated, the agent or the instigator?

MATTEO: It seems logical to me that the instigator is more guilty! He's the one who gives the orders. The other just follows the orders of the instigator! If you only condemn the one who carries out the crime, the instigator can get hold of another agent: the source of evil is the one who gives the orders!

CHIEF OUTLAW: Big things were promised to me: as I said, they asked me to do a job, but I will put something of my own into it. Am I making myself clear?

PLAYWRIGHT: I have no intention of writing a drama with characters who cover their faces, who don't want to take off their masks!

CHIEF OUTLAW: So who are you to ask me to take off my mask! Maybe one day history will be revealed in all its detail: who played this part, who played the other! But things like this are never done in the open! Say you find out who the instigators were after a hundred years! What use will it be! Can it change history? And will they ever find the instigators? Here and now, what counts is the practical consequence of the shooting: a few dead bodies and you stop a whole people! In a hundred years, even if the truth came to light, it would only serve to embellish the history books! If they found out the truth, perhaps, in ten years' time, that could have better results, but in a hundred years it'll be no use!

PLAYWRIGHT: Gentlemen, I have work commitments, I'd like this discussion to end now!

MATTEO: Aren't we going to do anything?

PLAYWRIGHT: Are you prepared to play the part, on stage, of course, to play the part of the outlaw who fires on a festive, defenceless crowd?

MATTEO: Frankly, no!

PLAYWRIGHT: So where am I going to find the actors? Nobody wants to take on the burden—but also the honour—of representing the victims, their agony on stage, the anguish of being on the brink of death, the anguish of not having lived in a just world, of having to leave six young children behind without anyone to look after them! Nobody wants to play the part of the aggressor who fires, with premeditation, on defenceless people. Do you want to tell me how to stage a drama without actors?

The curtain closes, and the CHIEF OUTLAW and the OUTLAW vanish while the VICTIMS reappear.

M. CLESCERI: What are you going to do?

ANGELA: Nothing!

G. MEGNA: We could tell you a few things about the moments leading up to the massacre, surely no one could describe them better than us: as for the moments after the massacre, we don't know. We were already dead...

G. CUSENZA: On May 1st, at dawn, the sky that day was the same as any other day: a patchwork of blue spaces and pure white clouds, but the horizon was clear. I'd scarcely poked my head out, to see what the weather was like, when a woman from the neighbourhood, still half asleep, said good morning to me, but she was upset. She came up to me and told me about the dream she'd just had, and said that dreams dreamt just before dawn come true! But I only realised this afterwards. I'm not the

superstitious type, who needs it! But my neighbour insisted on telling me about her dream: she dreamt that the enormous face of mount Pizzuta was enveloped in darkness—you know how dark the Pizzuta looks on nights with no moon—and here and there faint lights were kindled, they seemed to me like candles, she said; small votive candles lit up: it was as if a giant hand had lit them with a match: one moment at the foot of the mountain, then along the sides and then as if virtually at the summit: as if the Pizzuta was a cemetery on the 2nd of November, when women go and light candles to the dead. My neighbour begged me not to go to Ginestra and not to let anyone else go either; she'd already almost convinced her husband and children not to go. But who believes a woman's dreams? Both her husband and her children went to Portella, like all those who'd organised the May Day celebrations. Perhaps someone in Piana knew what was going to happen. But because of the climate of fear and uncertainty caused by the political and social struggles of the time, you might have guessed something was going to happen in Portella. Anyway, I didn't take the woman's dream that seriously. I got ready quickly and went to meet the others....

F. VICARI: It was nice to see all those people going along in such an orderly way, filling the main road all the way from the *Kryqja*¹ down there, some riding on decorated donkeys, others on foot, dressed in their Sunday best, up towards the main square and then along the road that leads to Ginestra. And there, in Portella della Ginestra, all the workers from the nearby villages gathered: they came up from San Giuseppe Jato, San Cipirello, Partinico, and met up with their comrades. Because we all felt like brothers with a common destiny: us lot from Piana, *Arbëreschë*,² others from nearby villages, *Lëtinj*,³ we fought to improve conditions for everyone, because when it came to work and employment none were favoured over others: we were all in the same boat. The predominant colour was red: the workers' red flags; but not everyone was a communist or a socialist, there were no differences yet, and people just came up to Portella for a day out. In fact, everyone was there: young and old, men, women, children....

G. MEGNA: I was wearing my new suit, I only had one, but for me this was the main festival of the year, like Easter! Those who had brought artichokes to Ginestra were sharing them with everyone, just like they were doing with the country loaves and other things: it was a really good-humoured outing! I was only a little way from the Barbato Rock,⁴ where those who had to give the speeches were standing. Friends and comrades in death, let's stand in the same positions as we did just at that moment of the gathering before they opened fire. (*He invites the other VICTIMS to take up positions round about.*) So you might get some idea of the commotion of the instant, before and after.... (*Film scenes of the beginning of the meeting are projected.*)

M. CLESCERI: I think I was standing just here in relation to the Barbato Rock and was listening to the speaker....

V. ALLOTTA: I must have been here, on the Pizzuta side. When they fired, the shots came from the Pizzuta.

S. LASCARI: It seemed to me that they came from the Kumeta; but perhaps it was the echo of the shots. Some people said it was bangers let off in celebration, but they were from nearby villages, *Lëtinj*. In fact, someone from the organising committee couldn't explain what the fireworks were about, as there had been none planned, and being from the organising committee he didn't know anything about it! And also, the meeting had only just started....

F. VICARI: And I was over on the Pizzuta side; I couldn't explain all the volleys. At first I thought it might be hunters, taking advantage of the holiday by going on a rabbit hunt....

V. ALLOTTA: What happened then was like the end of the world! Like when a squall of wind hits the ripe wheat of June in a fury, making it bend and fall, in the same way the crowd were bent and scattered! But this is all I saw... then I was hit.

(Film of the confusion following the shooting is shown.)

The VICTIMS move to the side of the stage, while the CHIEF OUTLAW and the other OUTLAW come forward side by side from behind the curtain.

CHIEF OUTLAW: (*hooded like the OUTLAW, his gun aimed*) We could have killed hundreds of them, once and for all, but we just wanted to teach them a lesson! A lesson slaughters some and softens up the rest! I was saying “fire, fire, fire” and the shots were showering down like hailstones....

(Film images of the OUTLAWS shooting are projected.)

PLAYWRIGHT: I don’t like violence at all, not even on a theatre stage! There at Portella, you fired on defenceless people!

OUTLAW CHIEF: Wasn’t their action violence? The crowd is violence! Their preaching, their speeches were violence! Demanding, demanding, demanding! We want this, we want that!

PLAYWRIGHT: It’s not the same thing: the power of the idea, to set against another idea, is what gives life to democracy!

GIORGIO: I agree, this is a drama that cannot be staged! The aggressors are still hooded: what kind of contribution to the truth can a play like this provide when some of its protagonists wear hoods! *(The CHIEF OUTLAW and the OUTLAW vanish slowly.)*

MATTEO: *(to the PLAYWRIGHT)* I give up on my idea of asking you to write something about Portella! And anyway, how many Portellas have we had in Italian history in these last fifty years! How many people wearing hoods! How many massacres have there been in Italy with many more dead than in Portella! There’s an incredibly long list!

PLAYWRIGHT: Yet the blood of the martyrs has strengthened our democracy! If today we live in a more civilised society, we owe it to the sacrifice of those who died as involuntary heroes, common people, people thirsty for justice! The victims of the other massacres of the last fifty years have also grieved us, but maybe because Portella della Ginestra was one of the first and so close to us, its memory is always alive and tangible!

ANGELA: “Blessed are the people who don’t need heroes!”—said someone whose name I don’t remember.⁵

GIORGIA: Unfortunately, though, there always have been heroes and perhaps there always will be, because fundamentally—sorry about the cliché—man will be wolf to man,⁶ and my apologies to the wolf!

PLAYWRIGHT: Well, we won’t do anything about it, then: I don’t think anyone feels like putting themselves in the shoes of either the victim or the aggressor, even as an act. The only thing to do, it seems to me, and the most peaceful, is to join the official commemorations, which temper the victims’ real pain, both physical and moral, with heroic idealism. Considering I’m not in a position to stage such real suffering, I won’t take up your invitation to write about the martyrs of Portella.

ANGELA: In any case, the memory of our fellow citizens and the kids from San Giuseppe Jato will be everlasting, everlasting like the stones with human faces erected in the square at Portella.

