

Literature Across Frontiers • Inizjamed

International Symposium

**Re-Visions
Literary Exchange in an Enlarged Europe**

St. James Cavalier Centre for Creativity, Valetta, Malta
3-6 November, 2005

Programme

Thursday, 3 November, 2005

19.30 Welcome by Maria Grech Ganado (Inizjamed) and Alexandra Büchler (LAF).

Friday, 4 November, 2005

09.00 Guided tour of Valletta led by Fiorella Vella

11.00 Malta Experience.

14.00 Symposium official opening at the St. James Cavalier Theatre in Valletta.

Welcome speeches by: Maria Grech Ganado (Inizjamed), Ronnie Micallef (British Council)

Chris Gatt (St. James Cavalier)

14.10 Keynote speeches by

Ned Thomas (Mercator Centre) and Adrian Grima (Malta)

Session 1: Is there a European cultural identity?

Creation of the European Union has been primarily an economic and secondly a political project. What has its impact been in the cultural sphere – with or without the Union, what do we have in common and what are our differences?

Chair: Éva Karádi (Hungary), Immanuel Mifsud (Malta), Stig Saeterbakken (Norway), Tuomas Nevanlinna (Finland), Nora Ikstena (Latvia), Tristan Hughes (Wales)

Session 2: Representation of small-language literatures on the international scene and obstacles to their greater dissemination

Chair: Mari Jose Olaziregi (Basque Country), Jan Kaus (Estonia), Ġorġ Mallia (Malta), Chris Gruppetta (Malta), Gwen Davies (Wales), Gudrun Sigfusdottir (Iceland)

19.30 Literary readings in the Upper Exhibition Halls, St. James Cavalier:

Jan Balabán (Czech Rep) - Jan Kraus (Estonia) - Priscilla Cassar (Malta) - Claudia Fiorini (Malta) - Rubén Palma (Denmark) - Krzysztof Czyzewski (Poland) - Laura Hird (Scotland)

Saturday, 5 November, 2005

09.0 Session 3: Policies, practices and structures that encourage and enable circulation of literary works and mobility of writers

Chair: Alexandra Büchler , Marta Dziluma (Latvia), Ewa Wojciechowska (The Book Institute, Poland), Marka Grech (CCP, Malta), Rubén Palma (Denmark), Andrej Blatnik (Slovenia)

11.0 Session 4 – Networking, exchange and cooperation - exemplary projects and practices

Chair: Karsten Xuereb (Malta), Krzysztof Czyzewski (Poland), Sara Penrhyn Jones (Wales), Ján Litvák (Slovakia)

14.0 Session 5: Vehicles for publishing and presenting literature in translation

Chair: Mike McCormack (Ireland), Snjezana Husic (Croatia), Kornelijus Platelis (Lithuania), Jan Balabán (Czech Republic), Laura Hird (Scotland)

16.00 Evaluation and closing session

Co-chairs: Adrian Grima and Ned Thomas

Chairs of sessions (Éva Karádi, Mari Jose Olaziregi, Alexandra Büchler, Karsten Xuereb, Mike McCormack)

Comments from the floor.

18.45 Literary Readings at Casa Rocca Piccola, 74 Republic Street, Valletta:

Tuomas Levanlinna (Finland) - Nicholas de Piro (Malta) - Nora Ikstena (Latvia) - Simone Inguanez (Malta) - Stig Sæterbakken (Norway) - Kornelius Platelis (Lithuania) - Tristan Hughes (Wales)

Sunday, 6 November, 2005

09.0 Full-day tour led by Fiorella Vella. Visiting Tarxien Temples, Ħaġar Qim and Imnajdra, Inquisitor's Palace, Birgu, and finally Mdina. Meeting point: Castille Hotel. Snack at 1.30pm at Il-Forn in Birgu. Ends at 6.00pm, Castille Hotel.

Readings during the tour by Caldon Mercieca (Malta), Roderick Mallia (Malta), Andrej Blatnik (Slovenia), Stanley Borg (Malta), Jan Litvak (Slovakia).

The symposium was organized as part of the Literature Across Frontiers programme of activities with support from
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Session 1: Is there a European cultural identity?

The creation of the European Union has been primarily an economic and secondly a political project. What has its impact been in the cultural sphere?

Eva Karadi: Introduction

The creation of the EU and especially its recent enlargement – Europe of the 25 had certainly the consequence of an enhanced interest for the new accession countries, the less known, smaller languages and literatures. People got more interested in those countries which got inside the new European borders. They travel around, so that we can hear languages spoken on the trams you haven't heard before, you have difficulties to identify. It makes us curious and proud on the European diversity of languages. Anthologies, series of articles were published, where every country from the 25 had to be represented by one of their poets or writers. Colleagues started to look for translators from Maltese or Latvian.

We, the smaller countries, less known languages and literatures became more visible. At least for a while. What can we do to maintain this visibility, to preserve the interest of a broader European public for our different languages and literatures?

Till this time of the enlargement our relationship to Europe, to the European culture was mainly oriented towards the center, even our most important modern literary journal had the title WEST (Nyugat). I read it at a Swedish writer, that when they make a journey down to Germany, France, Italy: they say, we go to Europe.

Now we all are Europe, but some of us are more Europe than the others, and some of us, on the other sides of our borders are not Europe yet, some are already on the waiting list, and some are not on it.

Europe used to have a nomadic meaning for us, now it is more descriptive. We were accepted into a Club, and now we would like to know more about the other members with whom we belong together.

What do we have in common, and what are our differences?

Who is the WE, we are speaking about? We, the people of the enlarged Europe, have certainly many things in common and we also have significant differences.

I suppose that we differ exactly in those things we have in common. And the similarities can give the basis for an interest for different approaches, different aspects, different attitudes, different perspectives, and different traditions. And original, unique individual accomplishments of artists.

We have *different languages*, some of them are more frequent, better known, more easily understandable languages, spoken by many Europeans also as a second language. Some of them belong to big families of European languages (like the Slavic, the German, the Roman languages), those, who speak one of them will feel themselves more or less at home, familiar in the milieu of the other. It's very often the music, the intonation, the sound of a language which makes it so characteristic.

It's nice to be in a choir of so many partly related, partly isolated languages.

But is it really that important to have and to maintain this linguistic diversity?

This is one of the questions, a quite provocative one I would like to raise for this session.

Wouldn't we be less isolated, would we just communicate on the language we also use at this seminar to be able to understand each other?

Even if we insist on the importance of our local, national, less frequented languages, not at least as the medium of our literature, and our literature as articulation, expression and bearer of our national traditions and cultural identity, we don't want to be closed into our languages, to be separated from the neighbours, from the others by our languages barriers. We want to be shown, to be listened to, we would

like to share our experiences, our views on our common life and world seen from different geographical, historical, generational, gender etc. and also personal, individual perspectives.

Literature is the most disadvantaged art form from this point of view compared to arts, music, dance and film. It has to be translated. And to be translated is not enough. An interest has to be raised and maintained for our literatures written in rather minor languages.

And here comes my second provocative question for discussion.

Shall we raise interest for national literatures inside the borders of the enlarged Europe?
Or even for smaller, local literatures written in less frequent local, sub-national languages?
(Like the Welsh, the Scottish, the Catalan, the Bask etc) Or should individual authors been promoted irrespective of their national background?

This is also a dilemma for the writers themselves. Are they supposed to represent their country, their nation, their ethnic group, follow their national traditions on the European scene? Or it's enough they represent themselves, and rather follow an international, a European trend.

This can be the choice of the individual author or artist. But we, the promoters, the mediators, translators of these literatures should do our best to make these literary achievements visible and recognized.

I would look for a possible solution of this dilemma in the direction of the regional approach, in the sense of a **Europe of the Regions**. Nations are sometimes artificial constructions, a national language is sometimes a dialect with a state and an army behind it. I read his recently at a Norwegian anthropologist when reflecting on the Scandinavian region and the relationship of the Scandinavian people to each other.

I am very much for defining and presenting ourselves and our literatures in regional terms, in the sense of the area studies. It would be a very user-friendly gesture from the side of the mediators and promoters of our literatures if we would locate our literatures in a broader context of regions. This way the European languages and literatures could be approached as the voices from the Scandinavian, the Baltic, the Visegrad, the Mediterranean, the Balkan region.

There are of course many other important aspects and classification possibilities, also the traditional ones according to related languages (Slavic or German Studies, etc.) Anyway I think it is important to start to learn to get integrated into our neighbourhood, into our region and then become part of the European cultural community enriching it with all our similarity and diversity.

My last provocative thesis concerns **the role of former European Imperia** in the process of European cultural integration. We used to have Latin as a common European language in the Middle Ages. Since the Reformation we live in the Babel of the many European national and lately again in the revival of the sub-national languages and literatures. Translation is important against a fatal fragmentation, isolation and also against a no less fatal homogenization, globalization.

I would suggest that the major European languages, especially those which were dominant in a region, often in the framework of a former Empire (like the German in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the Polish in its neighbourhood, the Russian in the former Soviet union etc) could and should take this historical task as a cultural mission in mediating between the smaller, lesser known languages in their neighbourhood, in their region and the other European languages and literatures.

Stig Sæterbakken: My heart belongs to Europe, therefore it is broken

1.

No Norwegians were hurt. This is how every headline news in Norway about accidents, terrorist attacks or disasters abroad, conclude. And when I say every, I mean every, except on those occasions when Norwegians *have been* hurt, which also means that what would have been a short bulletin, or a single report, becomes a succession of reports, continuing for days, if events prove disastrous enough.

25th of July 2005: At least 88 people lost their lives in a terror action on the holiday-resort Sharm el- Sheik in Egypt. No Norwegians were hurt during the attacks.

14th of August 2005: 121 people died when a plane from the Cypriot Helios company crashed just outside Athens. No Norwegians were among the passengers.

28th of September 2005: 12 people were killed when a suicide bomber blew himself up at the headquarter of the Kabul International Brigade in Afghanistan. No Norwegians were hurt during the explosion.

Each nation has of course an obligation towards the possible relatives of possible citizens abroad, and in this respect the reassurance in itself makes sense. But why "Norwegians"? When the earthquake hit Pakistan in October, considering the big Pakistani population in Norway, why was the message still only "One Norwegian is missing"?

2.

I reckon that we all can agree on a certain distaste for such an obvious outcome of egocentricity, and neither among those not hurt, in this case Norwegians, there fails to be expressed from time to time just resentment with this "first myself and then myself"-perspective which it rather openly bears witness to.

Still, the sentence continues its compulsory pursuit of the incoming reports of suffering from all over the world, like an embarrassing refrain from a pop song you dislike, but still can't get out of your head.

It is truly a grotesque scenario: while mutilated children are screaming in agony, we are presumed to heave a sigh of relief because none of them have the same nationality as us.

An interesting question then, would be, I think, how far it goes, our identifying with, and hence compassion with those in pain? How large is the radius of this compassion? Or put differently: How many does our list of "not-hurt" take?

3.

Could we, for example, imagine breaking news concluding with the following reassurance: "No Europeans were hurt"?

I think not.

Why?

Firstly because of the dubious associations evoked of a wealthy western continent's frontier against the rest of the world, the rich ones providing for themselves, on the verge of the so-called third world: that this far, but no further do our feelings of kinship and solidarity reach, that to this point, but no further are we willing to invest our moral and emotional capital.

Secondly because it probably would wake too many memories of previous times' oppression and imperialism, things we don't like to be reminded of, this together with its fascist connotations, the idea of a united European people, superior to people from other continents, a *Festung Europa* as a safeguard against the rest of the needing world.

4.

Or if we went the opposite way, making the radius of compassion smaller instead of wider? Would that be approved of?

As some of you may know, Norway has two official languages: *bokmål* – literary: language of books – which is a modernised, or alleviated, form of what was once was standard Norwegian, which in turn was derived from Danish. The other *nynorsk* – literally: new Norwegian – which is a language created by the linguist Ivar Aasen in the middle of 19th Century, a constructed tongue based on Norwegian dialects from all parts of the country, a synthesis of all these.

Our two different languages have been – and still are – subjects of dispute, since different parts of the country respectively have *bokmål* or *nynorsk* as their main language. We do for example have controversial laws regulating the use of new Norwegian in radio and TV. We have new Norwegian Publishing Houses, papers written solely in new Norwegian, etc. And opposite: papers refusing to print articles in new Norwegian.

This language dispute has been going on for more than 150 years, and has become a part of our political every-day-life, so to speak, this to such a extent that some claim that Norway is parted in five or six independent zones, defined in terms of the prevailing language spoken in that area, zones which have a minimum of contact with each other, in a sense a kind of states-within-the-state. This description is an exaggeration, but that it exists, that it's presented with a claim to be taken seriously, reflects how deeply this language dispute goes within the nation and shows how irreconcilable the parties from time to time have been.

Could one imagine, then, a local News station in the west of Norway reporting a car accident, in the end informing that no new Norwegian speaking people were among the dead? Or, on *Øst Nytt*, a news programme that covers the county Oppland, where I live: *No one with bokmål as main language was hurt in the accident.*

Of course not, as this would surely be received as something offensive, immoral, not to say inhuman.

The absurdity of the small limitation – compassion sorted after dialects – meets the dubious political and historical implications of the big limitation: the care for Europeans before Asians, Africans, etc...

