

exiled ink!



Integration: Exiled Writers and Literature
poetry • prose • articles • reviews

Winter 2007-2008

price £3

Editorial

INTEGRATION: EXILED WRITERS REVITALISE BRITISH LITERARY SCENE

Exile is a word usually associated with forced migration; it is a word also suggesting the necessity to ingest or the will to adapt to the cultural norms of the host country. The exile today is engaged, in a practical way, in the recognition of his or her identity within the policies of integration in Europe. In England, the agenda on the integration of collective identities, political, religious, cultural, leads us to ask: what are the political and socio-cultural norms, which would pre-suppose the integration of collective identities? So far, the attempts to define 'that something', which would bind a multicultural society into togetherness, remain elusive. Instead, the sense of belonging relates to the notion of fragmentation and hybrid identities facilitated by a constantly mobile world and ceaseless cultural exchanges.

In this context of cultural interactions, the exiled writer contributes to the decentralisation of literary norms, and

to the multi-directional styles which invigorate the British literary scene. However, this is not a straightforward matter for exiled writers, because of the dominance of the English language. In the process of translation, foreign language and its literary style must conform to English literary representation. So how do exiled writers fare in this cross-cultural turbulence and unequal power relations?

For the feature on integration, Lynette Craig collected poems and interviews of exiled writers living in Swansea, Oxford, Birmingham and North Shields. The primary objective was to examine the writers' self-perception as 'exiled' in relation to British mainstream literary style. The focus is on the notion of language, the process of translation and the degree of understanding the culture of the 'Other'.

Moniza Alvi describes how mentoring exiled poets helps towards integration. Besides assisting with linguistic challenges, mentoring can facilitate the interaction and understanding of the other's poetic space.

exiled ink!

Exiled Ink! is published by Exiled Writers Ink
registered as Charity No. 1097497



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Cover: Gate © Htein Lin. From the exhibition 'Htein Lin: Burma Inside Out', at Asia House in London (27 July – 13 October 2007)
www.asiahouse.org/www.hteinlin.com

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ISSN 1744-149B

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Integration: Exiled writers and literature

ALONE

Soleïman Adel Guémar

(Algeria)



Translated by Tom Cheesman

I read letters stained with the blood
of strangers who'd been tortured
sheets from school notebooks
smuggled out of prison
messages in bottles reached me
cries of innocents inhabit me

descending to hell
Algiers was held in an iron grip
suffocating between two deadly fires

I cannot hold a rose
without pressing on its thorns
my brain empties
I stare hypnotised
by my flowing blood

one winter day I came here
death clinging so long to my skin
luck was needed
to find room in the cemetery
the morning's goodbyes
were followed by the amazed returns and
joyous reunions

Swansea what have you in store for me?

Alone in London

Bart Wolfe

(Zimbabwe)

I sat behind you on the bus, barely breathing.
Watched your neck's soft pulse's trepid beating
And I held my breath not to die, the sigh engulfing
City sirens for an inner silence of my voyeuristic
watching
And when you left, yes, left me bereft,
Got off at the junction where the world stopped dead
I dropped the handkerchief that I had kept instead
From when first it slipped your hand to mine
That time I lent it to your crying for a crime
Of one who deserted you when I found you there
Upon the stairs of Bus Number 9 alone in London.



'what is thy sentence then but speechless death, which robs my tongue from breathing native breath?'

Mowbray, upon his banishment into exile (from Shakespeare's Richard II)

Lynette Craig

We invited submissions that expressed or reflected integration into British society and the English writing community. Though initially exiled, many writers have now been in England for a while and continued to write and we wondered if their work had changed over this time and if they still saw themselves primarily as 'exiled' writers or had become attached to the mainstream.

Poets express an underlying tension, a doubt, a fear and a reluctance to trust. This tension runs right through the work we present in this edition. Jean-Louis N'tadi writes about being imprisoned in Campsfield detention centre, near Oxford. In addition the past haunts, with Humberto Gatica imagining that the soldiers of his past continue to lurk in the darkness of Swansea.

In her answers to our questions, Shirin Razavian tells us about her 'urgency to express something that otherwise would drive you to destruction'. A writer does not cease to be a writer when she becomes an exile; writing is as essential as breathing. Shirin also tells us that she reads TS Eliot, William Blake and Christina Rossetti. It is interesting how important the classic English writers are to newcomers. Hastie Salih enjoys more contemporary writers, Margaret Atwood for example. She is writing her first novel which develops the theme of 'identity', arguably the central theme of exile.

The poem of Soleiman Adel Guémar uses the language of persecution, but also promises a future: the almost comical line, 'Swansea, what have you in store for me?' emerges as a challenge. What can we offer the exile with so much to say? In *Alone in London* Bart Wolffe expresses loss in the form of a love poem, a poem with a lovely first line. This poet is firmly placed in London. Also firmly placed in an English context are the poems of Nkosana Mpofu – corridors, dead leaves, train delays all transmuted into metaphor with a very English sensibility as if the poet has worked out what kind of image goes well in the English canon. But these powerful poems are telling us about a very un-English experience of persecution and abandonment.

An exiled poet in Swansea

Humberto Gatica

(Chile)

The Night is Quiet

The night
is quiet
not far away
the flickering
lights
of the city
that perhaps
at this time dreams

Imperceptible
the branches
of the Holm oak
move

A leaf
Falls

The countryside
wraps itself
beneath
the frost

From
the shadows
the soldiers
watch

La Nocha esta Quieta

La noche
está quieta
no lejos
las luces
titilantes
de la ciudad
que tal vez
a esta hora
sueñe

Imperceptibles
las ramas
del Encino
se mueven

Una hoja
cae

El campo
se submerge
bajo
aa escarcha

Desde
las sombras
los soldados
vigilan

A Voice in English and Ndebele

Nkosana Mpofu

(Zimbabwe)

Life in corridors

Left, right, doors close
In front, behind me, they shut
Doors slam, slap the chipped out
Plexiglas click-closing, sleek 'n' smart
Some, slide-slapping, just in time
Sensors detect, deter the chipped

Rushing towards the slapping, no chance
Doors without handles,
Digitised, programmed, well groomed
Privileged access and I'm not accepted.
Doors, I hear what you're not saying.

Scanning doors, decide my fate,
Scan my history, not my brain,
My capabilities, you can't scan these
Your sensors know who and what to welcome.
Doors, you shutter my dreams.

They clap-close, so apt, shun me,
Squeak close, bar me, ban me, swing me away
Expertly, silently.

Nglandi wangenza

This poem is about a man lamenting the loss of his values as he sees his culture diffusing into nothing. He cries as he loses control over his family - wife and children. What he had envisaged to be civilisation turns out to be a nightmare for him. He then remembers his homeland where children would listen to their parents, but it's too bad there is no one to listen to him.

Wangemuk' isiko
Wangemuk' izilo
Wangemuk' isimilo
Wangemuk' ingane
Wangitshiya ngize

Uth' uyangakha wen' ungichitha
Uth' uyangicola wen' ungicuca
Uth' uyangiphucula wen' ungiphuca
Uth' uyangihlangula wen' ungihlunga
W-e-e Nglandi wangenza

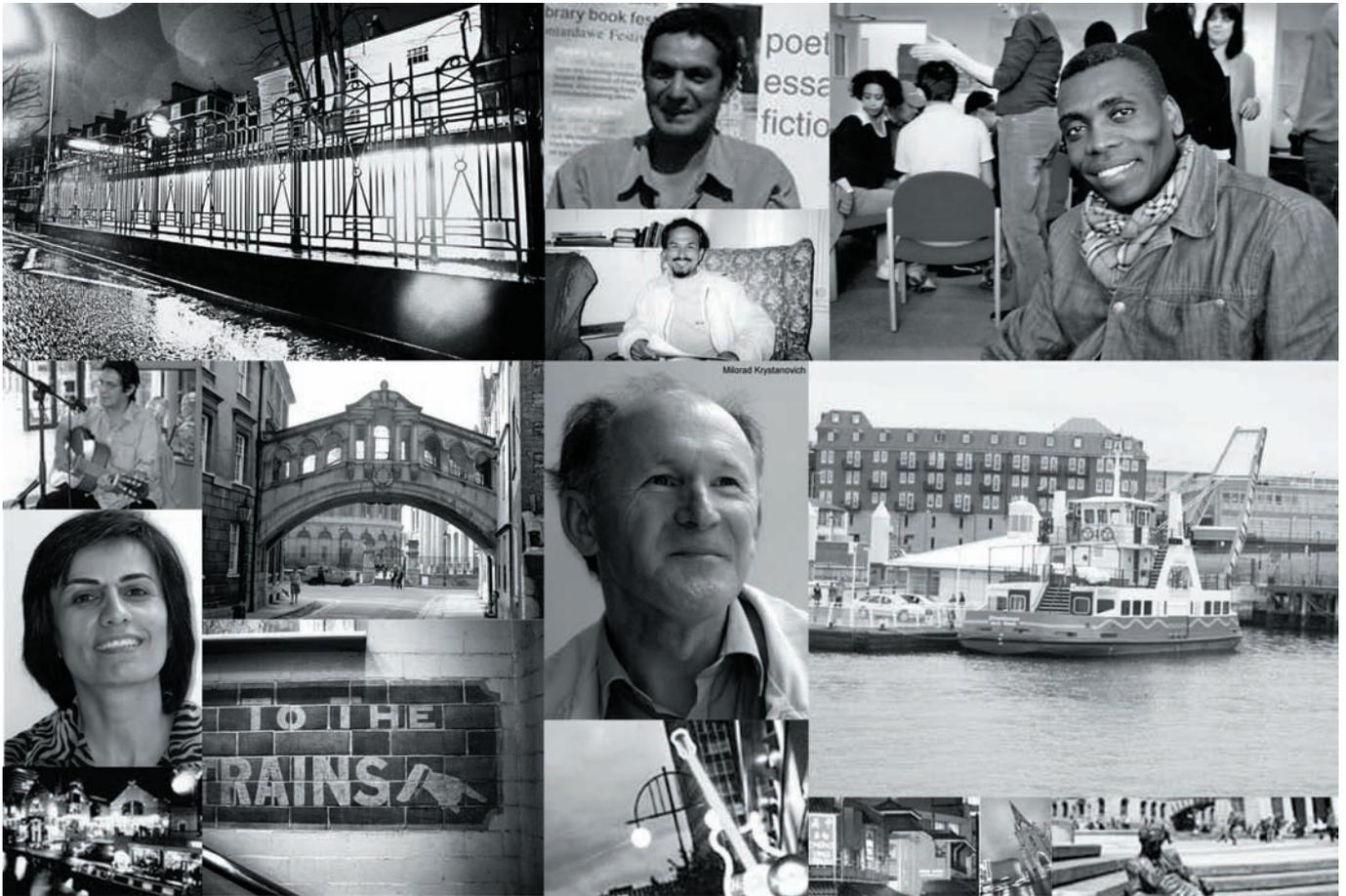
Zikhwicile zandiz' intombi
Zabhu' amaphiko zezwakala
Zadel' imizi, zema ngamalungelo
Zantantalaza, zantela
Zaklamasa, zaklabalala
Zakloloda, zanenga

Zith' amadod' azenz' izigqila
Zifulathele zithatheke yisilungu
Zizilibazise ngay' imvavula
Int' ozuyilahle phel' ayilamthambo
Umzimb' uhlasimula yimithambo

Umfazi nangw'eqans' uqaqa
Ingane zikhasel' eziko
Ngikhuza bandla ngize ngitsho
Ngikhwaza zize zihlengenzele
Ngikhuza ngize ngikhumbul' induku

Yebo ngamalungelo
Ichithamuz' amalungelo
Awub-o!
Akufuni mina lokhu.

Exiled Writers and Their Views



Writers in Birmingham and Oxford were asked about the challenges of writing in a different language. Their responses inform about the complex task of writing in translation.

In Birmingham, members of the writers collective, 'Writers Without Borders', express their views about the process of writing in translation. What is WWB? Their project director, Cathy Perry, gives the following description:

The group was founded in 2000 following a performance in Birmingham by members of Exiled Writers Ink. However, the group has developed its own local flavour. Although the four poets featured here are exiled writers, the group comes from many of the varied communities that make up Birmingham and a typical Saturday morning meeting will include people reading their work in Urdu, Farsi and Jamaican patois as well as English. Sitting round the table we are all poets with something unique to contribute and we share an interest in each other's cultures and languages. Hearing a poem read by its creator but in a language you do not understand makes you listen in a different way – you hear rhythms and rhyming and the structure of the poem but also the music of the language in a way that you might not if you were focusing on the meaning of the words. The explanation of the poem's meaning and how it came to be written often leads to wide ranging discussion and, hopefully, we understand each other better as a result.

The following poems and responses originate from poets whose first languages are Kikongo, Kurdish, Croatian and Farsi.

Avelino Bambi

(Angola)

This Love

I still remember, I still remember
I remember yet the green tears flowing,
green and crystalline as roses,
glowing with unconsummated love.
I see them on your egocentric face of love,
In your sui generis look.

I still remember, I still remember
I remember yet the snatched pleasure
that time, the first time -
the first cry of the germinating seed,
the savouring of desire,
the pleasure of the swinging tide,
the exhausting outcome of the
rise and fall of the waves of the sweet sin.

I still remember, I still remember
I remember yet the experience and inexperience
of opening your lips,
the kisses on your sweet lips, the wet lips of dew
and the mixing of fluids,
the laborious trip of the tip of the tongue across
the reliefs
your body's geography up to the oasis.

I still remember, I still remember
I remember yet as if it were today
the throbbing of your breasts
and the twilight of time.
Such a feeling! How much I miss you,
How great the pain that devours me
for this love, impossible to renounce.

What languages do you write in?

Kikongo (my mother tongue), Kimbundu (another African Bantu language spoken Angola), Portuguese and English. I also use some French, Latin, Spanish and Italian in poems. But I am comfortable working in Portuguese, Kikongo and English.

The biggest difficulty is all the interference of the languages I have – they interfere in the second language because of the linguistic issues that cannot match the new language. You have to be careful in terms of matching ideas. Some issues cannot match from Portuguese to English. Sometimes I get stuck because I cannot find any corresponding term and I have to think just in English how to explain it. Because of that I prefer to switch off the other languages to try and find something pure in English.

Have you had any of your work translated?

If I give the work to someone else to translate, it usually doesn't match my feelings and ideas. I prefer to translate it myself and then discuss with someone who knows English better than me. Translation is not only about what is written but you have to meditate and analyse and also to translate the feeling, not just what is written. Translate, interpret and meditate on what is written. It's better when it's done by the author. But it's slightly different even if you have translated it yourself.

How do you think local culture affects the way people use language or think about poetry?

When you are in different environment to your proper habitat there is always influence of the environment that surrounds you. It affects you mentally and culturally. And when you absorb other peoples languages you are not just absorbing words, you are absorbing a part of them. And you are not really at that time just the same person who came to that environment. You as a person, you change. When you are in a new environment you are surrounded by things you have never seen before and it makes you look back and makes what you had before look exciting. You look at it differently.

