

Voices from the Algerian Theatre

Voices from the Algerian Theatre:

*Dialect Translation for an
English Stage*

By

Souâd Hamerlain

**Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing**



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This book first published 2025

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN: 978-1-0364-1879-3

ISBN (Ebook): 978-1-0364-1880-9

In loving memory of my father

“Translation in its multifarious social, cultural, economic and political contexts *is* impossibly more complex a field of study than abstract linguistic equivalence [...] but the chance of perhaps coming to understand how translation works in those contexts, how translation shapes cultures both at and within its boundaries, offers a powerful motivation to push on despite the difficulty of the undertaking.”

—Douglas Robinson

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many driving forces behind the accomplishment of this book. In the first instance, I would like to express my profound gratitude to my mentors whose knowledge and insightful lectures have been instrumental in shaping my research interests and academic aspirations.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Paula Norman, who, despite her busy schedule, graciously took the time to review my translations and provide me with invaluable feedback and suggestions.

I am equally grateful to the playwright Mohamed Adar for generously dedicating his time to our interviews and for the priceless clarifications he provided regarding his script. I would also like to acknowledge the significant support of Rajâa Alloula, Abdelkader Alloula's widow, whose steadfast commitment and unmatched determination to preserve her husband's theatrical legacy are truly commendable.

Lastly, I must emphasise my deep appreciation for the training opportunities offered by Abdelhamid Ibn Badis University of Mostaganem, which have meaningfully honed my approach to professional development.

PREFACE

The scant interest in drama translation in Algeria has buttressed my commitment to promulgate the circulation of the Algerian theatre and its translatability through the technique of *tradaptation* (Garneau, 1978)¹ as a rarely practiced *modus operandi* in the Arab world. This neologism, which falls under the umbrella of “creative translation”, prioritises inventiveness over conventionality. Canadian poet and playwright Michel Garneau was the first to apply this technique in his *tradaptations* of Shakespeare’s plays *The Tempest* (1973), *Macbeth* (1978), and *Coriolanus* (1989) into Québécois.² This interplay between an official language (English) and a variety of French provided Garneau with a degree of creative freedom while also encouraging the preservation of a transcultural dialogue between the two contexts. The essence of this technique lies in striking a delicate balance between avoiding excessive literalism and steering clear of overly rough adaptations. Inspired by Garneau’s method, I have attempted to *tradapt* two Algerian Arabic³ plays—Mohamed Adar’s *Lamkhâkh* (The Two Brains) (1972) and Abdelkader Alloula’s *Lagwâl* (Sayings) (1980)—into English. In this instance, the process is reversed, transitioning from a dialectal form of Arabic to an official language. Notably, making such ideologically and culturally sensitive texts accessible to an English-speaking audience requires extensive contemplation. The challenge lies in the fact that theatrical texts do not permit intra-acts explanations, which could potentially lead to increased confusions for English-speaking spectators.

¹ Michel Garneau, “Tradaptation: A Creative Approach to Theatrical Translation.” *Theatre Journal*, vol. 31, no.2, 1978, 153-167.

² It seems that Garneau was already using his technique of *tradaptation* before formally coining the term.

³ I am using the term “Algerian Arabic” in its broad sense. However, sociolinguists tend to favour the appellation “Algerian vernacular” to reflect the country’s diverse linguistic heritage, which includes Arabic, Tamazight, and numerous loanwords from Turkish, Spanish, French, and other languages.

An illustrative example of this *tradaptation* technique is the transformation of the proper name “Nacer” from the source language into “Victor” in the target language—in Alloula’s *Lagwâl*. This choice was intentional, aiming to preserve the semantic connotation of the character as it appears in the original play. Specifically, “Nacer” (or “Nasr”, meaning victory in Arabic) reflects the character’s aspiration to *win* a prominent status among the privileged. This book does not serve an explicative function; rather, it encourages readers to engage with the translated plays in a way that evokes similar reactions to those of the original audience. As readers explore these plays, they will encounter the pathos and essence of human experience, providing a reflection of Algerian society through the authors’ perspectives. Additionally, this book invites theatre enthusiasts to view *tradaptation* as an innovative approach that challenges conventional methods of translating dramatic texts, thereby enhancing intercultural dialogue. I believe that presenting these narratives in this manner will help bridge the gap between Arabic and English cultures. Ultimately, this effort aspires to make a meaningful contribution to the expanding field of literary translation and to enrich the English-speaking theatrical repertoire.