GIORGIA: Instead of commemorations, I'd rather events like those at Portella never happen again!

MATTEO: We must be strong in hope.

The ACTORS and the PLAYWRIGHT move towards the side of the stage. The VICTIMS of Portella, including the LITTLE GIRL and the THREE BOYS from San Giuseppe Jato, come forward to the front of the stage, smiling, hand in hand, while on the screen run images of the landscape of Portella della Ginestra as it is today.

¹ *Kryqja* in Albanian means Cross. As in many Italian villages, in Piana degli Albanesi at the entrance of the village there is a Cross on a pedestal, a symbolic way of protecting the inhabitants. The Cross is positioned to the east of the village, at the beginning of a very long uphill road that leads to the main square.

² *Arbëreschë* is the Albanian word used to describe Italo-Albanian people, i.e. those Albanians whose ancestors emigrated to Italy a long time ago and who constitute the Albanian minority in Italy.

³ The Albanian word *Lëtinj* translates literally as “Latins” and is used by Italo-Albanian people to refer to Sicilian or Italian people, or foreigners in general, as opposed to Albanians. Italians are referred to as “Latins” by the Albanians also within a religious context, given that Latin was the language used in Italian religious rituals. On the other hand, local Sicilian people sometimes refer to Italo-Albanians as Greek, because although Italo-Albanians are also catholic, they use the Greek language in their religious rituals.

⁴ The Barbato Rock is in Portella della Ginestra and is named after Nicola Barbato, a socialist deputy who used to stand up on it and speak to the workers from all the nearby villages. Nicola Barbato was one of the organizers of the movement called “Fascio dei Lavoratori,” the “Workers’ League,” which was active in Sicily towards the end of the nineteenth century.

⁵ See Bertolt Brecht’s play *Leben des Galilei / The Life of Galileo*, sc.13:

Andrea: Unglücklich das Land, das keine Helden hat!...

Galileo: Nein, unglücklich das Land, das Helden nötig hat.

[Andrea: Unhappy the land that has no heroes!...

Galileo: No, unhappy the land that needs heroes.]

⁶ The allusion is to the Latin saying which has remained familiar in Italian culture, usually given as *homo homini lupus*, from Plautus, *Asinaria*, II.iv.88: “Lupus est homo homini, non homo, quom qualis sit non novit” [“Man behaves like a wolf to others, not with humanity, of which he knows nothing”].

(Translation: Emilia Ippolito, Paola Marchionni and Paula Burnett)

Galician in Spain

Galician is the language used by about 2.5 million speakers in the north-western area of the Iberian Peninsula, most of the population of the autonomous region called Galicia. It is a romance language that developed from Latin and was first documented in legal and poetic texts in the 12th century, and it did not become distinct from Portuguese until the 14th century. Between the 16th and 18th centuries it almost totally disappeared from written documents, but in the mid-19th century there was a strong renaissance of Galician language and culture. Although Galician was declared the official language of Galicia in 1936, the Spanish Civil War did not allow the implementation of the law concerned, and it was not until the Spanish Constitution was approved in 1978 that finally Galician was declared joint official language of the region, together with Spanish. According to the figures provided by the Junta, the autonomous government, more than 83% of the total population of Galicia speaks Galician, 46% can read it and 27% can write it. In recent years there has been a sustained effort to raise its prestige and encourage its use, and as a result there has been an increase in the number of publishing houses now editing books and publications in Galician. *O correo Galego*, a newspaper fully published in Galician, was founded in 1994, and there has been a regional Broadcasting Corporation since 1984 with Galician TV and radio programming.

Ana Romani

Knots

1

She plants herself
in the middle of the pillow

this ruined woman
rashly
holds up a light
to illuminate the wound
slit open in
the blankets

She looks at her swollen belly
her hard, debilitating
pregnancy.

2

Tightening the rope
pulling the cable

let it break

Who will be hanged from the mast?

3

That woman
 who is hanging from the furthest floor
 beyond the scaffolding
 in order to wipe away with her vertigo
 the filth marks
 the traces of fear

4

Cruel illusion
 the desert that is explored
 down into its bowels delving
 into the dry earth of muteness without name
 – What is your voice? –

she digs deeply with her hands
 confused in the silence delving

for grief itself:
 to probe and press likenesses
 to drink the dregs of rage
 and thus to discover deceit

5

The habits of the young girl who wears sandals in December
 she who asks no questions, neither knowing nor wanting to know
 who all alone licks stalactites with a fierce apathy
 whom the goddesses abandon in her princess's album
 That woman winds herself up
 and flings herself into space
 like when she used to play with dolls and grew up and lost her skipping-rope
 as when the tide broke and there rushed from her mother
 the rivers that ran inside her

6

I dreamed one day that I used to exist and I punctured balloons
 now I deflate my false pregnancy
 and secrete gases amongst the cracks in the foundations

(Translation: Claire Tylee)

Xavier Rodríguez Baixeras**Without Zeal**

From now on your lips will no longer be sandy
nor your breast, nor will the fragrant crags
open themselves up like fists at low tide.
The depths of your chalice are discharging black dregs.¹

The cataclysm that excites the stubborn assault
of excrement, is cherished by your princes
when they concoct the variable direction of the winds,
when they grope, irritatingly, at agony's splendour.

Black wave, lugubrious spume, this is the future
of your star, fallen into the exile of some blank well,
bird-voice poisoned, a stain about which we write
with despair the vilest, most nauseating verse.

In you words are stranded, dismally; affliction resounds
from the membrane of the night, and silence
is spilt over vessels sullied by the ink
of what is written without zeal, futile and superfluous.

¹ At the end of 2002 the coast of Galicia suffered from a huge oil-slick.

(Translation: Claire Tylee)

Chus Pato

Disdainful Swans, like Icebergs

Swimming through the sea, the inexplicable tide, strange cetaceans
 cosmic reflections of the philosophers in the garden open to the Cyclades
 prophets of the ocean
 ships bound for Armorica, Cornwall, Ireland, Scotland, Wales
 motto of Burgas
 Nestorian convents, cypresses from Salustio
 the elegance of a portico in a barren landscape
 black blood which reddens in the prison of Treveris
 the doctrine of the Aeonians: Procule, Urbica, Eucracia, Hypatia, Trahamunda,
 Egeria.
 Grimacing fish with the letters and numbers of omens
 the reign of terror, the final Romantic despair,
 the heart of Bruce, the King
 BE TOM ATRON SAMBIANA, ATRON DE LABRO
 the ebb-tide of an equator: Brazilian, Congolese, Hindustani, Malayan
 the metamorphosis of Adonis-Atis
 ladies' dances
 politics
 science
 Investitures
 the imperial Diet
 the tiara with three coronets.
 The rapid currents of the Gulf Stream,
 and harsh shoals, and rough breakers

That is how I imagine paradise to myself
 paradise is a place walled in
 paradise is entered by osmosis
 in paradise there are doves and the net for catching doves
 there is vegetation
 it could be a wasteland
 a book
 a path
 – to be born, emerge forever in a strange land

so the star is two
 Earthly
 squared
 four

(Translation: Claire Tylee)

Arabic in Spain

Arabic is one of the oldest living languages in the world and there are more than 200 million speakers of Arabic throughout the world. It is the official language of many countries in northern Africa and in the East, and while they all share the same written language their spoken dialects are widely different. This Semitic language that reads from right to left appears in written documents as early as the 4th century in Arabia and it has had a long and rich literary tradition since then. Arabic was the language of part of the population in the Iberian Peninsula between the 8th and the 15th centuries and its influence upon contemporary Spanish is quite significant, in many commonly used words as well as in toponyms. At present the speakers of Arabic in Spain are people who came to the country as immigrants quite recently. According to the official figures of the Minister of the Interior for 2001, there are 1,100,000 foreign residents in Spain, a figure representing 2.5% of the overall population of the country. Among foreign residents the largest group is that of Moroccans (234,937), and thus the great majority of the more than 300,000 speakers of Arabic in Spain today come from Morocco, most of them immigrants who arrived in the 1990s (a decade ago the figure for Moroccans was around 20,000) as non-specialised workers. The number of foreign residents from other Arabic-speaking countries such as Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon or Iraq is significantly smaller.

Abdulhadi Sadoun

Tank Carpets

How pacifist the people here are,
 offering both cheeks,
 if they had more they would offer them all
 to their destiny;
 meanwhile, your lips search
 for words that recollect.

