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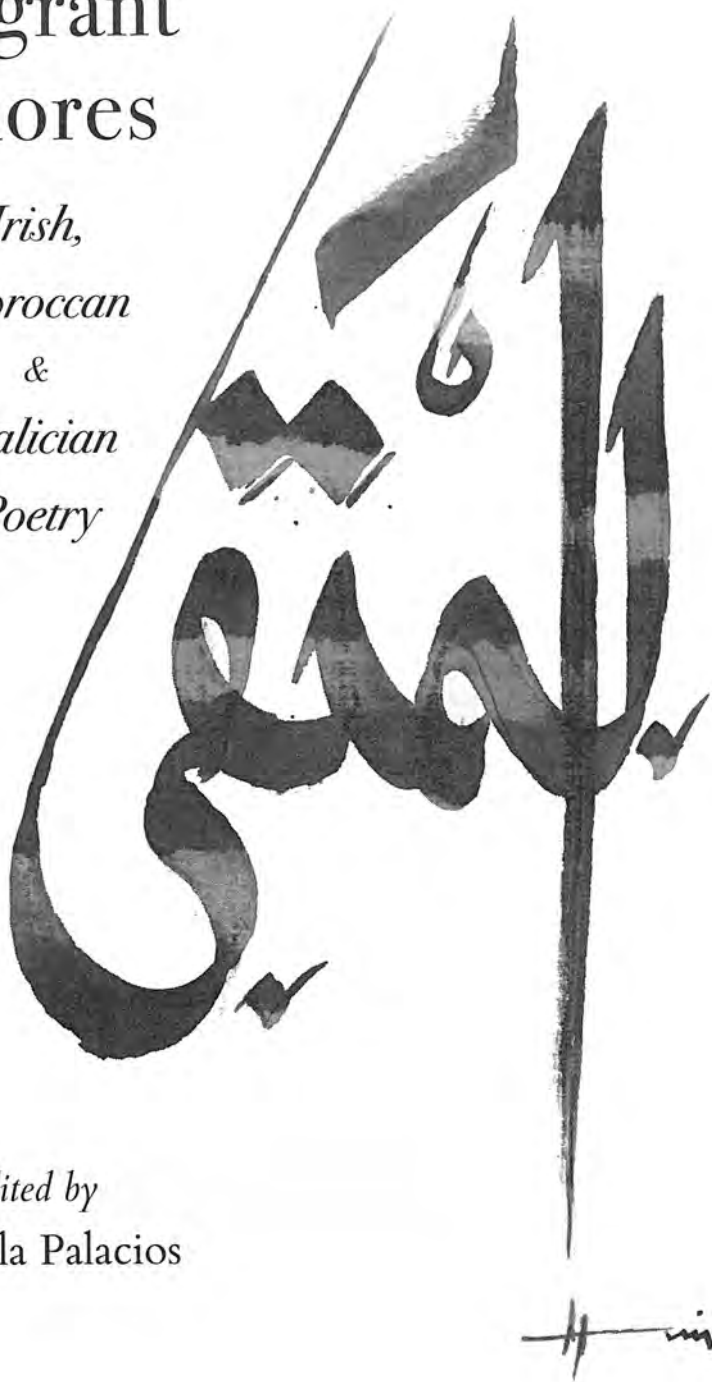
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Calligraphies by
Hachemi Mokrane

Migrant Shores

*Irish,
Moroccan
&
Galician
Poetry*



Edited by
Manuela Palacios

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For Bahi Takkouche

Contents

- "Migration, Otherwhereness and Translation" –
Introduction by Manuela Palacios 11

MOROCCO & IRELAND

Mohammed Bennis & Paula Meehan

- لَكَ الطَّرِيقُ الْعَدِيدَةُ... 22
The Lessons of Exile 23
By the Autumn River 24