What English poetry do you like?

Byron. Of the literature that I've read I think that's the best. I don't have much time to read modern poetry. I'm not very anxious for modern poetry. I prefer Lord Byron - this is one of the men who inspire me. But I'm not 'mad, bad and dangerous to know'!

How do you feel about writing in a new language and a new country?

I feel good about writing and excited about writing in another language. I'm planning to learn more French and I'd like to learn Russian.

Mardin Ibrahim
(Kurdistan)

**Let's Cry for Him
(To Dler Jakau)**

Let's cry on the crown of lilies
for his paranoid letters
Let's cry for the loneliness
beyond his bitter smiles

Who was it broke our soul
in the break of a day?
Who tore up his promise with the dawn?
On our incurable heart
for his murdered melodies
for his stolen, bereaved vases
On our luminous sadness
Let's cry, let's cry for him.

When I was thirsty in Mecca
he could not drink wine in Jerusalem
When I was anxious in Egypt
he could not sleep in Rome
When he was engulfed by leaves
on the horizon of the West
I could not bear his blame
I was sobbing in the East

Where are they, the hidden seasons?
Where are they buried, the purple days?

Instead of taking photos
under barbarian trees
Instead of singing lullabies
on ironic, fatal notes
Instead of laughing at treasonous jokes
Let's cry, let's cry for him.

What languages do you write in?

My main language for writing is Kurdish and the second one is English. I am more comfortable with Kurdish. I have been writing in English for four years. I want to express myself in English and also I want to participate in English activities especially writing activity.

What are the difficulties/ challenges of writing in a new language?

I think the list of difficulties and challenges of writing in a new language are endless but the most difficult parts for me are the language barriers to express myself and also the grammatical complexities.

How is it different writing in English? Do the words exist to say what you want to say?

It is very different because I think the writing process has logical and strong link with the thinking process. If we want to write in a language we should already have the ability of thinking in that particular language. Yes surely, the words are existing but our ability as a non-native speaker to find the appropriate words is limited. I think translation is helpful in many ways. We can receive new ideas and new forms of writing from different languages and cultures. I agree that there is an ontological problem with translation. The translator can translate the words and ideas but sometimes cannot translate the psychological connotation behind the words. But I don't see a way to resolve this problem.

How do you think local culture affects the way people use language or think about poetry?

As we do not have a universal code for writing, the writing and its meaning could entirely be understood in a particular cultural context. In general, writers have their own subculture but local culture is still valid as I see it. I am involved with English writers but not with English people in general. Despite the differences between our cultural codes and differences in our concerns, we are able to find a common language to understand each other.

Have you read any poetry in English that you like?

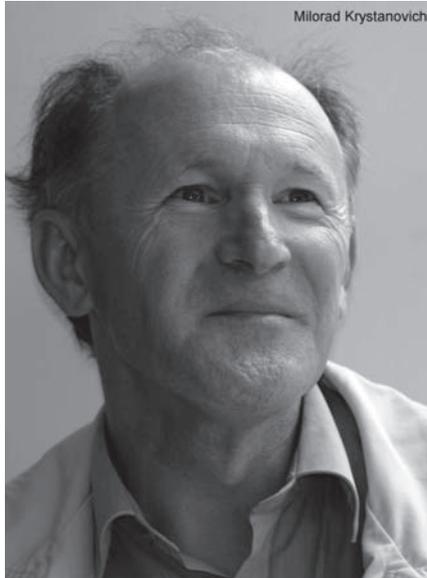
Yes, loads. English language and the richness of poetry in the heritage of English poetry have a borderless ability to provide us a wide list of fantastic works.

How do you feel about writing in a new language/new country?

It is hard work to write in a new language especially for writers like me who started learn English and write in English recently. But I have to say it is a nice feeling.

Milorad Krstanovich

(Croatia)



Mirror Writing

A diary for all the words
 I used in the past
 But no more
 The pages and the language
 Burnt
 Words dried
 In a pen filled
 With the diarist's illusions
 On the emptiness
 Of a glass surface
 I create a new rhythm
 Forcing it into the air
 A thin thread
 Of sunlight and blue
 Pierces the reflection
 Of an English sky
 I touch the grey feather
 Shed by a dove
 The inkwell is filled with ash

What languages do you write in?

I am writing in two languages - English & Croatian. I feel more comfortable writing my diaries in Croatian, poetry and prose in English. A diary is something very personal. Poetry is universal and I want to express myself through something universal. The first seed is personal through observation or experience but poetry tells about universal human experience.

What are the challenges of writing in English?

I've been writing in English since '94. I started to write English homework and then did a creative writing course. Memorising English phrasal expressions and idiomatic phrases and their meanings, that is the most difficult. Sometimes I want to make unusual use of words and word order – breaking the rules. I know that I can't say everything that I want. I want to communicate with readers. I don't want to write for the sake of writing. I don't want people guessing what I mean. I like stretching, expanding meaning of words and unusual use of words. More metaphorical and figurative than actual everyday speech. When I started I was translating. Now when I write in English I am thinking in English. First I write how I think, of course with mistakes, then consult dictionary and thesaurus.

Has anyone else translated your work?

Yes, I and two people have translated my work. Translation helps me to see how the languages are correlated. The translator should translate the meaning, not the word order. You have to be talented for both languages and talented for the literature – languages and writing – the sense of the language.

What role should the translator play? Is the translated poem a completely new poem?

A translated poem is not a completely new poem but it could be very different. The meaning has to stay the same or similar. It is interesting and challenging to find someone who likes the same type of story or poem and can challenge or express him/ herself in the other language. The original poem is somewhere between the two languages. Two mirrors, two languages and between them is the poem in English or Croatian. That is how I see it.

Do you enjoy working with other writers in English and reading English poetry?

I enjoy discussing, commenting, giving feedback and sharing writing experience. Every Saturday in the library I read contemporary British poetry. The TLS, Poetry Review, London Review of Books. And I find books on the shelf in the library or leaf through new poetry in Waterstones. I especially like the poetry of John Burnside and Penelope Shuttle.

How do you feel about writing in a new language/country?

Language is a bridge between two river banks, between people, cultures, societies. I am finding similarities and differences and finding marks and signs of the time.

Zohrieh Yousefi

(Iran)



Pain

In my beautiful country
the Islamic regime buys and sells God.
The cost of their survival
rests on their façade of holiness.

They bury fertile thoughts in hidden swamps,
miasmas where all that is living asphyxiates.

The lover is beheaded
and love is counterfeit.

In my beautiful country
mountains tremble
plains are parched
clouds are black
jungles burn
rivers overflow
and humans are captive.

My beautiful country
is pregnant
and suffering in pain.

Do you write in English? Do you think translation is helpful?

I write in Farsi. But I wrote two or three poems in English. I gave them to my friends to edit and correct. I think for English people it is better to write it in English rather than translate. Because of the culture. You are writing for English people. You present ideas differently. It is difficult to translate the ideas. Sometimes there isn't a way to translate. I think translation needs an expert – an expert in translating poetry and the two languages. He should be familiar with the literature and culture. The translator should feel the subject deeply and then translate the work.

How do you think English people think about poetry? Is it different to Iran?

Here, only some people think about poetry. In Iran, poems are very important and reflective. We have many poets whose books are in our homes like the Koran. Not every home but many. Before the revolution it was different. After the revolution many people, especially women, write because of the repression. When I was young I liked to read and write – poetry and other things. I had a small library of older books that aren't in the bookshop. But I lost them in the war. When I was young I really liked to write. I was interested to read and write more. Many things divide me from this way.

In our country it is very hard to go to something like Writers Without Borders. We haven't any sort of writers groups. We have a group for famous writers. But they have many problems, even the famous people. Many of them are out of the country. When Ahmad Shamloo died 5,000 people went to his funeral. His house was outside Tehran in the countryside. You had to walk. Many people came from very far. We saw all ages, every kind of people. But three times his gravestone was broken. There are pictures on the Internet. And they don't let people visit the funerals of poets and writers who die.

How do you think English people respond to your work?

I don't know if English people understand what I want to say. It depends on the subject. It is a different culture and society here. In our country we have repression so we have to write indirectly. If we write directly we never can publish it. Here it's not like that. Writing directly is good for the reader because they can feel you directly. But it is better sometimes we use some trick like metaphor.

Have you read any poetry in English that you like?

I have read some English poetry but my English language isn't very good and I have to use dictionary. I need to take more time and read it more than once or twice to understand it. When a poem is read I understand the main subject but not some of the meanings. I think about what he has said and he continues to read the next. Daljit Nagra's reading was nice. I think he said something that many people from other countries feel. Things we have in common. Useful for people from other countries. Some people from England are interested but many of them are not.

How do you feel about writing in a new country?

I think it is very interesting because I came from a country which is very closed and without any freedom for poets and writers. So it is like many doors open to you and you get excited, asking, How should I enter this new world? I haven't found a way to enter the new world yet. I go to Writers Without Borders but I don't go to many places or meet many people. When I came back from detention I got depressed and don't feel like going to places. For me, I live in two worlds, half of me in Iran and half of me here. Only half of me is here.

Hasan Bamyani

(Afghanistan)

There / Here

There, in my land, I was
crushed by tyranny,
killed by cruelty, ignorance, war

Here, to your land, I came
to be free.
Free from yesterday's horror

But no, no, no –
another enemy waited,
another tyrant ruled

His hammer is dishonesty,
his bow is nationalism,
his arrows

money and power and lies,
selfish greed and selfish pride.
These crush me now

There, in my land, I was
a teacher to our children.
I was proud of my place,
my person

Everyone knew who I was –
A human being
an Afghan
a free man

Here, in your land, I am
a stranger.
I have no place
I am no person

There

I spoke of freedom
with my fellow countrymen,
with friends,
with mountains that reach to the sky

Here

There is no one to talk to
My voice dies in my throat

Where are you, my country,
My people?

O come and find me,
your homeless
son



Do you prefer to write in English or be translated?

It's better to write in Persian, definitely, because I can express anything I want. In a foreigner language, I can't. But there are many problems with translation too. Persian is very rich and very

old, I can use wonderful words. But sometimes I fear my English isn't good enough to explain those words to my translator – and then to know if her translation is equally wonderful. I trust her, but I can't tell myself. That's why I need English readers.

There are other problems too. Often, to give the meaning, you have to lose rhyme and rhythm, which are so important in Persian. And you can give the bare meaning, but you can't give all the connected cultural meanings. Perhaps if I had a Persian translator, who knew them as well as me... But no, I think it is not possible. The trouble is, I love my Persian poems, I love, love, love my language. Even if the translation could be perfect, which is impossible, it will never be as beautiful to me.

Do you write about being here, or are you still inspired by the past?

I would like to write about both the past and the present, because they are connected. I am still looking for my ideal – for justice and human rights – and I still don't find it. I meet a lot of prejudice here, and it pushes me back to the same themes I wrote about before.

I have always written a few poems about being here, but they are a minority. Even a small minority. Recently they are beginning to be more. But the problem is that I am still living on the surface here, I am still only swimming on the surface. I must study this society more. And it must study me. Any creature – a bird, a plant, a human being – if he is displaced, he will take a long time to adapt. And if his surroundings do not understand him, if he cannot explain and express who he is – he suffers too much. That is still my problem.

د آنگا، د سرزمین
قربانی د سستیډا
خود د استغیابو لوستم. چمن السیدوا
قربانی چمن د حشوت نه بیوا
د آنگا
آزاد باشم
از آن صحیفی
اصولای
د حشوت د پروند
رمانه، نه، نه
د شمن دیر
انسان د تمدن
سوا حشوت استیډا و نرویر
شیرهای نزار بر منی
د زرد رود نرویر
خود خواص، خود بینی
مرا قربانی بیخود استم
د سرزمین عدم آعدتگار
لشکر و قلم
مقتدر - یا ما غایبی
یا حشوتی
میدر استم کی ام

Philippa Rees in conversation with Isabelle Romaine

Philippa Rees fled South Africa and apartheid and lives in Sussex. In contrast with the above writers, Philippa's concerns are not with English language and the translation of her work. She conveys her anger perceiving herself as a misfit in the host country.

As an English-speaking white South African (whose family was half Dutch but more influentially English) I knew what might be thought of as the last vestiges of Empire in Africa. My grandfather was employed by the Colonial service as Director of Education in the British protectorates (Botswana and Lesotho). He was fluent in both Zulu and Swahili; his staff of teachers was almost entirely black, so one half of myself lived in an entirely multiracial context where privilege was education, but African tribal culture prevailed, and isolation was physical. The other half that emerged from the British public schools system managed to ignore political realities altogether and here isolation was psychological. The world of my family, and my second Zulu mother had no point of contact with my peers. So my English education in Natal was of a foreign country, familiar through literature and architecture and art. The intellectual stimulus provided engaged my intelligence but ignored my loyalties and my heart.

In a sense exile started in late childhood, and as apartheid developed it simply found a focus. My family was progressively exiled from the prevailing values, and with the arrest of some of them, and the danger at the point of the treason trial, and the recognition that nothing could halt the blind rush to complete segregation, the sense of exile forced the emigration. But having belonged to a multiracial 'British' dominion meant that arriving in England was at that time more home than home had become. My grandfather would never have returned, and he fortunately died before he had to make a choice. His entire existence had found its passion in Africa and African people. He had worked against the condescension, the patronage, and the prejudices of the Colonial service, just as racist as some Afrikaners.

If I now write and sound like an immigrant it is because I have 'become' an immigrant only latterly. In that sense I suppose I start to conform, but the poverty is not material, but the deprivation of belief. Britain seems unaware that its class barriers are just as unbridgeable as racial ones were, its segregated education system, its judicial measures of detention, its banning, its intolerance, its blind prejudices are reproducing everything which exiled me and my family in South Africa. So in a way I feel I have moved from progressive exile to progressive exile, and perhaps a move from country to country merely obscures (or reinforces) that.

South Africa was a conspicuous pariah, and many of us were aware that it deserved to be so. Britain, by contrast, seems entirely complacent about the erosion of its liberties, and still blinded by its historical reputation. Having been party to the courage of the South African's who fought segregation, and illiberal laws, it has been bewildering to watch the indifference to the same things here. That, I suppose accounts for the anger and bitterness I find hard to camouflage. Betrayal feels total.



'Philippa and Noel in Basutoland'. This was the Africa of the British Empire in which Philippa grew up and against which she rebelled so strongly. It was in stark contrast to the tribal life with which she came into close contact and with which she formed a close bond.

A middle class friend once said 'I don't understand you, you treat everybody exactly the same' That probably had something to do with it. I believe British class distinctions are sustained by the deference and recognition of them (both ways) and if they are not perceived they tend to disappear. But it is with the middle classes that being SA is a problem (only they have suggested I f*** off back to SA!)

