



BERBERS IN SOLWAY

JOURNAL OF A MOROCCAN POET

ON HADRIAN'S BORDER

March 31 to April 13 2002

Hafsa Bekri-Lamrani

Hello Britain ! Newcastle Sunday March 31, 2002

Steve Chettle, the director of the Writing of the Wall Project who was so concerned about not finding me in a crowd of people immediately spotted me among the four foreigners who arrived at Newcastle today. After our meeting, Steve offered to show me the very reason that brought me all the way from Morocco : Hadrian's Wall ! I come from a country with impressive walls in every imperial city. The small heaps of stone which Steve was pointing at as he was driving immediately suggested that I had to seek other angles of vision to be impressed. Comfort wasn't long to come. As Steve was driving along I cried with joy: "Daffodils !"

'Yes ! You don't have them in Morocco' ?

'No. Not freely growing in the fields. I haven't seen daffodils since I was in the U.K. in 1976. 'Alright', I thought, 'daffodils as a first poetic sign , it suits me'.

Daffodils again in the blooming festival of colours in the garden of the Riverside Guest House in Corbridge, the dainty little town where I spent my first Hadrian's Wall night.

Vindolanda and Bowness-on-Solway, Monday April 1,2002

The weather has decided to be nice and friendly : no harsh northern wind, no rain. After a full traditional English breakfast with cereals, yoghurt, fruit, mushrooms , scrambles eggs and, coffee I was ready for the rest of my journey to Bowness-on-Solway my final destination.

'This road we are on is where the Wall used to be' Steve told me and on the way we stopped to visit the Vindolanda Museum and the Vindolanda Roman Site. I was getting used to the Hadrian's Wall geographical reference. The Wall, the Vallum, the Forts. As for the ruins here, they looked more consistent. In the museum one can find a lot of objects from the everyday Roman life : leather, glass, pottery, metal daily used or worn objects along with interesting scripts like this letter of invitation for a birthday party on September 11 from Claudia Severa to Sulpecia Lepedina, the wife of Vindolanda prefect.

Our next stop: Bowness-on-Solway a Tiny village. A few beautiful houses, different architectural styles rowed along the one street of the village. No stores. Peacefully living inhabitants and one pub. A blackboard sign at the entrance of the pub said : "Food for Lunch served until 2.00 p.m".. It's a quarter to two. Abrupt stop of Steve's car ! 'We'd better have lunch !' And lunch we had. Sort of.

'How do you like your steak ?'

'Medium'. The lady came back with an absolutely impossible to chew, overcooked steak. I ate the veggies and asked for a pudding and a cup of tea. Oh well, I'll come back for a bowl of soup and a good chat with the locals.



Wallsend Guest House

We then proceeded to Walls end Guest House, a few paces from the Pub, facing what had been the Roman Maya Fort (as I heard later). An excellent Bed and Breakfast with British traditions and modern comfort. Patsie, a frail gentle looking lady seems to be the soul of the House; so sweet and modest ! I was shown to a small, lovely room. Red brick paper on the wall, lime brushed ceiling, classic British furniture, a painting of local landscape, elegantly sculpted fireplace outdated by central heaters.

No time to unpack ! We have to go to the Tullie House in Carlisle. Steve knocks at my door and off we went. Cold rainy weather. Scotland could be guessed on the opposite border of the firth. Typical dreamlike misty day of the region I suppose.

Tullie House in Carlisle. Roman and Celtic objects are exhibited. One can sense the presence of the indigenous Celtic myths in the Latin culture. The presence of Celtic Goddesses for example. Like in Vindolanda, objects of everyday life testifying the residential aspect of the Roman presence in this region of the Roman empire. Hadrian, it seems was more interested in stopping the "Northern Barbarians" rather than conquering them. The wall and its forts were more places of protection and residence than army headquarters for strategic battles. Back to Bowness which will be "home" for the next twelve days.

How to Spell Bowness - Tuesday April 2,2002

After breakfast, Steve and I walk through the village. So refreshing these cottages lined up on the one street of the village. More than the cottages, people in the village are so friendly. Smiles and greeting from every single person we meet.

We took a pedestrian path to the sea. Grey Sea ! Strange, I am used to an ever blue sea. Steve is talking about the Wall. He's been working so hard on his "Writing on the Wall Project". In fact a great approach of a cultural, historical approach of globalisation! Using the Roman empire as a common heritage to link U.K. and international writers to exchange of ideas, work with children in schools here and now ! Now this type of globalisation suits me ! It's amusing too. Imagine my "Barbarian ancestors from North Africa were used to garrison a wall to stop the Celtic Barbarians of the north. An Steve today gathering us in a sort of " ex-Roman colonised unite !