But in the middle of these offensive limitations, or discriminations, there exists a limitation, or discrimination, which appears logical.

Between the moral reprehensible and politically impossible "no speakers of new Norwegian were hurt", and the fascist, racist and imperialist "No Europeans were hurt" we have the "No Norwegians were hurt" which we, for some reason or another, find acceptable.

If one tried to measure this discrimination accurately, one would probably find that its strength weakens fairly proportional to geographical distance, for Norway's part in such a manner that accidents happening to Danes or Swedes attract rather a lot of attention, evoke rather a deep compassion, lead to rather a great commitment... accidents happening to Britons or Germans a little less, but still quite deep, quite great, etc... gradually weakening in southern, eastern and western direction. With one major exception: the USA, which is far away, in fact literary on the other side of the globe, but still, in spirit and culture so close to Norway that it is easily mistaken for a neighbouring country.

"A car bomb exploded in Baghdad this morning. No Norwegians or North-Americans were hurt in the explosion."

5.

Norway's history as an independent nation is short. Norway has twice been in union with other countries, first Denmark, then Sweden (in fact we are celebrating our centennial anniversary; the dissolution of the Swedish- Norwegian union this year). And Norway has, interestingly enough, twice by referendum voted against joining the European Union.

That our past as a union-partner, which in our national mythology is made synonymous with periods of occupation, plays an important role in our strong resistance towards the European Union, I think is beyond doubt. As we once were "governed from Copenhagen", then "governed from Stockholm", we are now struggling not to be "governed from Brussels".

At the same time, after World War Two, our foreign policy has been heavily influenced by American foreign policy and American interests in Europe, this to such a degree that one might say that we have been "governed from Washington". Our NATO-membership has, as opposed to a possible EU-membership, been a rather uncontroversial issue in Norway, and it is not without reason that Norway has been characterised as the "nicest boy" or even "the most eager" one in the NATO-class. In the same way American film and music, American food and American culture on the whole, has pervaded us in such a way that we have made it ours. So, while an American influence almost have had safe conduct politically, culturally and commercially, Europe has been regarded with an anxiety of influence, as Harold Bloom might have put it, as if potentially infested with something America is free from. While the door to Europe has been shut more or less, the door to America has been wide open.

"A car bomb exploded in Baghdad this morning. No North-Americans or Norwegians who for three generations or more have had no Danish or Swedish blood in their veins, were hurt in the explosion."

6.

Our union with Denmark lasted for over 400 years. The Danish rule is often referred to as the "400-year-night", an expression taken from Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*, there, by the way, prompted by a madman Peer Gynt meets in Cairo, called Huhu.

Recent research, however, has put into doubt our conception of this long lasting restraint that we, being the weaker part, obviously, of the Siamese twin Denmark-Norway, experienced during the union. Excavations at Kaupang, for example, shows that this place, which is considered to be the first town founded in Norway and as such an important national symbol, wasn't founded by Norwegians, but by Danes who were engaged in trading in this area at the end of the eighth and the beginning of the ninth century. Today scientists and historians also are altering their interpretation of important archaeological finds from the Viking Age, like the Oseberg ship, again a significant national symbol, now said to be left in Norway by Danish kings, in other words: that a considerable part of the culture we think of as fundamentally Norwegian, as symbols of Norway as a nation, has been given us by foreigners, Danes mainly, and that the influence from Danish culture, especially through trading, goes much further back in time than those 400 years during Danish reign, so: that rather than a positive and constructive independency period, succeeded by a negative and destructive period of oppression and force, there has been a massive influence from Denmark all the time. In other words: that the 400-year-night in reality turns out to having been a 1000-year-day-and-night.

This should be obvious. But it isn't. On the contrary, it collides violently with a basic concept, a basic idea. Because the way we are raised to think, it is in our emancipation from others, in our struggle for freedom, that what we hold as our national heritage has been shaped. It is protected, not exposed, that we have found ourselves. Our genuineness, *our Norwegianness*, is that which was repressed during the unions, and that which, after winning back our freedom, could flourish once again.

7.

As a small country, young in regard to independency, it is as if Norway is still in a phase of bragging self-content, emphasizing the Norwegian (as a quality in itself), applauding the Norwegian *as Norwegian*. Ibsen is not a great writer. Ibsen is a great *Norwegian* writer. It is not his outstanding authorship one is interested in Norway, it is the magnificent fact that this outstanding, internationally acclaimed author was Norwegian.

As if our thinking originates from a kind of deficiency. As if our starting point is that the Norwegian is insufficient, insignificant, not held to be by the others, those we measure ourselves to, the great and mighty nations, the old civilized societies. As if our starting point is that we have something to prove. Something to make just. As we tell the world about Norwegian greatness, in reality we tell them of a deep frustration, a paralyzing inferiority complex. We regard ourselves as provincial, hence become delighted at any sign telling us that we are not, stressing it for all it's worth, failing to understand that what we in reality are stressing, is our need to do so, our need of acknowledgement as people, as nation. Even long after the Oslo-agreement has been wrecked and Palestine intellectuals have made it synonymous with "a new apartheid", we're proud that the first peace-treaty supported by both the Israeli and the Palestinians bears the name of our capital... When Mossad-agents killed a man that they mistook for an Arabic agent, by the way in my home-town Lillehammer – this was in 1972, and it is the only political murder that has ever taken place on Norwegian soil – Norwegian papers were full of praise for the attention now drawn to a small Norwegian city. "The world looks to Norway!" it read, with

references to American, British, French and German newspapers, all having the story on their front pages. The obvious tragedy of the events were completely drowned in a kind of morbid enthusiasm for the fact that Norway – at last! – was scene of an incident of international significance. Rhetorics that would return 20 years later, again to Lillehammer, when the city was assigned the Winter Olympics for the year 1994. Yes, rhetoric was quite similar, every inch identical: "The world looks to Norway!" "Lillehammer on everybody's lips!"

Political homicide, or Olympic Games, who cares, as long as it makes the world look in our direction, makes it attach some importance to our humble outpost?

And when we are still impressed by our own greatness, I guess it's because we haven't quite reached it yet...?

Or as Gombrowicz puts it in his diaries: "If a mature nation judges its own merits with moderation, a vital nation learns to neglect them."

8.

My point is simple. Norway didn't produce Ibsen. A conglomeration of influences and impulses, and not the least a whole world of literature, produced Ibsen (and, I have to stress at once, as part of this conglomeration of influences, also a Norwegian influence, Norwegian literature as well). Just as our specific Norwegian values, as we like to think of them as, has been created, not in periods of isolation and autonomy, but in periods of massive influence, forced as well as chosen. Our *Norwegianess*, if such a thing exists, is something that has been developed in a crossfire of external influence, right from the very start.

When Ibsen wrote *Peer Gynt*, which can by the way be seen as a brutal execution of Norwegian pride and conceit, or one could say human pride and conceit in general, he was living in Italy. He turned the perspective upside down, so to speak. Instead of sitting in Norway, studying the world, he placed himself in the world in order to study Norway.

In this context it might be interesting to know that Otto Weininger, who was a great fan of Ibsen, and *Peer Gynt* in particular, to such an extent that he – like Joyce did later – learned Norwegian – that is to say: Danish! – to be able to read Ibsen in original, and who travelled to Kristiania in August 1902 to be present at the very first performance of *Peer Gynt* at National theatre, returned to Vienna deeply shocked, completely beside himself, after having witnessed his favourite play, with its infamous, not to say hateful representation of the Norwegian national spirit, transformed into an idyllic national romantic melodrama, as it has since then always, right up to our time, been performed as.

Even this, a mortal criticism, we've managed to convert into a gala performance, a romantic celebration of our so-called national spirit, our character and our particularity.

9.

And I can't help observing that the name of the character which is today one of our leading national icons: Peer, which is a very common Norwegian name, is written in the old manner, with two e's; furthermore that the Norwegian word for "European" is "europeer", also with two e's.

Accordingly: Euro-peer Gynt.

10.

Do I feel any kinship with Europe? Yes, through literature I do. Some years ago, at a reading by the time my first collection of essays was published, I was introduced by the compère as a Norwegian writer who reads much foreign literature, one that has a so-called *international orientation*. There and then I was quite astonished by what I heard. The thought had simply not occurred to me, that for the most part I read books by foreign authors. Nor had I reflected upon the fact that in the collection of essays that I was about to present, not a single Norwegian writer was mentioned. The thought had simply not occurred to me, because I always, until that night, had thought of the literature I read, and which was important to me, as literature, not foreign literature.

My forefathers are not Ibsen, Bjørnson and Hamsun. My forefathers are Kafka, Beckett and Céline. And in this I see nothing sensational, and had not pondered upon it either, had I not been introduced in this manner, that night, some ten years ago.

In this respect I may say that my heart belongs to Europe, more than it belongs to Norway. I know Europeans better than I know Norwegians. I probably know European literature – and here I bring in the compère as a witness – better than I know Norwegian literature.

And this heart, my European heart, is broken, in the sense that what it belongs to, is so complex and mutually inconsistent that it can never act – or be – as one. And that my heart, my European heart, whenever it was that I became aware of it, thus already was in bits and pieces before it had had time to have its first contraction.

I see therefore the term *European* primarily as a negative term. That defining myself as a European makes it a little more difficult for me to define myself as a Norwegian. In the concept of the European lies a threat to the national. A European is a dysfunctional nationalist.

I like my European identity, because it takes away some of my Norwegian identity and replaces it with... nothing.

Because Europe is, strictly speaking, nothing. Europe is an impossibility, it's a contradiction in terms. Europe is a fiction. Europe is a literary construct, so to speak, held together by novels and poems, more than by nations and governments.

11.

To declare oneself a European is to reply "I am no one" when Polyphemus asks for one's name. The one-eyed giant demands a clear answer: Odysseys wards off with an absurd one, and by the help of his clever reply, he gets away, he saves himself. The answer "I am no one" gives him his freedom back, the freedom he needs to rescue himself and his crew (or what's left of it), it gives him the freedom of movement necessary for him to continue his journey, and to accomplish that which is his superior goal: *to return home*.

12.

Odysseys' reply is a literary one. He uses a literary effect to escape his own destiny. And isn't this what literature does? Lifts us away, away from ourselves, our own pre-destination... We become no one. That is to say, we can be anyone, in the same way that a novel, by force of its poetic language, opens for us any mental universe, makes it possible for us to enter any world, by making it readable, not acceptable necessarily, but readable, and in that sense understandable. Thus a novel – a good novel that is – can make the thoughts, the moral and emotional universe of say a paedophilia or a Nazi understandable, can make it possible for us to identify ourselves with it, bring us to the point of recognizing this as an option in ourselves as well. Because we are human. And being human means containing this too as an option.

The question *who are we?* is rejected in favour of the question *what is it possible for us to become?*

In the same way I see Europe as something negative, I regard literature as something destructive, in the sense that it makes it more difficult for us to be ourselves fully and completely, that it destroys our chances to establish once and for all, that *this is who we are, this is us*. To write (and to read) is to become another, with Rimbaud's words. Or many others, the one after the other. To write (and to read) is to change identity all the time, to remind oneself constantly of the possibilities of all the others we might have been, or still may turn out to be. Writing (or reading) we become changeable. We become anybody. We become No-one...

13.

As a dream therefore, a small utopian vision if you like, I see before me the day the message is not *No Norwegians were hurt*, nor *No Europeans were hurt*, but:

No one was hurt.
No one was killed.
No one survived.

Literature: Bloom, Harold: *The anxiety of influence* (1973), Bromark/Herbjørnsrud: *Norge – et lite stykke verdenshistorie* (2005), Gombrowicz, Witold: *The diary* (1953 – 1969), Ibsen, Henrik: *Peer Gynt* (1867), Larsen, Terje Holtet: *Peer Gynt-versjonen* (2003), Rimbaud, Arthur: "First letter of the visionary" (1871)

Tuomas Nevanlinna: The Heart of Europe / EUROPE AS AN UTOPIA

If no continent is a geographical natural kind, Europe is even less one. Europe is not a "physical" entity but a "meta-physical" one. I'm inclined to put this rather bluntly: Europe "is" whenever or where-ever a certain Ancient Athens is taken as a model or paradigm for (culture, e.g. for philosophy & science, arts and politics. According to this criterion societies or civilisations as different as Ancient Rome, Christian theology of the Middle Ages, Kingdom of Charlemagne, Renaissance city-states and modern scientific community qualify as "European".

* * *

What is this model or paradigm? There is no clear-cut answer and cannot be, because "Europe" is but a general name for the quarrel over the very meaning of the model. But, to put it bluntly again, it could well be characterised as universalism.

Firstly, philosophy as universalism with regard to knowledge. With the birth of philosophy truth becomes separated from tradition. From this it follows that all claims for an "European identity" become inherently questionable. The only constant of an European identity is that it is put into question. Indeed, it is constituted by this very questioning. European inheritance consists of endless overturning of that heritage.

Secondly, universalism in politics: the utopia of a non-exclusive political order.

Thirdly, aesthetics as both the basic solution and the basic scandal (stumbling block) for the universalistic problem. The solution, because the promise of a synthesis of the universal and the particular is what aesthetics is all about. The scandal, because the particular as something necessarily local, concrete and exclusive is also the very ground of the universalistic dilemma.