Taha Adnan & Máighrèad Medbh

- الماروكسيلواز 26
The Maroxelloise 37
All About Her 44

Fatima Zahra Bennis & Susan Connolly

- نَهَم 48
Longing 49
Anxiety 50

Imane El Khattabi & Hugh O'Donnell

- في الحرب 52
In the War 55
It Ain't Over 57

Mohamed Ahmed Bennis & Catherine Phil MacCarthy

- خيال بلا طريق 59
Imagination without a Path 60
O Halloran's Fort 61

Aicha Bassry & Sarah Clancy

السَابِجَةُ فِي الْعَطَشِ	64
Woman Swimming in Thirst	65
Poem for a Migrant Poet Waiting to Make Her Crossing	66

Mezouar El Idrissi & Thomas McCarthy

ليل غرناطة الآن	68
Tonight in Granada	71
Reading 'Noche de Granada' of Mezouar El Idrissi	73

GALICIA & IRELAND

Martín Veiga & Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin

Unha casa na Habana	77
A House in Havana	79
She Was at the Haymaking	81

Chus Pato & Lorna Shaughnessy

Asun...	84
Asun...	85
Liberty Landing	86

Eva Veiga & Maurice Harmon

sentir o corpo...	88
to sense the body...	89
Fluttering Handkerchiefs	90

Baldo Ramos & Celia de Fréine

amada estranxeira	93
foreign beloved	96
Doth Suffer a Sea-Change	100

Gonzalo Hermo & Keith Payne

A estranxeira inventa a utopía...	103
The outsider invents utopia...	105
The Outsider Watches the Woods from Her Room	107

Marilar Aleixandre & Breda Wall Ryan

auga na lúa	109
moonwater	111
The Path We Make with Our Feet Follows Us Everywhere	113

María do Cebreiro & Mary O'Donnell

O barrio das chinas	115
The 'Cosmopolitan' Quarter	119
Remembering Amsterdam	123

Appendix by Catherine Phil MacCarthy: "Imagination without
a Path" by Mohamed Ahmed Bennis

	124
Acknowledgements	126
About the Poets	129
About the Editor	138
About the Calligrapher	138



H mi

Migration, Otherwhereness and Translation. An Introduction

MANUELA PALACIOS

University of Santiago de Compostela

As we move through the world, we carry our home-bodies with us, ever so contingently... and we provisionally inhabit other spaces, other countries, although home and country may be too heavy burdens for our persevering, yet vulnerable, bodies, as this anthology will illustrate. In Maria do Cebreiro's words, countries are "bodies for rent".¹ The poems in this collection trace the steps of migrants from north and south, male and female, of lighter and darker complexion, young and old, because to exist is to move forward, as the etymology of the verb "exist" implies.²

Migrant Shores brings together writers from three Atlantic countries, Morocco, Galicia and Ireland, aware as they are of the shared ordeal of migration and exile at different times of history.³ In her poem "Daughters of Colony" the Irish poet Eavan Boland identifies the *otherwhereness* of the colonial subject and writes about the loss of an ideal national identity and the exploration of a painfully hybrid one.⁴ This feeling of dislocation is no doubt common to the people of Ireland, Morocco and Galicia, both due to their colonial background — notwithstanding its different manifestations — and because of their chronic experience of migration whether to neighbouring European countries or to more distant lands.

Though apparently universal, migration and the discourses about it are gendered. For this reason, this anthology aims at a notable representation of female voices that may examine the way gender and mobility affect each other, so as to retrieve women's disregarded diaspora.⁵ Many poems in this compilation consider the predicament of the migrant woman: her body, hopes, fears and frustrations, her national and ethnic (dis)affection and, in sum, her otherwhereness.

I have asked seven poets from Morocco and another seven from Galicia to provide a poem on the topic of migration and exile, and then asked fourteen Irish poets to both translate the Moroccan and Galician poems into English and to write a response poem — a good number of poems have been written expressly for this anthology. This project has a gratifying precedent in the anthology *To the Winds Our Sails: Irish Writers Translate Galician Poetry*, which Mary O'Donnell proposed we co-edited back in 2010 and which was beautifully produced by Salmon Poetry.⁶ *Migrant Shores* attests to the rich variety of poetry in the three communities by including writers from different generations, male and female, many of whom enjoy the recognition of their consolidated writing careers, but this anthology also features new poets with their audacious proposals.

