

DNI KULTURY HOLENDERKIEJ 2009

# CROSSROADS FESTIVAL

**JELEŃIA GÓRA POLAND OCTOBER 19-24 2009**  
**KARKONOSZE COLLEGE - TOWN LIBRARY - CULTURAL CENTRE**

## LITERATURE WITHOUT BORDERS

**Dutch cross border authors**

**YASMINE ALLAS** (Somalia)

**VAMBA SHERIF** (Liberia)

**RODAAN AL GALIDI** (Iraq)

**in debate with Polish  
authors**

**OLGA TOKARCZUK**

**NATASZA GOERKE**

**IGNACY KARPOWICZ**

## ABOUT MIGRATION AND MYTH

*The festival is organized by Fundacja Nemo and Stow. Góry Babel and supported by*  
*- the Foundation for the Production and Translation of Dutch Literature*  
*- the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.*



Polish Jelenia Góra (before 1945 German Hirschberg) in the Czech, German and Polish border area of south-west Polish Lower Silesia (Euroregio Nysa/Neisse) just between Wrocław, Berlin and Prague, is the crossroads of Europe. As the eye of a hurricane, here all European history turned around, changing people, names and borders, from Piast Polish, to Bohemian, Austrian, Prussian/German and since 1945 Polish after forced migrations in all directions, creating a no man's land, a black triangle. The town got its magic by mixing this migrant reality with the magical myths and legends of the nearby Giant and Izer Mountains and the inspiration of numerous pioneers, artists and writers who settled here.



**DUTCH AND POLISH CROSS BORDER AUTHORS**  
debate and presentations, introduction by Olga Tokarczuk

**- THE CROSSROADS CURSE AND THE UNKNOWN PATH**

a local legend about crossroads demons  
performance by Peter Spruijt, Nemo

**-GRANDMOTHERS**

presentation by Ida Baj Karkonosze College on  
"Polish students interviewing their grandmothers  
about migration"

**- THE LIMITS OF FREEDOM**

debate-program with film clips about migration  
& conflicting civil rights by Dutch Anne Frank  
Foundation

**-CONCERT BY DUTCH CHOIR**

"VOCAAL ENSEMBLE GRONINGEN"  
directed by Wilfred Reneman. Medieval and  
renaissance music by Polish and Dutch composers

**-INTRODUCTION BY FLIM TO DUTCH LITERARY  
CLASSICS**

### WHY FOCUS ON MIGRATION?

Europe can be defined as a reality of nations, fixed names and borders. But beyond this reality there is another Europe created by migration; people moving all around at crossroads, using stories and myth to change space and names all the time. Cross border authors are touching this migrant reality by living and writing at crossroads, posing the fundamental question "aren't we all migrants...?"

### WHY JELEŃIA GÓRA?

In Holland migration is linked with the reality of various and coloured minorities, which causes bitter debates about religion and integration. In Poland migration is linked with fate and destiny, which causes emotional debates about history and national identity. In both countries the social reality and life stories of migration are hidden behind invisible borders. The Crossroads Festival brings Dutch and Polish stories of migration together in order to open up the eye of the hurricane, using old en new myths to write about this eye's view. The Crossroads Festival might renew perspectives on migration..,



Jelenia  
górskie  
Centrum  
Kultury



## PROGRAM

**Official Opening Crossroads Festival Monday October 19<sup>th</sup> by the mayor of Jelenia Góra and the chairmen of Nemo and Góry Babel** Program: meeting with Ad van Rijsewijk (Góry Babel) and the writers Yasmine Allas, Natasza Goerke and Ignacy Karpowicz. Introduction and documentary film about Nemo. Introduction and film about The Twins of Tessa de Loo

### KARKONOSZE COLLEGE

**Tuesday October 20<sup>th</sup>**

**Main hall in the Rectorate's building.**

10.00 - 10.05 Official opening of the session by vice-rector prof. Tomasz Winnicki

10.05 - 10.20 The crossroads curse and the unknown path: a local legend about crossroads demons. Performance by Peter Spruijt, Nemo

10.20 - 10.35 Grandmothers; hidden gates to history "Polish students interviewing their grandmothers about migration" presentation by Ida Baj Karkonosze College

10.40 - 11.00 Introduction to the debate by Olga Tokarczuk about migration, language and imagination

11.00- 12.30 Debate between Dutch authors Yasmine Allas (Somalia), Vamba Sheriff (Liberia) and Al Galidi (Iraq) and Polish authors Olga Tokarczuk, Natasza Goerke and Ignacy Karpowicz

**Wednesday October 21<sup>st</sup>**

10.00 - 12.00 Workshops at classrooms.