The Schillerian dream about an aesthetic state is a perfect example of this structure: reason as something universal and free should be the "head" of the state, but it is doomed remain abstract and powerless without a "heart", e.g. without embodiment in the form of particular cultural sentiments. This aesthetics is duplicated in the relation between Germany and the rest of the world: the ideal Germany is posited as the privileged example of this cosmopolitan spirit.

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Europe is a proper name, it names a continent, but the orientation in question is universalistic. How could this universalistic orientation have a quasi-geographical proper name as its principal bearer? This is the basic paradox of Europe; its structural impossibility.

Europe is a place (a continent or an "union") and a non-place (something universal) at the same time. Europe is an utopia: literally, an impossible non-place. Europe as an utopia has the structure of "utopia (in) itself", the utopia to become a "place without location"; to become a place whose particularity would universality itself; to redeem this impossibility as its most own possibility. Europe cannot have a proper name and cannot but have one. In this respect it resembles "Jehova" - the one who has no name but still has.

Europe is the utopia of utopia: to be as a certain place (Europe) a bearer of universalistic truth and politics which by definition should not be "smeared" by any local roots or identities. This is clearly impossible. But Europe, and this is my claim, centers around this impossibility.

These abstract considerations have bearings to the present-day processes of European Union and globalisation as well. Is modernisation a form of cultural imperialism or is it a neutral means of creating rational, secular states? Is the demand of making religion a private matter a specific "cultural" (for example, protestant) demand or is it a reasonable request whose fulfillment would well leave the basic cultural matrix of a society intact?

* * *

The question of European identity on the context of the European Union can be put thus: EU has a head but does it have a heart? Does it need one? Should or could this identity, this "heart", be quasi-nationalistic (ethnicity and/or religion being the basis of identification)? Or should or could it be quasi-patriotic (adherence to a common idea)?

The quasi-nationalistic Europe is neither possible nor desirable. Patriotic Europe may well be desirable in an abstract sense, but is it possible? And what would the common idea be? And how could it ever be "installed" to the minds of Europeans? Through the blue-yellow flag and by making the schoolchildren sing Ode to joy once in a while? If this "lite-Schillerian" vision does not seem too plausible, it suddenly does not seem so desirable any more...

We are tempted to let out a cry for a total bastardisation of Europe: let's forget the whole thing! Whatever and whenever Europe "is", it is defined by its boundaries and limits. By its borders. And it is always a question about setting borders, even when they are redefined and enlarged.

In this case, however, we run the risk of leaving EU as it is: a techno-bureaucratic organisation aiming to optimise the freedom of commerce. But the question of identity cannot be avoided this way. This techno-bureaucratic solution namely also produces one, albeit negatively: EU as the centralised monster which the citizens of Europe love to hate...

So it seems Europe in the present politico-economical sense has a "heart" whether it wants one or not. But how are hearts woven and identities constituted? Not by sharing something rigid, fixed and substantial but rather by a mutual hanging onto the relevance of some big, empty notion - like "France", "democracy" or "Europe", for example. It is not any collectively owned meaning of Europe which binds us together as Europeans, but common questions and quarrels over the meaning and possibilities of Europe.

The European Union should be the union of people agreeing to disagree about everything except the relevance of the (dis)agreement itself. This is the essence of every (European) politics.

Nora Ikstena: A Bee Stings a Boot

"We are not doctors, we are the pain" – Belorussian writer Vasil Bikav uses this penetrating and embracing sentence to describe the essence of an artist. Latvian poetess Vizma Belševica calls it "a bee sting to a boot".

An artist is not interested in just stinging. He wants to explore the emergence of the pain that makes him defend, sting. He delves into the depth of his experience trying to locate the spring of the pain and to drink from it before it rushes into the collective waters. It is exactly this gulp of power that makes an artist create. Without it, he either thirsts to death or drinks anything he can find risking a loss of the very senses that make him look for the spring.

No wonder, a person who has chosen to search that spring instinctively resists any attempts to direct his "live water" to the open sea until he has filtered that water through the filter of the individual consciousness. He has to protect his ground water and he stings in defense. He stings the systems created by civilization. Thereby, he does not let the systems breed comfortably; he retains tension, interferes with them and threatens to sting again.

At the first glance, Europe as a common home seems to be an enticing slogan full of happiness and security. Particularly, for small nations that have suffered under the Soviet system. An invitation to join the European superpower decreases inferiority complexes of small nations and makes them to feel more proud and secure. Skepticism is always battled – "They don't need us - we need them".

This approach works particularly well to convince the poor yet doubtful people about economic advantages of joining the common home. The same argument is useless for discussion of interaction of European cultures in a shared social economic space. Because we have very long been in need of each other.

We are more tied to each other than we think we are. We are tied with common myths, symbols, folklore and faith. We also share the pain I was talking about earlier. What differs is groundwater. Our experiences.

A fugitive will know what is implied by the Biblical question: How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land? A mother will know the pain for her lost child killed by a religious or nationalist fanatic. A writer will know what it means to write in a language of a small nation and to encounter the unshakable rules of the free market. A dissident will know the price for his choice under an authoritarian regime. A civilian will never get rid of images of wartime horror – here, in the middle of Europe, at the turn of millennium. A person who has lost his dearest will not be eased through realizing - that's the rule of nature.

These experiences are our burdens. We have to carry them from the moment we are detached from navel string to the moment we hope to reunite with it. And that is no ghostly past we need to get rid of in the name of the beautiful future. That is subsoil water, a gulp of which helps us understand ourselves and others in this world.

The groundwater are people we meet on our way, languages we think in, traditions we cherish, glimpses of history of which we become participants, places where all three times – past, present and future – turn out to be simultaneously existent. Groundwater is self-reflection and understanding. Whatever globalised and unified future of the world we envision, the moment of grasping will always remain individual. It will remain distinct for every country and nation as well.

I do not think terms like "fatherland", "mother tongue", "exile", "roots", and "nostalgia" will fade away. They are tightly connected with any process of understanding. As T.S.Eliot wrote,
So, while the light fails
On a winter's afternoon, in a secluded chapel
History is now and England.

We cannot pretend not seeing that common European home is largely an object of discussions among politicians, bureaucrats and entrepreneurs. The people called "conscious masses" or "a crowd" when necessary are left out. But it may well turn out that the silent presence of many people constitutes the subsoil water for an artist. And then, the sting is even more painful.

Unlike a bee, an artist does not die after the first sting. And it is a great God's gift to be able to bite several times. We need to appreciate this and every bite needs to be well thought out. We may draw water from the same well for economic and political reasons but each of us will have a different spring of experience. We need to protect our own our special spring- to honor the suffering that makes us sting.

Tristan Hughes: Broken Mirrors

The question raised in this session is really a great Leviathan of a question – maybe too big to wrestle with this early in the day and entirely sober – so perhaps it's best I establish right from the start that I'd prefer to approach it from a small – though not necessarily limited, I hope – point of view. I'm used to small views. I come from an island called Ynys Mon, which lies off the coast of a small country, which is itself part of an island nation. And so, not unsurprisingly, I've developed something of an islanders mentality: a proud consciousness of detachment; a strong – if somewhat vague and indefinable – sense of distinctiveness; an instinctive suspicion of main lands. But, since islands are famously contrary places, that mentality also includes an entirely obverse set of attributes: the fear of isolation; the need to feel part of a wider whole; the desire to seek connections and search for affinities in the lands across the water. It's a mentality – or perhaps split personality is a better term – that many of my fellow islanders here on Malta might recognise. However, for the purposes of this discussion, we could use it as a paradigm for thinking about cultures, unions and identities, and of some of the apparently contradictory hopes and anxieties that they invoke.

Taking off my islanders hat for the moment, and putting on my Welsh one, I'd say that historically we've had plenty of experience of the issue of culture and union and identity, and up to now our thinking on the subject has been fairly clear: having the one means you risk losing the others. Union for us has traditionally meant something in the nature of a shotgun wedding, an enforced alliance with a vastly more powerful spouse who, like a black widow spider, will attempt to eat you directly after your relationship has been consummated. And so its worth keeping in mind that from the vantage point of small countries the question of common cultural identities is not only a leviathan of a question but, as often as not, it does indeed conjure monsters – huge, ravening ones that are trying to devour you.

This being the case, it's hardly any wonder that occasionally us Welsh have tried to make ourselves appear even smaller than we are, have quietly and inconspicuously gone about our business in the hope of not being seen, of not drawing the attention of dangerous and hungry neighbours. It's a survival tactic. And the fundamental thread running through our history over the last 800 years or so – in particular our cultural history – has been that of an unlikely survival. Unfortunately, it's a tactic with one major drawback. Minority cultures, when embattled and threatened, have often adopted a defensive stance, curling up like hedgehogs, and in doing so have risked becoming inward looking and static, of petrifying into little more than museum exhibits. Because, like any other living thing, they need nourishment from without to flourish. Which brings me, at last I suppose, to Europe.

This may be a hard claim to believe – and is perhaps coloured slightly by an islanders' pride and a Celtic propensity for exaggeration – but briefly, once upon a time, my island of Mon was the cultural capital of Europe; or, to be more specific, of Celtic Europe. As the Romans gradually occupied and subdued the rest of the continent the final remnants of a Celtic identity and civilisation were pushed into the far west, into Wales, and more particularly into Mon, in whose sacred oak groves those custodians of Celtic culture – the Druids – made their last stand. For a fleeting moment we were at the heart of a great, if fading, cosmopolitan civilisation, and it's something I don't think we've ever forgotten. You can perceive it in almost every manifestation of Welsh culture – as a sense of a lost wholeness; as an inextinguishable yearning for some missing, phantom, part of ourselves; as an ingrained intimation of an elsewhere, or elsewheres, that are just beyond our grasp. It might be the only explanation for the orphan or exile quality that pervades one of the oldest living cultures in the world. We are still foundlings in search of a lost family.

And I'll make the tentative suggestion here that our latest union – or lets call it a re-union – with Europe offers us at the very least a new place to continue looking. For too long in Wales we've been, necessarily I admit, overly pre-occupied with the dominating bulk of England, and at last we've got the chance to lift up our eyes and glimpse beyond it, to reach out for nourishment across new borders. For small countries like Wales the European Union might well represent one of the few opportunities in our histories for forging cultural relationships without the attendant spectre of asymmetrical power relations, without the fear of absorption, assimilation and extinction. Europe could become for us a rare arena of exchange and reciprocity – a place to find and meet long lost relatives who have become strangers. Mind you, and this is doubtless my islanders' suspiciousness cropping up again, I'd prefer it if we continued to conceive of it as just that – a meeting place – and not some more permanent and domesticated residence. Let us relish how different and strange those relatives have become and

approach Europe, culturally at any rate, not as something homogenous and whole but multiple and fractured – so that hopefully, like looking into a shattered mirror, it will complicate and multiply how we see ourselves rather than reflecting back an all too familiar image. For me, at least, the ideal European cultural identity would be a constellation, an aggregate, an archipelago, of small views, not one single vista.

Session 2: Representation of small-language literatures on the international scene and obstacles to their greater dissemination

Dr. Mari Jose Olaziregi: The Basque Literary System

As you may know, Euskara, or Basque, the oldest language in Western Europe, gives its name to our country, Euskal Herria, or “the land of Basque-language speakers”, and for that reason we have tried, despite its historical prohibition, despite its problems, to hold tight to our language through the centuries. In the final analysis, as George Steiner reminds us, when a language dies, a way of understanding and looking at the world dies with it. Today there are about 700,000 Basque speakers, or *euskalduns*, who live on both sides of the Pyrenees, in France and Spain. The political border that divides the Basque country today (*Euskal Herria*) separates two different legislative regions. After the Spanish Constitution was approved in 1978, the Basque language was accepted as an official language, together with Spanish, in the provinces in the Spanish region. But the same is not the case in the French Basque Country, where Basque has not been given the status of an official language.

As the Basque writer Bernardo Atxaga says in one of his poems, “I Write in a Strange Language”, we can think of Basque literature as a hedgehog that has been asleep for too long, but that, fortunately, has managed to awake in the 20th century. If there is a critical event in the history of Basque literature, it is the death of the dictator Franco in 1975. Only then did Basque literature begin to establish the necessary conditions for its development (the Bilingualism Decree, which increased the numbers of potential readers, official funding for publishers and distributors, funding to protect publication in Basque, and so on). In 2003, 1,574 titles were published in Basque, with an average print run of 2,403 copies. In total, 3.8 million books reached the market. Of these books, 72% were new titles and 28% were second or later editions. Of the books published for the first time, 69% were originally written in Basque and 31% were translations from other languages. The Basque publishing sector was responsible for sales totalling 27.6 million Euros in 2003, and the most successful fields with respect to sales were teaching and education (6%), literature for children and young adults (20%) and adult literature (7%).

Looking at those figures, we could be forgiven for thinking that at present the Basque literary system is in good health – but the truth is that it is ridden with problems that can easily be imagined if we consider that the language that sustains it, Basque, exists in a situation of diglossia. If it wasn't for the support the Basque institutions give publishing houses, or for the reliability of sales through the educational system, most of the 69 publishing houses that exist in the Basque country today would have to close down. Out of the 300 people who write literature in Basque today, only around 10 are professional writers. On the other hand, and as far as translation is concerned, today we can say that thanks to the energy and the initiative of associations such as EIZIE (the Basque Translators Association) we have an excellent collection of world literature translated into Basque.

