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THIS IS NOT YOUR LANGUAGE

RELATIVE FLUENCY

Welcome

to the THIS IS NOT YOUR LANGUAGE
zine

YOU'LL FIND:

- ◆ QUESTIONS (AND SPACE TO ANSWER THEM) + YOU CAN ADD YOUR OWN.
- ◆ QUOTES
- A COLLECTION OF POEMS ON:
 - ARABIC
 - (UN) BELONGING
 - EXILE
 - TRANSLATABILITY

Why?

This title struck me

It's a violent affirmation

Who's saying it? To whom?

Is ownership the way to go?

MADE IN BXL
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BORN TRANSLATED

EXHIBITION

FREE PALESTINE

Montpellier, July 2015

You sound American enough!
Why don't you tell people you're from the US, it'll make things easier.

[getting the job - selling nativity]

questions

Here in Europe people ask me if I'm Brazilian
"really" Brazilian, because
"I don't look like a Brazilian"
→ How does a Brazilian look like?
We come in all colors!

What's your mother's tongue?

English

Portuguese BR

Faicciano!

Català

Français

And your best friend's?

Your TV's? Your neighbors?

Is your mother's tongue
'your' tongue? NO.
In my heart & in my
heart
- Russian, Farsi, Bulgarian + Dutch!

Your school's?
Your friends?
Your grandparents?

- What language(s) do you swear in?

English

Français

English

Português

English

English i català

- What language(s) do you dream in?

dream language

Português

Français

(japanese?)

English, Italian + French

Català, anglès, francès

- What language(s) do you work in?
would you have to

English, French, Spanish, Luxembourgish

Inglês, Francês, Português

English

Anglès, Català

English

THIS

"How many people today live in a language that is not their own?
Or no longer, or not yet, even know their own and know poorly the major language
that they are forced to serve?"

This is the problem of immigrants, and

especially of their children, the problem of minorities,
the problem of a minor literature,

but also a problem for all of us:

how to tear a minor literature away from its own language,

allowing it to challenge the language and

making it follow a sober revolutionary path?"

(Deleuze & Guattari, Kafka: toward a minor literature, p. 50)

MA IL RAP SA COME AGGIRARE
L'OSTACOLO
È DA QUI CHE NASCE LA SUA GIOIA
BRUCIARE
COME FANNO GLI HARRAGA
I CONFINI SIMBOLICI
CHE DELIMITANO
L'USO DELLA LINGUA

From Algerian Arabic:

those who burn
- identity papers
- borders

RESTARE BARBARI.
I SELVAGGI ALL'ASSALTO
DELL'IMPERO

LOUIS YOUSSEF

"Only an American"

Just like the Brits to rename our country with a P: a letter we don't have, a sound our tongues wrestle to say. It's not Palestine like old buddy, old pal, old friend, but *Falastin*.

They'd know Arabic is phonetic if they could read, but that's an occupier for you—unwelcome guest. We have names impossible to mispronounce & yet they expect the world to say it their way.

In their new country, my grandparents give their children "good American names" impossible to mispronounce by the native-born of this land. They called their first child, a daughter, Patricia—with a P. Because who would believe an umma & baba from Falastin would name their child with a letter their mouths refused to speak, damned to a lifetime calling her Badrisha.

Only an American would do that.

Two Poems for Palestine • Protean Magazine October 19, 2023

Note: Shunnarah is pronounced shuh-nahr-ruh and the Arabic transliteration of ماني شونارة is **Mandy Shunnarah**

"Mother Tongue"

My mother's tongue is a stubborn but beautiful dancer
Refuses to wrap itself around English words,
so the strong Arab accent sits heavily in her mouth when she speaks.

Fifteen years later, all six of her children speak English
Which sounds like a dream come true
Until we learnt the cost of adopting a home that does not accept us.
That the only colours we know, are those of red, white and blue.

How this part of the world has a good way of staining you
Making you forget your own skin, so much so,
you don't even recognise your own reflection anymore.

Our language was to be deported so that we would forget where we came from.
But I guess I should be ashamed of myself
Because I can rant all day about how tyranny turned my country into turmoil
I can tell you which areas were affected the most.

How most families now live under the poverty line
But I wasn't there.

I wasn't there to see the first drone fall
I can't tell you what it's like not to leave your house out of constant fear.
Because I have no idea.

But these are the side effects of immigration
To belong nowhere.

Yesterday I shed my British passport to pieces
Then found blood on my hands

But am I really that surprised?

Knowing full well the foundations this country was built upon
I don't know where home is...

I can't tell you that
I can't put it into a poem for your snaps and applause
But I can tell you what it's like being a foreigner in your own skin.

Sahra Al-Shamiry

YOUR

"Arabic"

The man with laughing eyes stopped smiling
to say, "Until you speak Arabic—

—you will not understand pain."

[...]

I thought pain had no tongue. Or every tongue
at once, supreme translator, sieve. I admit
my shame. To live on the brink of Arabic, tugging

its rich threads without understanding
how to weave the rug...I have no gift.

The sound, but not the sense.

[...]

Naomi Shihab Nye

from *Red Suitcase*. 1994 (Jordan, 1992) <https://poets.org/poem/arabic>

Το αμετάφραστο

Έγραψε ένα ποίημα με λέξεις καθημερινές
(δεντροστοιχία πέτρα κέλφος χαρτόνι)
έχοντας την πρόθεση να το μεταφράσει
στη μητρική του γλώσσα.

Ανασέρνοντας μιά-μιά τις αντιστοιχίες
απ' το βυθό της μνήμης
αλλάζοντας τη διάταξη για να κρατήσει τον ρυθμό
προχώραγε στη νέα παραλλαγή με τόση επιτυχία
που σκέφτηκε να σκίσει την πρώτη γλωσσική μορφή.
Εάφνου

ο ίσκιος ενός γλάρου πάνω στα νερά
τού θύμιζε πως όλα τα πουλιά της μακρινής πατρίδας του
είχαν αποδημήσει ή σκοτωθεί.

Άρης Αλεξάνδρου
(1922-1978)

The untranslatable

He wrote a poem with everyday words
(tree-line stone shell cardboard)
with the intention of translating it
into his mother tongue.

Retrieving the connections one by one
from the sea depth of memory
changing the arrangement to maintain the rhythm
he was progressing to the new variant with such success
he thought of tearing up the first linguistic form.
Suddenly

the shadow of a seagull on the waters
reminded him that all the birds of his distant homeland
had migrated or been killed.

Aris Alexándrou my translation feel free to edit