AUTHORS' BIOGRAPHY

1.1. Mohamed Adar

Adar was born on the 22nd of December, 1941 in Hmadna, Relizane (a city located in the northern part of Algeria). From 1962 to 1964, he studied at the National Dramatic Institute in Oran and subsequently completed a six-month training period at the Institute of Sidi Fredj in Algiers. In 1965, he moved to France for extensive training, followed by two years at the National Institute of Drama and Dancing in Bordj el Kifan. In 1988, he undertook a second extensive training period in Russia.

Adar's professional career is both extensive and distinguished, and I must acknowledge that the works listed below cannot fully capture the breadth of his contributions to the dramatic arts. As an actor at the TNA (Théâtre National d'Alger/Algiers National Theatre), he performed in:

- **1965:** *Al-Khâlidûn* (The Eternal People), written by Boualam Rais and produced by Mostapha Kateb.
- **1971:** *Anta Alli Qtalt Al-Wahsh* (You Are the One Who Killed the Monster), written by Ali Salem and produced by Allal Al-Mouhib.
- **1973:** *Al-Shams* (The Sun), a film written by Lamin Merbah and produced by Zakariya.
- **1977:** *Al-Tahaddi* (The Challenge), episodes written and produced by Mohamed ben Saleh.
- **1980:** *Azmat Al-Osra* (The Family Crisis), episodes written and produced by Mohamed Houideq.
- **1985:** *Al-Ors* (The Wedding), episodes written by Bernaoui and produced by Mohamed Houideq.
- **1989:** *Al Fasl al-Akhîr* (The Last Act/Scene), written and produced by Ben Brahim.

As an actor at the TRO (Théâtre Régional d'Oran/Oran's Regional Theatre), he performed in:

- **1968:** *Kul Wahed w Hukmu* (To Each One His Judgement) and *132 Sana* (One Hundred and Thirty-Two Years), both written and produced by Abderrahmane Kaki.
- **1970:** *Al-Khobza* (lit. Bread), written and produced by Abdelkader Alloula.
- **1985:** *Al-Adjwad* (The Generous People), written and produced by Abdelkader Alloula.
- **1991:** *Al-General* (The General), written and produced by Mohamed Adar and Taib.
- **1997:** *Zabana* (Named after a well-known Algerian martyr), written by Azzeddine Mihoubi.

As a playwright, in addition to *Lamkhâkh* (produced by Sellal Mohamed), Adar wrote:

- **1977:** *Al-Bir Al-Masmum* (The Poisoned Well)
- **1987:** *Al-Bayâdiq* (The Pawns)
- **1989:** *Al-Smâsri* (The Courtesan), a TV series produced by Nor-Eddine Ben Amar.
- **1995:** *Al-Mokhadhram* (The Veteran)

As a producer, his works include:

- **1998:** *Sarkhat Al-Nissâa* (Women's Howl), written by Samir and Meriem, produced by Oran's Regional Theatre.
- **2002:** *Hamma Al-Fayeq* (Hamma the Bright), written by Azzeddine Mihoubi, produced by the Theatre of the Town, Oran.
- **2007:** *Hamma Al-Kordoni* (Hamma the Shoemaker), written by Azzeddine Mihoubi, produced by the Theatre of the Town, Oran (Note that 'Hamma' is a diminutive for Mohamed used in Eastern Algeria).

Adar continues to enrich Algerian theatre with his dedicated work. In 2007, he participated in the festivities of Algiers as the Arab Cultural Capital and

in Saudi Arabia's Fourth Theatrical Festival in 2009. In 2015, he appeared in the film *Hawadjis Al-Mumathil Al-Munfarid bi Nafsihi* (Reveries of the Solitary Actor), which competed at the Cannes Pan-African Festival (France). The film was written and produced by Hamid Benamra, with production handled by NunFilm.