Students meeting authors at English, German and Polish faculty. Readers about the authors and their books will be handed out in preparation.

a) All visitors will receive a Polish translation of the fragments from the books by the Dutch writers and biographical notes.

b) There will be a publication in the prestigious Polish magazine Odra of excerpts from novels by Yasmine Allas and Vamba Sherif with an introduction by Urszula Topolowa, teacher at Poznan and Wroclaw Universities, expert on Dutch migrant literature.

### TOWN LIBRARY JELENIA GÓRA

**Wednesday October 21<sup>st</sup>**

17.00 - 17.05 Official opening

17.05 - 17.20 The crossroads curse and the unknown path: a local legend about crossroads demons. By Peter Spruijt, Nemo

17.20 - 17.35 Grandmothers; hidden gates to history "Polish students interviewing their grandmothers about migration". By Ida Baj Karkonosze College

17.40 - 18.00 Introduction to the debate by Olga Tokarczuk about migration, language and imagination

18.00- 19.30 Debate between Dutch authors Yasmine Allas (Somalia), Vamba Sheriff (Liberia) and Al Galidi (Iraq) and Polish authors Olga Tokarczuk, Natasza Goerke and Ignacy Karpowicz

### FREE2CHOOSE: DEBATE ABOUT THE DILEMMAS OF MIGRATION

The Dutch Anne Frank Foundation presents a number of film clips about conflicting civil rights and the limits of freedom. The film clips are used to invite visitors to think about and discuss dilemmas concerning migration, human rights and freedom.



### CULTURAL CENTRE JELENIA GÓRA

#### DUTCH LITERATURE CROSSING BORDERS

**Audiovisual Introduction to classic Dutch writers who influenced society**

Classic Dutch writers and one of their books are introduced to the Polish public, showing also fragments of films made of these books.

**1. Monday October 19<sup>th</sup> 18.00**

**The Twin**, (by Ben Sombogaart 2002)  
**film of a book by Tessa de Loo (1946)**

**2. Thursday October 22<sup>th</sup> 18.00**

**Minoes** (by Vincent Bal.) **film of a book by Annie M.G. Schmidt (1911-1995)**

**3. Friday October 23<sup>th</sup> 18.00**

**"Discovery of Heaven"** (by Jeroen Krabbé 2001)  
**film of a book by Harry Mulisch (1927),**

### DUTCH CHOIR

#### VOCAL ENSEMBLE GRONINGEN

Dutch choir sings medieval and renaissance music by Polish and Dutch composers, like choral monastery music from Stary Sacz from the 13<sup>th</sup> century. And 16<sup>th</sup> century Polish choral church music by Bartłomiej Pekiel and Mikolaj Zielinski. But also Dutch madrigals by Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck, 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>e</sup> century. The choir coming from the far north east of the Netherlands, was founded in 1991. It is a group of 20 people directed by Wilfred Reneman.

#### Concerts

Wednesday October 21<sup>st</sup> 18.00 Kopaniec Church

Thursday October 22<sup>nd</sup> 18.00 Wojcieszycze Church

Friday October 23<sup>rd</sup> Swieradów Zdrój, Walking Hall

Saturday October 24<sup>th</sup> 19.00 Holy Cross Church  
Jelenia Góra

# THE AUTHORS

Six authors will attend the Cross Roads Festival in Jelenia Góra October 2009. They will part in the debate, read from their books and answer questions from the audience about their own works. The importance of the festival is also the meeting with authors from a country where migrant writers are extremely rare. All of them are playing an important role in the public debate about migration, the rights of minorities and the meaning of literature in modern society.



## DUTCH AUTHORS

### Yasmine Allas

Yasmine Allas, born in Somalia, came to the Netherlands to become an actress when she was quite young. After some years working as an actress with the well-known director

Theu Boermans, she published her first novel 'Idil' which was quite a success. In her second novel, 'The General with the six fingers', you will find the first signs of the meeting of different cultures, not as a clash of cultures but as a process of learning about 'the other', in the way the famous Polish author Ryszard Kapuscinski also wrote in his book 'The Other'. Yasmine Allas examines the advantages of being an immigrant although she does not forget about the pain of not being able to go back to her native country. As Somalia does not exist as one nation anymore, Yasmine Allas has contributed and still contributes in many ways to the debate about migration, about crossroads. She published a personal booklet entitled 'Homeless and nevertheless at home' in which she writes about the fate of her family who found asylum in the Netherlands and her observations of the changing behaviour of the original Dutch population towards immigrants. Yasmine Allas takes part in many debates and meetings and she writes for newspapers about migration. Part of her new novel Vreemdeling (Stranger) by Yasmine Allas, which will be published in October 2009, will be translated into Polish and published in the well-known magazine Odra. The same text will be distributed among the audience at the festival.