Here
 people do not know evil.
 It's better for them to be cooped up in boredom
 – I almost prefer their meekness –
 since they have known no wars.
 It is as if Spielberg had not invaded
 with his dinosaurs.
 They do not bleed to death over the tunics of Kubrick.

I say to them:
 – Whatever shall I do with your bits of intelligence!
 And I take cover under their umbrellas.

Here
 they grin a lot, without fear,

they touch my growing beard
 and burst out laughing:
 – Talk to us about what you know, about your carpets.
 C...A...R...P...E...T...S.
 and they draw the word out like a bale of cloth.

People, here,
 mistake me for a story-teller
 and they generously carry me
 in their arms,
 with kindness.

(Translation: Claire Tylee)

Talat Shahin

The Star Fell From Your Hand

To the Poet Amal Dunqul

I see on your breast the blood clotted
 in the pupil of the star of the night,
 dream and blood in the throat of the valley.
 You..., fallen,
 killed at noon.
 They cry for you, the canals of the Nile,
 the sun,
 the palms.
 You are the scattered promise,
 You..., time conquered.

* * *

Do not look back,
 the star fell.
 It fell from your hand,
 to be pinned to your chest.¹

* * *

Your wife used to give me warmth in the night,
 your colour would grieve me in her eyes,
 tormenting me.
 I forgot about stale bread,
 about the salt-deposit
 on lips dried by desert thirst.

* * *

Your colour would grieve me in her eyes

your wound encircled me when we caressed,
 it was infectious.
 I shunned you on finding you tender at heart,
 outlined in the tattooing of the night,
 I fled on realising you to be a child who runs about
 collecting salt from the desert,
 the star from the sea, and hairs from horses' manes.

* * *

Now it is winter,
 your wound bleeds,
 trembles,
 draws a child,
 writes poems,
 a nation.
 The veil of the night is drawn back
 and it sings in the silence.

* * *

When you went,
 weren't you hiding your face from the silence?
 or were you swimming in dead time?

* * *

Do not look back,
 the star fell,
 it fell from your hand,
 to be pinned to your chest.

¹ There are two people speaking in the poem: one is the dead poet. The identity of the second is hidden: it is Sadat, the former President of Egypt, of whom it is said that he embarked on the war of 1973 not in order to liberate the Egyptian territories occupied by Israel, but to decorate himself with a medal. He devised it himself and called it "The Star of Sinai." He was wearing it when he was assassinated in October 1981 after having imprisoned thousands of Egyptian intellectuals, amongst whom was the poet, Amal Dunqul, who died a few months later.

(Translation: Claire Tylee)

Mahmud Sobh

Mill of Longing

To my son, Tarek

Oh, Toledo... Toledo...
 Here I am, anchored in your moat,
 straining to see you come
 to ransom me from the clutches of Time
 from the viscous earth.
 Still I wait deep down in the ravine,
 with no hand stretched out toward me;
 seeing only
 your masts gleaming from afar,
 like a beacon lit on a hill.
 Open up for me, Island of Light,
 even for an instant,
 the Temple
 and the houses of the Lord.
 Son of Galilee! since I was born
 I have carried the cross
 and drenched Golgotha with my blood.

Oh, Toledo... Toledo...
 I thirst.
 Is there no drop to soothe me?
 My farm, there in Galilee,
 is no longer my farm,
 and my pitcher has long been dry.
 Oh, gate of History,
 my story ended
 when I forgot my name.
 Take me on your lap
 floating among the waves.
 Clasp me to you.
 They have forbidden me
 the taste of my Land,
 the wine of love,
 the warmth of my hearth.
 Take pity on me.
 I am like the Mill of the Moor in your vale,
 Mill of Longing.
 Windmill of La Mancha,
 without sails
 or flow.
 I am a question mark,
 the countenance of the Sad Knight.
 A futile puzzle.

As if I were the Tagus itself,
which, for fear of being overwhelmed,
winds itself into an anklet around your feet.

Oh Toledo... Toledo...
When you let me cross under your archways
every arch was like a knife blade.
And, like a damascened sword,
coloured by the sadness of Damascus,
every corner.
Your lamps
looked daggers of hate at me.
My shadow denied me
and I pursued him.
But, behind me, he came running.
He swore by the hand of Christ of La Vega
that he had never seen me,
never heard my story;
that I did not carry the Cross, like Him,
for even one day;
that I did not bear the weight of my tragedy
nor walk in Galilee.
And so I did not become the earth
of my native land.

Oh Toledo... Toledo...
I am at the point of death!

Oh Toledo... Toledo...
Here I am, anchored in your moat,
straining to see you come.
Here I am
once more as farce.
I come to you
Nazareth.
Where is my sepulchre?

What is the lost soul called
who loses his Home!

Oh Toledo... Toledo...

(Translation: Claire Tylee)

Amazic

Amazic people (also known as Berbers) lived in northern Africa before the Arabic invasion in the 7th century, in the area from the Canary Islands and the Atlantic Ocean to the western end of Egypt, and from the Mediterranean to the Senegal and Niger rivers and the Tibesti mountains in the south.

The presence of Amazic is still significant in Morocco (more than 50% of the population) and Algeria (almost 25%) with areas of a great concentration of Amazic speakers. The estimated total number of speakers is about 20 million people, although statistics are not fully reliable given its unofficial status. In Amazic the name of the language is really “tamazic” and its speakers “amazighen,” which means “free people.” It is a Camito-Semitic (or Afro-Asian) language, and it shares certain characteristics with Hebrew and Arabic in its phonology and morphological structure but with great differences in vocabulary. The influence of Arabic is more clearly felt in the north, where the influence of Latin is also important, due to the long years of Roman occupation.

There are several varieties of Amazic: in the north of Morocco *tarifit* (with more than two million speakers) and in the north of Algeria *teqbailit*. In the south we find *tamazight* and *tacelhit* (known to Arabic and French speakers as *chelha*). In the Sahara area we find *tamaceq*, spoken by Tuareg people. *Tacelhit* is the variety with the richest literary tradition in writing, with documents in Arabic script dating back to the 16th century. *Teqbailit* is the variety most widely supported at present, with the publication of books and magazines, and also the most openly defended in society.

Most of the immigrants coming to Europe from North Africa are from the Rif area and speak *tarifit*. At present most writings in Amazic use mainly the Latin alphabet. For symbolic purposes *tifinagh* is increasingly used. Amazic is the official language in Niger and Mali (where Tuareg people live), but it has no official recognition in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Mauritania and Chad, which has given rise to movements in defence of the language. After several events in 1995, a High Commission for Amazic was created in Algeria with the purpose of restoring that culture as an essential part of Algerian life. People connected with Amazic culture have lived in Catalonia, Valencia and other areas of Spain for centuries.

Karim Zouhdi i Mahmoudi

Candixa¹

On a night that seemed to have no end
 The universe dressed itself in marvellous attire
 Sewn with threads of half-light and gazelle-horn
 Stones made of stars and pure silver
 The trees kept silent and the sea had frozen over

Flashes of lightning had blinked and thunder-claps argued
 The *jujus* were shouts of joy and a mysterious sound
 The ground trembled and the mountains moved
 When Candixa appeared galloping on one foot

Dragging chains and carrying from the mountains

A loadful of bones from the next life
 Scraps of skin and river corpses
 The crowd rose up, the young as well as the old
 The women carrying children on their shoulders
 The waves flared up on the rocks

And a bride-to-be appeared in her best jewels
 With a belt full of salt and unpolished stones
 Dancing and singing a fabulous song
 In a sweet voice following the melody of a flute
 Candixa took fright and fled towards a hill

Mouth spouting fire and body heaving
 With goats' feet and woollen fleece
 Eyes shining like red-hot coals
 Mouth as large as the crescent moon
 And hair tied back behind

Like chains in a cat-o'-nine tails
 The elders came together
 They sacrificed a lamb and a sheep
 And a pair of receptacles full of blood
 So that those who drank could be healed

A young man stood up and shouted forcefully
 As if throwing stones:
 Candixa is an old lie
 Like a summer-cloud that sheds no rain
 Like the face of a night with no dawn
 Candixa is a lake from which mist rises
 Impalpable, which fingers cannot rake

¹ Aixa Candixa is the name of a legendary woman in North Africa. Some of the poem's elements have a traditional meaning, e.g. the goat as symbol of resistance.