Looking back on all the things I've written, a leitmotiv is inescapable. I always end up writing about solitude, and alienation. Characters are usually eccentric, or unorthodox, and reviled or the victims of hostility, or vehement opponents of oppression. That of course gathers everything together, doesn't it? The science was an original 'Theory of Involution' (I have rewritten it as a novel which I am still trying to get published) but it is about the correlations between genius (many locked up!) and the progressive advance of Evolution through the insights or penetration of unconscious memory by solitary unconventional scientific 'saints'. Even that conforms!

I think (and this is typical of immigrant writing but SA particularly) that I fail to use sufficient subordinate clauses, conditional tenses, and seem to cut too certainly to beliefs and opinions. This offends in this country. I am uncomfortable with trying to coerce or persuade. I am continually in conflict between writing a possibly 'publishable' work by adopting the conventions of English prose and recognising that it does not feel true or comfortable. I try to solve this by a lot of dialogue, or monologue, (putting words in other mouths) One of the problems about the British is that disagreeing is considered unmannerly, so when faced with strong opinions, they would rather absent themselves than take up the gauntlet. In SA taking up gauntlets was all we were about! I have attempted to find American agents or publishers but the problem is that my points of reference and my subject matter are British because it is what I know. I am currently writing a biographical/cultural polemic called 'Raw Materials' to confront this divide. The main character is SA but the author is British. It is an argument between irreconcilables.

Campsfield House Hotel

Jean-Louis N'tadi

(Republic of Congo)

Translated by Cristina Viti

Tucked away somewhere in Kidlington
By the airstrip for cargo flights
Barbed wire tangles watch over those
Trapped behind chain link and flashing lights.

The hotel of death assures me
It's really a very nice place:
Good service, and the great mission
To save the government's face;

To detain, to punish, to kill,
To eradicate cohabitation
In this hen-house that's got to be run
With no fuss and no botheration.

It tells me it's got no less than five stars
And was scared of invasion, of malaria
But is obliged by its heritage, the Word
To help Shakespeare's tongue rule Nigeria ...

It will have me know it loves gold in its coffers
(Hard-earned by the shame and horror it offers)
But whatever their colour, its high-class guests
Feed on pure orange juice – simply the best.

They're not really strangers, but well-cared-for clients
During their stay at Her Majesty's pleasure
Getting to grips with their complex situation
At considerable expense to the treasury:

It takes more than ten thousand a day
For each one, and that's non refundable!
We rob Peter to pay Paul day after day
But you know we cannot work miracles.

The good hotel then admits with some shame
It doesn't really love any of the guests
Who keep coming, wave after wave,
As it joylessly sees things get done for the best.

It says it believes money's forever,
The best help in the struggle for a nice safe tomorrow
It won't fail you in your noble endeavour
To rise above pain and sorrow...

But I say, as the ex USSR has found out
Trumped-up charges sow hate in love's furrow
They build with tedium, room after room
An obscene prison where the soul meets its doom.

You are devoid of the least shade of worth
Just like your brothers spread all over the land:
Dover and Colnbrook, Haslar and Harmondsworth,
They dish the same recipe we take from their hand.

Sick and tired now the clients have no choice,
One after the other they are raising their voice;
The menu is nothing but pain and more pain,
Day after day the treatment's the same.

Sixty-four weeks of weeping and crying
As man throws his fellow man deep into hell
I feel like my heart is sleeplessly lying
Parked up in some hideous wayside motel.

This torment that's turned into everyday norm
Might deserve a long dissertation
But I challenge this love of hate to back away
And point my finger at the aberration.

There is a time for each thing as they say
A time for tears, one for laughter and discovery
And I believe that finally one day
My soul will have done with this desperate misery.

To see more clearly I'll rub my eyes on the floor
With no fear of the birds of ill omen
While you valiant hotel bar your door
And marry a pregnant woman.

If only I could make you see
The only door that's real strong and safe
Is the one you can leave open wide
So that damp, mud and smoke can escape ...

O hellhole whose surcharge is rage
You had me crouch naked inside a striped van
Till I gave myself up to my angels
Who saved me by praising the Saviour of man

Now I'm shouting out loud: we will be free!
No client is buying your sham dictator's policy
Even those who were born and raised here
Are seriously questioning your hallowed authority.

Scandalised citizens march and campaign
For the deadly hotel to pack up and go
No one in the world, and this should be plain
Is an 'illegal' human soul.

Noxious hotel, Campsfield House, house of grief
You're like a fiend locking heroes in coffins
Shutting them out of the biblical feast
With hunger and despair in the offing.

May your evil kingdom vanish tonight
May you close your deadly gates
May your subjects, the families you blight
No longer sleep on hewn slate.

May no man bird or beast ever know quiet or ease
As long as this plague of the land continues to rage
As long as the rotten hotels of no truth and no grace
Shame England, the kingdom of unity and peace.

Note: Campsfield is a detention centre near Oxford

Integration and Food

Handsen Chikowore

DINING IN THE DIASPORA

Birds clap blissfully perching on the window sill
Tables cry heavy promises
Waiters waiting to appease our appetite
With my partner going Dutch was cool
No longer costing a pretty penny

Hawk eyes scan daisy fresh food
Edible air with aromatic scent
Our mouths stream with eagerness
Menu books flying like unconfined wings
Tikka Masala, kebab
Rice and peas with chicken
Tortilla wraps and Mexican sauce
Atlantic fresh Canadian cod

It was the chicken wings that took us to paradise
The grilled salmon with lettuce that kept us there
A comfort zone to cherish
Like cows, our blood was fattened
Forgetting the thunderstorms we fled
Our bellies on the verge of pregnancy
Our tongues still crying for more
We kissed good bye

JOURNEYING THROUGH FOOD

Groceries greet me in polar bear fashion
I am an idiotic genius
In a valley of drinks
The shops have bottled so many tongues
Choice knows no boundaries
My eagle eyes begged many questions
My stomach did not understand either
Losing my lunch was normal

Fruits sooth my longing
Kiwi, dates, figs carry me homewards
My bitter reminiscence sweetened by Lancashire
cheese
Roast beef and Yorkshire pudding embrace me
Food now flows through me like the river Ngezi
The longevity of exile means my alveolar ridge has
adjusted
And my larynx now complies
Yesterday's food was nutritious
Tomorrow's is junk
The pocket dictates each meal
My journey is like a flipped coin
You never know which way it will land

GRAZING IN SANCTUARY

Food like rabbits in green mountains
Can tell a sympathetic story
Grazing in woods like babies is bitter
Taste buds adapt as options become limited
Chewing sometimes chokes
Skin bears my new stature
Going against the grain is obvious

Feeling the pinch
No longer fit as a fiddle
My appetite died long ago
Fresh fruit is out of reach
Bitter day comes, bitter day goes
As my pocket stays stagnant like pond water

My tongue knows no better
Eyes watch with good wishes
Hands window shop with hope
Exiled, poor as a church mouse
Quality food is running away from me
I long for greener pastures but
Food costs a fortune for voiceless refugees

Finding a Place – the mentoring of exiled poets and integration

Moniza Alvi



Awards evening with Mir Mahfuz Ali, one of three shortlisted in the poetry section.

W

riting, and particularly, perhaps, the writing of poetry, can help towards personal integration, promoting emotional well-being, helping us to get in touch with experiences which may be painful, or difficult to access. It might be said that this personal integration is partly bound up with acceptance, finding a place in society as a whole. Mentoring schemes for exiled writers can help greatly in forging connections individually and across cultures, overcoming some of the barriers presented.

So far I have mentored three poets for Exiled Writers, Choman Hardi, Nazand Begikhani, and most recently Mir Mahfuz Ali. Their talent was clear from the outset, and it has been a privilege to work with such gifted writers. Mentoring has been crucial in various ways, such as assisting with linguistic difficulties and challenges, helping writers understand the UK poetry world, building up and ensuring that exiled writers realise they have something both special and universal to offer. During the process the three mentees became more aware of differences between a British poetry tradition and that of poetry in their country of origin. An exchange seems to take place as aspects of contemporary British poetry are absorbed into the style of the exiled writers, while in turn British mainstream poetry is enriched by exiled writers' styles of writing and their first-hand experience of poetry from another tradition in its original language.

Hardi, Begikhani and Mahfuz Ali are now contributing, or in a position to contribute, to a changing British literary scene, to what the scholar Bruce King has termed 'the internationalization of English Literature'. (See Vol. 13 of *The Oxford English Literary History*, 'The Internationalization of English Literature' Vol. 13/1948-2000). King writes 'Those born outside England often call upon a different imaginative world from those born in England.' A different imaginative world can be glimpsed in Mir Mahfuz Ali's poem 'My Daughter Waits By The Door'. The poet combines atmosphere and feeling when he portrays his daughter waiting forlornly for playmates by the door of a flat on a British estate: 'A long emptiness howls like a mad dog'. The description is imbued, it appears, with a vestige of his country of origin, Bangladesh. The poetic styles of exiled writers may seem 'foreign' or challenging – the extreme Bengali sensuousness of Mahfuz's writing, Begikhani's brand of imagism with its roots in Kurdish poetry. But, it's more complex than this suggests. Mahfuz, for instance, grew up with 'English Literature' and Nazand's work shows the influence of T.S. Eliot whose poems she has translated. Both poets partake of and are becoming part of, contemporary British poetry.

The work of the three poets has been enthusiastically received by British mainstream poetry. Choman's collection was 'snapped up' by Bloodaxe Books, Nazand's first collection in English has been published by Ambit's in their new series 'Here From Elsewhere', and a group of Mahfuz's poems were recently short-listed for the prestigious New Writers' prize. There is a strong realisation in Britain that such writers of quality enrich the British poetry scene. They have strong subject matter. These three poets have war or genocide in their backgrounds or foregrounds, and they have born

witness. This does not mean that they write directly or even indirectly on such huge themes all the time, but that their varied cultural experiences, including experiences of language, are threaded through their writing as a whole. Their writing confidently explodes ideas about poetry we might have entertained in Britain, for instance that it should necessarily be ironic or understated, or that it should avoid the overtly political. Above all these are passionate poets, and there is an over-riding sense that the poems had to be written.

For the reader, naturally, it's not one way traffic, and if we don't share the particularities of experiences, cultural, political or literary, we can bring to the poetry what we know of loss, trauma, protest and regeneration. Engaging with such poetry connects us to others, and to a wider world of which we are part, and to a fuller realisation of Britain. It can help us connect to our own far-reaching and ancestral roots. Exiled writers are 'in between' cultures. Perhaps, in a changing Britain there is a recognition that many of us here also feel the country is in an 'in between' place, alien, as well as home.

As I see it, mentoring has been hugely helpful in bridging the gap, easing exiled poets' pathway into the British poetry world, enabling them to find a place. Mahfuz describes the mentoring process as helping him to 'build a bridge over two rivers...' Hopefully, he writes, 'two rivers should meet up like Ganga and Jumuna before heading for the sea'. Nazand sees mentoring as having helped her 'in feeling confident in my new linguistic space and integrated into the new poetic land of the UK.' It is crucial that talented writers should not be held back by difficulties with the English language, by lack of confidence, by unfamiliarity with British poetry, or by lack of knowledge about how the British poetry scene 'works'. Currently many leading British poets are showing active involvement in literary translation, an indicator of how potentially welcoming British poetry is to voices from 'elsewhere'. I am convinced also that mentoring programmes for exiled writers need to be ongoing, so that, after first book publication, they receive continued help with developing and editing their work, enabling them to continue to publish and thrive in this country.

Adapted from an article 'From "Elsewhere"' by Moniza Alvi which appeared in the summer issue of the online poetry magazine Poetry International Web.

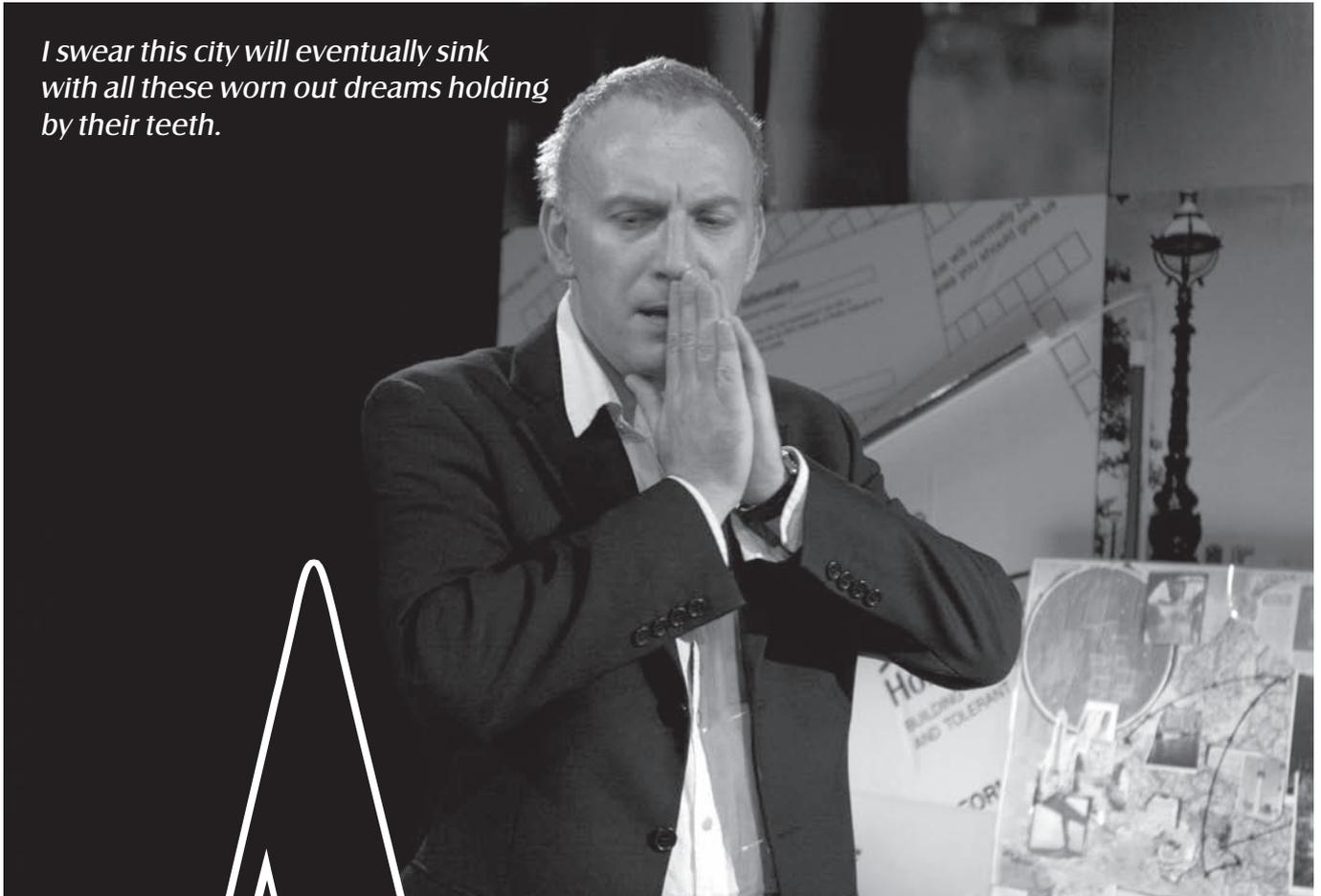
Exiled Writers Ink is currently running a two-year Mentoring and Translation Programme funded by the Arts Council.