On the subject of translations, I should say that whereas today we have many people who are trained to translate from English, German, Russian, Czech, Danish, Italian, and so on, into Basque, the number of translators who can translate from Basque into other languages is much smaller. This problem, together with the fact that the Basque institutions did not offer grants for translation until the year 2000, means that to this date only 70 books have been translated from Basque into other languages. But there are some remarkable initiatives, such as the agreement UNESCO signed up with the Basque Writers' Association, which approved a yearly budget for the translation into French or English of 3 books that were representative of Basque literature. But the truth is that apart from our most universal author, Bernardo Atxaga, most Basque writers are totally unknown abroad. For this reason the Centre for Basque Studies at the University of Nevada in Reno (USA) decided to launch the Basque Literature Series, which comprises a list of contemporary Basque literary texts translated into English. The Basque Government subsidises the translations, but we do not have any kind of subsidy for the promotion of the books. *An Anthology of Basque Short Stories* is the first book that we have published. We decided to publish it ourselves even though an important publisher (Harvill, in Britain) showed interest in publishing it in a couple of years' time. We thought it a better strategy for a minority literature such as ours to put the book in circulation as soon as possible. And we were right: less than a year after being published in English, the anthology has been published in Basque and in Spanish, we have a contract to publish it in Russian and we are about to close a deal with a German publishing company.

These are only small attempts that will need to be reorganised and better planned in the next few years, when a proper body for the promotion of Basque literature is in place.

Gorg Mallia: The Native Writer as Hermit: Questions about Diffusion

Mcluhan's prophetic "global village" has taken root in all that we are – in a society that no longer thinks in terms of national identities, but lives a hybrid life, fed by omnipresent media influences that create a woven network of multinationalism.

In this sense the word "national" has lost much of the meanings it once had. There is nothing hermetic about a society that lives on a tiny island surrounded by sea and physically linked to other countries only by ship or plane. The uniqueness of identity, so persistently fought for by our romantic forefathers, who needed to fly it as a banner that screamed independence from the dominating foreigner, is now quite extensively gone. Ironically it has become a bastard entity, intermingled with traits coming directly from that very foreigner they struggled to distinguish themselves from.

Because in an age of electronic instantaneity, in which a virtual umbilical cord links us constantly to a feeding tube of multiculturalism (be it high or pop culture, it does not really matter), there is a fusion of mentalities, mores, lifestyles, societal traits and so many other elements that have compounded themselves into what I like to call a "blended psyche". This feeds off the ground it grows in, true, but is twisted round and round by the multifaceted influences that cultivate it.

The influx of all that is world-wide, kneaded into the national and European cultural roots, has created societies that are much more cosmopolitan than hermetically "national", creating identification and recognisability that go beyond what is encountered in the everyday.

Literature has developed to draw nurture from many sources not necessarily native to its writers, but which have intertwined into an amalgamated identity.

But there is ONE national trait that, though influenced and infested by others, remains predominantly NATIONAL... and it is ironically THAT which needs to be sacrificed for a native literature to be multinationalised. I am, of course, referring to a country's native language ... also a romantic symbol of identity, but one that needs to be compromised if that literature is to be read beyond the shores of what is, all of a sudden, a non-cosmopolitan, very hermetic, microscopic country. And the problem is that there is no way that a translation can do the original work justice. Not even if it is the actual writer who has translated his or her work.

In the folly of my youth I sought to experiment with translation, and went straight for the jugular... translating J. M. Barrie's Victorian children's masterpiece "Peter Pan" into Maltese.

It was there that I realised how utterly native to England and the English of that particular era the language used by Barrie was – how totally reflective of speech timbre and linguistic nuances of the time, as well as of the very nature of the English psyche sampled at a unique moment of its existence. So that language is more than a vehicle of thought, and the words are an inextricable part of the very nature of all that the story contains. The importance of language in literature is both diachronic and synchronic – pull that language out of the mold created by the native author, and you have a different book, a different literary work. As such, translation tends to take on the trappings of the betrayer of the stylistically conscious author who depends on the sounds of words and the turn of phrase and idiom that makes for actual identity.

It is unfortunate that there are no subtitles in literature. I tend to abhor dubbed films, no matter how well the actual dubbing is done, because I prefer to have the original sound created by the makers – and there IS a distinct national and/or creator identity borne in the sound of language as used in films. Subtitles help keep you abreast of the story, but the native sound carries the associations and unique tonalities of the fundamental intention – of the language the creators THOUGHT in as they produced their work.

But the fact remains that that cannot happen with literature. Translation is necessary for a writer to cross frontiers, and when the frontiers happen to be those of a minute market in which selling a thousand

copies is tantamount to having a best-seller, that crossing might very well be necessary for the broad and continued life of the work.

Luckily the Maltese have English as a second language – we actually used to be bi-lingual, but let's all agree that that was in the past – so if the author him or herself goes in for the work of translation, there might be less harm done. Or, as has been happening quite extensively again in the past few decades, works are originally written in languages other than Maltese. The National Book Council, of which I have been chairman for a mere two months, is the organiser of the Maltese literary prize, the only formal national acclaim given to excellence in books in Malta. True, the prize does not just single out literature, but that is part of what is lauded, and though the Council concentrates on the book itself, the book IS the main carrier of literature after all.

One of the eight categories that are rewarded for excellence is specifically for books written by Maltese in another language. This year's Category Eight has garnered twenty two books of the seventy seven that have gone in for all eight categories. That is, nearly thirty per cent of the total entries. This is indicative of the realisation that the Maltese author and publisher have that the Maltese book needs to transcend the smallness of the local market. Admittedly, only some of these books written in another language can be deemed works of literature, as it is the larger book... the one that is more expensive to produce, that needs to be marketed both to the tourist that visits the island (and, logically, cannot read Maltese) or abroad. The reach of scholarship, or at least historical retelling, by its very nature, seems to need stretching to beyond a single community. Not surprising, seeing that English seems to be the main language of academe.

My Council also organises the Book Fair ... which, along the years has had the misfortune of losing the word "International" from its title. The Council I chair will try to bring that word back. Book fairs can be for a for cultural and literary cross-fertilisation, and we are aware that, though the Maltese have a penchant for reading in English, there is little awareness among my countrymen and women in general of the contemporary literatures of the other countries of Europe. Perhaps twinning with some of the larger book fairs in Europe can bring about the bridging that is so lacking right now in so much except for symposia like this one.

The National Book Council can build bridges too by liaising with other National entities that propagate the book, creating opportunities for writers to meet and talk and become aware of each other's contribution to national, and possibly international, literatures. Inadequate, but at least effective within the accepted limitation of the scope.

But the dilemma of the translation as modification rather than loyal messenger of the soul of literature remains, and I very much doubt any book council can find ways of bypassing it.

Things CAN be done to promote national literatures that have not been translated. To give one example of many potential ones, Book Councils such as the Maltese one, can join in the effort to make available (both in printed and in electronic formats) criticism and reviews as well as historical writings about the literature of this land. Individual works might be singled out for treatment, and their particular contribution to the world of literature placed against an international backdrop. This can raise the contribution of both individual works and the native literature in general to beyond the hermetic mausoleum of which a mere 400,000 people are aware. I know this is already being done by individuals and interested groups, but having the clout of the Council behind such an endeavour can only help it.

But I will be the first to admit that these efforts will only have an effect that is limited to the level of interest of the non-native speaker in discovering about literature that he or she cannot read first hand.

A writer needs to be read. That is the essential nature of the beast. It is a pity that geography limits the diffusion of the linguistic baring of the soul that is poured into a work of literature, but, basically contradicting what I have been rambling on about for the last few minutes, I also have NO doubt that excellent writers will, even if diminished by essential translation, cross frontiers and be read. In that way, the very nature of the blended psyche, which is nonetheless rooted in very unique ground, will be passed on and enjoyed by those who are unfamiliar with the trappings, but who are very aware of the soul.

Dr Christopher Gruppetta: Dissemination of Maltese Literature Abroad

As a publisher in Malta, my experience of Maltese literature publishing rests mainly in the field of children's literature, and co-edition experience is mainly with UK publishers, hence this paper is skewed towards children's literature and towards cooperation with UK publishers.

Maltese-language children's publishing is, when compared to other European countries, a relatively recent phenomenon, and in many respects is only now moving out of its infancy stages.

Although writing for children in Maltese had been available sporadically, chiefly through what we would today refer to as serialisations in newspapers and magazines, *Gabra ta' Ward* – a compendium of stories written specifically for children, compiled by Temi Zammit – dated 1934 is probably the first publication of a children's book in Maltese. A number of other books followed, however for the birth of children's publishing as a formal concept we have to move forward to 1971 when *Fra Mudest* by Charles Casha was published, followed within a few weeks by *Il-Pulena tad-Deheb* by Trevor Zahra. The first Maltese-UK co-edition of a book in the Maltese language took place in 1973, in the form of 4 Maltese language Ladybirds adapted by Mario Azzopardi.

This notwithstanding, Malta has – for its size – a considerable body of children's literature. Between 1970 and 1980, **119** children's books were published in Malta, and between 1981 and 1991 another **180** were published. (*T.Zahra, 'Il-Kotba ghat-Tfal', PIN*).

There is obviously not the time here, nor is it the place, to go into the detailed history of children's literature in Maltese, however the volume 'Il-Kotba ghat-Tfal' by Trevor Zahra, Charles Briffa and Gorg Mallia is an exhaustive reference work that follows this fascinating area of our culture step-by-step.

If one broad sweeping generalisation were to be made on Maltese children's literature, it would be that the majority of texts tend to look nostalgically into the past, reflecting a way of life and ambience that children of 2005 cannot identify with... Having said that, the past few years seem to be heralding renewed experimentation in content and style, so that we are now finding literature on subjects that – although mainstream in European literature – are relatively uncommon here in Malta: fantasy of the Tolkien variety, wand-wielding magic (with or without Hogwarths) which is, believe it or not, not as common a genre in Maltese as it is in practically all the rest of the world...

Dissemination of Maltese children's literature abroad has so far been limited, although there have been occasional translations and adaptations. There is also a handful of Maltese children's authors who publish original English texts with UK publishers, although as far as I am aware these are chiefly reference works and invariably in the English language.

Population extent in Malta, from which we need to extract a subset of the *reading* population, and further narrow this down to the *children* reading population, of course limits dissemination quantitatively.

Attempts have been made, with varying degrees of success, to export and distribute Maltese children's literature in Australia, which has a sizeable Maltese-reading population. Merlin, the company I work for, does some modest trade with Australia, however the two limiting factors for us as publishers have been (1) the prohibitive shipping costs to Australia, and (2) the lack of a marketing and distribution setup in that vast territory.

On the other hand, this de facto insularity has allowed Maltese children's publishing to move through its extended teething phase, and prior to attempting any debut in the international scene it has needed to move to a degree of professionalism.

This is entailing continuing development of and attention to production values, greater availability and use of prepress and design professionals, as well as – most difficultly – a progression in mindset from the cottage industry tradition to a more structured setup. Thus for example, for better or for worse the figure of the **literary agent** is non-existent in Malta. Likewise, the role and functions of the **editor** are still highly resisted by sections of the publishing and book writing community. These are other peculiarities reflect the above-mentioned 'cottage industry' setup where many editorial and publishing functions are combined into one person, at times the author himself/herself.

From past dealings with European publishers' rights departments, it is my opinion that before these levels of quality and professionalism were met, it would have been counterproductive to propose Maltese children's books to rights purchasers abroad, as the latter are invariably accustomed to standards of excellence that come from intense market competition.

My experience of collaboration with European publishers has been that of acquiring, not selling, rights, resulting in a number of co-edition projects in the Maltese language with the likes of HarperCollins, Penguin/Ladybird, Usborne Publishing, Lion Publishing. Co editions, while not contributing to the dissemination – within or outside Malta – of Maltese literature, do provide locally a benchmark of the professionalism required by the international publishing community (given the publishers' contractual insistence on their standards of production and prepress), while at the same time establishing a network of contacts in the rights world for Maltese authors to make use of.

Perhaps not everyone is aware that European publishers regularly get to evaluate Maltese manuscripts – usually in the form of published product – and that the reality of an editor's desk overflowing with an interminable slush pile is far removed from the romantic notion of editors waiting with bated breath for the Maltese reply to J.K. Rowling.

In the medium to long term, I am optimistic that the process will become a two-way one, and that Maltese children's literature in translation will find its way into the European bloodstream. This will of course entail a sobering of our expectations and a readiness of all parties involved to accept the realities and commitments required by European (and non) publishers.

Gwen Davies: Promoting That Elusive BestsellerE: Welsh and English-language Publishers from Wales on the International Scene

The Croatian essayist Dubravka Ugresic, in "Eco Among the Nudists" (*Thank You for Not Reading*) describes a scene on her local beach a few years ago, when all the sunbathers are sheltering under the same novel. She reflects, "The phenomenon of the bestseller is a projection of the collective longing for one book, *the book of books*, for a substitute Bible... (this longing is) deeply anti-intellectual... the bestseller is a space of ritualised collective innocence (we enjoy something which everyone enjoys). The bestseller offers a closed system of simple values and even simpler knowledge.'