(Translation: Claire Tylee)

Gun

The Gun are an ancient people from the Gulf of Guinea who inhabit the south-east area of the Benin Republic (formerly Dahomey). Before French colonisation they founded a kingdom with its capital in Hogbonu (“the great gate”), today Porto-Novo. They are one of approximately thirty socio-cultural groups with a distinct linguistic identity who live in the Benin Republic. The so-called “gungbé” (that is, the language of the Gun) belongs to the same family as Fon, Aja, Yoruba, Xwla, Ayizo, etc, all of them originating in and influenced by the linguistic basis of the cultural grouping known as Aja-Tado (located in the Gulf of Guinea and extending over land belonging to present day Ghana, Togo, Benin and Nigeria), with populations that emigrated in the early 16th century to the green areas of the Gulf and finally settled down in the region they occupy today. 11.6% of the Benin population speak Gun.

Gun is a tonal language like most of the languages in sub-Saharan Africa. Through their oral tradition African peoples have created a literature in their own languages—a total of 1,500 have been classified in the African continent—which has flourished in very varied genres such as heroic stories, legends, ritual songs, etc., that, due to the lack of a writing system, have usually been transcribed using Latin or Arabic scripts. It is, then, a phonetic transcription that attempts to represent languages in which tones play an essential role, since in these African languages the different tonal levels (high, middle, middle-high, low) are crucial for understanding the message they are conveying.

As to the writing of the Gun poems presented here, the author has tried to transcribe them using Spanish phonology, leaving out diacritics and other linguistic marks to avoid as far as possible the problem created by writing down tones, since she has not used the specialised marks of linguists and anthropologists—difficult to understand for non-specialised readers—and she does not think it appropriate to use musical notation on a five-line stave, or at least a three-line one. The reader should therefore be aware that the writing down is only an approximation to the actual reading.

Agnes Agboton

Far Away

Far away, so far away
The warm cloak of the wind
and the sweat that soaks the earth.

Far, far away, so far away
The palm-trees of Seme-Podgi
and the blood that makes tracks.

Far, far away, so far away
The red earth that embraces my people
and slowly drinks the water from the *yoho*.¹

Meanwhile, morning chills my dreams
and my naked feet drag themselves
along these floors that have no thirst.

Where, where is the red earth,
the blood of generations,
the burning palm-wine of the gods?

Where, where is the red earth?

¹ *Yoho*: family altar.

Song of Difficult Love

I

My eyes search nakedly
in the land of masks
where even the smiles go in disguise.
Are there on your naked body the remnants of distant clothing?
Are your hands, too, sometimes in disguise?

II

Your eyes on the swing
go from smiling to weeping.

Smiles full of tears,
crying between the laughs
and always leaving a little chink
for surprise.

Your eyes on the swing
go from smiling to weeping;
go from weeping to smiling
and open wide in surprise.

Your eyes on the swing.
Black flowers,
laughing and weeping.

(Translations: Claire Tylee)

Catalan

Catalan is a romance language related to the other languages that developed from the Roman occupation of the peninsula. The romance language most remote from Catalan is Romanian and the closest one, Occitane or *langue d'Oc*, the vernacular language of southern France. From a linguistic point of view, apart from several differences in consonants and graphic system, the major difference between Catalan and Castilian is the phonetic system that consists of eight vowels instead of the five vowels of Castilian.

The first written documents may date back as early as the 7th and 8th centuries, although the language might be older in its spoken forms, since these documents include the kind of elaborate Latin that did not reflect the spoken language. There are numerous documents written entirely in Catalan dating back to the 11th century. In the 12th century we have the first literary text, the *Homilies d'Organyà*, a collection of sermons, followed by many poetic texts. Three periods can be distinguished in the history of Catalan language and literature: the national period until the 15th century, the decline (16th through 18th centuries), and the renaissance (19th and 20th centuries).

In the Middle Ages Catalonia was an independent country within the kingdom of Aragon, and Catalan, then spoken by 85% of the population, had to compete not against Castilian but against the language of Occitane. One of the most prestigious writers at this time was Ramon Llull (1235-1316), and a wonderful author was Ramon Vidal de Besalú (1160-1230), who wrote the first grammar of the language. Because of the existence of a very old parliament, legal texts are probably the most enduring productions. Once Catalonia was joined to the kingdom of Castile and after the Secession War (1714), a period of decline began. In the 19th century, with the industrial development of the area and the consolidation of the middle classes, the Catalan language flourished again and a rich literary tradition developed in highly refined language. In 1931 Catalan recovered its status as official language, which was lost in 1939, after the Spanish Civil War, and not restored again until the post-Franco transition towards a democratic system that started in 1976.

At present Catalan is spoken by eleven million people and is a language full of vitality and known throughout the world. It has been declared an official language by the Estatutos de Autonomía (Statutes of Autonomy) of Catalonia, the Balearic Islands, and the autonomous community of Valencia (in this case with the name "Valencià"), areas in which both Castilian and Catalan are thus official languages. In 1990 the European Parliament approved a resolution that recognised the existence and use of Catalan in the context of the EEC. Within the framework of the Spanish Constitution and the Estatutos, a set of policies was developed, starting in the 1980s, to encourage its use, and it was introduced into schools, administration and the media. There are several TV channels broadcasting in Catalan, as well as ten newspapers, around thirty weeklies, a hundred magazines and more than two hundred local publications. Catalan publishing houses also have a high turnout, with 7,492 publications in 1999. Despite the extensive use of Catalan, there are still some activities where the language is still not fully used, such as, for instance, in the law-courts.

Francesc Parcerisas

Writer's Album

His hands, perhaps tired of existence,
 disturb your memory and feelings:
 simply writing near the wood in the twilight
 and listening to a wind, flush with the paper,
 which recalls the submerged beach of childhood.
 Even precise words get lost and vanish from view
 like the remains at the bottom of a cup of coffee;
 and fragments of tobacco fall on the breast
 while the cigarette is being consumed at the lips.
 Is that what he wanted? It doesn't stop him from
 thinking it could have been otherwise.
 He is only intrigued by the errors that bring us
 as far as this blind alley, with no way out of the labyrinth,
 and that make stone be stone, but red
 be ruby, whether it be dream or crime.
 Words have blurred the edges between illusion and lies,
 perhaps even to the point of his wishing to believe
 that there really could be young gods and eternal love.
 He has grown old without trouble, stretched out like a dog
 among his books and the things he sets value by
 and he has no fear of dying from cold. Adjust the shutters and smile.
 No need for replies. You and I can leave
 the tendrils that make the hedge impenetrable;
 this evening already has unravelled all the thread.

(Translation: Claire Tylee)

Josefa Contijoch

Advice

You can take
 the way to the right
 the way to the left
 or go straight ahead.
 It's all the same:
 you'll arrive at a place
 you're not going to like.
 It will always be a mistake.

Working the Red River Bed

Working the bed of the red river
 which sings tales of skulls
 dried up by the wind and the drought
 you meet with cactus and reptile-fossils
 and a scorpion which was lying in wait
 to bite you so you'd become dust
 become the bed of the red river
 which sings tales of skulls.

(Translations: Claire Tylee)

Anna Aguilar-Amat

At the Sales

Slowly I went back to undressing in front of
 that other mirror in the fitting-room,
 proportions skewed. I saw that several
 kind words of yours had got caught
 on the edge of my bra. And some tiny
 skiers were zig-zagging all over my
 shoulders, larking about: these were your jokes.
 The one you said I'm a difficult woman and
 another couple of snubs bounced off the stool with
 a clang of coat-hangers. One on top of another,
 three modest dresses I'd plucked listlessly from
 the rail, as though pleasing you were a priority.
 They're like memories of girl-friends: sometimes I see them
 like a chorus-line in your smile powering your
 thighs and the shining teeth of your desire. I don't
 bear them any grudge: their moods led you to me.
 And I picture other women, the ones I precede,
 and I smile: the warm ear among the hair in my song.
 I see their voices... "You really notice that zip, the buttons
 stick out..." It's just as banal in Euro-speak. I've chosen one
 that I'll leave in the wardrobe until the day we meet.
 Carlos Gardel laments from the tannoy.
 At the till there's a seething mass of eternal
 adolescents and the well-heeled, with me like a child
 clutching a bunch of carnations wrapped in newspaper.
 I can see how unpoetic it is. It's only a common tale
 (and a short one at that) of how I spend the hours that
 follow in your wake. Like a grain of sugar swirled

by centrifugal force in the whirlpool of a cup
as someone stirs it. Little by little I dissolve with no reprieve
that could make me disappear completely,
and I become cold tea, in the dubious hope that love
of the chase will grant me one more moment, will leave me
the tip of yet another morning,
the tip of yet another morning
filled with kisses.