The Unbearable Strangeness of Being: Emily Rhodes on Tena Stivicic's *Fragile*

Fragile by Tena Stivicic

Performed at the Arcola Theatre, Autumn 2007

*I swear this city will eventually sink
with all these worn out dreams holding
by their teeth.*



A

Croatian actress,

Serbian stand-up comedian,

human-trafficking victim,

Norwegian journalist,

Balkan mafioso.

All escaping. All pursuing fragile dreams. In London.



'Good evening. It's such a thrill to see so many of you here tonight ...' begins Mila, a twenty-something year-old Croatian girl, who then starts to sing to the packed Arcola Theatre in Dalston, East London. The illusion of her performance is shattered a couple of minutes later when she notices Marko watching her. He has interrupted her rehearsal, intruded into her private space. She stops abruptly – 'I thought I was alone' – and the audience become aware that they were, like Marko, inadvertent voyeurs.

So the play begins with a rehearsal, a performance to an imaginary audience, and we enter into a world where the reality of the current moment is never acknowledged – it is just practice for 'real life'. Everything is temporary and everyone is waiting for this reality to begin. The rehearsals aren't for real life, but for a naïve vision that never materialises.

Throughout the play there is an enormous graph at the back of the stage. At one point Gayle, a New Zealander artist / social worker, explains to Tiasha that it shows a typical immigrant's progress on arriving in London. 'The initial shot of energy upon arrival... a sudden drop... a slow but steady uplift... another drop... that can go on for a while.' In a play where every single one of the characters is an immigrant, we are invited to see them all as points on that graph. Tiasha asks Gayle where she is and she points to the end of it, where the curve drops. The graph ends going down, not up, making it hard to escape *Fragile's* pessimism.

The play, like the graph, charts the characters' journey from naiveté to disillusionment to acceptance. The characters slowly realise that the dream for which they are preparing is too fragile to exist. Instead they must settle for a grimmer reality. Mila returns to Croatia; Michi and Tiasha find themselves running a warehouse; Erik dies; Gayle gives up on being an artist. Marko remains a point of hope, appearing to edge towards becoming a successful comedian, but he is also the most recent to arrive in London. Given the context of the others' journeys and the ever-present graph, one suspects that after this peak he will come crashing back down.

The epilogue is an unsettling addition. We are taken back to when Marko has just arrived in London and are shown what could have happened offstage after the play's opening scene. Marko and Mila are sitting by the Thames, drinking coffee, chatting. Marko is full of excitement, as is Mila, who offers advice on how to survive in London. The scene is filled with freshness, of hopeful expectation, of arrival: about to find and conquer their dreams. Having seen what will happen to them, there is real poignancy to this. And the grimmer reality already seeps in. Even as they cheerfully sit by the Thames, they are serenaded by an older Eastern European beggar. Nearly a happy ending, instead the epilogue reinforces the tragedy of the endless stream of immigrants who come to London dreaming of a better future only for their illusions to be brutally smashed.

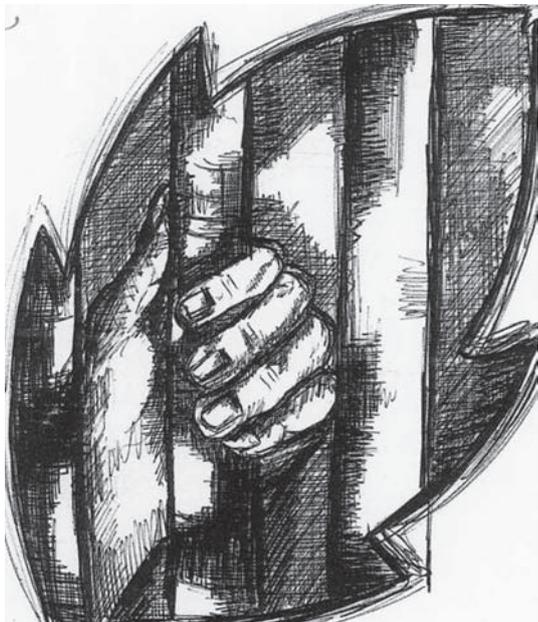
Poets on Iraq

Drawings by Layaly S. Mohammed

The Treacheries of Devastation

Tajia Al-Baghdadi

*Translated by Muhamad Tawfiq Ali,
August 2007*



Like a sleep walker, I climbed the stairs of time.
I turned the key of night, my voice poured out
Together with the vocabulary of place.
The window was quivering in the wind,
Dragging the stones of the horizon
And passers by, screaming:
I haven't got a moment to see you, Iraq
Nor the time to shout.
I found nothing except for Iraq's head,
Being the target of a salvo of spears from every side.
And this silence, which is cruel for me
And as usual, the polite pain suited our silence.
And was dragging its torn year along the logs
Of the fireplace from pillar to post.
Oh pain, what have you done to us?
Except for the stupidity of a military boot
And homes above which aircraft hover
And booby trapped dreams.
In order to mourn you, allow me to prepare the last words
And raise the screen off the last scene,
So I can say we are all implicated in an obscure game,
Where insomnia drives wedges between us.
How much of our garbage do we offer you before you
leave?
Oh blighted cities, the lungs can't breathe the air
And my voice no longer reaches.
You stroke the fur of silence with the tips of your fingers
And so with the audacity of a wooden leg
Roll the dubious hypocrisy off its double standards.

Christmas 1998/New Year

Note: The poem is a reflection on the events of that year, which was characterised by the continual aerial bombings and missile attacks on Baghdad and southern Iraq. The whole decade up to the last war was characterised by the UN imposed sanctions on Iraq as a consequence of Saddam's invasion of Kuwait on 2nd August 1990. And the rest is history, as they say.

From 'Back from War'

Salah Niazi



Outside the barracks
Folk are waiting apprehensively
As if at the hour of the trumpet

The war is over,
The survivors are coming back,
At a distance, the military lorries are in sight
Guns are heaved up lengthwise
Above the soldiers' heads
As if floating up to their necks
These are the remnants of the still-alive-and-kicking
Shoulders are without epaulettes,
Uniforms without buttons,
Their arms are just like oars in a dry river
Plying from one arid wave to another
Crying Noah, Noah, Noah
Remnants of those still-alive-and-kicking.

In an assembly like this
There is no grieving for lost limbs,
Any strap of a person is enough
The important thing is still to be alive,
Lost limbs are of no concern.

Every soldier on the coming lorries
Is counted as alive and dead – both at once
Alive and dead both at once
Uncertainty and certainty
Life and death
Are interwoven now.

In a moment, the truth will be made plain,
The dead will be dead forever,
And the living will be in part alive.

Critical moments are, no doubt, shattering
They can save, or otherwise kill, in an instant
Like a flash of lightning, unawares it catches you
Like a flood, it does not give you time
To collect your belongings
Or put on your clothes half decently.

In such gathering
Joy and grief soon will be two separate things
And selfishness will show itself
As the most powerful element in man's nature

She is like a stricken boat
A woman searching for her son
Is like a stricken Boat.
Inches away, an embrace
So strong that
There will be no dividing them.

Feasts and obsequies
Are two neighbouring trees
Their fingers are interlacing now
But how different they are.

Uruk

Your steps have fallen
Into the sand
And your pyramids have fallen too.

The beginning of the world has col-
lapsed

Neither Gilgamesh strives
Nor Enkidu cries

Nothing
Just the grass of death
Still rigid
Still producing
Day by day

Mandalay

Your greenery
Your history
And your days
Have dried now like dead dry palm
branch
What remains of you today?
Except dark street,
Old market
And dried up palm tree.

Basra

He beheaded the enchanted palm tree
When we rushed to protect
Its fruits;
His dogs shouted to us:
There is no chance to save
The palm tree's orphans.



Photo by N. Ramzi

A Search

Should the signs be auspicious
For you
And the question like an artery
On your sheet of paper
Advance
Go where you chance upon
A kindly bullet
Engaged in conversation
With a wedding party
Yesterday
On the planet
Of scattered body parts
I saw a kingdom.

Here there are children
The signs bounteous
The questions pure
Singing their songs
If you are expansive
The signs will dissipate
In your features
This is a shifting cipher
Adjust it
Be yourself



The Judge

Oh foolish judge
Don't bang with your crude hammer
Your slimy impurity
Will decide my death
Words germinating in three
A shirt frolicking
In a bed of roses
The genuflecting angels
Embracing transcendental purity
The sky sucking the rain
Should you observe the drooping shirt
Be cautious
Three things on the guillotine
Will pursue you
Until you metamorphose into a ghost.

On the Booksellers' Street of Baghdad

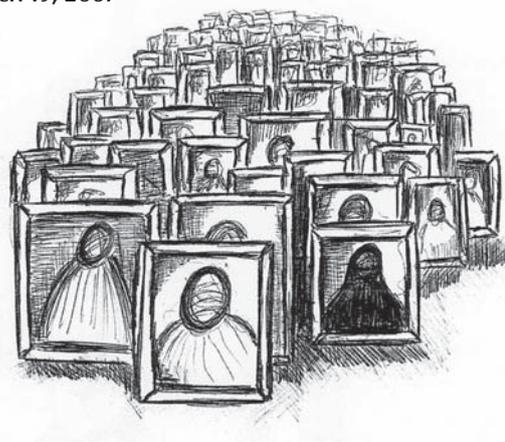
Majid Naficy: Iranian exiled poet

Written after the March 5, 2007 blast on the booksellers' street named after Mutanabbi, the great Arab poet (915-65).

I saw Mutanabbi returning from Persia
He had heard the sound of Tigris, by the Kor River
Calling him back to Baghdad.
On his way, he had given his sword
To the Qarmati rebels in Gonaveh
Because he knew that from then on
He would have no friend but the pen.
He had told himself,
"I, Mutanabbi, poet, prophet and swordsman
Moved into the desert from Kufa
With the bedouins of Qarmati revolt
Looking for the secret of brotherhood.
I went to Aleppo with Prince Sayf of Hamdan
To stand against the Frank crusaders
And traveled to Persia with King Azod of Daylaman
To spread the seed of Arabic poetry.
Now I want to return to Iraq
Only to look from the bridge of Baghdad
At the fishermen in their nutshell boats
Who are gently rowing on the Tigris River.
I want to see the gnostic Mandaean in their white
towels
Making ablution in the shallow waters
While looking at the North star,
And from the diners on Abu-Nuwas St.
I want to buy lentil soup and Mazgoof fish
Barbecued on pomegranate sticks.
How happy it is to walk around
Near the reeds by the river
And watch the kisses of a young couple
From behind a palm tree
How happy it is to sit by the old harpist
And listen to the story of the Tigris River
Rushing from Mountains to the Persian Gulf,
How happy it is going to the Turkish bath
Before muezzin calls to prayer
And surrender one's body to the caressing fingers,
Cotton washcloth and bubbling soap
And when taking dry towels
Ask the receptionist for a glass of ice water
Then in a happy mood
Going to the House of Wisdom
And seeing the dazzles of joy
In the eyes of the youth."
Mutanabbi told himself,
"I am becoming a child again
Enchanted with playing words".

Looking down from the bridge of Baghdad
Mutanabbi saw nothing but blood
Running constantly in the Tigris River.
Fishermen were hunting the dead
Farmers planting human bones
Mothers giving birth to headless babies
Behind bushes and sand domes
The beheaded running in the shallow waters
And the water-sellers shouted in the alleys:
"Fresh blood! Fresh blood!"
On the booksellers' Row, a red fog
Had covered the sky and the earth
Muhammad, the binder, was looking in the ruins
For the cut-off head of his brother
Father of Hussein, the hummus-pedlar,
Was talking to one of his son's shoes
Shatri, the book-seller, was shedding tears
Running behind the half-burnt leaves of poetry
In the alleys on the east-side of the Tigris River
He was humming one of Mutanabbi's couplets,
"Even the blind can see the letters
And the deaf hear the sound of my poetry."
Mutanabbi stood
His robe clung to his skin
And his headdress was wet with blood.
He asked himself,
"People or Books?
Books or people?"
Should he put down the pen
And take the sword again?
The Tigris did not answer
It was running fast
Like an arrow shot from a bow.

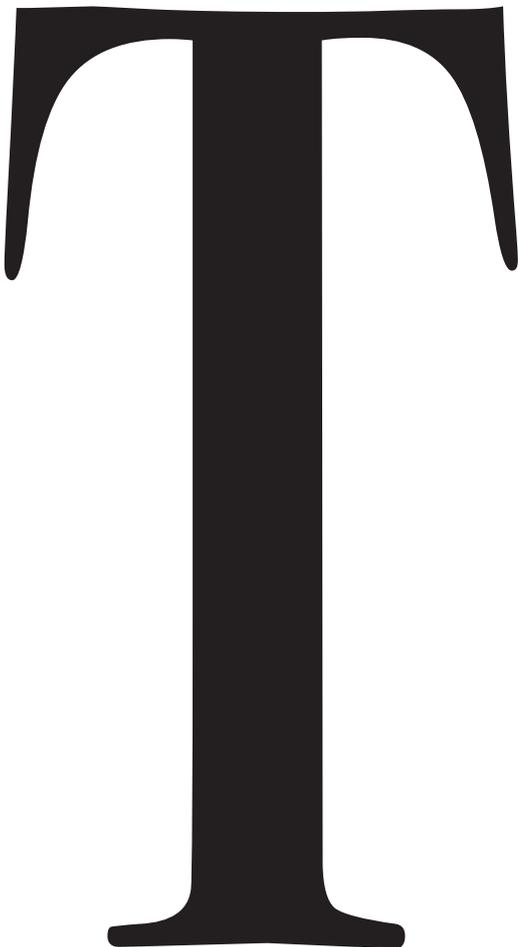
March 19, 2007



TRANSLATION

'THE POWER TO CROSS BORDERS'

Miriam Frank



his year's Independent Foreign Fiction Prize took place on the 1st of May at the National Portrait Gallery in St Martin's Place, London WC2. The award of £10 000, supported by Arts Council England and Champagne Taittinger, went to the Angolan author, José Eduardo Agualusa, and translator, Daniel Hahn, of *The Book of Chameleons*, published by Arcadia Books.

The Independent Foreign Fiction Prize was established in 1990 by the English newspaper *The Independent*, when it recognised that – beyond headline news – a greater understanding between cultures and societies around the world is served by their distinctive literature. To date, over the last several decades, of the 110 000 or so editions published in Britain every year, only 3% consist of translations compared with other countries where the figure is likely to be 30% or more.