1.2. Abdelkader Alloula

Alloula is another prominent Algerian theatrical figure. He was born on the 8th of July, 1939 in Ghazaouet (a coastal town located in the north-western part of Algeria). He received his primary education in Ain El Berd (Sidi Bel Abbès) and his secondary education in Sidi Bel Abbès and Oran. In 1956, he ceased his studies to join Oran's amateur troupe ECHABAB (Young People). During his time with this group, until 1960, he benefited from various theatrical trainings at the Centre Universitaire d'Études Théâtrales in Nancy and at the Sorbonne University in France.

Alloula participated in numerous plays, including Mohamed Touati's *Moughramin Bil Mel* (Fond of Money) and Mohamed Krachai's *Roujoué Al-Sâda* (The Return of Happiness), *Khedma Chrifa* (An Honorable Job), and *Khadr Al-Yaddine* (The Green-Handed One). In 1962, he adapted Plautus' play *Les Captifs* into *El Asra* (The Captives) with the Ensemble Théâtrale Oranais.

Upon the establishment of the Algerian National Theatre, Alloula was employed as an actor, performing in:

- **1963:** *Les Enfants de la Casbah* (The Children of the Casbah—Abdelhalim Rais, Mustapha Kateb), *Hassen Terro* (Rouiched, Mustapha Kateb), Calderón's *La Vie est un Songe* (Life is a Dream—Mustapha Kateb), *Le Serment* (The Oath—Abdelhalim Rais, Taha El Amiri), and Molière's *Don Juan* (Mustapha Kateb)
- **1964:** Sean O'Casey's *Roses Rouges Pour Moi* (Red Roses for Me—Allel Al Mouhib) and Shakespeare's *La Mégère Apprivoisée* (The Taming of the Shrew—Allel Al Mouhib)
- **1965:** Tom Brulin's *Les Chiens* (Dogs—Hadj Omar)

As a director, he staged:

- **1964:** Rouiched's *Al-Ghoula* (The Ogress)
- **1965:** Tewfik Al Hakim's *Le Sultan Embarrassé* (The Embarrassed Sultan)
- **1967:** *Monnaies d'Or* (Golden Coins—Adapted from an ancient Chinese legend)

In the same year, he also interpreted and produced three radio plays (Alger Chaîne 3) from a universal repertoire, including works by Sophocles, Aristophanes, and Shakespeare.

- **1968:** *Numance* (Adapted by Himoud Brahimi and Mahboub Stambouli)
- **1982:** Maxime Gorky's *Les Bas-Fonds* (Translated by Mohamed Bougaci)

He wrote and produced:

- **1969:** *Laalegue* (The Bloodsuckers)
- **1970:** *Al-Khobza* (Lit. Bread)
- **1972:** *Homq Salim* (Salim's Folly, adapted from Gogol's *Journal d'un Fou*)
- **1975:** *Hammam Rabi* (Lord's Bath, named after a thermal resort in Northwest Algeria) and *Hout Yakoul Hout* (Fish Eating Fish, co-written with Ben Mohamed)
- **1980:** *Lagwâl* (Sayings)
- **1984:** *Al-Ajouad* (The Generous People)
- **1989:** *Al-Lithem* (The Veil)
- **1992:** *Ettefah* (Apples)
- **1993:** Carlo Goldoni's *Arlequin Valet de Deux Maîtres* (Harlequin, Servant of Two Masters)

He participated in the commentary of two films: Belkacem Hadjadj's *Bouziane Al Kalai* in 1983, and Azzedine Meddour's *Combien je vous aime*

(How Much I Love You) in 1985. In 1990, he adapted five novellas by Aziz Nessim for Algerian Television's Channel Five. These novellas are: *Lila Maâ Madjnoun* (One Night with a Mad Man), *Al Soltane Wal Guerbane* (The Sultan and the Jars), *Al Wissam* (The Medal), *Eshaâb Fak* (People Got It), and *Al Wajeb Al Watani* (The National Duty). He is also the author of two screenplays: *Gorinne* (1972) and *Jalti* (1980).