Ugresic's particular international bestseller author that year was Umberto Eco. But her comment can easily be adapted today to Dan Brown. The next Dan Brown was what most publishers seemed to be after at the 2004 Frankfurt book fair. They all had a vaguely-articulated longing for something similar: no one knew what the next Dan Brown might look like but they would all recognise it when they saw it. We – representatives of Parthian, a small, English-language Welsh publisher, were trying to sell in advance our new novel, *The Colour of a Dog Running Away* by Richard Gwyn. We were trying to sell it as "the new Dan Brown" – and it did share some characteristics: part thriller, a preoccupation with an obscure Catholic cult, Catharism. But we went home with no deals. Despite having been established 11 years, and having a good list of around 12 English titles a year, with a strong element of literary fiction, and despite having had a foreign rights agent working for us for 18 months, we had not managed to sell one title.

Five months later with the publication of *The Dog* in May this year, two things had changed. We started promoting it in the UK as the new *Shadow of the Wind*, a book totally dissimilar, being set in the Franco era and being a story of childhood, but sharing a Barcelona setting. We knew this would tap into current publicity around the Catalan book's choice on the primetime TV Richard and Judy Bookclub. And then it was read and picked up by Scott Pack, an extremely influential and controversial figure in the British book trade – central buyer for Waterstones, and our book was awarded an A* grading, a guide to Waterstones' managers which guaranteed bulk orders throughout the UK, inclusion in promotional offers, heavy publicity and prominent face-up, front-of-store display in the shops. The book was visible *throughout the UK*. We started getting serious broadsheet reviews –again, UK-wide coverage followed by international trade publication coverage guaranteeing more visibility, and at last, sales. Within six months of the publication date we had sold 5000 copies (our usual print-runs are 1500) and by the end of the summer we had sold rights in four countries, including the USA. This year's Frankfurt proved a hotbed of appointments, dispatched readings copies and hopefully more firm deals.

The opening quotation describes an international phenomenon, a world-wide "collective longing" for a book. Traditionally, as a small independent publisher, we have struggled even to get noticed by bookchains and the media within the UK, within a bookmarket producing 100,000 titles a year, never mind the world market. Some Welsh publishers are happy to consolidate their sales within a small home-market producing 159 literary titles in English and a total of 652 Welsh-interest English books. The A* UK-wide grading that Waterstones awarded *The Dog* was unprecedented for a Welsh book. We can afford to try and be ambitious, because our primary market in theory extends to the English-reading people of the world. This is not a luxury shared by a minority-language literature such as Welsh, who in 2004 published 56 literary titles out of 583 general Welsh-language titles, produced within an overall market in both English and Welsh of 1235 titles published for the Welsh market. The warmth of reception for our novel *The Dog* at 2005's Frankfurt Book Fair, compared to the previous year, is due to one key factor: UK publicity. We have the luxury of aspiring to achieve this directly. For our Welsh-language colleagues, an international profile in rights terms would usually be gained using the stepping-stone of an English translation, usually via an English publisher. An alternative option would be to bypass the UK altogether by building networks with other small or minority-language literatures.

In theory, Parthian has a much greater direct international potential than Welsh-language publishers. But the poverty we share with them currently outweighs most of the advantages the English language conveys on us. We are all small – like us they have around 5 or less full-time staff working on book publishing. They are cash-strapped, time poor, have no dedicated rights staff and are historically subsidy-dependent. They –like us - are extremely grateful for the opportunities for the networking, translation contacts and rights promotion that literary exchange bodies like Welsh Literature Abroad provides. We all struggle to garner the publicity that supports word-of-mouth success and to offer the advances that keep our best authors committed to their publishers (although this is gradually changing

with various new schemes that have come in the wake of new political commitment at National Assembly government level).

We are all – Welsh and non-Welsh-language publishers - committed to the writers of Wales. And although we may vary from publisher to publisher in the degree of our commitment to the Welsh language, or to political nationalism, we are, unlike the bigger London publishers with their much bigger advances and publicity budgets, committed to Welsh culture and to giving something back to Wales. Parthian, like our Welsh-language colleagues such as Y Lolfa, are committed to nurturing writers who want to reflect their experiences of contemporary Wales. This is where the politics comes in. This is not to say that we are not pleased to find a Welsh author who wants to write about Barcelona. Its subject of an international city that is a major holiday destination for trendy young people, was one of the major reasons for *The Colour of a Dog Running Away's* success. We will also be launching in the Spring of 2006 a new series of translations and titles by foreign authors. These titles, however, will only ever be around 16% of our output, and we do have to test the market yet. Less than 4% of books published in the UK market are translations. Our bread and butter are our Welsh authors; they reflect Wales; that is reflected in our subject matter. As our foreign rights agent said recently, "Parthian's authors – Tristan Hughes with his lyrical north Wales landscapes and deep history; Jo Mazelis with her small seaside town cameos and her fairytale motifs; Rachel Trezise with her black humour and gritty realism... they have a wonderful style; what we are trying to sell is great quality literature, but yes, they are local stories. It may be that foreign publishers see them as too Welsh, too local." While ironically for some authors, using the Welsh language can free them from a concern with a Welsh setting and characters, on the whole a commitment to our own experience is what defines our output, for Welsh-language and English-language publishers alike. And readers of our best-selling title, *Work, Sex and Rugby* have confirmed that they like it because they are reading about themselves, and they can't find that experience in the mainstream.

We are not narrow: we are keen to promote the experiences of others, the settings; the cultural differences, the enrichment that other languages can offer us – even in translation. So we are interested in buying as well as selling within the international arena. Welsh-language publisher Y Lolfa recently explored plans for buying four thrillers based on the new East European cities. English-language publisher Seren was looking into a big series from Lithuania. Our two foreign Spring titles will be from the Catalan, and Nebraskan English. But Parthian happens to be at a buoyant stage, enabled to buy rights following good rights sales and by a benevolent funding body that will cover the production costs of foreign titles. We managed to get a translation grant from Institut Ramon Llull, and this relationship has encouraged us to buy a second Catalan title for 2007. It is no coincidence that the countries I am mentioning have minority literatures: Welsh-language publishers in particular would rather invest in cultures that have things in common with bilingual Wales. Y Lolfa, on the other hand, abandoned their plans for translating thrillers because they found the differences too great: Czech politics and culture was too far a jump; they found the style too literary, too dark for the tastes of their readers. They were worried about production costs. Seren's European grant fell through so the Lithuanian titles were put on hold. It may be that we still need a bit of spoon feeding: shortcuts to aid funding of translations from foreign institutions; help with production costs; advice on how to market translations in our home market. This is because of our size and impoverishment rather than a lack of interest or broad horizons.

We need help with orientation within a huge market: getting to know various publishers and their personal tastes and quirks takes time, money and a commitment on both sides. In order to promote that elusive potential bestseller, we need to have a feeling for what might be big in the coming season. To avoid Dubravka Ugresic's 'ritualised collective innocence', we need to learn the international hooks and author models – not necessarily bestselling ones – that will strike a chord with particular foreign publishers. Our satellite estate novel *Playing Mercy* may be sold as "something like Altman's *Short Cuts* film". Jo Mazelis' short stories seem to be popular in Denmark: we need to know why and play on this in other northern European countries. We need to know what publisher in what country likes Graham Swift's work and whether they might see the similarities that we do between him and Tristan Hughes' interest in place and history. We need hooks; we need contacts, we need to build up detailed knowledge. Hopefully sessions like the 2005 Inizjamed Malta Symposium will provide some shortcuts.

Guðrún Sigfúsdóttir: As a publisher working in a very small market

I am the editor in chief of the fiction department at the JPV publishing house in Reykjavík. It is Iceland's second largest publishing house with 11 full-time employees. My husband, Jóhann Páll Valdimarsson (JPV), is the head of the publishing house, our son the managing director, and his wife oversees the finances. My husband and I have worked together more or less since 1971, and we've managed to live in harmony by defining our specific areas of responsibility: each one of us works in his own chosen field, which helps us to stay on course – and to keep peace at the dinner table.

The Icelandic book market

We Icelanders, as many of you undoubtedly know, are a small nation with a population of about 290,000 people, so we therefore have a small book market. The Icelandic book market is also a bit unusual and a fluctuating one, in that the vast majority of our sales take place just a few weeks before Christmas. There is a well-established tradition in Iceland to give books as gifts at Christmas time, and for many Icelanders, reading a good book over the festivities is part and parcel of the sacred ritual – and it also gives people something to talk about at all those family gatherings. This tradition is rooted in the lean days of the Second World War, when supplies were difficult to come by, with very few ships coming into port, and limited imports, so that books became a popular gift.

Books have been important to Icelanders throughout the ages; the Icelandic Sagas are our pride and have helped to form our self-image as a nation. The Icelandic Sagas are quite special in many ways, both in terms of their narrative and characterisation. They were written in Icelandic, even though Latin was the common language used by the educated classes in Europe at that time. They moulded the Icelandic people and played a major role in the nation's struggle for independence at the beginning of the twentieth century, because they reflected the pride and audacity of individuals who weren't afraid to forge their own destinies.

But enough about the past...

What characterises the Icelandic book market?

It is no exaggeration to say that, despite the size of our country and the smallness of its book market, it really is quite miraculous that so many good and high-quality books come out in Icelandic every year, with more books per capita than any other country in the world. Of course this vast production has sometimes taken its toll on our publishers over the years, and there have been some bankruptcies in this sector from time to time, but new publishers seem to be sprouting all the time.

Between some 600 and 1000 books are published on the general market in Iceland every year, and this figure does not include publications from the institutions that publish many excellent books in their own areas of expertise, or private publications, the most common being poetry books.

Every year, dozens of quality literary works are published in translation, but the sales on most of them are fairly meagre and translation grants are pretty low, unless the book is being translated from a Nordic language, in which case it is eligible for a grant from the Nordic Ministry. The Translation Fund provides a grant of about 100-150 thousand Icelandic Krónur (up to 2000 Euros), which often only amounts to one third of the costs. So Icelandic publishers receive most of their grants from these two funds. Of course there are also other examples of financing such as the grant JPV received from the Ireland Literature Exchange for a children's book about Artemis Fowl by Eoin Colfer.

But although these Nordic grants are undeniably alluring, they are not the only determining factor, since the percentage of books published from Nordic languages isn't very high, when compared to other linguistic areas. But Nordic translations have been on the increase over the past few years and now amount to about 20% of the total of translations.

How does JPV choose its books?

Icelandic publishers keep a very close eye on what interesting books are being published in the world and keep abreast by browsing the Net, reading trade publications, going to international book fairs, and chatting to other publishers and operators in the publishing business. But in my opinion, the most important thing is to have what we call a nose for the fluctuating areas of interest of the nation, to be able to "feel the vibe" as it were, or whatever you want to call it, and sense what people want to read. This of course varies over the course of time. But perhaps it's easier to identify the public's interests in a small country than it is in the bigger ones.

JPV is a relatively small but ambitious publishing house, which has gained recognition in Iceland for the original way in which it promotes and advertises its Icelandic and foreign authors. Jóhann Páll Valdimarsson has been an innovator in book advertising – both by using direct advertising—through television, newspapers, magazines and special supplements—and indirect advertising, through interviews with authors in magazines, newspapers, television and radio. One of the keys to success is, of course, hard work, since nothing ever happens, unless people are prepared to throw their energy behind it, and have faith in their projects, and follow them throughout the entire process.

There is no particular genre of book we favour but we try to choose books on the basis of their artistic merit, even though we know they may be published at a loss. Our guiding principle though is that a book should manage to reconcile being good with being sellable. Like other things, ultimately it's the feeling for the material itself that's the decisive factor.

Even though works are translated from an incredibly wide range of languages, we've normally been able to find translators to translate from most of them. If we can't find a translator to work from the original language, which is rather rare, then the work is translated from a third language such as, for example, English. But we always endeavour to translate from the original language, even though this can sometimes cause problems if the people working on it are not experienced translators, even though they may be fluent in the language concerned. This can result in a lot of extra work for the editor.

Translation is a kind of bridge between countries, because by translating foreign literature we gain a glimpse into the cultures and customs of other nations –small nations must be able to compare themselves to others, in order to meet its challenges and evolve.

Selling Icelandic books abroad

Regarding the promotion and publication of Icelandic books abroad, the situation has changed dramatically since foreign publishers really became interested in Icelandic books about two decades ago. Though not forgetting Halldor Laxness, The Nobel Prize winner who sold well in Germany and the US, especially his novel *Independent People*. The reason for this is probably first and foremost the international success of Peter Höeg with his book *Smilla's Sense of Snow* and Jostein Gaarder *Sophie's World: A Novel about the History of Philosophy*. These books created an interest in Nordic literature and Icelanders made the most of it – the interest these books generated meant that foreign publishers became very attentive when we presented our authors at book fairs. It probably did no harm either that Björk had become an international star and it was suddenly hip and cool to visit Iceland, and the first woman president in the world was Vigdís Finnbogadóttir. In addition one can add that in a time of violence and terror we have thankfully been free of the conflicts that many western nations have to contend with.

The success of Nordic authors has influenced the success of Icelandic authors. You could say there's been a definite breakthrough in that regard.

Who translates from Icelandic?