The Independent Foreign Fiction Prize seeks to redress this scarcity by encouraging publishers to turn their attention to foreign works and their translation. Boyd Tonkin, *The Independent's* literary editor, made the point that "art has a peculiar power to cross borders and fiction, especially, can open doors into other ways of life and modes of thought," the award encouraging "a unique bridge between writers abroad and readers at home." By dividing the prize equally between foreign author and English translator, it further recognises the crucial role of the translator in the fulfilment of that linguistic and cultural bridge crossing.

The evening opened with a welcome from John Hampson, on behalf of Arts Council England. Eighty-six titles were submitted for the prize this year, out of which 20 were long listed. Their representation ranged across the planet from places as diverse as a remote Tibetan mountain village, an obscure Greek island and the "crumbling mansions" of Havana, and the languages spread from Turkish to Norwegian and Gikūyū. Hampson paid tribute to the authors and the high quality of their literature, as he did also to the translators referring to their art because, he said, "to convey a work of literature from one language to another while retaining the linguistic and stylistic essence of the original is nothing less than art." He concluded his speech hailing the increasing spread of cultures and nations represented in the short list, "it means that the choice (for the reader) of literary riches from around the world will be ever broader, ever more diverse, ever more heterogeneous. And that is unambiguously a cause for celebration."

The Book of Chameleons follows a gecko's viewpoint and account, in turns quizzical, fantastic, colourful and humorous, of the goings-on in an albino African's home. Felix Ventura makes a living by manufacturing pasts for a variety of clients, which together portray a sense of life in Angola with its recent harsh and conflicting, war-torn history following its independence from Portugal in 1975. In her review for *The Independent*, Amanda Hopkinson, director of the British Centre for Literary Translation in Norwich, described

it as "a work of fierce originality, vindicating the power of creativity to transform even the most sinister acts" and "a morality tale for the truth commissions of our times".

José Eduardo Agualusa was born in Huambo, Angola. He studied forestry, worked in journalism and now concentrates on his writing while dividing his time between Rio de Janeiro, Lisbon and Luanda. His earlier novel, *Creole*, a vivid depiction of life and attitudes of mixed societies in Angola and Brazil when slavery was coming to an end, also translated into English by Daniel Hahn and published by Arcadia Books, won Portugal's Grand Prize for Literature.

Daniel Hahn was born in London, son of psychoanalysts: his mother Brazilian and his father Argentinian of European Jewish descent. He is editor, writer and translator, organises and takes part in literary and theatre conferences and has worked with Shakespeare's Globe Theatre since its inception. He now lives in Brighton and commutes frequently to London and other parts of the world.

Arcadia Books is an independent press established in 1996 and winner of the Sunday Times Small Publisher of the Year 2003. Fifty percent of its publications are in translation and many of its titles have been short listed and won various prizes. Arcadia's publishing director, Daniela de Groote, settled in this country after leaving her native Chile.

The short list against which *The Book of Chameleons* competed, included:

1. Dag Solstad's *Shyness and Dignity* from Norway, published by Harvill Secker;
2. Eva Menasse's *Vienna* from Austria, by Weidenfeld & Nicolson;
3. Javier Marias's *Your Face Tomorrow: Dance and Dream* from Spain by Chatto & Windus;
4. Vangelis Hatziyannidis's *Four Walls from Greece* by Marion Boyars; and
5. Per Olov Enquist's *The Story of Blanche and Marie* from Sweden by Harvill Secker.

* * *

Trusted tales: Authority and exile in literary representations from the former Yugoslavia

Andrea Pisac

After the break-up of Yugoslavia in 1991, the UK publishing market was flooded with a wave of titles translated from Serbo-Croatian that claimed authority over what was happening in the war-affected Balkans. People generally read books to gain understanding about the Balkans during and immediately after the war.

Almost all Balkan writers whose work is translated into English live in exile and most of their work is autobiographical, which speaks of a particular influence that the book industry holds over the development of literary genres. Even if the work is not written in a traditional form of autobiography, it contains the kind of narrative which highlights the authorial voice which is knowledgeable about the experience they are talking about and because they are talking in a personal

way, the voice is also regarded as an authentic representation of the region the author is coming from, of their people and of the events described in the book.

The process of translation, which is central in literary and cultural understanding of another country, is fraught with unequal power-relations. The choice of books which come to be translated and viewed as representative of a certain national literature is not a politically neutral act. It reflects how social and historical context shapes the literary poetics and canon and reveals institutional constraints that either promote or censor certain types of writing.

Many writers left the former Yugoslavia in early 1990s. Some of the most established ones are Dubravka Ugresic, Slavenka Drakulic, Miljenko Jergovic, Vladimir Arsenijevic and Bora Cosic. In their numerous interviews given to international press, they stress that their physical life was never in danger and that they live in a self-imposed exile.

Several writers had unpleasant experiences with either the media or the authorities in their original countries. Just before they left, Ugresic and Drakulic were called 'witches' in the most influential Croatian weekly for daring to take the stand against the war when 'the nation needed all their people to fight for it'. Such incidents did prompt writers to leave their countries, but studies in anthropology have shown that exiles are often social mis-fits of their community even before they leave.

Exile is usually understood as an experience of living outside of one's country through an adverse set of events. However, in the context of the former Yugoslavia, a place that has disappeared as political entity, Yugoslavia has come to signify a home to where return is not possible, for this would involve a temporal and not a physical journey. Asking questions about homelessness and exile requires a reconceptualisation of identity and community. It is no longer possible to think of places and regions as fixed socio-cultural units where cultural routines are practiced and embedded in local time and place. Today, people express their identities through attachments to different places and also different historical times. A single life history can involve relations to various countries, regions, different languages and even different historical entities like Yugoslavia. In those terms, the experience of exile offers understanding of home and identity, which are concerned with fluidity and with individuals' continuous movement. If home has come to be found in routine set of practices, memories, myths and stories carried around in one's head, then exile too needs to be redefined.

So far displacement and exile have been studied only in the context of forced migration. However, by looking no further than identifying exile as an expression of human tragedy one gains no insight into the lived meanings that exile can have for specific people. This study will therefore look into ways that exiled writers position themselves as writing for 'their people' in the international community, but also writing against them by criticizing totalitarian regimes in Yugoslav successor states and by establishing themselves as the only trustworthy source of knowledge about 'what went wrong' in the former Yugoslavia.

Treatment of exile as a literary trope in the writings of exiled Yugoslav writers, and exile as a cognitive act will show how the very act of writing functions as a strategy of ensuring a form of continuity. For a number of writers in exile, the true home is to be found not in houses, but in writing. For Yugoslav writers this is a means of preserving continuity with the pan-nationalist past and it serves as a new cognitive home.

Each year in the UK, approximately 100,000 books are published in English. However, of these 100,000 books, only 3% are titles which have been translated from other languages. This is a small figure, and is indicative of the reluctance of British publishers to actively publish literature that has its roots in other languages and other cultures. It preserves the global hegemony and dominance of English at the expense of other languages. In such circumstances of cultural insularity towards foreign languages and with additional commercial constraints that publishers face, it is necessary to examine how titles get chosen for publication.

In the UK, where there is very little or next to no public subsidies to the publishing industry, it is the media and the anticipated commercial success of books that are crucial in promoting certain themes, titles and regions of the world. In order for a book to sell, the author needs to reflect the authority on certain subjects, mainly on history and current situation in the country of their origin. Such author is trusted to tell the truth, and is obliged to honour the contract between the reader and themselves that what they write is TRUE and based on evidence. Positioning a writer as an authentic and authoritative voice of their community influences the nature and genre of the literary text – exiled text is assumed to be autobiographical or is at least marketed as such.

In literary translation, it is not only language that is being translated – a translated text represents another culture embedded in space and time, whilst at the same time it reflects an unequal relationship between texts, authors and literary systems. Cultural concepts and literary expectations of the target audience govern both the choice of titles to be translated and later the process of translation. In order to reach out to potential readers and buyers, the exiled writer will have already had to translate themselves in terms of cultural categories and acceptable concepts before the linguistic translation takes place. The hegemony of the publishing industry imposes its own control over what is published, printing only the accounts which conform to dominant stereotypes and trends. In this way we can talk about exile as a position which enables the writer to get translated and published because it offers them insight into dominant narratives of their host countries.

To sum up, this study focuses on how a certain body of literature gains the authority to speak on behalf of a community and who decides which literary representations are trustworthy.



Dubravka
Ugresic

A Conversation with Dubravka Ugresic

On the occasion of her newest collection of essays published in the UK Dubravka Ugresic: Nobody's Home, Telegram Books, London, October 2007.

Vesna Domany Hardy

Q: Just before reading your latest book of essays 'Nobody's Home', I had been reading Joseph Roth's collection of essays 'Report from Parisian Paradise'. I mention this because I am struck by the similarities in your existences, perspectives, and themes - albeit separated by 3/4 of a century. Like yours now, Roth's themes, set between the two world wars, are his exile and his transient existence - which enabled him to dissect his social environment with a greater sense of objectivity. It would seem as if you are also able to see things from above in all their magnitude. Is it possible that exile is perhaps an ideal situation for a writer?

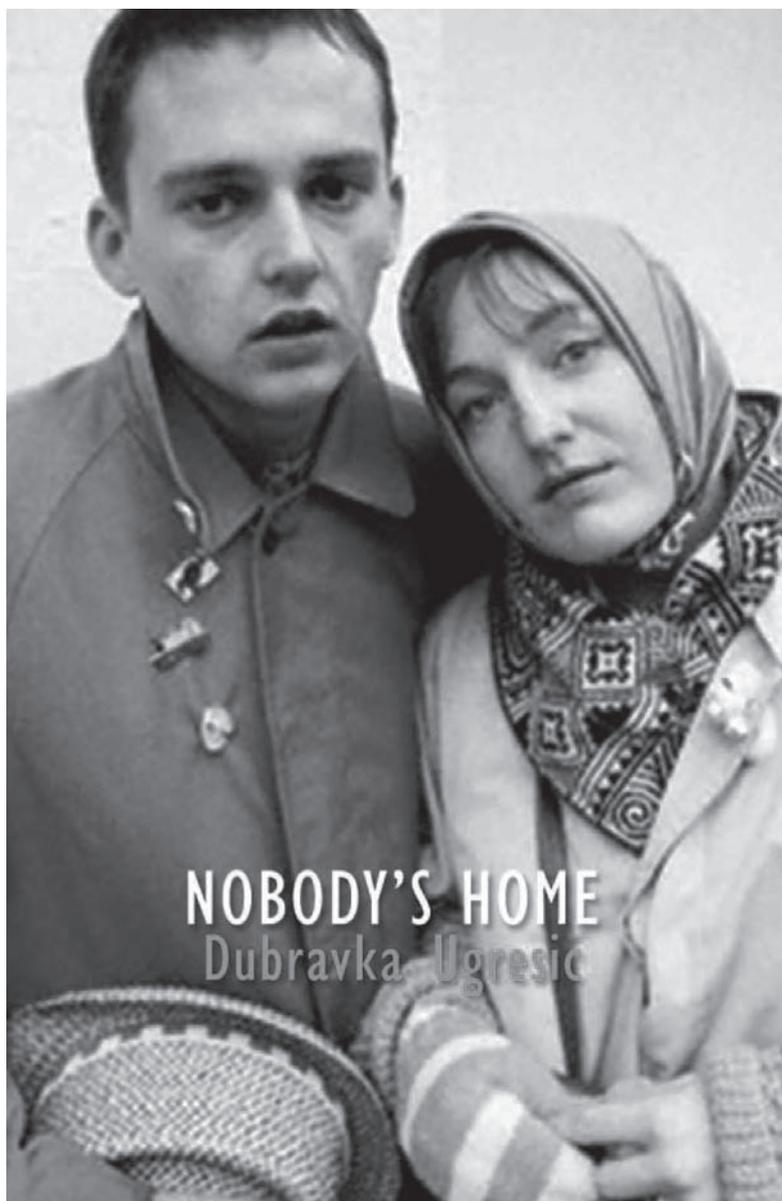
D.U.: The similarities you mention between mine and some of Joseph Roth's writings simply occur because exile itself is a cultural text. I'd say the oldest and richest of these began with Adam & Eve's banishment from Paradise, for biting into that famous apple from the tree of knowledge - that moment of the innocence lost and the stripping away of illusions. Into that big cultural text called exile, many texts have been built in, even those that at first sight do not seem to be thematically connected, such as 'The Wizard of Oz', about which Salman Rushdie has written an excellent analysis.

Exile itself was the subject of my study long before I myself became an exile. I have studied and written a great deal about Russian literature which, as you know, has been well marked by exile. A great number of writers found themselves abroad after the Revolution. One could start with cult figures such as the poetess Marina Cvetayeva (my novel 'Ministry of Pain' begins with Marina's poem about exile), or temporary exiles like Victor Shklovsky and other famous exiles such as Vladimir Nabokov, or later, Joseph Brodsky (I use quotes from all three in 'The Museum of Unconditional Surrender'). I had felt a direct taste of life in exile, even before I left my home, through Russian writers I'd known who emigrated to America (these encounters were the origin of some episodes about emigration in my novel 'Fording the Stream of Consciousness').

Whether exile itself is an ideal condition for a writer is perhaps a subject for a much longer discussion, and I would prefer not to give it a superficial answer here.

Q: You are now a European writer paradoxically exiled in Europe. You are travelling, lecturing, observing, and warning us, through your writing, about the dangers of rising nationalism, chauvinism and fascism - even though you write with a great deal of humour. Do such manifestations of evil bother you more in your native Croatia than elsewhere?

D.U.: When reading my essays every intelligent reader knows that Croatia is taken as a model and that when I use that country as an example I do not think that only Croatia has a licence for nationalism, fascism, chauvinism and the like. Of course I could respect the rules of political correctness and add to each fragment of writing where I use Croatia as an example that the same things happen in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Romania, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania as well as in Western European countries like Holland, France, and the UK. However, there would still be a naïve reader somewhere eager to point out that I had left out Sweden, for instance. Interestingly enough, I think it is usually the readers who have not solved their own issues of nationalism or chauvinism who are the ones reacting to my Croatian examples. The Croats at home complain that I have only been looking at their country, while at the same time the readers outside it, but of the same mentality, congratulate themselves that such things only happen in Croatia. And with that same self-congratulatory satisfaction, those Croats read about bad things in Serbia refusing to see the same things at home. Therefore, I repeat that which I have always underlined in my essays: Croatia is a model which I



am using simply because I know it best – but I do not write about Croatia. I write about the phenomena of ethnic hatred, the exclusion of the 'other', societal manipulation, collective paranoia, the use and abuse of history, and so on and so forth.

Q: You obviously see the demise of Yugoslavia as the end of an era. I repeat the analogy with Roth who, as an assimilated Jew, considered the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy his only fatherland. My impression is that the demise of Yugoslavia made you in one sense an orphan, while on the other hand you have become a perfect example of a 'European' writer. Would you agree?