The Irish poets in this compilation have accepted the challenge of translation and *echolation* with their customary altruism and talent.⁷ There is no doubt that the current refugee crisis has stirred everybody's conscience as we urge European institutions and governments to comply with the responsibility to alleviate these people's suffering. In his elegy to W.B. Yeats, W.H. Auden seems to despair when he exclaims "For poetry makes nothing happen", and yet he ends his poem in a more trustful note as he asks Yeats to inspire us with his verse: "In the deserts of the heart / Let the healing fountain start".⁸ Paula Meehan insightfully puts forward an alternative reading of Auden's words: "But, maybe we might read that 'nothing' as a positive thing. If poetry makes *nothing* happen, maybe it stops *something* happening, stops time, takes our breath away".⁹

The type of translation sometimes practiced in this anthology is the indirect one, that is, with the mediation of English drafts and linguistic support that I attempted to provide for the thorough understanding of the source text. All the Irish poets involved in these translations have a good command of some Romance language, which has, in particular, facilitated the English renderings from Galician. Furthermore, poets such as Lorna Shaughnessy, Keith Payne, Mary O'Donnell, Celia de Fréine, and Maurice Harmon have had valuable previous experience translating Galician poetry. The Arabic poetry from Morocco, however, has proved to be a more serious challenge for all of us involved. I had translated and edited Arabic poetry in the past and the Moroccan poets supplied Spanish and French versions of their poems — Aicha Bassry and Mezouar El Idrissi even provided first-rate English translations that we reproduce

here with the permission of their translators — but I was impressed with the Irish poets' professional rigour in their individual quests for supplementary information, having the poems read in Arabic and discussing the various nuances with native speakers of Arabic and scholars. I avow that I have often found poets' indirect translations more evocative and refined than direct renderings made by other translators with insufficient training in the craft of verse.

The activity of translation seems especially apt for the theme of migration, as the etymology of "translate" shows: to bring over, carry over (Latin *transferre*). Like translations, migrants also move across culture and language boundaries; like translations, migrants are often regarded with suspicion. Nevertheless, translation is one of the best possible tools to negotiate with the *other*. The anthropologist Arjun Appadurai maintains that complete, integral and precise understanding of the other is impossible and suggests that we should create common spaces with the facets and convictions that we do share, spaces of "selective concordance and contingent consensus".¹⁰ I would like to advocate translation as this space of dialogue and negotiation.

Migrant Shores begins its exploration of migrants' circumstances with a not so common dialogue between MOROCCO AND IRELAND and, more specifically, with that between two eminent poets: MOHAMMED BENNIS and PAULA MEEHAN. I selected a poem by Bennis that introduces some key aspects of the experience of migration: choice, exile, knowledge and memory. The speaker addresses the migrant, though it could be, as is often the case in the Moroccan section, an illustration of a split subject, since the lyric voice and the migrant may well be the same person.¹¹ Meehan knows that her translation will also mediate between two world-views and respectfully intertwines her own sense of rhythm and stanza with the attention due to Bennis's proposal. In her response poem, Meehan picks up some of Bennis's motifs, such as the river, memory and knowledge, but contributes a new idea to their dialogue: our consecutive learning and *unlearning* process through life.

The next two poets, TAHA ADNAN and MÁIGHRÉAD MEDBH focus on a girl's painful handling of cultural constraints on her body and behaviour. Medbh brilliantly renders Adnan's vibrant style and poignant subject matter. His Moroccan girl growing up in Brussels — hence the coinage *Maroxelloise*, from *marocaine* and *bruxelloise* — is torn between the contradictions within her own home culture and those of the host society. Medbh shares with Adnan

the story of an Irish young woman who is turned away from home because of her troubled behaviour. Both young women embody the conflictive messages about femininity in their respective cultures.

FATIMA ZAHRA BENNIS and SUSAN CONNOLLY form the next duo of voices and both tackle the suppression of women's desire.¹² The Moroccan poet delves into a woman's struggle for self-fulfilment and her alienation from the crippling nation that constricts her agency. Connolly handles with utmost dexterity the dense imagery and terse lineation of the original and provides a subtle response where the longing turns into anxiety and Bennis's second-person addressee becomes, as a result of relentless subjection, a defeated and embittered "I".