Although very few people speak or understand Icelandic, apart from the Icelanders themselves, Icelandic is taught in some of the most eminent universities in the world – mainly as a means of enabling scholars to get closer to the Icelandic Sagas. Many readers have gone on to reading modern Icelandic literature after reading the old sagas.

Icelandic books have rarely been bestsellers on the international market and this fact has been a source of disappointment to foreign publishers. Publishing prospects for Icelandic books abroad therefore seem to have somewhat dwindled again. Of course there is a certain type of book that always sells well. The crime novelist Arnaldur Indriðason has been successful, for example in Germany, has sold there in 150.000 copies, and has just received the Golden Dagger award in the UK for *Silence of the Grave*.

The Icelandic Literature Fund gives financial support for the publication of Icelandic books abroad, but their grants aren't very high so that sometimes publishers may tend to choose books from countries that give higher grants. This is a thin line that every publisher has to tread for himself, by deciding which factors prevail and they may differ from year to year.

Session 3: Policies, practices and structures that encourage and enable circulation of literary works and mobility of writers

Ewa Wojciechowska: Policies, practices and structures that encourage and enable circulation of literary works and mobility of writers

The Book Institute and its aims

The Book Institute is a national institution established by the Polish Ministry of Culture. It has been up and running in Kraków since January 2004. The Institute's basic aims are to influence the reading public and to popularise books and reading within Poland, as well as to promote Polish literature worldwide.

Practices:

Introducing Polish literature abroad

Twice a year we publish a catalogue called "New books from Poland" in English and German. The books that appear in the catalogue are chosen by literary critics cooperating with the Book Institute.

Information in "New books from Poland":

- the author's biography (translations to foreign languages)
- an essay about the author
- an extract of the book
- information about the publisher and translation rights

The catalogues are distributed to the publishers and public at book fairs, especially in Frankfurt.

At special occasions (Poland – guest of honor, Polish year in a chosen country) we publish additional catalogues in an adequate language, which is a wider presentation of Polish literature, not only a selection of new books that appeared on the Polish book market. This catalogue is constructed in the same way as "New books from Poland" (information about the author, extract, information about publishers and translation rights). In addition to that it contains sectional texts presenting certain genre, for ex. Polish poetry, literary reportage, science-fiction, crime story, literature for children. This catalogue is usually called "Literary guidebook in Polish literature for beginners and advanced". Both catalogues are richly illustrated with portraits of authors and covers.

At every stand on international book fairs we present a wide range of Polish books that illustrate the selection presented in the catalogue, as well as books exhibitions on certain topics. The exhibitions are often accompanied by literary programs.

(2004-2005 the Book Institute participated in 30 book fairs, Polish publishers were part of our stand 215 times, we organized 51 meetings with Polish writers)

Example: for the book fair in Leipzig 2006 we have planned to present Polish science-fiction, fantasy and comic books. We have invited 5 writers who will have meetings moderated by appropriate German authors and journalists. At our stand we will present book exhibitions and a special exhibition of Polish comic books – on boards.

Organizing meetings with Polish writers abroad

The Book Institute cooperates with foreign publishers that publish books by Polish writers and co organizes for them meetings with readers. We also organize appearances by Polish writers at literary festivals and other literary events. Usually, when a foreign institution wanting to invite a Polish author asks for financial support, we cover the costs of the writers' journey as well as a fee.

Increasing the number of translations from Polish into foreign languages

We do it with help of the ©Poland Translation Program:

The purpose of the Program is to support the translation and publication of Polish literature in other languages. Preference is given to fiction, poetry, drama, essays, non-fiction, and works in the humanities, broadly conceived.

The Fund may subsidize:

1. Up to 100 % of the costs of translation from Polish to other languages
2. Up to 100 % of the cost of the acquisition of rights

Applications may be submitted by publishers commissioning the translation of Polish books that they wish to publish.

The publisher is required to submit:

- A completed Fund application form
- A copy of the rights agreement (or a copy of a letter of intention)
- A copy of the contract with the translator (or a copy of a letter of intention)
- A description of the publisher, and a copy of its list of current and forthcoming titles
- A bibliography of the translator's work
- A short explanation of the reasons for the choice of the work in question
- A detailed breakdown of publication costs and distribution plans

Application forms and supporting material should be submitted to the Book Institute, which decides on the formal criteria for acceptance.

From 2004 we subsidized about 200 books with the amount of almost 2 millions PLN (about 500 000 euros).

Organizing study visits for translators

In May 2005 we organized the I World Congress for Translators of Polish literature and invited 170 translators from the whole world (Europe, USA, China, India). The translators stayed in Krakow for 4 days and took part in workshops on Polish literature led by critics and publishers.

In March 2006 the Book institute starts a project "Translator Collegium" – translators can apply for a residence („Senior Scholar" – monthly residences three-month residences for professionally active translators, who have at least one published translation) in Villa Decius in Krakow.

For May 2006 we have also planned a study visit for foreign publishers.

Making information on Polish books and the Polish publishing market accessible to foreign consumers

The website contains www.bookinstitute.pl (in Polish, English and German) contains:

- 100 biographies on Polish authors
- over 500 notes on Polish literature based on the Polish Scientific Publishers Encyclopedia
- 31 short notes on authors writing books for children and youth
- about 500 notes on books published in Poland from 1998 to 2005
- over 150 extracts from books
- about 800 notes on books for children and youth
- essays on contemporary Polish literature
- over 200 records with addresses to Polish publishers

In addition to that on the website we publish news information about literary process, festivals and meetings.

The website is actualized every day.

Institutions that cooperate with the Book Institute:

Foreign partners of the Book Institute

Frankfurt Book Fair

Bureau international de l'Édition Française

National Book Centre of Greece

Svet Knihy (Czech Republic)

Arts Council England, Literature Department

Committee for the Promotion of Basque Literature

Books from Lithuania

Centre for Slovenian Literature

Croatian Literature Centre

Danish Literature Centre

Estonian Literature Centre

Flemish Literature Fund

Fund for the Promotion of Icelandic Literature

Hungarian Book Foundation, Translation Fund

Inizjamed Poesia, Malta

Institute of Portuguese Books and Libraries

Ireland Literature Exchange

Norwegian Literature Abroad

Ramon Llull Institute
Slovak Literature Centre
Scottish Poetry Library
Welsh Literature Abroad
Literature Across Frontiers
Edinburgh UNESCO City of Literature (Scottish Art Council)

Centres for translators:

Collège européen des traducteurs littéraires (Seneffe, Belgia)
Europäisches Übersetzer-Kollegium (Germany)
Collège International des Traducteurs littéraires (France)
Magyar Fordítóház Alapítvány (Hungary)
Tyrone Guthrie Centre (Ireland)
Vertalershuis/Translators' House (The Netherlands)
Literárne informacné centrum (Slovakia)
Casa del Traductor (Spain)
Baltic Centre for Writers and Translators (Sweden)
The British Centre for Literary Translation (Great Britain)
Käsmu Writers' and Translators' house (Estonia)
EKEMEL (Greece)
Institució de les Lletres Catalanes (Katalonia)
Linguaggi di-versi (Slovenia)
Latvian Literature Centre (Latvia)
Übersetzerhaus Looren (Switzerland)

Ruben Palma: Borders within Borders

I have been asked to talk about two subjects today. First: Immigrant literature and official Danish multicultural policies. And second: Immigrant writers and the Danish literary scene.

Both subjects make a rather complex field where statistics are arduous to find. My presentation will show some facts, but most of them will be based on experience and observations through years, which means I may not be completely right, but, I hope, neither completely wrong. This is also a field with a lot of particular cases... so it is clear that only general aspects can be sketched here.

Large scale immigration is only about four decades old in Denmark. Since the very beginning there have been a considerable number of immigrant artists from the so called Third World. People move across national frontiers and so does their art. Among dancers, musicians, performers, painters, filmmakers and so on, I believe those having a harder task, if not the hardest, are the writers. Literature uses language as expression, and languages are deeply rooted in history, geography and the culture of the area. Language is a much more rigid and conservative art platform than, for example, music and dance. The literary work of an immigrant writer will have many and difficult borders to cross before ending on a book store or a public library.

Most Foreign Language writers, as they are called in Denmark, have written in their own languages and have later been translated into Danish. They are at any time at least 30 persons, writing and participating at different levels in literary activities. Very few have tried the hard way, writing in Danish, a language they have learned as adults or almost adults. Of both these categories, only a handful has succeeded in getting published. The majority has financed their books in one way or another, often in home made editions. It is important to remember that it is very difficult for a Dane, who has just begun writing, to reach a publisher. An immigrant writer will need to do a lot more work, will need to be a lot luckier.

Looking at the state cultural institutions in Denmark, I would say these are hard times. I do not want to bore you with political and bureaucratic constructions resulting in official policies. It is enough to say that until some years ago there was a will and a praxis to promote and understand the art produced by immigrants. Part of it lay in the conviction that integrating the art of the immigrants was a way of integrating them into Danish society. Some 3 years ago, there was a change of attitude and policies: Art should by no means resemble a tool to integrate foreign cultures. Something like art is art and should remain pure art. This change was, of course, very closely related to a huge, public debate about immigration. I am confident when I say, that at the present time there is no multicultural arts policy in Denmark. Foreign artists, writers included, can only get support if they meet the quality standards set up by Danish artists or art experts. Any support based on multiculturalism is conceived as favouritism.

However, even though there is no official multicultural policy, the Danish state still leads when it comes to assessing cultural funding per inhabitant, and there are institutions and funds which have supported and still support immigrant writers, namely working grants.

Right now there is a fund providing 200.000 Kr a year - a little less than 30.000 Euros, for foreign writers living in Denmark, who still write in their own language. This last year there were 8 applicants, who all got working grants.

Another fund provides support to improve manuscripts. Here an established writer helps a less experienced one. Only one immigrant writer has applied for this in the last 2 years.

There is also a fund for the exchange of persons and literatures, which provides support to travel and promote books abroad. It is mainly used by Danish writers, but it also opens interesting possibilities for foreign authors who live in Denmark and have managed to publish in other countries and languages.

And finally there is a large, millionaire fund where established and upcoming Danish writers can seek working grants. The main criterion used here is quality. A foreign writer will have to meet the standards, though I would rather say the prescriptions, of Danish writers and literature experts.

Getting grants helps writing, but not publication. The point is that without an official multicultural policy the criterion of the people in charge of state institutions is a mere reflection of the point of view of the literary establishment. In other words, publishers and their literary advisors, those who take the actual decisions as to whether a manuscript should become a book, meet the immigrant writers with a pre-conceived, institutional literary and linguistic formula or framework, with regard to Danish literary quality standards, now overburdened by necessary economical calculations.

My very unofficial part-explanation is that the Danish language is conceived of as something so uniquely Danish, that quality literature in Danish is considered only attainable by writers who are brought with the language. After visiting the USA as a writer, for almost 3 months last year, I have come to the conviction that the closer the relation between language and national identity, as can be the case in small countries with minority languages, the strongest the resistance to accept newcomers as writers.

Without an official multicultural policy Denmark is only for the very persistent immigrant writers – or artists in general. Most give up or turn their gaze to the countries and cultures of their origin. Of course far from all immigrant writers are skilled ones. But I have met some good ones, who have never made it to the publishers, even when they really deserved it. I am sure; Isabel Allende and García Marquez and many others would have had a hard time trying to publish their works if they had been immigrants in Denmark. They would probably not have met the Danish quality standards and concepts. I see, in this Danish attitude, a certain degree of ethnocentrism and arrogance.

This must not be misunderstood. Not all is cold and dark in Denmark. Once in a while established writers and literature related institutions have tried to help the immigrant writers, mostly advising them about the tough rules of the literary world they themselves are a part of.

But... arrogance and ethnocentrism is also to be found among the immigrant artists. I have met those who seriously assume that their achievements in their own country should be enough to bring them fame and glory in Denmark, those who think their own imported aesthetics are precious art per se, and look with disdain at Danish literature and culture, not caring to know the background and the mind of the people they intend to write for.

Foreign writers are not considered to be a part of the Danish literary scene. They are seen as a kind of underdeveloped literary area inside Denmark, which is expected to deliver some kind of sympathetic, exotic ethnicity. Some publishers operate with quotas. So a foreign writer may get very good reviews, but as opposed to most Danish getting very good reviews, he will most probably not be published again. In fact a published, immigrant writer from another country, let's say France, Holland or Sweden will be in a much better position to be translated and then published in Denmark - than one living in Denmark.

I have to say, that I am ambivalent about the Danish lack of multicultural policies. My ego is really satisfied, when I say that I have not been published because of some state program. On the other hand, as I mentioned before, I know of some good immigrant writers who have run into a Berlin Wall of art and culture prejudices. I also have to add, that I am not at all certain about the right or wrong of the actual Danish art policies. History has shown many examples of apparently wrong policies producing good results in the long run... and, I guess, we all know examples of the opposite.

The situation I have described in Denmark shows some particularities, but I am quite certain that it is just a part of a much larger phenomenon in the world of modern literature; a phenomenon that is going on in every country having immigrants in significant numbers.

And suddenly I have the hunch... that maybe among those poor immigrants from Asia and Africa whom I've seen in the streets of Valletta; there may be some few writers who want to make their works known in Malta. Some of these writers may write in ways different from that most Maltese readers are accustomed to. And there may even be some foolish ones, like me in Denmark, thinking the language of Malta is fascinating and who are ready to devote years of their life learning to write in Maltese. I do not know it is just a hunch, but... if there are some immigrant writers out there; maybe their Maltese colleagues could give them a helping hand. I am sure it would be appreciated.