D.U.: It all depends how we look at things, how we interpret them, from which personal mental mindset we see them. Yugoslavia was the country in which I was born, which I grew up in and which I carry as part of my personal baggage, and that's just a simple fact. However there is an interesting turn. If you read my work before the destruction of Yugoslavia, it is more than evident that as a background, Yugoslavia does not exist in my novels or stories. They are, in a way, 'cosmopolitan'. The action of my novel 'Fording

the Stream of Consciousness could have been situated in London and not much would have changed. The same is the case with my short novel *'Steffie Speck in the Jaws of Life'* or with the collection of stories *'Life is a Fairy Tale'*. Yugoslavia and its destruction, nationalism, war and the creation of the new nation states became a visible background for my prose only when I found myself beyond the borders of that zone.

Q: Accordingly, would you agree that exile and the themes issuing from it have now become not only central to your writing, but to the writing of our time in general? If we follow the great literary cycles, for example the development of American literature, we quickly observe that the children or grandchildren of the first settlers were its main contributors. Could it happen that in a couple of decades we are enriched by a great wave of literature from the descendants of people currently emigrating to Europe from all over the globe?

D.U. Very interesting question, but I am afraid that it would require much more time than we have on our hands. I don't think one can say great literature is written only after the big events have taken place, and by the descendants of those who participated in those events. For example, in Russia after the Revolution, before the Kharkov congress of 1932 and the imposition of Socialist realism, the strongest criticism of the Soviet regime was built into the greatest literary works such as Bulgakov's *Master and Margerita*, the satirist duo Ilf and Petrov's *The Golden Calf*, or Juri Olesha's *Envy*, to list but a few examples. These novels were written in the era of early communism, before Stalin's ban on any criticism had been imposed. I just mean to say that it is difficult to predict cycles in literature. There is another thing we should also take into account, which is that the notion of 'great literature' pre-supposes the existence of a literary canon, which along with 'literary values', is a shaky notion at best.

Q: Many of your essays have been concerned with the current literary scene. Can you expand on the context of your expression 'a semantic traffic jam'?

D.U.: *When the breakdown of great ideological systems happens, as it did in Central and Eastern Europe and then in the former Yugoslavia, people experience it as a kind of psychological earthquake. In order to survive, they have to adapt themselves to a new system very quickly - like finding yourself in a heap of debris, and having to build a new house from it. You have to reset yourself mentally, and develop strategies of hide and show, delete and restore. And everyone takes part in this restoration: the historians, the government, the state establishments, the media, the educational system - absolutely everybody, including ordinary citizens. Everybody is adapting to the new regime. So when these things have not quite yet settled, when the struggle for the domination of one version of truth is still piping hot, it is then that this semantic blockage occurs.*

Q: In your new book you express concerns about the danger represented by the unquestionable, widely spread popularity of religion today. What role does religion play in modern concepts of 'identity', and how does this conflict with the notion of the great European Enlightenment?

D.U.: I am an atheist, but even more than this, I am profoundly anti-religious. To start with, I believe every religion basically has a fascist strategy at its core. Secondly, every religion shows horrible disrespect towards the strivings of human reason. In its essence religion is a totalitarian and exclusive ideology, even though the clerics supposedly offer us the freedom of choosing whether to believe or not. In today's Croatia for instance, the priests go around the schools blessing the school satchels. What is the message here? The message is that school does not count, nor the teachers, nor the student's efforts, but what counts is God because He is what will help you. In Croatia every hospital has a crucifix in the lobby, and in every patient's room. The crucifix tells you that science can't help you, neither medicine, nor doctors, and that you must place your faith in God. The highest grade of cynicism is shown when priests start preaching against communism for having destroyed so many millions of people. But nobody has yet undertaken to make a list showing the total human toll of the world's religions, from the small sects to the big religious systems.

Let us not forget also that religion is a male invention, which directly neglects half of humanity - the women! And not only does it neglect them, it humiliates them, forces their submission to male canons, turns them into slaves or actually kills them outright.

Rrahman Dedaj: Kosovan Poet

Robert Elsie

Rrahman Dedaj (b. 1939) was a poet in constant evolution and one who has contributed substantially to the modernisation of Albanian verse in Kosova. Dedaj was born near Podujeva and studied Albanian language and literature in Prishtina before becoming executive editor of Rilindja Publishing Company. He moved to London during the 1999 Kosova war and died there on 21 August 2005.

Dedaj's poetic works are characterised by rich, emotive expression, by an almost mathematical precision in structure and semantics and by a search for a balance between tradition and modernity. His first collection *Me sy kange*, Prishtina 1962 (With Eyes of Song) evinced both personal and social motifs. In *Simfonia e fjalës*, Prishtina 1968 (Word Symphony), his sensitive lyrics took on more neo-romantic tones, with an Orphean world of blossoms and butterflies. Later volumes, in particular *Baladë e fshehur*, Prishtina 1970 (Hidden Ballad), *Etje*, Prishtina 1973 (Thirst) and *Gjërat që s'preken*, Prishtina 1980 (Things Intangible), inaugurated a new stage in Kosova verse, more attuned to contextual symbols and myths. This neosymbolist verse often runs rampant with animal and plant metaphors caught up and preserved in disciplined, elliptical structures. More recent collections include *Jeta gabon*, Prishtina 1983 (Life makes Mistakes), *Fatqeësia e urtisë*, Prishtina 1987 (The Misfortune of Wisdom), and *Kryqëzim hijesh*, Prishtina 1997 (Crossing of Shadows).

His daughter, Arta, writes about his last book written in exile in London:

This book was published post mortem on the anniversary of his death. It is called: *Zoti thotë ndryshe Adam* ("God says it differently Adam"). My father wrote this book while living in exile in London. He expressed his deepest feelings about his experiences during the war when he was forced out of his home and about his journey into the unknown and his arrival and life in London. He was very nostalgic about his country, his people and his friends; in other words, about his whole life which was Kosova. Even though he was in very poor health and spent most of the time in hospital during the last two years of his life, he never stopped writing. He finished his last book in hospital exactly one day before he died.

The following poems are translated by Arta Dedaj.

GREEN

From the greenery
my skin, thoughts and hair grew green.

I breathe the green air
eat the green bread
and feel the green sadness.

A bird is pecking the heart green.

I learn the green silence and
become the green memory.

In the green farewell
it will rain green
and we will walk green.

DAVID EVANS AN OLD MAN FROM LONDON

He is so similar with the rain and the grass
he looks at himself at cat's eyes
and smiles green.

David Evans an old man from London
does not know
how the stars in my sky die.

He smiles at the flowers in the same way he smiles at the
children
he looks at himself in dog's eyes
and creates a different romanticism
from the nostalgic sound of the rain.

He turns the black cat and
the small red fish into a metaphor.

He talks to the grass in the same way as to the people
David Evans an old man from London
cannot even dream
how Kosova thunders in my head.

RAHMAN DEDAJ

ZOTI THOTË
NDRYSHË ADAM

FAIK KONICA

Kaleidoscope of Africa

Tears for Darfur

Freddy Macha

London, Thursday, 21st, June 2007.



Photo by Anne-Marie Briscoe

The hall is quiet.

The only sound is music. Music is food. Except?
Apart from the ongoing music we are being confronted with gloomy slides. Wailing women. Dead children. Dead camels and cows. Burnt houses. Withered men. Displacement. Corpses. Non-fictitious horror. The morbid and inhuman face of Darfur.

You can hear him playing different instruments, saying nothing; the photographs speak loud and clear. This is the work of Ahmed Rahman a gifted musician from Sudan. See him in action, above, photo taken by Anne Marie Briscoe.

Rahman was part of a whole array of writers and artists invited to perform at the Human Rights Centre in East London on this special Thursday in June put together by Jennifer Langer and Exiled Writers Ink, an organisation of refugee writers. Her own family was expunged by the Nazis during the Second World War.

We heard powerful stories. It is arduous telling them all. Of a man who had been shot in the throat during a demonstration in Bangladesh. A passionate writer with a whispering voice, due to that fateful bullet wound.

Mir Mahfuz's poem "Seeking Shelter" was recited to an attentive audience:
"...He is an alien

On this barbaric shore,
Gazing into land
He doesn't belong to,
But he has nowhere to go
Beyond this coast."

Of Alfredo Cordal the poet from Chile who ushered our souls back to the work of one of my favourite poets, Pablo Neruda. Neruda who won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1971. Cordal, in a similar spirit, re-affirmed that words define our identity, woes, joys and self expression. There was a dance from Iran by Ziba Karbassi, the lady in red. Gallant, flowery, flamboyant, long, like Ziba's graceful limbs. Plus surprises.

How often do you hear pleasant stuff from Afghanistan? All we ever get are images of sad, veiled women, arid terrains, angry blokes, guns and bombings. Hassan Bamyami, offered us a taste of this troubled country's music. He wailed. Jamaican singer, Bob Marley once said he began singing when he was born, by crying. Mr. Bamyami from Afghanistan reminded us of a birth.

Then it was time for Ahmed Rahman.
The other day I saw a poster that was calling for donations:

"If this Darfur woman doesn't go to the well to get water her children will die; if she goes to the well she will be raped."

You hear of bad things.

Then you meet those who have been there.

Ahmed Rahman's music and huge kaleidoscopic reflections on the gargantuan screen were appalling. I followed him backstage.

"I knew most of these people." Ahmed whispered, "It is very difficult..."

He excused himself and stepped away. It is very disturbing seeing a grown up man crying.

Here I was, witnessing a Darfur close up...

From the Exiled Writers Ink June 2007 Conference-Festival 'Writing Resistance: The Literature of Exile'. The author, Freddy Macha, was himself a performer.

<http://freddymacha.blogspot.com>

www.freddymacha.com

A Mouthful of Africa

Isabelle Romaine

Back in time, another Thursday in a different hall in East London, five African writers are performing on the theme of food in Africa. South African music enfolds the five standing figures. Three of them have their heads bandaged in endless strips of red material, like red balls inappropriately placed on busts. The two remaining figures gaze with stony recognition at the audience; cardboards with slogans lie neglected at their feet. Soon, one of the two will speak, a South African demonstrator on the picket line in London, hungry and cold, she will tell of her craving for home food roti and pakoras. Slowly, with measured movements, the three figures unwrap their heads in time with the music.

እንጀራዬ

በጣም ሞቃት በሆነው የሐምሌ ወር
አጋማሽ የምሳ ሰዓት ላይ ነበር። ሙና
የምትኖርበት ሆስቴል የታደሰው በቅርቡ ነው።
በየመስኮቱ ተቀምጠው የሚታዩት እቅፍ
አበቦች ከቤቱ ንጽህና ጋር የገባ ሰው ሁሉ
በደስታ ይቀበላሉ። ውጭ መገንዳ ላይ ግን
የተሰባሰሩ ላህኖች ከሆስቴሉ መስኮቶች
ላይርቁ ተበታትነው ይታያሉ። ሙና
"እንጀራዬን አፈልጋለሁ" ብላ ጮኻ ላህኗን
ወረወረችው።

ከተቀመጠችበት ወንበር በድንገት
ተነስታ እንደ እብድ እየጮኸች "እኛ የራሳችን
ምግብ አለን! ተውቃላችሁ?! የእኛን እንጀራ
አፈልጋለሁ. . ." አለች ራሷን መቆጣጠር
አቅቷት ነበር። በዙሪያ ያሉት ሁሉ በዚያ ሁኔታ
ሲመለከቱት ፍርሃት እና መጨነቅ
አደረገችው።

እንደኛ ፎቅ ላይ ወደሚገኘው ክፍሏ
ይዘዋት ሂዱ። የሆስቴሉ ሥራ አስኪያጅ
ልታያት ወደ ሙና ክፍል ገብታ ስትመለስ
ራሷን አየንቀንቀች ነበር የወጣችው። "እነዚህ
ሰዎች መጠለያ ስላገኙ እንኳን ማመስገን
ነበረባቸው" አለችና ወደ ጽ/ቤት ተመልሳ
ገባች።

ሙና የክፍልዋን በር ጥርቅም አድርጋ
ዘግታ አልጋዋ ላይ ተብቅልላ እስኪደክማት
ድረስ ስቅለቅ ብላ አለቀለች።

The tone is set. The play, *A Mouthful of Africa*, is a compilation of short stories, sketches and mimes, songs and poems, evocative of culinary customs and representative of the issue of food autonomy in various African situations.

Actors for one night, the exiled writers deliver a bold and inventive performance. They mingle with the audience, the stage and seats having been removed, and welcome the spectators to join in their stories on food. Flavours of Ethiopian cuisine, *Berbera*, a spice mixture which accompanies most Ethiopian dishes, is offered around as an illustration of a young refugee's longing for her *Enjera*.

Poems are delivered on trays, each carefully typed on papers rolled like miniature parchments.

The highlight is the surreally inflicted act of sand 'eating'. Standing under a suspended cone full of sand, arms suspended, forming a cross, a figure 'swallows' the sand which falls through in his open mouth. Time seems endless. The scene, suggestive of drought, is complemented with lyrical evocations of water, the elemental force in want in many African countries.

Music from Mali and Ethiopia is played intermittently. The final snapshot is left for the last act: in the true tradition of African welcome, *A Mouthful of Africa* ends with a nomadic Somali buffet. Actors and spectators sit down on cushions and rugs to partake of their meals, while, a Somali story teller recounts a typical 'day in the life' in a Somali hamlet.

The performance, an Exiled Writers Ink project, took place at Oxford House Theatre, Bethnal Green, on 7 June 2007, as part of Africa Beyond Festival: "Word from Africa".

The Poetry of Ziba Karbassi

Jennifer Langer



Z

iba Karbassi originates from Tabriz, an Iranian town imbued with mystical poetic traditions where the Sufi mystic, Shams-e Tabriz had a major influence on Mowlana (Rumi) in an encounter in 1244. Ziba too, is a poet who aims to achieve sublimity through a concentration on breathing which leads her to a new consciousness and awareness. She asserts that living words need this elixir to make the words metamorphose. Ziba's work has inspired and influenced Iranian poets in terms of language and form and Ziba herself, has been the subject of many poems.

I sense that Ziba's poetry is the result of profound inner experiences and imagined dimensions that involve the negotiation of the relationship between the poet's imagination and her poetics. Reading her poetry is an inherently emotional experience because her work is not purely representational but, in a sense, transcends time and space. The metaphor of the fish appears in several of her poems, the fish equating to the ultimate meaning of life and the soul.

Although the hegemony of pain and anger in relation to the fate of the Iranian people, particularly women, is evident, her poetry is never didactic or morose. She subverts traditional demands for silence about the female body and the physical and emotional aspects of love although in Iranian culture it is expected that women will avoid self-revelation and self-referentiality as it is considered transgressive to unveil the private. For this reason she is considered dangerous by various groups and individuals and has received many threats despite being in exile. In this sense, she follows in the footsteps of the great female poet, Farough Farrokhzad, considered dangerous for contesting the accepted order.