(Translation: Anna Crowe)

Daisy Abey was born in 1941 in Matara, Sri Lanka, and studied Sinhala at the University of Ceylon. She migrated to Britain in 1965 and since then has divided her time between Leeds and London. She has been writing in Sinhala for many years, translating her own work into English. Several collections of her poetry have been published in English by Sixties Press: *Letter to a Friend: First Poems*, *City of Leeds* (both 1999), *Under Any Sky* (2000) and *On Pennine Heights* (2003). Her Sinhala novel, *Like the Wind*, is also published in her own English translation by Sixties Press (2003).

Agnès Agboton was born in Porto-Novo, Benin Republic (formerly Dahomey) and completed her primary school education and some of her secondary education in her hometown and in Ivory Coast. In 1978 she moved to Barcelona, where she finished her secondary education and completed a Bachelor's Degree in Spanish Literature at the Universidad Central de Barcelona. In between two cultures, she keeps in touch with her home country, where she has carried out different projects to retrieve oral traditions (songs, tales, legends, praise songs, etc.). In Catalonia she has been working for several years with the centres of Pedagogical Resources of the Departament d'Ensenyament de la Generalitat, primary schools, libraries and other institutions, helping to make the African oral traditions known among Spanish and Catalan young people. Together with articles, lectures and participation in several radio programmes (TVE, TV3, CITY TV), she has published the following books: *La cuina africana* (Barcelona: Columna, 1988); *Contes d'arreu del món* (Barcelona: Columna, 1995); *Àfrica des dels fogons* (Barcelona: Columna, 2001), *Àfrica en los fogones* (Ediciones del Bronce, 2002). She is also co-author of the book *El Libro de las Cocinas del Mundo* (Barcelona: Rba Integral, 2002) / *El Llibre de les Cuines del Món* (Barcelona: La Magrana, 2002). Together with the illustrator Carmen Peris, she was co-finalist for the 1995 *Apelles Mestres* award with the short story "Les llàgrimes de Abenyonhù," and since then she has published her poems in the Gun language in several literary journals (*Poesía, por Ejemplo* 11, Madrid, 1999) and anthologies (*Barcelona poesia*, ed. Gabriel Planella, Barcelona: Ediciones Proa, 1998), while bringing her work to the public through poetry readings.

Anna Aguilar-Amat (born Barcelona, 1962) is Senior Lecturer in Terminology Applied to Translation at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, poet and essayist. She has published the following collections of poetry: *Trànsit entre dos vols* (*Tránsito entre dos vuelos*) (Barcelona: Proa, 2001), Carles Riba 2000 Award; *Música i escorbut* (*Música y escorbuto*), (Barcelona 62: 2002), Màrius Torres 2001 Award; *Petrolier* (*Petrolero*), (Valencia: Edicions de la Guerra, 2003) Englantina d'Or Award at the Juegos Florales de Barcelona 2000.

Shamim Azad, born in 1952 in Bangladesh (then East Pakistan), studied Bengali Literature at Dhaka University. In 1990 she came to Britain to teach and now works as a poet in education for the London-based organisation Apples and Snakes. She received the Bichitra Award in 1994 from Bangladesh, and a Year of the Artist 2000 Award from London Arts. Her works include two novels, two plays, a collection of short stories and one of essays, as well as three books of poetry: *Sporsher Aupekhkha / Waiting for a Touch* (1981), *Bhalobashar Kabita / Love Poems* (1982), and *Hey Jubak, Tomar Bhabishat / Young Man, It's Your Future* (1989). "Companion" was first published in the newspaper *Prothom Alo* (Dhaka, 2000), and with its translation in *My Birth Was Not In Vain*, edited by Debjani Chatterjee and Safuran Ara (Sheffield Libraries, 2001). See also www.shamimazad.com

Meg Bateman (b.1959) was born and raised in Edinburgh. She learnt Gaelic, taking a degree and PhD in Celtic Studies at Aberdeen University and spending a year as an auxiliary nurse in South Uist. After working for ten years at the universities of Edinburgh and Aberdeen, she now teaches at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, a Gaelic-medium college in Skye where she lives with her son. As well as writing her own poems, she has edited and translated Gaelic poetry. Her collection *Aotromachd / Lightness* was shortlisted for the Stakis Prize in 1998 and won a Scottish Arts Council award. Her publications include *Òrain Ghaoil / Amhráin Ghrá*

(Coiscéim, 1989) and *Aotromachd agus Dàin Eile / Lightness and Other Poems* (Polygon, 1997). *Wish I Was Here* (Edinburgh: pocketbooks, 2000) includes her poem “Ealghol: Da Shealladh.”

Boyikasse Buafomo: born and brought up a long time ago in Itsike-Isameila, in the central basin of the Congo, formerly Zaïre. By way of engagement, “exiles” himself in the wide world, and in 1978 finds a “Roof” in the centre of the Milky Way, Brussels. There, through defiance or secular tradition, he rediscovers a voice, and promotes, to children of 8 to 8,888 months, the ways of Orality. For this, in Educational establishments and Urban ghettos (Theatres, businesses, Communities, Television and other places), he takes on the mantle of Travelling Storyteller. Encounters Cobra Films in *Sango Nini / What’s New?* and lends it his voice, which in successive encounters tells the story of a predominantly ethnic minority area of Brussels, *de facto* Capital of the European Union: Matongé. The documentary won first prize at the Brussels festival, “Filmer à tout prix,” and the prize for the best European documentary at Marseilles. Receives in 1999, at the first “New Year” conference organised by the Catholic University of Louvain (Belgium), the Grand Prix de l’Année Nouvelle and the International France Radio Prize for his adaptation and broadcast of *The Jewish Tradition of Teaching* by Elie Wiesel and *The Sacrifice* by Antoine Tshitungu Kongolo. Invents in 2002 the “Carte Contée—Verhaalkaart,” the first South-North multicultural media/logue. Its purpose? To connect the imaginary and the real.

Maolios Caimbeul (Myles Campbell) was born in 1944 in the Isle of Skye, where he still lives. He teaches Gaelic at Gairloch High School, Ross-shire, and writes part-time. His work has appeared in numerous magazines and anthologies. In 2002 he was crowned bard at the Royal National Mod in Largs. His poetry collections are *Eileanan* (Glasgow University, 1980), *Baitean* (Gairm, Glasgow, 1987), *A’ Càradh an Rathaid* (Coiscéim, Dublin, 1988), bilingual in Scottish and Irish Gaelic, in which “Itean A’ Tuiteam” appears, and *A’ Gabhail Ris* (Gairm, Glasgow, 1994). A fifth collection, *Saoghal Ur*, is due from Diehard Publications, Callander, later in 2003. The anthology *Wish I Was Here* (Edinburgh: pocketbooks, 2000) includes his poem “3.3.2000.”

Saleha Chowdhury was born in 1943 in Bangladesh (then East Pakistan). She studied Bengali at Dhaka University, becoming from 1967 a lecturer there. Since 1972 she has lived in London, working as a primary school teacher. She regards her retirement in 2003 as an opportunity to become a full-time writer. In 1996 she won the Best Poet Award from Manchester’s Cyclone Poetry Group, and in 2000 she was given an International Poet of Merit Award in America. Her Bengali works include eight novels, five short story collections, a play, three children’s books and three books of essays. There are three books of her poetry in Bengali, *Judas Ebong Tritiyo Pokkho / Judas and the Third Party* (Dhaka, 1998), *Dewaley Cactus Phool / The Cactus Flower on the Wall* (Dhaka, 2001), and *Hriday Pendulum Baja / It Rings In My Heart* (Dhaka, 2001) and two in English, *Broad Canvas* (Peterborough, 1997) and *It Grows In My Heart* (Peterborough, 2001).