Session 4: Networking, exchange and cooperation - exemplary projects and practices

Karsten Xuereb Inizjamed (Malta) – Its 'Being' is Networking

Inizjamed is a network which networks with others, and which finds that this way of organizing itself is essential to achieving its aims and succeeding to grow.

In this approach it is very similar to other European small associations of a cultural, educational or developmental kind. Many of the reasons that lead to this way of being are also shared by such organizations. Firstly, the organization is very people-oriented. The organization lacks 'full-time' or 'core' human and financial resources, and a way around that is focusing on debate and doing. Moreover, these people are creative, not only in how they create their art but also in establishing contact with Inizjamed and other groups – through the internet, newspapers, journals, events, seminars and conferences, to mention a few.

What it lacks in its own resources it finds through networking and therefore collaborating with other organizations, such as St James Cavalier, the British Council, the LAF and numerous Maltese and international NGOs and development organizations. One long-term positive outcome of such collaborations is the mutual capacity-building exercise that allows long-term creative and organizational growth to occur.

Therefore, the organization does not depend heavily on 'physicality' and 'location'. Rather, its existence is more dependent on its online presence, and the people who keep researching, debating and organizing events and running programmes within its flexible structure.

Finally, although the organization is small, its vision is wide, and to run successfully it has to find ways of beating the isolation, and complacency, the local boundaries can create. Such boundaries include the geographical characteristics of Malta that are often compounded by a parochial approach to innovation and open debate. Therefore, strong, personal and long-term relationships with organizations like the Biennial for Young Artists from Europe and the Mediterranean and the LAF itself are very sustaining for survival and growth.

The concerns Krzysztof Czyzewski raises in his paper about the tension that rises from the struggle to maintain one's own identity while developing a common public sphere are therefore very real, and in the case of Inizjamed, have to be addressed through a dynamic approach that accepts change and adaptability as ways of being. There is no fixed working structure that Inizjamed aspires to achieve. Rather, its main concern is being relevant to its times and its context. This is not an easy job as the organisation enjoys being active on various fronts and thrives off its members and collaborators' diverse interests and fields of specialisation – literature, literacy, creative writing, translation, theatre productions, video and civil engagement to mention but a few.

A key example of a project that characterizes Inizjamed's affinity to networking is *Klandestini*, creative writing project in collaboration with writers in Cyprus, Greece and Italy and supported by the British Council (<http://klandestini.britishcouncil.org>).

Krzysztof Czyzewski: New Agora A cross-cultural action in publishing

As Europeans today we proud ourselves on cultural diversity, fight for preservation of separate identities. Yet haven't we, in all that struggle, imperceptibly, lost agora and the culture of dialogue that accompanies it? And if we have – how can we see it restored? Do we need a new agora today? Is it not in contradiction with the ever so powerful pressure on diversity and separateness? What are the sources of today's crisis of multiculturalism and what are the ways out?

These are but a few of crucial questions and issues the cross-cultural action "New Agora" launched by Borderland Foundation will be dedicated to. Its program is complex and multidisciplinary, associated with mobile workshops of bridge-builders for young generation, flying literary "Cafè Europa" gatherings involving writers, translators and publishers, and international symposiums "New Agora" with the participation of an assembly of fresh-minded representatives of humanistic reflection of our time. All of it will be organized in different parts of Europe. A special publishing program based on an European network is going to be developed in accordance to fulfil and assist this cross-cultural action. Its ambition is to create a common internet site, magazine and series of books.

Jan Litvak: Quality literature and intensive cultural exchange from Slovakia

In June this summer, in the Moravian capital, Brno, the sixth year of the largest literature festival, **Month of Readings**, took place. The guest of this event was Slovak literature. Each night in Brno, one Slovak author gave a reading, and, day by day, nearly 30 writers presented their work. Slovak literature has rarely such a great possibility to be heard beyond the borders of its motherland.

Presentations of the local - Czech writers were transmitted through the internet and the performances of Slovak writers were possible to hear and download from the festival web site, the following day. The whole festival was set up by just three people from the association **Windmills (Větrné mlýny)**. Besides the festival catalogue, the organisers publish a number of original and translated books every year, and recently, they have started publishing their own magazine.

While the Czech media were attentively monitoring the course of the festival and informing the public about each literary evening, the Slovak media didn't show any deeper interest in this cultural event, if they had noticed it at all. This is a simple example of how Slovakia and the Slovak media sees and treats its literature and authors. Literature is on the margins of the Slovak public's interests.

At the end of September, a meeting of publishers and authors from various European countries, participating in the project **Magazine in a Magazine**, was held. The goal of the project Magazine in a Magazine is to bring the contents of one of the national magazines representing smaller literature into another. It is supposed to bring some kind of counterweight to the much more frequent presentations of the English, possibly German and French best oeuvres. On the contrary, Magazine in a Magazine is more attracted by the national literatures and by the current events taking place on the pages of the literature magazines, leaving up to their own editors the choice of the material to be printed out, while the translation is being provided by the Magazine in a Magazine. The project was started by the Slovenian literary journal and publisher **Apokalipsa** as a Slovak-Slovenian initiative, but today it includes ten magazines from nine national literatures.

Apokalipsa - Slovenia

Romboid - Slovakia

Jelenkor - Hungary

Host - Czech Republic

Studium - Poland

Quorum - Croatia

Ars - Monte Negro

Literatur und Kritik - Austria

Naše Pismo - Macedonia

Blesok - Macedonia (internet magazine, bilingual, published in English as well)

All the magazines mentioned above, apart from the Slovak magazine *Romboid*, there are also book publishers and they exchange material and present each other's best production in translation. For example, the Slovak magazine *Romboid* has gradually devoted space to selected articles from the magazines *Host* from Czech Republic, *Apokalipsa* from Slovenia, *Jelenkor* from Hungary, and recently, a special issue of *Romboid* in which the magazine *Studium* from Poland appears as a guest has come out. Potential new partners, who would be interested in such cooperation, are welcome if they have their own publishing houses.

It has to be mentioned, that *Romboid* has gone through tectonic changes during its existence. During the communist regime it used to focus more on the literature theory and reviews, later it formed a kind of a creative lee for the peaceful elite. Editors of *Romboid* gave birth to the youth magazine *Touch*, its former appendix, which has been in press until today.

Another Slovak magazine, specializing in modern European culture and mainly in literature, is **Fragment**. It is officially in print since 1900 (until November 1989 it was being issued as a samizdat magazine). Since the beginning, *Fragment* has always been devoted to the central European literatures. At the same time, it gives a lot of space to the Balkan literature as well. Its quality ranks it among the best leading magazines. *Fragment* doesn't succumb to the superficial fashion waves, to the contrary, the taste of this magazine and the taste of its editor Oleg Pastier is foreseeing and often literally prophetic. It has presented hundreds of Slovak and foreign writers on its pages. The main aim of the magazine is to

publish contemporary Slovak and European writing. In recent years it published translations of contemporary writing from Poland (Jaroslaw Klejnocki, Marcin Wiecek, Jacek Gutorow, Krzysztof Siwczyk, Andrzej Stasiuk), Hungary (László Darvasi, László Garaczi, Péter Nádas, Gábor Németh, Lajos Grendel), Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Switzerland, Netherlands, Austria, Czech Republic, Portugal and Wales. Apart from literature, *Fragment* concentrates on graphic art. Moreover, it continually brings its readers the current output of its main authors, as well as giving space to the young and budding Slovak writers. Finally, the magazine also publishes books.

The best demonstration of the high quality of the magazine *Fragment* is certainly the fact that similarly oriented European literature magazines regularly translate Slovak authors publishing on the pages of *Fragment*.

The editors of *Fragment* and *Romboid* work closely together. Although both often struggle to survive, they still manage to bring us the Slovak and European writing of today.

I would also like to mention two Slovak literary groups which have had a productive relationship with the editors of *Romboid* and *Fragment*. One is the so-called **Lonely Runners** - Ivan Laučík, Peter Repka and the current managing editor of *Romboid*, Ivan Štrpka. Today, the output of the Lonely Runners Group is considered to be the core of contemporary Slovak literature and is among the best Slovakia has to offer to an international readership.

Another literature group is the **Barbarian Generation** consisting of three poets and one poet-painter. The group raises questions about conveying direct experiences and perceptions or altered states of consciousness in writing, and they have never published their own magazine. Instead, their work has appeared in many Slovak and foreign magazines as cuckoo's eggs and they call the method of hidden influence on already existing magazines is called *paper therapy*. They closely collaborate with the editors of both *Fragment* and *Romboid*.

If quality literature and intensive cultural exchange are important to you, you are most welcome to work with us.

Session 5: Vehicles for publishing and presenting literature in translation

Snjezana Husic: No translation is better than a bad translation Festival of European Short Story and Translation Workshops in Zagreb

To talk about Croatian Festival of European Short Story (FESS) should be an easy task for someone who has been member of its Editorial Board since its very start, and therefore is well acquainted with all of its activities. But it is not an easy task, for there are so many activities within the Festival: so many of them, that I like to believe that it is much more than just another literary festival.

Festival of European Short Story is not just about bringing foreign short story writers to Croatia, having them read their works for Croatian audience, making them see some beautiful landscapes and sending them back home. It is an attempt to make a difference and to have something left behind after the Festival is over.

Besides, FESS is not only about writing; it might be said that, to the same extent, it is about translating.

Festival of European Short Story started in 2001 not as a festival, but as a series of short story anthologies. A small Zagreb-based publisher, Naklada MD, and its editors Roman Simic and Miroslav Micanovic, gathered a group of people, most of them young lecturers at the University of Zagreb, with the idea to present some of European national literatures by publishing anthologies of contemporary short stories.

All of us who were and still are involved in that project felt the same urge to give a new pace and a new impulse to the contemporary Croatian literature by linking it to some new literary tendencies from abroad and by allowing it to breathe in some fresh air coming from different European national literatures. We feared that in the previous ten years we had lost the pace, for several reasons: breakdown of book-distribution chains, crisis of literary magazines, financial difficulties of a great number of Croatian publishers, and general economic and social crisis in which the country had found itself. At the same time, we sensed that Croatian literature was heading in the right direction, and that there were interesting things going on, great books by Croatian writers being published. But how could we be sure about it, if the occasions for literary exchange with different countries had become so few? We needed something that we could compare with, in order to avoid easy self-complacency.

It had used to be literary magazines' task to present for the first time new authors and new tendencies from abroad, and to encourage in that way Croatian publishers to translate books by foreign contemporary writers; but in the 90's, most of the Croatian literary magazines, even if they had managed somehow to survive, were not published regularly and, often, because of the financial crisis, could not afford to pay translators' work. Therefore, the fear that there was not enough news coming from the other side of the border spread in a part of Croatian literary community. Our anthologies of European short story were an attempt to overcome that situation.

While preparing those anthologies of contemporary short stories – German, Hungarian, Polish, Serbian, Irish, Italian, Norwegian, etc. – we became aware that the Croatian literary scene often lacked good translators; for it might not be a problem to have a work translated, even from a very "small" language – but sometimes it is a huge problem to have it translated well enough, even when the original is written in a "big" language. Along with the book-distribution breakdown and other difficulties that the Croatian publishing business was facing in the 90's, a new problem appeared that of bad and ugly translations. It was not a general problem – some publishers had never given up quality translations, no matter the costs – but it was a widespread phenomenon.

We continued working on two fronts. While the first anthologies of European short stories were being published by Naklada MD, its editors Roman Simic and Miroslav Micanovic established in 2002 the Festival of European Short Story. Since then, it is held every year in May, in Zagreb and in some other Croatian town; so far, FESS visited Osijek, Beli Manastir, Hvar and Zadar, and Ljubljana, Slovenia.

The idea at the core of the Festival was initially to present to Croatian audience some of the writers whose short stories had been published in our anthologies, and to enhance readers' interest in the anthologies. We hoped as well that FESS would become a vehicle for presentation of Croatian

contemporary literature abroad; therefore, together with a dozen of foreign writers, several Croatian writers are invited every year, and we have been seeing first results in that sense too.

Concept of the Festival is a simple one: foreign writers read from their originals, while the Croatian translation is being projected on a screen; Croatian writers read from their originals too, while the English translation is being scrolled on the wall beside them. That kind of presentation proved to work both for the audience and the writers. Moreover, it proved to be useful to the publishers as well; having a sample of work by a certain author translated in an anthology, and then having a chance to hear feedback from the audience on the spot, together with the opportunity to meet the writer himself of herself – for many Croatian publishers that became a vehicle to discover new literary stars. In fact, several foreign writers got their works published for the first time in Croatian translation after they had been guests of FESS. Our Festival is not an extension of publishing industry; we would like to turn the publishing industry into an extension of the Festival, and we have had some success so far.

Nevertheless, none of this would be possible if the translations were bad and ugly. Festival of European Short Story could not survive not only without translators, but without dedicated and skilful translators. At this Symposium, few speakers have already stressed the importance of quality translations, and I cannot but to agree fully.