Lemon is the surprising metaphor ascribed to love in her poem 'Love is Lemony'; the astringent, sour, acid lemon which hides behind the soft stereotypical pink transformed to orange through an emotional and physical relationship. Naked shoulders are described as the square houses children draw while bodies coil around each other like vines. 'Gravequake' is a powerful poem causing the reader to empathise with the woman forced into prostitution through poverty and to feel fury against the men exploiting her body. The poet is an angry, external voice addressing the male client accusing him of treating the woman as an object 'She's not a willow to tremble!' She is not portrayed as a victim but as a powerful person to be feared by her male clients because 'she has swallowed fear' and is in control. Other contradictions are represented here which reveal the reality of life – love-making on graves, the Haji who has made the pilgrimage to Mecca, paying for sex, the woman reciting the Koran and the 'happy grave'. The metaphor of the black crows is reminiscent of an image by Shirin Neshat, the exiled Iranian film-maker, of rows of women in black hejabs looking exactly like black crows, threatening and waiting to devour their prey: 'Tell your black crows Tell your black crows/ Caw Caw/ The song of the nightingale is not up for sale.' These are the women who perpetuate the system and punish those who upset the status quo.

The poem 'Death by Stoning', written thirteen years ago, was the first poem on this subject. It is almost unbearable to read because of the sense of shock, revulsion and sadness it evokes through the detail and



emotion described by the victim's mother. This poem is not a polemic but is a powerful call to somehow stop this atrocity still perpetrated against women. Ziba's pain for the people of Iran is represented in the poem 'Revolution' by the imagery of stars. 'The people's back was wounded/so their sky would rain stars' implying that the revolution was conveyed to the people as a miraculous transformative event but in fact led to the suffering of society: 'The earth filled with bloodied stars'. This use of imagery and metaphor is wonderfully creative and so this poem becomes an allegory.

Ziba has been a poet since an early age when she learnt at the feet of a great poet in Tabriz. Her life has not been easy and I wept when she described her past to me. She was separated from her mother as a child and under Iranian law stayed with her father in Tabriz. Unhappy living with her father's new family and having to speak Farsi instead of Azeri, her mother tongue, she was brought up mainly by her grandmother. Her mother's new husband was taken away never to be seen again. Once when Ziba visited her mother in Tehran, she learnt that she and her new sisters were to flee to England as her mother's life was in danger and she would not leave without the daughter from whom she had been separated. Ziba was heartbroken to leave her grandmothers whom she was never to see again. She is aware of the binaries of pain and joy and writes 'traumas I brought/snake bile I brought' but also 'craziness I brought/light I brought.' Ziba does not describe her personal pain but perhaps does so vicariously by writing poetry of the emotions enabling her to enter and create a new consciousness.

Ziba's poetry is translated from Farsi by Nilofar Talebi and Stephen Watts.

Gravequake

Translated by Nilofar Talebi

The song of the nightingale
Is not up for sale.
Tell your black crows Tell your black crows
Caw Caw
The song of the nightingale Is not up for sale.

And it's is not a willow that trembles
It's the frail figure of a woman.
She's not a willow to tremble!
You, tremble!
It's a woman on your grave
Who sleeps under you
Takes money and recites the Koran,

In the name of Allah
Slap cold whip money
Weeping insults ha! ha! money
Skin kiss fur coat mane money
Rouge pallor dignity money
Buys eats buys eats eats eats buys...

What! Graveyard? Fear? Are you kidding? You're
kidding, right?
A woman with rosy cheeks and breasts
Tears the white prayer veil off her head
Spreads it on your grave
And you do her.
Her thin body trembling
Her skinny arms and thighs trembling.
She's not a willow to tremble!
You, tremble!

She has swallowed fear
She'll swallow you too
Fear! You!
Fear!
Down below there, up on top there,
You little man!
This woman is to be feared
Even dead, she is to be feared Hajji*
Even dead.
Happy grave,
Hajji
Happy grave!

*A Muslim who has made the pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj)

گورلرزه / شغری از زیبا کرباسی

چه چه بلبل فروختنی نیست
کلغ هایت را بگو
بگو کلغ هایت را
چغ چغ
چه چه بلبل
فروختنی نیست اما

این بید نیست که می لرزد
اندام نازک زنی ست
بید نیست که بلرزد
و بلرزد
زنی ست که روی قبر تو
زیر تو می خوابد و
پول می گیرد و
سور حمد می خواند

بسم الله:

راه دره پول پوست بوسه گیسو پالتو پوست پولس‌لی سرمه شلاق پول زنجیره بدوبی
رژگونه رنگ و رو آبرو پول می خورد می خورد
می خورد می خورد می خورد می خورد
هی ... قبرستان، ترس، شوخی می کنی، شوخی ست

زنی که با گونه ها و
اشگیلی های بیستان
چادر نماز سپید
گل گلی اش را
از سر می کند
روی قبرت پهن می کند و
می کنی اش
تن نازکش که می لرزد
بازو ها و ران های لاغر
که می لرزد
بید نیست که بلرزد
تو بلرزد

ترس را خورده
و را دم می خوردت
بترس
تو بترس
آن زیر
آن رو
مردک!

فقط ترس‌دنی ست این زن
مرده اش دم ترس دارد
حاج آقا!
مرده اش دم

قبرت روشن
حاج آقا
قبرت روشن

جیز پاییز 2001 / مجموع زیبا کرباسی /

Unheard Voices

Edited by Malorie Blackman, Corgi Books 2007

Reviewed by Janna Eliot

Award winning Malorie Blackman is a Black British author. She has written over 50 books, including the acclaimed *Noughts and Crosses* trilogy, and *PIG HEART BOY*. Her latest book, *Unheard Voices*, marks the 200th anniversary of the British Parliament passing the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act in 1807. The slave trade plundered Africa, enriched Britain, and its consequences are still manifest today.

This book shocked me. This book stunned me. This book gave me nightmares. This book made me feel the whip tear my back and the chafing of metal round my neck. This book left me with the stench of the slave ship and a sense of dreadful loss and displacement.

Malorie Blackman has compiled a riveting collection of stories, poems, and diary extracts in a painfully vivid commemoration of over 500 years of slavery.

James Berry's 'Afeemah and his Son' evokes the collective agony of African prisoners swept away from their homeland on a slave ship; "*a long-drawn-out groan of grief rose up.*" Poems by Daniel Aloysius Francis and John Agard explore conflicting views of captives and slavers, while an extract from Alex Haley's brilliant epic 'Roots' explores the horrific conditions in the rat-infested hold of the slave-ship.

Excerpts from 'The History of Mary Prince' focus on the ghastly life of enslaved children, prodded and sold like cattle, separated from family, deprived of education and food, flogged mercilessly for the crime of breaking a cup, and worked till they dropped. 'Cane River' by American Lalita Tademy follows 13 year old Suzette on a Creole plantation in Louisiana, and her almost inevitable rape by a white man.

Maiming or murder was often the fate of slaves who tried to educate themselves. 'Nightjohn', Gary Paulsen's inspirational story, describes a young girl secretly and defiantly learning to read on a plantation.

Grace Nichols' moving poem, 'The People could Fly', cites the West African belief that a diet without salt would make the soul light enough to return to the mother continent. "*Hear them singing; One bright morning when my work is over I will fly away home...*" 'North', by Malorie Blackman, is a horrific tale about a runaway mother who kills her young daughter to spare her a life of slavery.

Benjamin Zephaniah exposes the role of religion and commerce in his poem, 'Master, Master. "*Master master drank a toast/And dreamt of easy tea,/He gave to you a Holy Ghost,/Come children see.*"

The role of Britain in the odious slave trade is described in several stories. In 'Runaway', by Sandra Agard, the young child slave Scipio makes a break for freedom. The boy's pain and fear are palpable as he spends his first night alone in the cold woods of the English countryside, but the story ends with a rallying cry. "*I'm no longer Scipio. I'm Cudjoe, a free man!*" And with renewed energy and hope he turned and ran into the night towards London." Catherine Johnson adds an emotive and atmospheric reconstruction with 'The Last Words of Cato Hopkins, in which Cato, a thirteen year old boy about to be hung in Newgate Prison for scamming rich white aristos out of their money, tells his gripping story.

The 'Awakening of Elmina' by British born Grace Quansah is a personal response to her recent visit to Elmina Castle in Ghana, where her ancestors were kept in appalling conditions before transportation overseas.

The volume ends with James Berry's accusatory lament, 'My Letter to you Mother Africa'. "*I have never seen you, Africa,/never seen your sights or heard your sounds,/never heard your voice ...*"

Unheard Voices, brought out to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the passing of the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act, comes with notes and facts placing slavery in a historical and political context. As Malori Blackman states in her foreword, "*It is an anthology of work from those to whom the slaves of the past still whisper.*"

This book made me weep. It left me with a sense of shame and deep pity. It reminded me that 24 million Africans were enslaved, many perished on the gruelling journey from their homeland, and 16 million were worked to death in the first three years of their horrific exile.

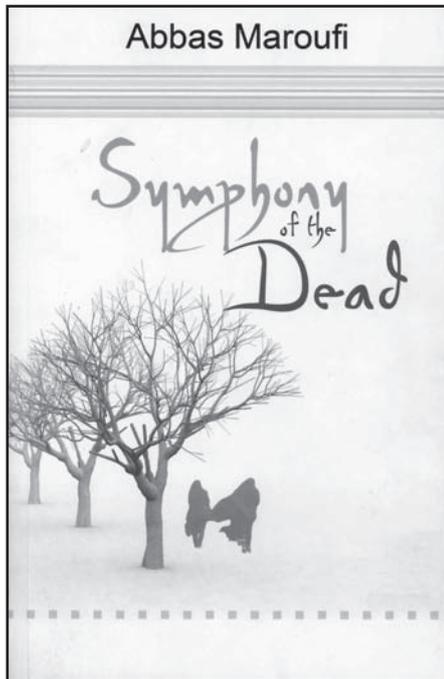
Here are their voices. Read this book. It will sadden and inspire you.

SYMPHONY OF THE DEAD

Abbas Maroufi

Translated from Persian by Lotfali Khonji, Aflame Books, 2007

Reviewed by Lotfali Khonji



Abbas Maroufi is a leading Iranian writer whose work has been translated into English for the first time.

The setting for Abbas Maroufi's *Symphony of the Dead* is the city of Ardabil in north-western Iran during the Allied occupation of Iran in early 1940's. It is the story of the Urkhani family, headed by a reactionary "no-nonsense" father, a merchant specialising in the wholesale trade of nuts. Rivalry

between his two sons, one an enlightened book-reading left-wing intellectual and the other one more interested in worldly matters, sets the scene for tragic consequences. Their sister gets married against her father's wishes. The plot of the novel, however, goes beyond this doomed family and portrays social and political aspects of life in post-war years in that region of Iran. The bond between the fugitive intellectual brother and an Armenian girl is very interesting in the particular setting of the story: a very traditional Moslem community in which any pre-marital bond is taboo. Intended fratricide is a theme running through the book like a thread. The introduction (referred to as the "Prelude") refers to the story of Cain and Abel and sets this theme in motion. Almost everyone in the story is doomed and meets a tragic end. In this respect, "Symphony of the Dead" resembles some Shakespearean tragedies. It can also be likened to works of authors such as Balzac in so far as it portrays life in a particular historical period and provides some sort of social history of back-alleys and ordinary people.

The author, Abbas Maroufi, is an Iranian dissident who used to publish the literary review *Gardoon* in Iran in the early years following the Islamic revolution. He got into trouble with the authorities and faced imprisonment and other punishments. For the past two decades, he has been living in Berlin where he conducts many cultural activities. His *Symphony of the Dead* was translated into German some years ago. His

other works in Persian are yet to be introduced to the Western world.

Translating a work of this nature into the language of peoples whose cultures and customs are vastly different from those influencing the original work is always problematic. The difficulties go beyond linguistic and literary problems. For this reason, addition of footnotes, endnotes and a glossary has been found necessary. Originally, they were all footnotes. The end result, however, divides these explanatory notes into footnotes, endnotes and a glossary of unfamiliar words and terms. There are episodes and occurrences that can be puzzling to the Western reader. For example, why should the old merchant be upset by the fact that his daughter's suitor turns up in person to meet him and make his proposal? This needs an explanation of old customs whereby such matters were first raised among female relatives (typically, the suitor's mother met the girl's mother or some other female relative). Explanations are also needed in connection with historical and political issues. Linguistically, although Persian and English belong to the same family of languages (viz. Indo-European), their sentence structures are different. For instance, the verb in Persian comes at the end of the sentence. This fact alone calls for much restructuring of phrases, sentences and paragraphs. In some cases, this amounts to a "reconstruction". The problem is much less acute when one translates between, for example, French and English.

F-Words

Published Inscribe, Peepal Tree Press, 2007

Reviewed by Jennifer Langer

This booklet of prose and poetry commemorates the bicentenary of the Parliamentary Act to abolish the Atlantic Slave Trade to Britain. Eight Yorkshire writers respond by focusing on the theme of freedom. The writers are Tanya Chan-Sam, a South African writer living in Sheffield, Khadija Ibrahim who was born in Leeds of Jamaican

parentage, Jack Mapanje, the exiled Malawian poet shortlisted for the 2007 Forward Prize, Seni Seneviratne, born in Leeds to an English mother and a Sri Lankan father, Simon Murray, Leeds-based poet and novelist and Rommi Smith who is Parliamentary Writer in Residence.

Jack Mapanje's poems firmly grounded in the North-East, are entitled 'Surviving Freedom in Sunderland April 2007' and 'Upon Opening Tina's Asylum Carwash'. A cynical tone is articulated about the paradox of events commemorating the abolition of slavery while asylum-seeker car-washers work as modern-day slaves.

NEW WRITING WORLDS 2007

Miriam Frank

The New Writing Partnership, a charity supported by East Anglia University, Arts Council England, the City of Norwich and County of Norfolk, is involved in a broad spectrum of activities which promote literature and writers, both at home and internationally, with the aim of stimulating debate and cross-cultural exchange. In June this year it held a series of public events, readings and workshops in Norwich, to which a representative of Exiled Writers Ink was invited.

At Norfolk Reads: Meet the Writers!, held at the Norwich Millennium Library, Xiaolu Guo read excerpts from her novel *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary For Lovers* based on her diary when she started life in London after leaving China in 2002, and Daljit Nagra read a sample of his poem *Look We Have Coming to Dover!*, written in a rich hybrid idiom evocative of life as an English born son of a Punjabi family.

In the evening a reception was held in association with English PEN at Norwich Cathedral in celebration of Norwich becoming UK's first City of Refuge, joining an international network of cities which offer residency to politically exiled writers denied freedom of speech in their countries. Sheila Hancock, Margaret Drabble, and writers in residence Hary Kunzru and Geoff Dyer read moving excerpts of poetry and prose from the PEN anthology, *Another Sky: Voices of Conscience from Around the World*, and from visiting City of Refuge writers, followed by a buffet supper in the Cathedral Refectory.