Josefa Contijoch Pratedesaba was born in Manlleu (Plana de Vic) on 20th January the year of the floods. She comes from a family of publishers and booksellers. She studied accounting and foreign languages with the Carmelite nuns in Manlleu and Philology at the Universidad de Barcelona. She has been an active member of the “Comité de Escritoras del Centro Catalan del PEN Club” since its founding in 1992. She has written poetry: *De la soledad primera* (1964), *Aquello que he visto* (1965), *Quadern de vacances (una lectura d’“El segon sexe”)* / *Cuaderno de vacaciones (una lectura del segundo sexo)* (1981), *Alas intactes / Alas intactas* (Salvador Espriu 1993 Poetry Award) (1994), *Les lentes illusions / Las lentas ilusiones* (Màrius Torres 2000 Award) (2001). And she has written fiction: *Potala* (1986), *No em dic Raquel / No me llamo Raquel* (1989), *La dona líquida / La mujer líquida* (Ciutat de Palma 1989 Fiction Award) (1990), *Rimmel* (1994), *Amor congelat / Amor congelado* (1997), *Tòrrida tardor / Otoño tórrido* (1997), *Els dies infinits / Los días infinitos* (2001). She has

also published the lectures “Virginia Woolf - Vita Sackville-West: fascinacions transferides” in the anthology *Cartografies del desig, quinze escriptors i el seu món / Cartografias del deseo, quinze escritoras y su mundo* (1998) and “Contra l'oblit: Montserrat Roig - Anne Frank” in the anthology *Memòria de l'aigua, onze escriptors i el seu món / Memoria del agua: onze escritoras y su mundo* (1999). And recently “Victor Català - Grazia Deledda: ‘Màscares sota la lluna’” at the third edition of *Cartografies del desig*, 11 October 2001, Teatre l'Espai, Barcelona.

Nino De Vita was born in Marsala, where he still lives, in 1950. He is the author of *Fosse Chiti*, published in 1984 by Lunarionuovo-Società di Poesia, and again in 1989 in a new edition, by Amadeus. He has also written several collections of poetry in dialect: *Cutusiu* (Trapani, 1994; Messina: Mesogea, 2001) and *Cuntura* (Alcamo, 1999). De Vita was awarded the Alberto Moravia Prize in 1996 and the Mondello Prize in 2003. The author is in charge of the Leonardo Sciascia foundation, in Racalmuto. Major Italian literary critics have studied his writings with interest.

Róża Domaścyna, born in 1951 in Zerna near Kamenz (Oberlausitz), accountant, business engineer (economist for mining), from 1973-1984 worked in the coal mine Knappenrode, from 1985-1989 studied at the Institute of Literature in Leipzig, lives in Bautzen, since 1990 freelance writer, writes in German and Sorbish-Wendish, mainly poetry, but also plays, translations, essays and editorial work. Róża Domaścyna has received several renowned literature prizes. Publications include (poetry and poetic prose): *Wróco ja doprédka du* (Bautzen: Domowina-Verlag, 1990), *Zaungucker* (Berlin: Verlag Janus-Press, 1991), *Pře wšě płoty* (Domowina-Verlag, 1994), *Zwischen gangbein und springbein* (Verlag Janus-Press, 1995), *selbstredend selbzweit selbdritt* (Verlag Janus-Press, 1998), *Pobate bobate* (Domowina-Verlag, 1999) *sp* (Domowina Verlag, 2001); also a play, radio plays and features as well as several translations into higher Sorbian and into German.

Saqi Farooqi (Qazi Muhammad Shamshad Nabi Farooqi) was born in 1936 in Uttar Pradesh, northern India. At partition in 1947 he moved with his parents to East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), and to Karachi in 1950. He graduated from Karachi University and came to Britain as a postgraduate student in 1963. He worked as a newsreader with the BBC World Service and as an accountant, and still lives in London. Following Urdu tradition, as a young poet he adopted a pen name, Saqi. He has become internationally known as one of the leading Urdu poets of his generation, sparking controversy by drawing on both Urdu and western traditions. The BBC has made two programmes about his work. His Urdu works include two books of criticism and six poetry collections: *Pyas ka Sehra / The Desert of Thirst* (1967), *Raadar / Radar* (1977), *Razon se Bhara Basta / The Bag of Secrets* (1981), *Bahram ki Wapsi / The Return of Bahram* (1985), *Zinda Pani Sachcha / The Living Waters* (1992), and *Haji Bhai Pani-Wala / The Hydrocele* (2001). In English translation his work is published in *A Listening Game* (Lokamaya, 1987; Highgate Poets, 2001). “The Sweet Smell of Death” was first published in 1964 in a Lahore magazine, *Funoon*.

Rose-Marie François, poet, writer and linguist, performs her own poetry and her translations. Born in 1939, “between the green of Flanders and the black of the Borinage,” she spent her childhood in a hamlet where Picard was still spoken. She began to write before she reached school age. She teaches at the University of Liège, Belgium, where she runs workshops on the translation of poetry and short, difficult prose. Among her most recent publications are: *De Source Lointaine, Tālina strūlaka*, poems, with a Latvian translation by Dagnija Dreika (Riga: Tapals, 2002); *Pieds nus dans l'herbe, Pļavās kailām kājām*, bilingual anthology of Latvian poetry, translated into French by RM François (Amay: L'arbre à paroles, 2002); *Passé la Haine et d'autres fleuves*, novel (Liège: Le Fram, 2001); *Zwischen Petrus und Judas / Entre Pierre et Judas*, bilingual anthology of Austrian poems, 2nd. vol. (double), translated and presented by RM François (Amay: <editions@maisondelapoésie.com>, 2001); *Fresque lunaire*, poems (Montreal: Le Norôit, 2000); *Qui nous dépasse / An uns vorbei*, poems, with a

German translation by Rüdiger Fischer (Rimbach: Editions En Forêt <Verlag_Im_Wald@t-online.de>, 1999).

Lubina Hajduk-Veljkovićowa, née Senec, was born in 1976 in Bautzen and has lived in Leipzig since 1995. She studies Sorbian and history in Leipzig and is currently on maternity leave. She writes predominantly in higher Sorbian, initially poems, now also prose and theatre plays and, for children, fairy tales and radio plays. Publications: *Prěnje jejko* (poems, private print, 1998), *Pjatk haperleje* (poems, Bautzen: Domowina Verlag, 1998). Some poems were published in the journal *Literatur und Kritik* (Themenheft Sorbische Literatur, 1999) and in an anthology entitled *Landschaft mit Leuchtspuren*. New texts from Saxony (Leipzig: Reclam Verlag, 1999), *Wurywanki* (theatre play written with her husband Dusan, 2001); prose: “Wjelča zyma” and “Donjebjesspěče” in the anthologies *Zadyn happy-end* and *Wobraz ze skibami* (Domowina Verlag, 2001).

Basir Sultan Kazmi was born in 1955 in Lahore, Pakistan, where he took his MA in English Literature at Government College. He began writing Urdu poetry at an early age, encouraged by his father, Nasir Kazmi, a famous poet who died in 1972 at the age of 46. Basir taught literature, drama and criticism at Government College for fourteen years, then came to Britain in 1990 on a British Council Scholarship. In 1991 he was awarded an M.Ed. from Manchester University, and in 2001 an M.Phil. for a study of female literacy in Pakistan. He has worked as Writer in Residence for North West Playwrights Workshops, founding an Asian theatre in Oldham, and since 1992 has worked as a Language Support Teacher, first in Halifax and then in Manchester. His Urdu play was published in Pakistan in 1987, and in translation as *The Chess Board* in 1997. His poetry is published in Urdu (Lahore, 1997), and in translation in *A Little Bridge* (Pennine Pens, Hebden Bridge, 1997), and in the *Generations of Ghazals* (Redbeck, 2003) which presents his work with that of his father. He still writes drama, and though working mainly in traditional poetic forms, he has recently begun to experiment with free verse.

Giorgos Lillis was born in 1974 in Bielefeld. His poems and articles have been published in several literary journals. Two books of poems have been published: *Die Haut der Nacht* (*The skin of the night*) (Verlag “Odos Panos”) and *Das Land der schlafenden Wasser* (*The land of the sleeping waters*) (Verlag “Mandragoras”). Lillis spent a few years in Agrinion and Athens and has lived back in Germany since 1996. He works as a freelance journalist for Greek literary journals. He has presented bi-lingual features (Greek/German) for the local broadcasting station in Bielefeld, where he introduced Greek musicians and authors. He has twice received the first prize in the national literary competition in Greece.