### Vamba Sherif

Vamba Sherif was born in Liberia but spent his youth in Kuwait, where his father was a university professor. At the start of the Gulf War Vamba's family had to leave the country and they fled to Syria. His parents went back to Liberia,

where a civil war was going on. Vamba decided to flee and arrived in the Netherlands where he studied International Law.

In 1999 Vamba Sherif published his first novel, 'The land of the fathers', about the founding of Liberia as a country, by freed slaves sailing from the United States to Africa. His second novel 'The Kingdom of Sheeba' is a very interesting story about an African immigrant family in a small Dutch town. The husband lives in nostalgia and melancholy whereas the women sees all the opportunities the new country offers them and find their own happiness. Vamba Sherif is a cosmopolitan thinker who has lived in various countries and speaks many languages. He did some radio reporting from his native country after the civil war and he has taken part in debates and literary meetings, where he has shown his strong opinion on migration, being an African writer in a European country. Now he is working on a new novel and some of his books will soon appear in various translations. Part of his novel 'The land of the fathers' will be translated into Polish and published in the magazine Odra.



### Al Galidi

Al Galidi has lived in the Netherlands for nine years. He was born in southern Iraq in 1971 but doesn't know the exact date. He explains: "In the desert birthdays aren't celebrated." As a child he wanted to play the violin. His father bought him one but there was no music teacher in his village. He began to think he could play the violin with words and started writing poetry when he was eight years old. Years later he studied civil engineering in the northern Iraqi city of Arbil. Al Galidi left Iraq and arrived in the Netherlands in 1998 as an asylum seeker. His story 'February in Schiphol' is based on his personal experience. As an asylum seeker he was not permitted "to work, to travel or to think," he notes on his website. So he taught himself Dutch and began to write again - for which he thanks the Dutch Immigration Service and the Ministry of Justice. In the meantime he had published a large number of books: novels, poetry and columns in newspapers

## POLISH AUTHORS



### Olga Tokarczuk

Olga Tokarczuk is one of Poland's most important and praised authors. She won many prizes and her work has been translated into some twenty languages. Olga has travelled widely in the western world and also in countries like China,

Malaysia and Syria. She has lived in the Netherlands for more than six months now, giving her a cosmopolitan mind, passionately engaged with the debate on migration. Her latest novel 'Bieguni' (Runners), which won the prestigious NIKE Prize, is all about people moving from one place to another. Olga is fascinated by migration of human beings. Olga Tokarczuk's family came from what now is Ukraine to Poland after World War II. Some of her Ukrainian family moved to France, as she discovered lately.

Olga has also said that Jelenia Góra is a wonderful place to meet immigrant authors from various countries and she will open the festival with an essay on migration.

### Natasza Goerke



Natasza Goerke was born in Poznan where she studied Polish Literature and Oriental Studies. Since the mid-eighties she has lived in Germany but quite often she stays for long periods in Nepal and Tibet where she studies Tibetan and

Nepalese culture, history and language. She is a migrant author writing wonderful and somehow absurd short stories with a philosophical meaning. She shows that what many people consider as truth may be wrong. Besides Polish her work has been published in German, English and other languages. Poland has a great tradition of emigrant authors (the Nobel Prize Winner Czeslaw Milosz was one of them), and Natasza Goerke is one of their representatives. With her great knowledge of other cultures and religions and her open mind towards the world, we are very happy she has agreed to take part in the festival.



### Ignacy Karpowicz

Ignacy Karpowicz was born in the north-eastern part of Poland. Karpowicz must have been confronted with various cultures and religions in his youth. In his biographical notes one reads about him as novelist, traveller and translator. Ignacy Karpowicz is not the traveller that moves all

the time from one place to the other. He lived in Ethiopia for long periods to study its culture and language. He translated from the Ethiopian language and he wrote a book about his travels in Ethiopia entitled 'New flower ( and bees) of the Emperor'. In writing this book he tries to get nearer to history, culture and daily life of that exotic country. The author also lived in Costa Rica to study its culture and language, and he translated literature from Spanish. In his writing Karpowicz is taking a certain distance to the world, to the reality as presented to us in a different way, often false and stereotype. He is an author who is very interested in the dialogue with writers from countries which are often seen as exotic places. His latest novel 'Gesty' (Gestures) is nominated for the most prestigious literary NIKE prize.

#### **Crossroads Festival**

is organized by Foundation Nemo and Stow. Góry Babel in cooperation with Kolegium Karkonoskie, Town Library of Jelenia Góra, Gmina Stara Kamienica and Dutch Anne Frank Foundation.