Alloula was also a cinema actor, performing in:

- **1969:** *Les Chiens* (Dogs), directed by El Hachemi Chérif.
- **1971:** *Ettarfa* (The Rope), directed by El Hachemi Chérif.
- **1989:** *Tlemcen* (A city located in the western part of Algeria), directed by Mouhamed Bouamari.
- **1990:** *Djann Bû Resk* (Bou Resk's Djinn) and *Hassan Niyya* (Hassan the Naïve), directed by Abdelkrim Baba Aissa and Ghouti Bendeddouche respectively.

During the national TV programme *Liqââ* (Encounter) on the 25th of March, 2007, the Tunisian screenwriter and filmmaker Moncef Dhouib (1951-) highlighted Alloula's personal qualities, while openly acknowledging the influence of his knowledge, generosity, and humility. He noted that Alloula was originally meant to visit Tunisia for three days in the 1970s. However, upon discovering a keen interest in theatrical art, he chose to extend his stay to three months, during which he delivered lectures. Alloula was tragically assassinated in Oran on the 10th of March, 1994, during what is referred to in Algeria as the Black Decade.

SUMMARY OF THE PLAYS FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL VERSIONS

2.1. *Lamkhâkh* (The Two Brains)⁴

At first glance, “*Lamkhâkh*” translates to the plural form “The Brains”. However, upon reading the play, it becomes clear that the playwright is specifically targeting two particular “brains”, thus implying a dual form. Actually, this play was penned in the decade after Algeria gained independence, a time marked by profound social, economic and political change. This period drew the keen eyes of columnists and critics alike, who used their writings both as a form of escape and as a tool to rouse dormant consciousness. Adar is one of the Algerian playwrights who subtly rebelled against political prejudice and social oppression. It is evident, even without closely examining the text, that the play revolves around themes of injustice, restricted freedom, and ignorance. The play features thirty-one characters, with six of them standing out as protagonists. The characters are a judge, a defendant, a loon, a thinker, a caretaker, a doorkeeper, a president, eight spokespersons (among them stand one from the West and another from the East; namely the two brains that inspired the title of this play), three men, a woman, an old lady, a husband, a wife and nine visitors. The judge is taken aback to find himself dressed as an arbitrator should be and is eager to join a group where everything is organised, everyone is in their proper role, and time is considered “money”. However, the group refused to admit him, so he went to another place where chaos prevails due to the ever-increasing number of citizens. The loon (who received some religious education in his childhood), was beaten several times by the judge and the thinker after his proposal to open a court in the city to arbitrate people’s conflicts. He was unequivocally accused of displaying demonic traits and was instructed not

⁴ Mohamed Adar, *Lamkhâkh*, Douroub Al-Mouwadjaha, 2000.

to repeat such a proposal (as if anarchy was a deliberate choice). Only after persistent insistence was the project accepted. Nevertheless, people were judged with an unexpected casualness. The term “party” is forbidden, and anyone who dares to use it is met with disapproval, starting from the president himself. He asserts his dominance and refuses to be overthrown by anyone else, as he declared during his visit to the judge’s town. He seeks prestige and now demands that the town be kept tidy and that the people show their approval; this is all that matters to him. The reason for his visit is to attend a speech to be delivered the following day by the judge. However, his presence coincides with a trial between the East and the West, in which everyone has a say. The doorkeeper represents this division but no longer knows where to stand. Having spent his life observing the back-and-forth movement between the two sides, he now questions whether it would be safe to leave this job, especially since he has been poorly remunerated for his efforts. The debate between both regions’ envoys takes the form of a mess with many “detours” to elude touchy issues. During the trial, the judge learns that the easterners’ funds failed to reach their rightful recipients due to the interference of thieves and traitors. Meanwhile, the westerners complain about migration issues and a lack of money, despite their large territory, small population, strong soldiers, and prosperous agriculture. Here, too, notions of thievery, disloyalty, and greed for money are prevalent. A shift in the events occurs when the judge is blamed. He is accused of worsening the living conditions of the people, who are forced to stand or lie prostrate as he passes by. Additionally, the existence of an association defending the oppressed against the harsh court angered both the judge and the thinker; they felt that anything threatening them had to be dealt with. At this critical moment, the role of the caretaker becomes significant, as he inspects every city-dweller, while the thinker insists on gathering information about suspicious individuals. This was the case for a bearded man who, denounced by one of his fellow citizens, was immediately suspected and condemned to beheading. Furthermore, several ordinary people who criticised the judge and his supporters faced threats as a result. It becomes apparent that the judge, who decided to speak on religion and politics (and possibly economics if time allows), will not write anything himself. Instead, he has summoned the loon, the thinker and even the caretaker to take on the task. On the appointed day, visitors arrived with

