
Paula Burnett. *The EmLit Project: European Minority Literatures in Translation*. London: Brunell University Press, 2003, 503 pp.

The EmLit Project: European Minority Literatures in Translation, edited by Paula Burnett of London's Brunell University, is a compilation of the work of vari-

ous translators of nineteen different minority languages, which qualify as such based on their classification as either ancient or migrant. These translators have taken the initiative to translate select works of European minority literature, including plays, poetry and prose, into five major respective national languages: English, French, German, Italian and Spanish. Burnett has organized this anthology of translated works with

the purposes of sharing these pieces with the current linguistic majority, reflecting the often overlooked cultural diversity of Europe, thereby increasing the visibility of languages that may soon face extinction and encouraging bilingual writers to continue or resume writing in their minority tongue.

Burnett notes the particular importance of the term “minority,” meaning “any language used by a minority in demographic terms” within the European geographical context, without taking into account any one language’s popularity or majority status elsewhere in the world. Because of this essential distinction, *The EmLit Project* includes references to the background and social and linguistic position of each of the original minority languages that has been translated, as well as providing biographical notes on each author included.

The book contains an extensive table of contents and an introduction, followed by its five chapters, entitled Originals, English Translations, French Translations/Traductions françaises, German Translations/deutsche Übersetzungen, Italian Translations/Traduzioni italiani and Span-

ish Translations/Traducciones espagnole. An index of authors is also included, along with a CD-ROM entitled “Writers Reading: A Sampler,” which features readings of select minority texts in their original tongues, which include Scottish Gaelic, Welsh, Urdu, Hindi, Picard, Sicilian, Galician, Arabic, Gun and Catalan.

The minority languages included in *The EmLit Project* are organized in the “Originals” chapter according to the European country in which they qualify as such. From Britain, the editor has included Scottish Gaelic, Welsh, Bengali, Urdu, Hindi and Sinhala; from Belgium, Picard, Walloon and Lingala; from Germany, Sorbian, Greek, Turkish, Sicilian and Albanian, and finally Galician, Arabic, Amazic, Gun and Catalan from Spain.

Each chapter of translations is organized in sections for each minority language as follows: first, a short history of the original minority language is given, along with a reference to its current status in Europe, followed by the author’s name, translation of the original text into the majority language indicated in the chapter title and finally the name of the trans-

lator. Words left untranslated as well as culturally unique passages are referenced with footnotes at the end of each work. A further explanation is at times included in the form of a “note to the reader.” Each chapter contains various translated texts from numerous minority languages and ends with the original authors’ biographical information.

For example, in the chapter entitled “English Translations,” there is a section including Sicilian minority literature that begins by identifying Sicilian as one of the Southern Italian dialects and goes on to mention the unique qualities of both the background and evolution of the language. The linguistic tradition is also referred to as having been “shaped by significant events and personalities” including Antonio Veneziano, Giovanni Meli, Domenico Tempio and Ignazio Buttitta.

For this particular minority language, Burnett has only included one translated sample of Sicilian literature, which is a lengthy poem entitled “Benedettina,” written by Nino De Vita and translated by Emilia Ippolito and Paula Burnett, that tells the story of the tragic death of a pregnant young girl in a rural

village. Nino De Vita’s biographical data is found at the end of the chapter along with the various other authors of works that have been translated into English for the purposes of *The EmLit Project*. Of note are the prizes “Alberto Moravia” and “Mondello,” won by Nino de Vita in 1996 and 2003, respectively, as well as the fact that his works in Sicilian have been edited at the author’s own expense.

It is of interest to note that some of the pieces chosen for this project treat the very subjects of language and translation, such as Twm Morys contributions, written originally in Cymraeg, entitled “On Hearing an Englishman Speak” and “To My Translator,” which were actually translated by Morys himself. Rose-Marie François’s “The Punishment,” written originally in Picard, is a short story that relates the tale of the childhood punishment suffered by François when her mother catches her speaking Patois, as well as her resulting determination to continue using the tongue and in fact acquire knowledge of others as well.

This book is useful for any audience because of its accessibility to the reader. As Burnett states

in the introduction, the purpose of *The EmLit Project* is to make minority languages more visible by making them more available to the linguistic majority. However, while any member of the general public may enjoy this compilation of translations and gain an appreciation of the minority languages it contains, this book

would also be particularly appropriate for the bilingual reader or for use in a language classroom setting, especially in classes dealing with the intricacies of translation and its importance in maintaining the use and recognizing the presence of minority languages.

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