IMANE EL KHATTABI's poem explicitly alludes to the current refugee crisis with her portrayal of war, refugees and border controls. The collective speaking voice includes the reader in that "we" and, by doing so, stimulates our empathy. HUGH O'DONNELL masterfully rephrases the poem in succinct and penetrating three-line stanzas, and contributes to this dialogue with the Moroccan poet by presenting a female refugee's weary struggle to survive in a Western city.

The following two Moroccan poets deal with a distinctive space of migration: the liminal zone, the frontier, the strip of land or sea between home and destination. MOHAMED AHMED BENNIS places his lyric subject in such a place, which denotes detachment and loss, while he intertwines the theme of migration with that of artistic rapture. CATHERINE PHIL MacCARTHY exquisitely renders his evocative imagery in her translation, and responds both with a prose discussion of Bennis's poem — reproduced as an appendix at the end of this anthology — and with a poem that enquires into the themes of dispossession and displacement which are so emblematic in Irish history and literature.

AICHA BASSRY's poem about a woman's misgivings as she undertakes her voyage to another land is here sensibly translated into English by Nourddine Zouitni. Once again, we come across the suffocation of a woman's longing for self-realization, which Bassry aptly presents through a split subject: the expectant "I" and the languishing "she". SARAH CLANCY's response valiantly avows the writer's impotence before the refugee crisis. Clancy's confession "and I have no art in me that can measure up to this task" recalls Eavan Boland's similar expression of inadequacy in her poem

“Daughters of Colony”: “No testament or craft of mine can hide / our presence / on the distaff side of history”. In spite of their self-doubts, both Irish writers furnish us with memorable representations of the displaced woman’s alienation.

The Moroccan-Irish section ends in a more hopeful note with the poems by MEZOUAR EL IDRISSE and THOMAS McCARTHY, the former in an English translation by the Bard Group. El Idrissi enacts the repossession of Granada — “The night in Granada is mine now” — only to celebrate life and poetry in the new welcoming home of verse, music and love. McCarthy responds with a magnificent sonnet that insightfully identifies the dark edges of El Idrissi’s hymn to Granada — the exile’s chronic condition, the laborious and often frustrated search for meaning — though it ends with a bold call to “conquer the sea in boats made with words”.

The GALICIA AND IRELAND rapport has a solid social and cultural foundation. During the second half of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries Ireland was actually an “inspiring *other*” for Galicia on account of both the Irish struggle for independence and Galician Celticism. This anthology, however, explores other shared circumstances such as massive emigration at various times of deep economic crisis and women’s unacknowledged roles in them. This Galicia-and-Ireland section begins with a duo of voices, MARTÍN VEIGA and EILÉAN NÍ CHUILLEANÁIN, closely attached to the city of Cork. Veiga has written, for this collection, a poem about Galician emigration to Cuba and the double displacement suffered by a woman, born in Havana of Galician emigrants, who one day has to leave her Cuban home to return to Galicia. Her nostalgia for the home of her childhood and early sensorial impressions poignantly illustrates the migrant’s perpetual dislocation. Ní Chuilleánáin’s remarkably accurate translation is an excellent example of the close collaboration between poets in this project. Her response poem also tells us of a woman’s transatlantic emigration and, in particular, of a rather frequent pattern of migration of Irish nuns. The Irish poet astutely interweaves choice and fate, liberation and confinement thereby portraying the complexity of these women’s experience.

The poems in this anthology often tell us about the migrants’ sundry means of communication with their homeland. Today’s texts on mobile phones have replaced the letters and photographs of a not so distant past. CHUS PATO offers us a poem that delves into the migrant’s pressure to convey a message of success through the

photographs that are sent home from the European destination countries of Galician emigration: France, Switzerland and Germany. These are photographs that simultaneously and paradoxically bring the migrants home while enhancing their absence and strangeness. LORNA SHAUGHNESSY has translated Pato's poetry before and is well acquainted with the Galician poet's style and conceptual world. Shaughnessy's response poem picks up the motif of the photographs, both those in the family album, taken during the migrant woman's occasional visits to Ireland, and those never sent but conjured by the poet as she reconstructs the life of the Irish domestic worker in New York.