Kito Lorenc was born in 1938 in Schleife-Slepo near Weißwasser. He studied Slavonic studies in Leipzig, worked in literary studies at the Institute for Sorbian Folk Culture, was literary manager at the National Ensemble for Sorbian Folk Culture in Bautzen and has worked as a freelance writer since 1979. He writes poetry in German and Sorbian, children’s books and theatre plays. He also does translations and editorial work (since 1973 he has been editing the poetry publication *Serbska poezija, Sorbisches Lesebuch*, 1981, *Aus jenseitige Dörfern. Zeitgenössische sorbische Literatur*, 1992). Kito Lorenc has received several renowned literary prizes. Selected publications (poetry): *Nowe časy – nowe kwasy* (Bautzen, 1961); *Struga. Bilder einer Landschaft* (Bautzen, 1967); *Kluče a puče* (Bautzen, 1971); *Serbska poezija: Kito Lorenc* (Bautzen, 1979); *Ty porno mi* (Bautzen, 1988); *Gegen den großen Popanz* (Berlin und Weimar, 1990); *Suki w zakach* (Bautzen, 1998); *die unerheblichkeit berlins* (München, 2002).

Aonghas Macneacail was born in 1942 in Uig on the Isle of Skye, growing up in a Gaelic-speaking environment. He studied at Glasgow University. He has been writer in residence in Argyll, Ross and Cromarty, Glasgow and Skye, and was awarded Scottish Arts Council bursaries in 1983 and 1992. He was Stakis Scottish Writer of the Year in 1997, and won a

Grampian Television Poetry Award. He currently lives south of Edinburgh. One of the most prominent Gaelic writers of his generation, he writes for many media, including theatre, music, radio and screen, and was a principal writer of the Gaelic soap opera *Machair* for Scottish television. There are seven collections of his verse, which has been published internationally. His most recent poetry collection *Oideachadh Ceart / A Proper Schooling* (Polygon, 1996) won the Saltire Prize. The anthology *Wish I Was Here* (pocketbooks, 2000) includes his poem “an tùr cailte.”

Twm Morys (born 1961) grew up where he still lives, near Llanystumdwy, Gwynedd, Wales, a Welsh-speaking village near the sea. He graduated in Welsh literature from the University of Wales, Aberystwyth. Since 1988 he has been a free-lance poet, writer and presenter, except for a year as a lecturer in Welsh at the University of Rennes, Brittany. He writes mostly in strict metre (*cerdd dafod*) and is a regular competitor in the *ymrysonau*, popular live contests between teams of poets in vestry, village-hall or pub. He has his own band, Bob Delyn a'r Ebillion (Bob the Harp and the Pegs), who have released four CDs, the latest being *Hyn / This* (Sain, 2003). He writes a column in the poetry magazine, *Barddas*, and has published two volumes of essays. His poetry collections are *Ofn Fy Het / Afraid of my Hat* (Barddas, 1995), *La Ligne Noire des Montagnes* (with essays, in French translation: L'Association Festival de Douarnenez, Brittany, 1998), *Eldorado* with Iwan Llwyd (Gwasg Carreg Gwalch, 1999) and *2* (Barddas, 2002), which includes “Un Bore Oer.”

Francesc Parcerisas i Vázquez was born in Begues, Baix Llobregat, in 1944. Poet, translator and critic, Parcerisas taught Spanish at Bristol University and has an MA in Literary Translation from Essex University and a PhD from Universidad de Barcelona. He lived for seven years in the island of Ibiza working as a free-lance literary translator. Since his first book, *Vint poemes civils* (1966), he has published a number of collections of poetry and literary criticism and has regularly contributed to Catalan newspapers and magazines. His collected poems, *Triomf del present*, include all his poetry up until 1992. *Focs d'octubre* (1992) and *Natura morta amb nens* (2000) are his latest collections. Since 1998 Parcerisas has worked as Director of the literature section at the Catalan Ministry of Culture.

Michalis Patentalis was born in Düsseldorf but grew up in Prossotsani near Drama, Greece. After his A levels he studied music and harmony among other things. He worked in black and white photography and in broadcasting as an editor and presenter. For his prose piece “Zwei Erdbeeren im Sand” (“Two strawberries in the sand”) he received the first prize for prose in the competition entitled “Bicycle and Art” in 2000. Further publications: *Die Kurzsichtigkeit einer Stadt* (poems, Greek-German), (Köln: Romiosini, 1998). Some of his poems are included in the anthology *Deutschland, deine Griechen (Germany, your Greeks)* (Köln: Romiosini, 1998). Essays and poems were published in the book *Weißer Fleck Griechenland (White spot Greece)*, edited by Gabriele Kleiner (Berlin: Edition Ost, 2000).

Chus Pato, born in Ourense in 1955, is a history teacher in a secondary school in the Galician hinterland. She has published the following volumes of poetry: *Urania* (Ourense: Calpurnia, 1991), *Heloísa* (A Coruña: Espiral Maior 1994), *Fascinio*, (Santiago de Compostela: Toxosoutos, 1995), *Ninive* (Vigo: Xerais, 1996), *A ponte das poldras* (Santiago de Compostela: Noitarenga 1996), *m-Talá* (Vigo: Xerais, 2000).

Yüksel Pazarkaya was born in Izmir, Turkey, and came to the Federal Republic of Germany in 1958. He first studied Chemistry and then German Studies and Philosophy. He received his PhD in German Studies in 1972. Since the early 1960s, Pazarkaya has worked as a translator and journalist in Germany and Turkey. He has also written textbooks in Turkish and German and children's books. He has won numerous prizes: e.g. the Order of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1986 and the Adalbert-von-Chamisso-Prize in 1989, 1990 and 1994. He has been a visiting lecturer at several U.S. universities. He has also discovered and

supported new, young authors. He has been published regularly in Turkey and Germany and has been a member of the jury for the Adalbert-von-Chamisso-Prize since 1995. Publications (selection): *Heimat in der Fremde?* (stories, Berlin, 1981); *Ich möchte Freuden schreiben* (poems, Fischerhude, 1983); *Irrwege/Koca Sapmalar* (poems, Turkish/German), (Frankfurt/Main, 1985); *Kemal und sein Widder* (novel for children, Würzburg, 1993).

Padma Rao was born in India, growing up in Bihar. After taking a degree in literature she came to England with her husband in 1982. She has been writing in Hindi and English for the past seventeen years and her work has appeared in several anthologies, including *The Redbeck Anthology of British South Asian Poetry*, edited by Debjani Chatterjee (Bradford: Redbeck Press, 2000). With Brian Lewis she edited the multicultural anthology, *Poetry in Action*. A freelance arts consultant who runs a cultural diversity management and training agency, Diversitywise, she also works for Northeast Arts and the BBC, and has been involved in the *Decibel* programme. A current project is the collection and publication of life-stories of Asians who came to Britain forty years ago. She lives in Sunderland.

Xavier Rodríguez Baixeras was born in Tarragona in 1945 and works as a secondary education teacher in Vigo. Some of his publications are *Anos de viaxe* (Vigo: Xerais, 1987), Crítica Española Award; *Visitantes* (A Coruña: Diputación de A Coruña, 1991), G. Garcés Award of the Diputación de A Coruña; *Nadador* (A Coruña: Espiral Maior, 1995), Crítica Galega Award; *Beira Norte* (Santiago de Compostela: Sotelo Blanco, 1997), Crítica Española Award; y *Eclipse* (A Coruña: Espiral Maior, 2001), Losada Diéguez Award. He is the author of some forty works that have been translated into Galician, Spanish and Catalan. He has also published critical editions of literary works and has written some literary criticism for journals and conferences.

Ana Romaní was born in Noia (A Coruña) in 1962. She is a writer and journalist, and for the past thirteen years she has been in charge of *Radio Cultural*, a cultural news radio programme for Radio Galega (the regional Galician Broadcast Corporation), which has received several awards. She has published several collections of poetry, *Palabra de Mar* (Santiago de Compostela: Ed. de Autor, 1987), *Das últimas mareas* (A Coruña: Espiral Maior, 1994) and *Arden* (A Coruña: Espiral Maior, 1998), the short story “Marmelada de amoras” (Pontevedra: Biblioteca Nova, 1997) and the anthology *Antología Literaria de Antón Avelos de Taramancos* (Vigo: Galaxia, 2003). She is a member of the Pen Club de Galicia and the Asociación de Escritores en Lingua Galega. She was a founding member of the feminist publication *Festa da Palabra Silenciada* and of the Association Mulleres Galegas na Comunicación. She writes regularly for literary and general information journals. She has been part of different artistic projects: *Son da Pedra* with the folk band Milladoiro; *Son Delas* with individual Galician musicians, *Daquelas que cantan: Rosalía na palabra de once poetas galegas* in the Foundation Rosalía de Castro, and has been in charge of various poetic events such as “O outro extremo do paraíso” (1997) and “Lob*s” (1998) with the writer Anton Lopo, “Catro poetas suicidas: Intervención poética contra a levidade” (2001), and “Estalactitas” with the women writers Anxos Romeo y Lupe Gomez (2002). Some of her poems have been translated into Spanish, English and Russian, and her work has been published in several collective volumes and anthologies.