their shopping bags, which they presented to their “superior”, eager to see and hear what the “Master” had to say. While they waited outside, one woman among them was told to step back. Feeling the chill and unease, they began setting up tents as makeshift shelters to protect themselves from the cold and the insecurity that tormented them. It was as if they had predicted their fate. No sooner had the judge appeared than he declared war on them and their tents. Bombs and missiles were unleashed to burn and destroy all the shelters but one. Someone who claimed to know the judge’s true identity occupied this remaining shelter. He addressed him as “Hachemi” and informed him that his father and brothers were dead, and that his mother had been kidnapped. He then commanded the loon and the thinker—who were initially hesitant to believe him—to stop addressing the judge as “Sir” (Sidi). The judge realised he had lost his “protective” status, as he knew this man had come to reclaim what had been wrongfully taken from him: his rights.

2.2. *Lagwâl* (Sayings)⁵

Alloula’s contribution to the development of the Algerian stage is immense. The issues he addresses are so closely tied to the social reality of the country that the public swiftly embraced them. *Lagwâl* is a sort of trilogy featuring a Minstrel (a *guwâl*) who tells a different story each time, with varying interpretations—essentially reflecting the people’s perspectives on the events. Through the characters in the three stories, much is revealed about the suffering endured by the citizens under the yoke of the French occupation of Algeria during the first half of the twentieth-century, characterised by poverty, inequality, and disloyalty. However, these hardships are portrayed as diminishing in the face of people’s persistence, astuteness, and patience.

The first story centres on a driver named Kaddour and his so-called friend, Nacer. Kaddour submits his resignation to his manager, whom he considered a friend. He vented his frustrations, rejecting any blame for

⁵ Abdelkader Alloula, *Lagwâl*, Moufam Publications, 1997.

disruptions. After fifteen years of enduring mistreatment from Nacer, Kaddour decided to express his dissatisfaction. Leaving his friend's factory was a relief for him, as he was ready to salvage his self-respect and dignity. Previously, he had acted as an intermediary between the workers and their boss, parroting words he neither understood nor agreed with, merely to placate their grievances and anger. This was all because he was blinded by the false friendship he believed his manager had for him. If the friendship had been genuine, Nacer would not have attempted to sell Kaddour's daughter a necklace illegally brought from abroad. At least, this is what some well-meaning individuals hoped he would realise—forcing him to reassess his values and examine the flaws in his supposed friend's character. Both were once passionate patriots during the war, young men with noble dreams. What changed afterwards? Why did Sir Nacer's behaviour shift so drastically after independence? This was something Kaddour could not understand. His friend was using the factory for his own gain and that of his relatives and connections—building, travelling, and purchasing items at the expense of the factory and its workers, among other things. Despite his promises to safeguard his country, he became greedy and selfish, losing sight of the purpose of his role in that factory. Some claim that Kaddour actually left after his confrontation with his friend. Others suggest that he heeded his fellow workers' advice to stay and hope for better days, specifically for a positive change in his friend's behaviour. Another account says that he regained his job due to his experience as a driver and that he subsequently fought against the abuse of workers, which eventually led to his friend's dismissal.