EVA VEIGA radically changes the tone and the scope of this section with a poem that is reminiscent of the Moroccan concern with chimerical landscapes and states of mind. Veiga's verse steers mesmerizingly through the contrary moods of entrapment and desertion, snow and fire, hope and shipwreck that mark a migrant's venture. MAURICE HARMON, with previous experience in the translation of the kindred poetry of Galician writers such as Pilar Pallarés and Ana Romaní, excels in his English rendering of Veiga's oblique phrasing and rousing rhythm. In his response poem, Harmon relates the Irish experience of emigration to the present-day refugee crisis, thereby raising consciousness about our amnesia and greed.

Although most accounts of Galician emigration focus on destination countries in Europe and Latin America, BALDO RAMOS writes a family saga in the United States throughout the bleak decade of the nineteen thirties and after. Ramos also provides a poignant photograph within the genre of mourning or memorial portraiture. His account depicts the migrant's instinct for survival in the face of recurring hardships and setbacks. His extended metaphor of tree and land aptly expresses the perennial, though often frustrated, struggle to settle down. CELIA DE FRÉINE masterfully recasts his poem with special attention to the rhythms of the English language and the expectancy brought about by the caesuras. Her own poem establishes a parallel between Irish emigrants' arrival in the United States and current refugees reaching our coasts or drowning en route.

GONZALO HERMO makes a radical shift in the course of this section by resorting to the figure of the foreign woman as an inspiring muse that refurbishes literary tradition. In her book *Democracy and the Foreigner*, Bonnie Honig suggests that societies

often need the foreigner so as to overcome an impasse; for this reason, instead of posing a problem the foreigner may rather provide a solution.¹³ Hermo significantly chooses a female foreigner and, by doing so, gives recognition to those women artists who have time and again considered themselves as strangers in their own country.¹⁴ KEITH PAYNE, who has translated one whole anthology of Galician poetry in *Six Galician Poets* (2016), renders, with remarkable suppleness, the disaffected and provocative mode of Hermo's charge against the literary canon. Payne's poem playfully picks up some of Hermo's motifs — the foreign woman and the skeleton trees — and elaborates on notions of entrapment and freedom in a visionary mood that recalls Odilon Redon's chromatic symbolism.

MARILAR ALEIXANDRE conceives a *Gulliveresque* travel to the moon so as to indict the exploitation of African women at home and abroad. On her part, BREDÁ WALL RYAN delivers the disparaging tone and imaginative force of the original with commendable artistry. The Irish writer responds with a poem that casts the refugees' agony in sharp relief: the desperate escape from carnage, the treacherous voyage and the murder of the lives left behind.

The anthology ends with two poets who have already worked in close collaboration, MARÍA DO CEBREIRO and MARY O'DONNELL, as they translated each other's work in *To the Winds Our Sails, Forked Tongues*, and in the Galician journal *A Trabe de Ouro*.¹⁵ María do Cebreiro offers us a poem about the women of the red-light district in Barcelona, where many foreign women, trapped by mafias, work as prostitutes. This neighbourhood was named "Chinese quarter" in the 1920s — perhaps on account of its poor and marginalised community, as in many American cities in the early twentieth century. The Galician poem sensitively envisages the lyrical subject's identification with these prostitutes, as does Mary O'Donnell's poem, about a similar district in Amsterdam, with verse that ponders notions of exploitation and concern, betrayal and solidarity.

The calligraphies by the Algerian artist HACHEMI MOKRANE engage in a dialogue with the subject-matter of the anthology and propose visual rhythms that alternate with poetic rhythms in sober black ink. The calligraphies are not merely beautiful sinuous lines but words charged with profound and relevant meaning: thalatha shaouati [three shores], laji'a [female refugee], el-manfa [exile], shatat [diaspora], 'oubour [crossing].¹⁶

NOTES

¹ “This, and nothing else, is what countries are: bodies / for rent”. María do Cebreiro, (*nós, as inadaptadas*), Ferrol: Sociedad de Cultura Valle-Inclán, 2002, p. 27.

