

Then the Cicadas Sang: a novel and two essays on translingual writing.

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# Then the Cicadas Sang: a novel and two essays on translingual writing

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## Abstract

This thesis consists of two parts: a creative work and two critical essays on translingual writing.

The creative component, *Then the Cicadas Sang*, is a novel set in 1940s Malta. It is a story about love and aspiration. As a teenage girl, Mari vouches she will do anything to leave the tiny island she lives on. Foreigners – the British who governed the island at the time – and books give her a glimpse of the world beyond her shores. But she craves for more, unaware of what she risks losing by chasing her dreams.

The novel deals with how books shape our imagination, how the languages we speak give us access to different systems of conceptualizing the world and how we navigate the spaces in between. It does this through the protagonist, Mari, and the people who help shape who she is, particular Mrs Applegate, a British evacuee who sought shelter in Gozo in the midst of the Blitz. In as much as it is a story of a girl turning into a woman, the novel is also the story of an island. It sits between Junot Díaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* and Elena Ferrante's *The Neapolitan Series*. The extract submitted is Book One in a series of two.

The critical essays explore the poetics of multilingual writing. They analyse the linguistic, political and cultural stratifications in multilingual writing, with a focus on the perception and reception of Maltese literature written in English. I ask if a multilingual writer's role can be akin to that of a cultural translator. They investigate whether, unlike the monolingual writer, a writer's multilingual background gives him or her access to different systems of conceptualizing the surrounding environment and how this informs the creative process. This study informs my own process of writing *Then the Cicadas Sang*, with a particular regard to self-translation and how one language can carry another on the page. In this case the languages I am working with are English, Maltese and Italian.

Item Type:	Thesis (PhD)
Qualification Level:	Doctoral
Additional Information:	<p>Due to copyright restrictions the full text of this thesis cannot be made available online. Access to the printed version is available once any embargo periods have expired.</p> <p>Supported by funding from a Malta Arts Scholarship awarded by the Maltese Directorate for Lifelong Learning.</p> <p>One of the essays, 'Shifting Centres: Crafting a Fictional World in Translingual Writing' has been published in <i>Oxford Research in English</i> and is available here: <a href="http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/116999/">http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/116999/</a>.</p> <p>The second essay, 'Towards a Multilingual Poetics, or Self-Translation, Translingualism and Maltese literature' is due to be published as a book chapter as part of the AHRC <i>Translating the Literatures of Small European Nations</i> (forthcoming, 2019).</p>
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