The events of the second story unfold in a room where a father, Ghecham, offers advice to his son, Messaoud, after many years of hard labour. Ghecham has spent two years working for a French settler in the vineyards, six years as a blacksmith, four years in a quarry, three years at a port, three years in an iron factory, and eleven years for a National Company. In reality, father and son seldom communicate deeply, and when they do, they avoid addressing the core issues. Today, Ghecham seeks to make up for lost time by recounting his life as an orphan from a young age, struggling to survive with almost nothing. He shares the hardships he and his wife Badra endured, moving from house to house and job to job, and expresses his gratitude for

her enduring commitment. He also reflects on the solidarity of the workers during their bleak times, as well as his recent termination from the National Company. In fact, this last event was surprisingly quiet. Ghecham had waited a long time for the doctor's diagnosis, which eventually revealed that he had asthma—likely contracted during his time working as a miner. Naturally, he felt despondent as he thought about his five family members. However, this led him to reflect on all the objects he encountered on his way home, viewing them as the products of his long hours of hard work. He missed his job so deeply that he yearned for his workshop, his machine, the trade union he used to be a part of, and even the smell of labour. He gazed at his hands, wishing he could contribute more to his country but feeling powerless. Thus, more than anything, he wanted to leave his son an inheritance. Still, this inheritance was not material; it was moral. Ghecham had lived a life of poverty, with all his money spent on renting homes. He had nothing to leave his child except wise words, a photograph of Badra and himself with their child, and the Algerian flag. In reality, he hoped his son would become a good citizen who serves his country within the framework of socialism.

In the third and last story, the Minstrel tells us about a young cardiac patient, a very smart girl named Zainouba, whose illness never stopped her from being cheerful and dynamic. She was so beloved by her parents that her brothers sometimes felt envious. Doctors frequently advised them to indulge her every whim by taking her on outings to help her feel better and forget about her heart condition. One day, her mother decided to take her to another town to visit her uncle Djilali for a few days. Unable to leave Zainouba's young brothers alone, she asked an elderly woman at the train station to look after her daughter throughout the journey. The old woman kindly agreed, especially after learning about Zainouba's illness. What stands out about Zainouba's character is her remarkable curiosity and her uncanny ability to read people's minds with a single glance. She would gaze at each passenger and describe their life, thoughts, or occupation. Unfortunately, upon reaching her destination, she discovered that everything had changed. Her uncle, once a talkative man, remained silent throughout their walk home. He, who used to lift and embrace her during her visits, lacked the strength to hold her this time. The house seemed almost empty, with the woolen

mattresses missing, the dinner was meagre, and her cousins appeared to be starving. She quickly sensed that something was wrong with her uncle's family and insisted on learning more. The issue was that her uncle had lost his trade due to complications from his involvement with the trade union. Determined to hear the full story before going to sleep, she listened as her uncle recounted his long and painful experiences with his fellow workers and their subsequent dismissal. Some say she took a deep breath and passed away, saddened by the plight of the workers. Others claim that she recovered after hearing the story and spent the remaining evenings in cafés with her uncle and his friends, engaging in light-hearted conversations.

TRADAPTATIONS OF THE PLAYS

3.1. Mohamed Adar's *Lamkhâkh* (The Two Brains)

(Presented for the 1st time in Oran on February 24th, 1972, performed 20 times)

Act one

Scene One

Thinker: Before this man came (pointing to the judge), we were used to sleeping in this place. As soon as he came, he transformed it into a court. Now, this side is for sleeping and that one for judging.

Loon: The judge is well trained you know... The day he came (pointing to the judge), he found us, this man (pointing to the thinker) and me, biting each other. He biting me and me biting him, he biting me and me biting him... Until this man (pointing to the judge) reconciled us. We were amazed at how he could manage that! Most of the time, we would stay eight hours or eight nights biting each other, and that day he quickly ironed out our problem. Just after that, he told us that he was a judge.

Thinker: From that day on, that man began calling him judge. I heard him! He called him judge, me too I started calling him judge. People heard us calling him judge, so they did too; we forgot about his real name!