² Latin *existere*: to step out, stand forth, emerge, appear.

³ I would like to thank Catherine Phil MacCarthy for her inspiring feedback regarding the title of this anthology and Keith Payne for his wise observations. Many Irish poets gave me precious advice as I was assembling this collection and I am grateful to all of them for their unrelenting support. I also want to express my gratitude to Sarah Clancy for her decisive mediation in the final production of this book and to all the poets in this anthology for trusting me with their work.

⁴ Eavan Boland, “Daughters of Colony”, *The Lost Land*, Manchester: Carcanet, 1998.

⁵ Mirjana Morokvasic has censured the lack of attention paid to women’s role in migration in her article “Birds of Passage Are Also Women”, *International Migration Review*, 18.4, 1984, pp. 886-907. We have taken heed of Morokvasic’s admonition and have designed a project in which Irish and Galician writers provide photographs of female migrants in their family and write about them. See María Jesús Lorenzo-Modia (ed.), *Ex-sistere*, Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2016, and Ana Acuña (ed.), *Letras nómades*, Berlin: Frank & Timme, 2014.

⁶ A second anthology followed with Irish writers translating Galician, Basque and Catalan poetry in M. Palacios (ed.), *Forked Tongues*, Bristol: Shearsman, 2012. A third collection has appeared recently with the Irish poet Keith Payne translating Galician poetry in M. Palacios (ed.) *Six Galician Poets*, Todmorden: Arc, 2016.

⁷ I borrow the term “echolation” from the Canadian poet Erin Moure, who used it in reference to her “echo” or response poems to those of the Galician poet Chus Pato in *Secession / Insecession*, Toronto: BookThug, 2014.

⁸ W.H. Auden, “In Memory of W.B. Yeats”, *Another Time*. London: Faber & Faber, 1940.

⁹ Paula Meehan, "Imaginary Bonnets with Real Bees in Them", in *Writings from the Ireland Chair of Poetry: Imaginary Bonnets with Real Bees in them*, University College Dublin Press, 2016, p. 19. I would like to thank Keith Payne for drawing my attention to Paula Meehan's comment on Auden's line.

¹⁰ Arjun Appadurai, "Diálogo, risco e convivialidade", in Arjun Appadurai et al. *Podemos viver sem o outro? As possibilidades e os limites da interculturalidade*, Lisboa: Tinta-da-China, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 2009, pp. 23-38.

¹¹ In her review of Mohsin Hamid's novel *Exit West*, Eileen Battersby comments on "the damaging ability of displacement to make one experience the sensation of having become two people". "A Migrant Couple's Search for an Open Door" *The Irish Times*, March 4, 2017, p. 13.

¹² Regarding the repeated last names of some poets in this anthology, I would like to say that Fatima Zahra Bennis and Mohamed Ahmed Bennis are siblings, but Mohammed Bennis is not their relative. Bennis is a common surname in Morocco. Similarly, Veiga is a frequent Galician surname and Martín Veiga and Eva Veiga have no family relationship. However, Mary O'Donnell and Hugh O'Donnell are cousins.

¹³ Bonnie Honig, *Democracy and the Foreigner*, Princeton: Princeton UP, 2001.

¹⁴ The great poet of the nineteenth-century Galician Revival, Rosalía de Castro, wrote the influential poem "Estranxeira na súa patria" [The Foreign Woman in her Fatherland] in her collection *Follas Novas* (Madrid: La Ilustración Gallega y Asturiana; Havana: La Propaganda Literaria, 1880) in which she elaborates on the topic of women's disaffection for the fatherland.

¹⁵ María do Cebreiro translated a number of poems by Mary O'Donnell into Galician in "Mary O'Donnell: De Dublín a Compostela", *A trabe de ouro*. 103 (2015): 443-457.

¹⁶ Hachemi Mokrane's calligraphies have appeared in other non-fiction and poetry books such as the bilingual, Arabic-Spanish, collection of poems, *Los ritos de los sentidos*, edited and translated by J. Elouafi, B. Takkouche, M. Palacios and A. Casas, Madrid: CantArabia, 2015.