#### **Aim**

1. Promoting Polish Jelenia Góra as cultural crossroads and centre of migration culture
2. Debate about the position of migrant authors in Europe
3. Promoting cultural exchange between Holland and Poland, with the focus on literature
4. The festival is not meant as a mere presentation, but as a platform for debate, workshops and performances

#### **Concept, central coordination and contact**

Peter Spruijt Fundacja Nemo. Miedzylesie 5 - 58-512 Stara Kamienica - Poland - tel (0048 -75) 7693605 or (0031) 06-53604513 [nemoland@op.pl](mailto:nemoland@op.pl) - [www.nemoland.nl](http://www.nemoland.nl)

#### **Literature program:**

Ad van Rijsewijk and Olga Tokarczuk Stow. Góry Babel

#### **Dutch Nemo settling in Poland**

Because of migration and lost meanings the area around Jelenia Góra literally became 'a place in between', a no man's land welcoming everybody.

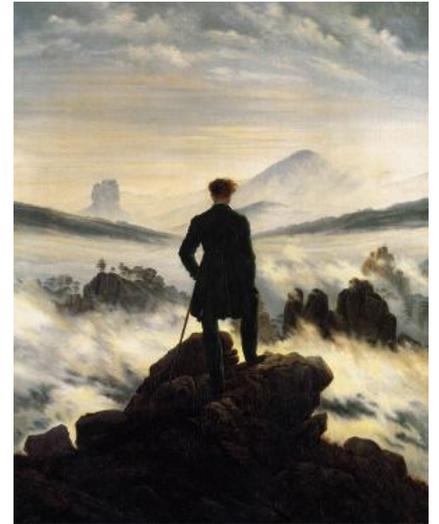
For this reason the Dutch walking association Nemo settled in Poland, founding 'Nemoland' (means nobody's land) in Stara Kamienica; as a crossroads between (lost) cultures, especially between Poland and Holland.

For Nemo walking is a metaphor for slow writing and reading the inner landscape, just as slow food, enjoying landscape by walking around; taking at crossroads 'the unknown path instead of the mainroads to fixed meanings.

# LITERATURE AT CROSSROADS

As festival about cross border literature will discuss fundamental questions about the position of cross border authors regarding migration. Questions could be:

1. What is the influence and the effect of migration on their books?
2. What does it mean for authors to live and to write between two cultures?
3. Should cross border literature reflect private life of authors social/political reality?
4. How authors react to dilemmas around migration in Europe with growing support for nationalist and anti migration movements?
5. What is the connection between Dutch and Polish migration issues and cross border literature?



A crossroads is literally an intersection where two or more roads meet. It has also the meaning of a crisis situation or point in time when a critical decision must be made. In its metaphorical sense, however, the term can refer to any sort of abstract place, location, event, or forum where people meet and share ideas. In addition, crossroads play a key role in the religion, folklore, and magic traditions of many cultures.

A crossroads is seen as no-man's land, not owned by anyone, and, as such, is a perfect place to conduct a ritual. The crossroads is a location "between the worlds," a site where supernatural spirits can be contacted and paranormal events can take place. Symbolically, it can mean a locality where two realms touch and therefore represents liminality, a place literally "neither here nor there."

In most cultures it is a significant place of meeting with transcendent powers (gods, spirits, the dead). It is often close to the symbolic content of the door, since the crossroads can also symbolize the necessary transition to the new (from one phase of life to another; from life to death).

## CROSSROADS AND MYTH

Cross border literature is leading the reader to crossroads

To win the favour of the gods or spirits, obelisks, altars, or stones were erected, or inscriptions were placed at crossroads.

Practically everywhere in Europe crossroads were also regarded as the meeting place of witches, evil demons of fertility gods. For this reason, Christians have erected crosses, chapels, and statues of the Madonna and the saints at crossroads. Among many African tribes, the symbolism of the crossroads plays a significant role in ritual acts venerating Elegba as mediator between gods and men. In Greek mythology Oedipus slays his father at a crossroads. The Greeks made sacrifices to a goddess of the (three-way) fork in the road who was often represented in triple form: Hecate, goddess of ghosts and magic, who was also closely associated with the realm of death and motherhood.

*Pictures*

*Left: Crossroads devil Rübezahl / Liczyrzepa from Giant's Mountains (Riesengebirge / Karkonosze,) inspiration of many authors. 16<sup>th</sup> century.*

*Right: Caspar Friedrich 1818 Wanderer in Giant's Mountains*

*Under: Magic Crossroads*