Loon: The man who is talking now was once talking with the judge... He was attempting to philosophise but was soon "unmasked," this man is not a philosopher!

Judge: A philosopher who didn't carry on with his studies can't be called a philosopher!

Loon: The debate between them took a turn, that man who used to philosophise didn't study philosophy, yet he is philosophising... I was duped at the beginning but no longer! (talking to the judge)... Have you ever seen a philosopher who doesn't know how to read or write? This one isn't even able to distinguish between silent and pronounced letters! I really doubt if he isn't "the rubbish of philosophy" itself!

Judge: A philosopher who didn't carry on with his studies can't be called a philosopher!

Loon: What would you call him, then?

Judge: A thinker!

Loon: I heard this man calling him thinker so I started calling him thinker, too. People heard us calling him thinker, so they did too; we forgot about his real name!

Thinker: Do you see that man who is talking to himself? One day he was shaking his hands and murmuring... More than that, he was dressed in white with a green belt around his waist, I've never seen a rosary as big as his! Cloths were hanging upon his arms and breast, cloths of various colours. Jesus! One in green, one in white, one in yellow, one in red, as if he owned all the city's cloths! You know, an overthrow took place because of those cloths (silence). When this man (pointing to the judge) saw that man (pointing to the loon) dressed in white, with his belt, handkerchief and mixed cloths, with a flag at his hand he exclaimed...

Judge: What is the reason for your coming here, loon?

Thinker: I heard "the judge" calling this man loon, so I started calling him loon, too. Even the others called him loon; we forgot about his real name!

Judge: As soon as I entered, they undressed me. I beseeched them to give me back my clothes but in vain; instead they gave me these clothes. When I entered, I found all people dressed in the same way! I haven't yet settled that I heard bells jingling, bells Good Lord, bells! In this town bells ring at lunch time, believe you me I'm not exaggerating! I thought they were calling for war! I was taken to a room where people were queuing. I was

really surprised by the order established in this town. For them, time is a sacred thing! There was a time for washing, a time for having coffee, a time for working, a time for having lunch, a time for playing, a time for having dinner and a time for sleeping. Great order reigned, I implored them to let me form part of the Organising Committee but they rebuffed me! Something amazed me actually, if someone eats potatoes here, Jesus! Everybody will eat potatoes! If someone eats turnip, carrots, or aubergines, trust me, everyone will eat turnip, carrots, or aubergines. They didn't accept me into their Organising Committee cos I think they were worried I'd change their programme. Still, the committee thought about everything except a court!

Thinker: The Organising Committee didn't think about a court, but Sir did!

Loon: One day, we became overrun with work; people coming from here and there. Anyway, they came from everywhere, to the point that they were "packed like sardines!" People were waiting outside. They were overcrowded as though they were an army with the aim of attacking us! I came and said to the judge, "what do you think if we open a court just nearby?"

Thinker: That's Satan! (walking towards the judge).

Loon: As soon as he heard the phrase "a court just nearby" he bit me repeatedly... He was almost going to kill me so I escaped. When I came back late in the afternoon to sleep, he found me again... Bit me once more, then said to that man (pointing to the thinker):

Judge: Don't let me do that on my own, please! Come and bite him with me. If you don't do it today, one day *he* will do it!

Loon: This very man (the judge) gave that man (the thinker) permission to bite me. Now, both are biting me. I couldn't stay with them so I run away cos they bit me in any place they found me; they bit me while washing, while working and even while eating! They even starved me, so I became a vagabond and decided to hide from them. This "judge" used to send a traitor to bite me, he came tacking in the dark and bit me. They bit me where on earth they found me! They did that over seven days and seven nights till I begged them not to do it again!

Judge: Never repeat that again!

Loon: They accused me of thieving. In fact, I'm a literate man brought *up* with a certain religious education. I remained *up* and didn't want to go *down*; I was afraid to fall. I didn't want to come down fearing this very fall, and I'm still up, here I am! Here I am!