But instead of supporting active, professional translators who had already proved to have necessary skills, the team gathered around FESS decided to make an investment in the future of translation. Therefore, we established a series of Translation Workshops: Polish, Italian, French, Spanish and Irish (in English), and we are planning to introduce new languages.

In cooperation with University of Zagreb and Croatian Literary Translators' Association, every year in April, before the beginning of the Festival, there are translation contests for students. Students who apply have to translate into Croatian a short story by a writer, guest of the Festival. University lecturers and experienced translators review and correct those translations, and they work afterwards with the students, who then rearrange their translations. At the end, a winner is chosen, and he or she receives a grant from a cultural institute, embassy, or literary organization. We have a very successful cooperation with Italian Cultural Institute, French Cultural Institute, Spanish Embassy, Polish Embassy, Mikolaj Kopernik Polish Cultural Association, Culture Ireland and Ireland Literature Exchange, and others.

The aim of Translation Workshops within the Festival is not just to form quality translators, but first of all to motivate young people and make translator's profession to seem appealing – and the latter is probably the hardest part of the job. Our objective is also to raise awareness of the need for good translations. Because often no translation is better than a bad translation.

That is why we do not focus exclusively on so called "small" languages. For a couple of years we went on repeating that we desperately needed a Translation Workshop for the English language, precisely because everybody believes that they are familiar enough with the English language in order to translate it. The worst, the most scandalous translations published in Croatia in the past fifteen years were translations from English. In fact, English has to face a serious threat: everybody speaks English, and everybody will ruin English – just like myself, giving right now my own generous contribution to the destruction of the English language.

To take care of education of future translators means to take care of our mother tongue, especially in a country like Croatia, where approximately 70% of all of the published books are translations. To take care of "small" languages does not mean then just to translate from and among "small" languages, but first of all it means to take care of our own language, whether big or small, and we can do that also by insisting on quality translations. It is not enough to translate: if we don't translate well, than it is better to give the whole thing up.

Forming a number of young translators offers some guarantee that a small language like Croatian has a future. That is why the Festival of European Short Story is not only about writing and reading, but it is as much about translating; and that is why it is not only about exporting Croatian literature abroad, but it is as much about importing foreign literatures into Croatia.

Kornelijus Platelis: Vehicles for publishing and presenting literature in translation

The main vehicle for publishing all kinds of literature is business, a profit making. Even non-profit publisher has to buy materials, services and pay salaries. Books have to be sold. Although, we have to admit that the literature we are talking about usually is not profitable for all participants involved in the process: author, publisher, and seller. If it was we would not talk, we would just write and publish. All ways of presenting and promoting literature or the reading itself in media, literary events, at schools are important and welcome. Although, I do not believe that you can normally sell a book by unknown author from a half-known country and – very often in small markets – by a known author from your own country even if you have good press coverage. Therefore, an external funding exists. I believe that in our times it is necessary to support the serene entertainment of literary activities – writing and reading – in such noisy and colorful environment of general entertainment industry. Not to speak about literature in languages with small amount of users. When the supported book is published the question of its delivery and readers remains. Books have to be read.

There are two ways of such funding: public and private funds that support publishing in a country and funds that promote literature abroad. I am not a big expert in European matters and I would be interested to hear how things are in other countries. Every year about 1 million euros officially goes to book publishing in Lithuania from public funds only. Another million, I think, goes from private sources and indirectly from public funds as well. About 1.5 million from public funds goes to support culture press. I am not talking here about textbooks for schools and universities. The support is supposed to lower a price of a book. Money is divided by boards of experts. Priorities are national literature and culture and elite literature from other countries. So it is not difficult to publish a collection of poems, a piece of prose or even translated book in the country with 3.5 million inhabitants. All the support is used by publishers and very often covers all direct publishing expenses at the expense of an author or translator. Nobody publishes poetry books without a support anymore. The situation is not healthy in this respect but nobody can change it for the better except writers themselves.

Funds that promote literature abroad are in many countries of Europe and in the Union (Culture 2000 and 2007). Majority of such funds supports only translation. It is not enough for a publisher especially in case of poetry. Very often a publisher can brake even, including his own expenses, only using a double bookkeeping: taking part of translator's fee for publishing. I do not know if it is common in all Europe but it happens in Lithuania. I think the vehicle would be more effective if the funds could change their strategy or make it more flexible and start to support publishing itself with some small amount of money. The whole process would become more transparent this way. If we are going to produce a resolution I propose to mention this problem in it.

Such funds are often connected with organizations that run residences for writers and translators. You can find such residences all over Europe. They are very important vehicle not only for writing and translating but also for new connections and ideas.

The role of funds that promote literature abroad is important. Lithuanian organization *Books from Lithuania* is only 7 years old and can not boast of a big budget but it has already supported about 270 books in different countries and completed successfully two very big and important projects of presenting our literature in Frankfurt (2002) and Gothenburg (2005) book fairs where Lithuania played the role of the main guest. This organization is not only paying translators but most often initializing books in translation, anthologies, culture events, organizing seminars for translators. They have the residence for translators of Lithuanian literature in Vilnius.

The next vehicle of presenting literature is literary events and festivals. Readings given by authors are still popular. Literary festivals can attract bigger audience and they remain an important vehicle in promoting literature. Some of them have become a real industry. Directors of all international literary festivals of the world were invited to Vilenica festival in Slovenia in 2001 with the aim to create a global network. Nobody knows how many festivals there are but I think half of them were present. A network was not created because of very different interests but I still use the directory compiled by organizers. I am director of one of international poetry festivals – Druskininkai Poetic Fall. We had the XVIth event this year. For me a kind of network could be useful in sense of expertise and possibility to run common projects. An expertise is important. All festivals try to invite good and famous authors or those who are becoming famous. Some of festivals are even competing about them. But usually everybody is ready to share information about poets from there own country. Their judgments about literature often are more

direct and strict than information from "literatures abroad" that have to play some "democracy". The festival's aim is to present Lithuanian poets to readers in other countries and to present good poets from abroad in Lithuania. Therefore, we publish Lithuanians with translations into English and original texts by foreign poets with translations into Lithuanian in our annual anthology. We are inviting not only poets but organizers of other festivals as well.

We have enough vehicles to present and promote literature, as you see, and they complement each other. The question is: how to use them properly? I think separate projects that would accumulate as many as possible vehicles could be more successful. For example: work in residence (translation), publishing of the work and presenting it in a festival. Quality of the work is very important. We have to choose right people to take part in our project. We, organizers, are directly responsible for the quality. Very often we use public or sponsors' money and we have to produce something valuable. Our product must be competitive in an aesthetic scale even if the audience does not show big interest in it. And we have to prevent ourselves from making politics with minority languages or whatever if the politics are at expense of artistic value.

It is easy to notice that various literary centres like publishing houses, festivals, residences, etc. work better when they are moved by ideas, not by money. Money is necessary but ideas first. Only keen interest of organizers in what they are doing can evoke interest of audience. You have to love what you are doing. Love solves all our problems. Sounds like the Bible School. Sorry.

Laura Hird: Promoting Scottish literature in Europe

I'm delighted and honoured to have been invited to take part in the Re-Visions symposium and to have an opportunity to exchange ideas with some of Europe's finest writers, editors and publishers. My sincere thanks go to everyone at Inizjamed and Literature Across Frontiers for organising the symposium, and in particular to Maria Grech Ganado, Adrian Grima, Clare Azzopardi and Alexandra Buchler for all their hard work, conviction and encouragement.

I'm an Edinburgh-based writer who runs a website on which I showcase international new writing and reviews. Through the site I encourage and establish links between writers, publishers and literary magazine and website editors in Scotland and their counterparts around the world. I thrive on discovering and encouraging writing from every genre, age group, opinion and location and am keen to include more writing from the newer member states of the European Union.

A couple of years ago I was contacted by the inspirational Maria Grech Ganado, who sent me samples of her own poetry which I loved and immediately snapped up for the site. Through Maria, and her tireless translation and encouragement of many of the best contemporary writers in Malta, I have gone on to publish stories and poetry by some brilliant Maltese writers, including Immanuel Mifsud, Clare Azzopardi, Adrian Grima, Norbert Bugeja and Stanley Borg. This has subsequently developed into an extremely popular section on the site. I look forward to discovering and including more Maltese writers in the future and also developing similar links with writers in other European countries. For this I am reliant on dynamic and passionate translators such as Maria, and magazines/websites which also publish work in translation.

Many writers first featured on the site have gone on to have work commissioned in international literary magazines, anthologies and in several recent cases, had their books accepted for publication. Since its inception just over three years ago, the site has received over 1 million hits and I am regularly contacted by writers, publishers and editors internationally wishing to bring their work to a wider audience through involvement with the site.

I set up the website in the first place through my frustration at the growing reluctance of publishers to publish short stories, poetry and anthologies or to consider the work of previously unpublished writers. Through running workshops and writing events throughout Europe over the years I've discovered many wonderful writers who due to subject matter, age, location, or lack of imagination on the part of publishers and editors, remained unpublished. The site gives me an opportunity to showcase and promote their work in a free, open forum which, I'm happy to say, has gradually gained international recognition. As a result, I now regularly have writers poached by many of the more mainstream magazines and publishers who rejected their work in the first place.

Increasingly I see even the most apparently cutting-edge of publishing houses taken over by sales executives, who now seem to wield all the power and frequently over-rule even the most passionate of editor's decisions through their soulless need for profit. If a book does not have a short, punchy pitch, or an already captive market, there is a growing squeamishness about taking any sort of financial risk with it.

In this climate, the mainstream thrives whilst any form of innovation is thwarted. This is a disaster for any writer trying to push new boundaries, or seek publication of their work in translation if they happen to be from a country that has not yet had the chance to produce an international bestseller. Most new acquisitions for work in translation seem to be brokered by the established publishers at the Frankfurt Book Fair, which leaves a shameful wealth of talent internationally, left effectively on the outside.

On a more positive note, since the set-up of its devolved parliament, Scotland has a growing renewal of confidence in itself as part of the wider Europe, our economy is growing and the Executive is actively on the look-out for ways to embrace both people and arts from other countries.

As many of you will know, Edinburgh, has recently been designated the first UNESCO City of Literature. As the founding member of the new Creative Cities Network it is in a perfect position to play a pioneering role, and help to harness the creative potential of cities around the world in the fields of literature and the arts in general. Edinburgh and future partner cities of literature have a unique opportunity to encourage literary exchange, join in cross-cultural initiatives and build relationships

through a shared passion for the development of a local, national and international literary culture. Delegations to other potential cities of literature are planned for this year, to encourage the cities to bid for UNESCO City of Literature status and to explore the development of mutually beneficial projects and partnerships.

Prior to my visit I was in contact with Sophy Dale, the Development Manager of the Edinburgh UNESCO Initiative. Apparently, talks are already underway with Tony Cassar Darien, the artistic director of Malta's National Theatre in Valletta about setting up some kind of link or writer's exchange. I was particularly interested to hear that Tony has, for the last 10 years, been running a non profit organisation which I understand holds regular public readings and performances and acts as a pressure group for the arts here in Malta. If Tony is in attendance, I'd welcome the opportunity to meet him to exchange ideas as to how my involvement with the Maltese writing scene could be developed further, as I would with delegates from throughout Europe. I would also encourage all delegates to contact the initiative direct to make sure they are given a voice and a chance to be an integral part of this unique project from the outset.

The Scottish Poetry Library's European Poetry Information Centre project is also seeking to expand the Library's European holdings and information resources, in a bid to get Scottish poetry out onto a European platform and to foster connections between Scottish and European poets. The Library has staged international readings during the Edinburgh Festival and also works in partnership with the cultural institutes of France, Italy, Germany and Denmark, and with Literature Across Frontiers, to hold translation workshops and public readings.

Scottish Arts Council has a proactive policy to build an international network of partnerships and offer opportunities for Scottish audiences to enjoy the work of international artists. There is an increasing demand for translations of Scottish books, particularly in Serbia, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and Croatia and therefore there has surely never been a better time to promote cross-translation, learn from each other's vibrant and diverse arts and cultures and raise the profile of translators themselves.

Over the course of the next year, I hope to work more closely with the UNESCO Initiative, the Scottish Poetry Library and the network of publishers, editors and literary organisations I have already built up through the website to encourage a greater exchange and appreciation of literature from writers throughout Europe. I very much look forward to speaking to the other delegates about possible projects and as I said, would welcome anyone to submit writing in translation for possible inclusion and promotion on the site.

The Scottish Arts Council have yearly Creative Scotland Awards which provide funding to individuals and arts organisations to increase the profile of Scottish Arts internationally and I will be working on a bid for the next round of funding applications. My bid revolves around the creation of a multi-language magazine through building up a network of European translators, which I would promote on my site. The excellent Italian magazine, *Storie* has had great success with its magazine and publications in which the English translation and original Italian text feature alongside each other, as has the *Barcelona Review* in Spain. The Netherlands-based *Words in Here* is also an inspiringly organic forum for writing in translation throughout Europe. Magazines like *Banipal*, which publishes work in translation from throughout the Arab world is also a huge inspiration.

When I return to Scotland, I will be setting up a page on my site for delegates and like-minded publishers and writers, with further details of these plans, alongside links and information on the UNESCO Initiative, Scottish Poetry Library and other organisations dedicated to the promotion of intercultural writing projects throughout the European Union. I hope that many of you will visit and get involved.