The next day, Sunday, *An Afternoon of World Literature*, supported by the Foyle Foundation, was held in the private garden of the Bishop's Residence. Various allied organisations, including Exiled Writers Ink, put up book stalls in an enclosed clearing of the gardens, while readings from multicultural writers from the UK, Germany and Italy, were listened to by a packed audience in a marquee.

The following week, *New Writing Worlds 2007* - another New Writing Partnership enterprise in association with East Anglia University - brought together a group of writers from the UK and other countries to debate issues around this year's theme of Exile and Imagination. This was subdivided into *The Existential Condition*; *Language, Discovery and Alienation*; and *A Sense of Place* - a full morning devoted to each. Presentations opened for discussion at these roundtable meetings were led by the writers in residence, chaired by Professor Jon Cook, at the University of East Anglia.

The Existential Condition was introduced by Geoff Dyers with a thought provoking exploration of the definition of "exile". Beyond geographic displacement as a result of expulsion or in search of safer shores, exile - the outsider, the stranger, the other, one who does not belong - is also many writers' experience vis-à-vis the society or nation into which they have

been born, expanding the idea of exile to an internal state of ill-fit and non-conforming. He illustrated this with quotations from D H Lawrence's letters which expressed his aversion to England and lifelong search abroad for a place he might call home: a self imposed exile. Significantly, towards the end of his turbulent life Lawrence finally writes, "One can no longer say: 'I'm a stranger everywhere', only 'everywhere I am at home'".

Eva Hoffman introduced the concept of the nomadic existence becoming the norm in this post-modern world of migration, fast travel and communication. The rampant cross cultural movement of today is transforming the meaning of exile and home, rooted lives becoming an "interesting aberration", Hoffman suggested. She pointed out that, even in a stable situation steeped in local history and tradition, we can no longer fail to be aware of the world's multiplicity and of the heterogeneity of our own cultures. Native and stranger have become less polarised and more fluid, and identity overall more hybrid in a perpetually mobile, nomadic, and intermingled world. Hoffman reflected also on the effects of these far reaching changes on literature; the emerging new writing's divergence from its, up till now, favoured stability and centrality is moving into non-linear, multi-directional styles and contents in its representation of this changing world and ourselves in it.

In the section of *Language, Discovery and Alienation*, discussion raised the intrinsic relationship between language and identity, the breaks that occur in the one when the other is interrupted, and the new, multifaceted, and in many respects richer self that emerges. In the last session, *A Sense of Place*, Maureen Freely explored crossing borders, both in travel and literature, without "making the extraordinary exotic". The relationship between the inner place, our subjective self, and the outer place, our physical surroundings, was considered: the disparity between them in exile leading to conflict, while absorbing their difference paving the way towards integration. In the discussion that followed, Michael Augustin, a writer and broadcaster from Bremen, Germany, quoted Thomas Mann who, after exchanging Hitler's Germany for life in the US, declared "Germany is where I am."

This 2007's New Writing Partnership's series of events ended with a packed lecture by the writer Ian McEwan on Christian apocalyptic thinking, and a debate about Authorship, Migration and the Digital Age chaired by Amanda Hopkinson, the director of the British Centre for Literary Translation.

The New Writing Partnership's team of organisers, Chris Gribble, Katri Skala, Nathan Hamilton, Katy Carr and Leila Telford, indefatigable and delightfully welcoming and helpful at all times and occasions, were instrumental in the symposium's fertile and exciting outcome.

Academia Rossica's Russian Film Festival

Anna Gunin

On 27 October 2007, London's first Russian Film Festival opened, offering a diverse and colourful selection of contemporary films from Russia. The Astoria West End cinema quickly filled up with Russian voices and faces, along with Londoners curious to discover the new cinematic offerings on show. London's Russian community is not small: estimates put the number officially and permanently resident in the capital at over 40,000, which has led to the city being dubbed "Londongrad". Several directors and actors from the films featured attended the festival opening, talking informally to the audiences after the screenings. The evening closed with the film premiere party held in a nearby Ukrainian restaurant.

Russian films have long influenced world cinema through their creative innovation. Early Soviet directors explored groundbreaking techniques in films such as "Battleship Potemkin" by Sergei Eisenstein. The new generation of Russian directors continues in this tradition of creative experiment and social comment. All of the films included in the festival have won prizes and each reveals a unique aspect of modern Russian life.

"The Island" is film director Pavel Lungin's latest film, exploring the themes

of material attachment and repentance. Since the 1990s Lungin has lived in Paris while making his films in Russia. Back in 1990 Lungin's debut film, "Taxi Blues", showed the harsh reality facing creative people in Russia: it is the touching story of the relationship between a saxophonist whose instrument is confiscated when he jumps his taxi fare and the taxi driver confiscator, brawny and far removed from the world of culture. Indeed, Russia historically has suffered the ambivalent distinction of being the homeland of great artistic genius while also being one of the world's fiercest persecutors of its creators of culture, or "engineers of the soul", as Stalin named them. Petr Mamonov, the star of "Taxi Blues", also features in "The Island": here he plays an odd Christian monk who lives faraway on a bleak, remote island. Visited by pilgrims seeking miracles and haunted by his conscience over a past transgression, he discovers God's mercy in a story that in turn delights, amuses and moves.

"Goddess: How I Fell in Love" – the first film directed by well-known Russian actress and screenwriter Renata Litvinova – is a strange, poetic collage on death, love and escape to other worlds. The film takes as its starting point the grim life of Faina, a police investigator, and follows her course as she examines the dark case of

a missing child, straying into an ethereal world fuelled by cognac, drugs and fantasy, until finally she ends up on the other side of the looking glass. Shot in shades of slate, peopled with ladies grotesquely caked in cosmetics (while Faina's kookily beautiful face remains nude), set to the upbeat sound of Nick Cave's music, the film explores the boundaries between the world of dreams and a drab, disturbing reality.

The Russian Film Festival was organised by *Academia Rossica* – a charitable organisation for the promotion of cultural ties between Russia and Britain – and *Sovexportfilm* (Moscow), with assistance from the Russian Ministry of Culture. *Academia Rossica* also awards a biennial prize for Russian literature in English translation – the only such prize in the world. With the recent hit films "Nightwatch" and "Daywatch" making a big impact in cinemas around the world, Russian cinema is entering a new global phase. In Russia itself, the post-Soviet interest in Hollywood imports has waned, with audiences now returning to home-grown films. Meanwhile, the organisers of this festival in London were overwhelmed at the success of their event: let us hope this first Russian film festival will not be the last.



Biographies

Tajia Al-Baghdadi was headmistress of a girls secondary school in Iraq. Her poetry is published in the Middle East and in London based newspapers such as Asharq Al Awsat. She has spent 18 years of her exiled life teaching Arabic, Art and Islamic Studies in London.

Moniza Alvi was born in Pakistan and grew up in Hertfordshire. She has published five collections of poetry and received a Cholmondeley Award in 2002.

Avelino Bambi is a teacher by profession. Since leaving Angola he has been more active as a writer and performer. He writes in Kikongo and Portuguese as well as in English.

Hasan Bamyani is a writer and teacher who fled Afghanistan six years ago, when the Taliban targeted him for teaching girls. He lives in Oxford and finally received leave to remain this year.

Handsen Chikowore is a Shona speaking poet from Zimbabwe.

Lynette Craig holds an MPhil in Writing, leads poetry workshops with refugee groups and mentors and edits their work. Her poetry collection is entitled *Burning Palaces*, (Flarestack).

Janna Eliot Novelist and translator, Janna Eliot lives in London and comes from an immigrant family.

Robert Elsie is a writer, translator, interpreter and specialist in Albanian studies, whose scholarly interests over the last twenty years have been Albanian culture, literature and history. Amongst his many works is *Albanian Literature: A Short History*, Tauris, 2005.

Miriam Frank Her articles, translations and original works have been published by the Guardian Review, Index on Censorship, Buenos Aires Herald, Quartet Books, Serpent's Tail and Rodopi, and she has been interviewed for BBC Radio 4 and World Service programmes.

Soleïman Adel Guémar is an Algerian born poet and writer working in French and now living in Swansea. He worked as a journalist and was also a prize-winning writer and poet. His poetry book *State of Emergency*, Arc, 2007 has been awarded the English PEN prize for poetry in translation.

Anna Gunin is a freelance translator and interpreter who graduated from Bristol University. She lives in rural Somerset with her Russian husband and son. At present she is translating the novel *I Am a Chechen!*

Humberto Gatica is a Chilean exile who escaped from the Pinochet regime and now lives in Swansea. His poetry had been translated into English, Welsh, French and German.

Vesna Domany Hardy was born in Zagreb, Croatia. She studied at Zagreb University and then worked as an English and Literature teacher. She left Yugoslavia in 1974 and is now a freelance writer, researcher, translator and interpreter.

Mardin Ibrahim was born in Kurdistan and grew up under despotism and war. His first book, *Jasmines of Death* was published in Kurdish in 1999 and in 2007 he published *Clothed in Black*, with the talented young Kurdish poet, Lazo.

Gareeb Iskander was born in Baghdad in 1966 and now lives in London. He has published two books: *High Darkness*, a poetry collection, Beirut, 2001 and *The semiotic Trend*, Cairo, 2002. He works as freelance translator for the Middle East newspaper, London.

Lotfali Khonji lives in London. His translation work includes *Closed Circuit* by Shadab Vajdi and *A Manifesto for an International Front* (Dr. M.A. Khonji). His forthcoming English translation of Esmail Khoi's Persian poems is entitled *Beyond the Horizon*. His works in Persian include *A Grammar of the Larestani Language* and Persian translations of Denis Wright's *The English amongst the Persians* and Edward Said's *Orientalism*.

Milorad Krystanovich was born in Dalmatia, Croatia and works as a language teacher in Birmingham. His published collections include *Where Spirits Touch* (Writers Without Borders 2005) *Four Horizons* (Heaven Tree 2006) and *Yasen Tree* (Heaven Tree 2007).

Jennifer Langer is a poet and editor of three anthologies of exiled literature (Five Leaves) with a fourth forthcoming. She has an MA in Cultural Memory, London University.

Freddy Macha is a London based Tanzanian born writer and musician who leads workshops and performs solo or with his Kitoto Band. In Tanzania he was a reporter for the national Swahili daily *Uhuru* and weekly columnist for *Sunday News*. His first collection of Swahili stories was published in 1984. He has lived in Germany and Brazil where he played with Os Galas band until 1992.

Nkosana Mpopu is a praise poet who writes in Ndebele/Zulu and English. He writes about a broad range of subjects - from rivers, weather, feelings, politics, and social issues to faith. He lives in North Shields.

Majid Naficy was born in Iran in 1952 and published his first collection of poems in 1969. He fled Iran in 1983, settling in Los Angeles, and has since published eight collections of poems. He co-edits *Daftarhaya Kanoon*, a Persian periodical published by Iranian Writers Association in Exile.

Salah Niazi was born in Nasiriyah, Iraq, and has lived in Britain since 1963. He is a well-known poet and critic, and founder editor of the quarterly Arabic literary journal *Al Ighdirab al Adabi*. He has published many collections of poetry and translated into Arabic Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, and James Joyce's *Ulysses*.

Jean-Louis N'tadi was born in Congo-Brazzaville, came to the UK in 2004 and now lives in Oxford. He is a playwright whose works include *Le Chef de l'Etat*, *Vendu*, *Verve d'une Creature* and *Monsieur le Maire* destroyed by the Brazzaville Security Services. *L'Acte de Naissance* was written in Campfield detention centre and *Cries of the Cricket* was performed on the London Eye in 2005.

Andrea Pisac was born in Croatia where she published short stories and essays. She is currently doing a PHD on exiled writers from the former Yugoslavia. She runs the writers in translation programme at English Pen.

Wafaa Abdul Razak is from Basra Iraq where she was a famous poet. She arrived in the UK in 2001. Three books have been published in Arabic – *The Night does not know me*, *The Key is Blind*, *A Moist Eye to the Sun in the Mirror* – plus two unpublished collections of poetry, a CD book with music, two short stories and four novels.

Philippa Rees was born of mixed Boer and English blood in South Africa in 1941. After the Nationalist takeover and the Treason Trial of Mandela, she left for London, then spent time in Mozambique, Florida and Germany. Her writing, both poetry and prose, deals with conflicts between loyalties, and the alienation of the individual out of step with the consensus.

Emily Rhodes read English at Exeter College, Oxford. Since then she has freelanced as a journalist, and is currently Editorial Assistant, working with non-fiction, at Random House.

Isabelle Romaine a French Cameroonian, graduated in Geography at Lyon II University. She taught at a lycée in Dakar, Senegal. She has an M.Phil. in English Literature and an MA in Cultural Memory.

Bart Wolffe was born in Harare and left for exile in Germany in 2002. He now lives in London. He is a Zimbabwean leading playwright with work performed in nine countries. His fourteen plays include *The Sisyphus Road* (2002), *The Art of Accidental Stains* (2002) and *Killing Rats* (2001). He has several published books, mostly poetry, including *coffee cups and cigarettes* (1991) and *Changing Skins*. He was a freelance journalist and was involved in the media in film, television, print and radio. The lack of freedom of expression meant that continuing as an artist in Zimbabwe became impossible.

Zohrieh Yousefi was born in Iran. She belongs to the generation that was involved with revolution in 1979, the eight years war between Iran and Iraq and the terrible repression by the religious regime after the Revolution.

The Silver Throat of the Moon includes prose and poetry from writers originating in countries as diverse as Algeria and Zimbabwe, Somalia and Iran, Kurdistan and Afghanistan. Some authors, like Choman Hardi, Sousa Jamba, Reza Baraheni and the late Miroslav Jancic are now well known internationally for their writing in English, others, including Maxamed Ibrahim 'Hadraawi', Yang Lian, Ziba Karbassi, Dubravka Ugresic and Saadi Youssef are appreciated internationally but fairly new to readers of English.

The causes of exile are manifold, and finding refuge no easy matter. Predrag Finci comments on how many countries he has passed through, whereas his mother-in-law has rarely left her home yet the country she has lived in has changed almost as often. Sousa Jamba, on the other hand, pretends to be from a different country to his own as so few Westerners have heard of his former home, and are made nervous by hearing of an unknown land.

As well as writers in exile describing their personal experience, this collection includes essays by the writers *about* being writers and readers in exile. These articles range from the difficulties in holding on to traditional rural imagery in a place so far from home through to the, perhaps temporary, identity of a whole generation of young writers of Algerian origin whose lives have been entirely spent in France.

Jennifer Langer, herself the daughter of refugees, lives in London where she formed Exiled Writers Ink!



The Silver Throat of the Moon: Writing in Exile

Edited by
Jennifer Langer

Five Leaves Publications 325 pages 0907123651 £9.99

Mail order: Five Leaves, PO Box 8787, Nottingham NG1 9AW

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