Scene Two

"The caretaker, the doorkeeper, the judge, the thinker, and the loon."

Caretaker: (enters) Am I not the very man who you've appointed to watch the door?

Judge: Yes, you are!

Doorkeeper: He's been standing here by the door for three days, shall I let him in or kick him out?

Judge: (makes a sign to the loon and thinker and whispers in their ears) Let him in! (The caretaker leaves).

Scene Three

"The judge, thinker and loon are sitting... A man enters."

Thinker: Here is the first man we judged!

Loon: As soon as he entered, the judge, clad in his gown, held the book and placed it in front of him before leafing through the pages.

Judge: (The judge whispers in the thinker's and loon's ears)... The court sentenced you to leave this side and that for the rest of your life!

Defendant: Every time I come here, you tell me I'm sentenced to quit this side, you never want to sentence me to enter through it!

Act Two

“In this scene, there is a new door: that of an Association.”

Doorkeeper: The door is solid; my health is good. We're living underground! Here, I *am* the doorkeeper. I've been in front of this door for as long as I remember. Some people say that I was born beside it, while some historians claim that it was made out of me! In fact, those who don't know the door don't know me. I could've had children with it if it were a woman! When it rains on it I feel cold, when it becomes hot I get fever, I'm living on a threshold but nobody cares about me! When they speak, they speak and do things on my behalf. They wanted to enlarge the whole town while I couldn't even get through the door! They said they want to do that for me, as if the town was too small for me! All I wanted was to come in through this door, just like everyone else had. Yet, I found it closed! The door was closed only for the doorkeeper and not for the others! Will I always stay by this door? Why am I a doorkeeper at all? And then, for whom? The day I got angry I walked up and said to those people who were there, “For whom do I keep watching the door? For the town; the earth; the court; you; the door; the party?” As soon as they heard the word party, they came to me and started staring at me with a gaze of a single man! I saw their eyes moving, and even if I was among them, I suddenly felt like a stranger to them and was about to regret what I had just said. Then, I looked left and right. One of them spoke to me aggressively, with his blushing face and thin neck. I said to myself that this man must have studied in Germany. “This is not *your* place!” he exclaimed...“Your place is in front of the door not behind it!” Another one, small with a flattened nose, close eyes, with a thin neck, having probably done his studies in China carried on saying, “Being in front or behind the door is not the problem, what is important is to understand the place of the door in the party!” A third person standing alone, stout, with a long nose, probably from the Vatican screeched at me, “Never speak again about Royalty, it's something that doesn't concern you, it's something sacred!” As soon as I knew that Royalty was a sacred thing, I brought the Gospel and started reading it till I learnt Psalms by heart. Then, I went on reading Torah till I learnt the Bible by heart... But in none of them is the term party mentioned! I found eras which differed one from the other

and in which the doorkeeper stays in front of the door even if he is the very person to open it!

Act Three

“We are back to the previous location where the judge, thinker, and loon once stood. Now, the president stands there all on his own.”

President: Those troubled individuals abducted me! I *am* the party leader, owing to the many esteemed friends who support me. They call him President the one who formed the Miserable’ Party! Some individuals claim that he has passed away; others say that he disappeared; some others assert that he emigrated, while the remaining ones say that he was killed. In any case, whether he passed away, disappeared, or emigrated, he was succeeded by two “brains”. It was said that the first “brain”, despite being a sportsperson, caught tuberculosis; his disease lasted less than six months. Whereas the remaining “brain” was, one day, sent to the West because the party feared the potential influence of the judge and his followers on the people of this region. At that time, these neither agreed with the court nor with the party, they simply maintained a neutral stance. The political party needed help especially from the western side, the judge used to send spies there; something that the party ignored. Before he reached the West, we heard about his death and believed the news, even though we hadn’t seen the body! My friends started looking for somebody to replace these two “brains”... They didn’t find any but me!

“The caretaker enters.”

Caretaker: Who are you?

President: (glancing left and right)

Caretaker: Yes, *you*!

President: Me?

Caretaker: Tell me, it’s you, right?

President: Me?!