Abdulahdi Sadoun was born in Baghdad in 1968 and has been living in Madrid since 1993. He left Iraq after the first Gulf War and came to Spain to pursue his PhD studies in Spanish Language and Literature. Since 1997 he has been co-editor of the literary publications of *Alwah*, the only literary journal in Spain that publishes in Arabic and specializes in diasporic literature. *Alwah* has published over forty works. He is the author of two collections of short stories, *Al yaum yartadi badla mulataja bil ahmar* (*El día lleva traje manchado de rojo*) (Damasco: Al-Majim, 1996) and *Intihalat Ailaa* (*Plagios familiares*) (Amman, Jordania: Azimnah, 2002), and two collections of poetry, *Tadhir al Dhihk* (*Encuadrar la risa*) (Madrid: Alwah, 1998) and *Laysa syua Rih* (*No es más que viento*) (Madrid: Alwah, 2000). Some of

his short stories and poems have been translated into German, English, Persian and Kurdish. He has translated Spanish literature into Arabic, such as the poetry of Vicente Aleixandre and Juan Ramón Jiménez, Latin American short stories, modern Spanish poetry and books like *El Lazarillo de Tormes*. His short story “Kunuz Granata” (“Tesoros de Granada”) won an award for best children’s short story in the United Arab Emirates in 1997.

Giuseppe Schirò (Di Maggio) was born in Piana degli Albanesi, Sicily, in 1944. In order to avoid misunderstandings, he added “Di Maggio,” his mother’s surname, to his surname. He graduated in classics from the University of Palermo with a dissertation on *Këthimi* by G. Schirò (1865-1927). He taught literature in schools near Turin and subsequently at the Scuola Media Statale “Dh. Kamarda” (secondary school) in Piana degli Albanesi for twenty years. He edited the review *Mondo Albanese (Albanian World)*. He has published two poems in octosyllabics, a number of poetry collections, fourteen theatre plays, and other writings which take their inspiration from: everyday life; individual and collective dramas; emigration to the north of Italy and abroad, historically a double experience for the children of previous immigrants; the defence of language; the poetically indelible memory of the “Bella Morea,” from which came the *arbëreshë* (Albanian) ancestors; Albania and the tragic immigrations of the 1990s; and the restless Kosovo. Poetry publications: *Sunata (Sonata 1965-1975)*, 1975; *Më para se të ngriset (Before it gets dark)*, 1977; *Kopica e ndryshku (The weevil and the rust)*, 1981; *Vjeç të tua 500 anni tuoi - Mas Rushi arbëresh (Master Gio’ Italo-Albanian)*, 1988; *Metaforë (Metaphor)*, 1990; *Kosova lule (Kosovo flower)*, 1991; *Anije me vela e me motor (Sailing boat and motor boat)*, 1992; *Poezi gushtore e tjera (August poems and other poems)*, 1995; *Kopshti im me dritare (The orchard and the windows)*, 1996; *Gjeometri dhe ikje (Geometry and fugue)*, 1998; *Poesie d'amore in tempo di morte. Kosova Martire Secondo Trimestre 1999 (2000) (Love poems in times of death: Kosovo martyr second quarter 1999, 2000)*. Plays: *Pethku (The Inheritance)*, 1982; *Shumë vizita (Many visits)*, 1986; *Orëmira (The lucky amulet)*, 1988 in which the three sons of an old couple emigrate to Germany in search for work; *Për tokën fisnike të Horës (About the noble Terra della Piana)*, the story of the first settlement of Albanian refugees in Piana around 1488; *Investime në Jug (Investments in the South)*, 1990).

Talat Shahin was born in Kena, Egypt, in 1949 and has been living for more than twenty years in Spain, where he works as a writer, journalist and translator. He holds a degree in Law from the University of Cairo and a PhD in Law from Universidad Complutense in Madrid. As a journalist he works for Cairo TV and radio, and for the Arab journals *Al-Hayat* in London and *Al-Bayan* in Dubai (United Arab Emirates). He has taught at the Faculty of Pedagogy in Ashmon (Egypt) and has taught Arabic at the Instituto Egipcio de Estudios Islámicos (Egyptian Institute of Islamic Studies) in Madrid. He has published a collection of essays, *Gamalyat al-rafd fi l-masrah al-kubi (La estética de la negación en el teatro cubano)* (Cairo: Al-Zaqafa al-Yamahiriyya, 2001) and three collections of poetry, *Aganyat hobb li-l-ard. (Canciones para la tierra)* (Cairo: Al-Dar al-Misriyya, 1973), *Abyadiyat al-hobb. (Abecedario del amor)* (Cairo: Al-Dar al-Misriyya, 1996) and *Kitab al-hobb wa-d-damm (El libro del amor y de la sangre)* (Madrid: Instituto Egipcio de Estudios Islámicos, 2001). He has translated the work of several Spanish writers into Arabic, including Juan Goytisolo and Antonio Buero Vallejo.

Marcel Slangen was born in Liège, Belgium, in 1935. He embarked on a career as a French teacher then changed direction from the early seventies towards the theatre. He has written numerous plays in Walloon, several of which are for puppets; he has adapted plays from the classical repertoire for Walloon, including Molière’s *The Miser* and *The Misanthropist*. Marcel Slangen is also a poet and essayist. Since 1984 he has devoted himself totally to the promotion and dissemination of Walloon in teaching and the media. He is president of CRIWE (Research and Information Centre for Walloon in Schools) and editor-in-chief of the review *Djázans Walon* which is noted for its publication of news features in Walloon.

Mahmud Sobh was born in 1936 in Safad, a location in Galilee close to Nazareth (Palestine), and in 1948 he sought refuge in Damascus after the establishment of the state of Israel. He completed a degree in Arabic Language and Literature in 1961 at the University of Damascus and since 1968 he has been a member of the Arabic Department at the Universidad Complutense in Madrid, where he is now Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies. He is an Arabist of high renown and both his translations and his original work have received several awards, among them the Premio de Poesía del Consejo Superior de Letras y Artes de Egipto (1958), Premio Vicente Aleixandre (1978) and Premio Nacional de Traducción (1983). Among his books are *El Libro de las Kasidas de Abu Tarek* (Salamanca: Delegación Nacional de Cultura, 1976), *Poseso en Layla* (San Sebastián: Caja de Ahorros Provincial de Guipúzcoa, 1978), *Poesías de Ibn Zaydun* (Madrid: Instituto Hispano-Árabe de Cultura, 1979), *Poetisas arábigo andaluzas* (Granada: Diputación Provincial de Granada, 1994), *Diván: antes, en, después* (Madrid: Instituto Egipcio de Estudios Islámicos, 2001) and *Historia de la literatura árabe clásica* (Madrid: Cátedra, 2002).

Paul-Henri Thomsin was born in Liège in 1948 where he teaches in a primary school. He is Deputy Chairman of the board of the Walloon Cultural Federation for the Province of Liège. He also has a regular column in a local weekly and in a monthly magazine. He has received several literary awards. Publications: Illustrated stories for children: *Li Noyé dè p'tit Colas* (Biblio, 1986); *Mi vi pâpa, c'è-st-ine saqui* (Labor, 1987). Adaptations of comic strip stories ('bandes dessinées') into Liège Walloon: *Lètes di m' molin* (Dupuis, 1984, after Alphonse Daudet *Les lettres de mon moulin*); *Li danseuse d'â Gai-Moulin* (Noir Dessin, 1994, after Georges Simenon *La danseuse du Gai-Moulin*); *Tchantchès avâ les vôyes* (Noir Dessin, 1996); *Li p'tit bout tchike* (Marsu Production, 1996); *Walon'reye tere di lédjindes* (Noir Dessin, 1998). Collections of weekly columns: *Avâ les vôyes* (Editions liégeoises, 1993). Chronicle: *L'amoûr al môde di Lidje* (Noir Dessin, 2002). Drama: some fifteen plays in Liège Walloon, in collaboration with G. Simonis.

Karim Zouhdi i Mahmoudi was born to Berber parents in Tossa de Mar (Gerona) in 1978. He holds a Bachelor's Degree in Translation and Interpreting and a Degree in International and Intercultural Studies. His languages are Amazic, Arabic, Catalan, Spanish, French, English, Italian and Hebrew.