Back from our walk in the village, Steve drove us to Carlisle for quick shopping and a programmed BBC interview with Bellinda Artingstoll – Radio Cumbria in which Steve presents the Writing on the Wall Project and I answer a few questions such as

'Did it come as surprise to you that Moroccans were here with Emperor Hadrian 2000 years ago ?'

'No. Not at all. The Romans had been in Morocco for 400 years when Hadrian had the wall built. Comparison could be established with France colonising North Africa and using North Africans as soldiers during WWI and WWII.' Was my spontaneous answer.

On our way back to Bowness, we stopped at the entrance of Burgh-by-Sands, we took a public footpath that led us to a place "where the wall used to be" and which was now an emerald green pasture. I'm getting more and more fond of these Cumbrian folks who transformed Hadrian's Wall into a ghost, using its stones for more practical purposes and turning the land where "it used to be" into rich meadows for their sheep and cattle. Pragmatic ? Yes but with a great sense of history since they do cherish the Ghost, and make it present everywhere in everyone's memory : Here a house named Severus, or The Fort Cottage, a Guest House (my "home") named Walls End Guest House. No wall or hardly any but the Wall's presence all along the remains of the Wall. Great sense of humour !
How can I spell what I feel ?



***How to spell Bowness
on the Way to Your Soul***

***The Wall as an excuse,
People as a very good reason,
Magic landscape as a
Dream place,
Birds as a symphony of Life and
Peace be on you all***

***Hafsa Bekri-Lamrani
Bowness on Solway
April 2, 2002***

Down for dinner. I was told by Patsie that she has five new guests who had ended up in Bowness after having walked the Wall. They were at the pub she said. Of course ! Where else could they be in Bowness ? I walk to the pub. I ask Dave if there were any "Newcomers" sounding local myself ! He showed me a table in the dining room one step down from the bar.

'Excuse me . Are you the people who are walking the Wall ?'

'Yes. You must be the Moroccan writer. Patsie talked to us about you.'

'Yes I am.' (Boy news travel fast in any village of the world!)

'We are walking the Wall to raise money for guide dogs for the Blind.'

'Well I can contribute some money.'

They produce a yellow plastic doggie and I contribute a few pounds. There are five men some young some older working in different fields? They gathered for a good cause and an

adventurous walk along the Wall. My love for this half existing wall used for communication, historical background and, social welfare keeps growing as I meet people in the region where it *once* stood as a boundary. We would have talked about the wall much longer if a 36 years old Texan tourist who was in Bowness for one night did not spoil our evening with some stupid political nonsense. He served us every possible cliché you spend your time of trying not to use when you speak of Americans because you have met so many nice Americans along the way. The last straw is when he asked me if Walt Whitman was black. Not that it matters so much but still, this wasn't even a far fetched poet from some alien country outside the U.S.. Peter one of the five walkers stood up and went playing darts and I decided to go back "home" to Wallsend Guest House after a forgiving good bye to the Texan.

On The Border - Wednesday April 3, 2002

Steve having left yesterday, this is my first exploring-on-my-own day. Steve bought me two maps of the region. I decide to walk south east to Port Carlisle, the closest village. The weather is fine. The road lounges the sea. Scotland is visible. Gorgeous, luxuriant vegetation. The daffodils again ! So much at home in this land. Daffodils like bright yellow suns enlighten the fields while the gorse shrubs try to compete with them without the same glamorous simplicity. The sea on my left lays like brown blanket. Strange colour for me who have always taken blue for granted as a colour for the sea.

People driving by. Fast drivers but always with a second or two for a smile or a little bow of the head as they drive by you. An old man rides by me on a bike. Greetings, a "nice weather hey ?" then rides along. A few minutes later, he comes back, climb down from his bicycle and addresses me :

'Where are you going ?'

'Port Carlisle'

'I live there, though I am from the other side of the Wall'

'I came from Morocco to visit the region and write about the Wall'

'How nice !'



Port Carlisle

‘What do you do ?’

He said he was retired and he told me how he had been a coal miner and a digger after the shift in energy sources. He recently worked at the burial of the foot and mouth diseased sheep. We reached Port Carlisle his final destination and my returning to Bowness point. Before parting Joa Thompson (that was his name) showed me what used to be a port for sea travel to Carlisle and I understood the name Port Carlisle given to the village. I walked back to Bowness, to my Victorian furnished room for a cup of tea and a little nap.

Journal writing got me to half past six.. Patsie and I had planned to go to Port Carlisle’s Pub for to meet some local people. As we arrive , Patsie showed me where the railway used to be from big days of the industrial era. We went into the Hope and Anchor Inn, Port Carlisle pub where she introduced to Kevin, her brother and Lynn her sister, Roy a zoologist and the third member of the obnoxious club as I was to discover later, Lawrence and, Johnty who talked to me about his various trips in the world and told me there was a lot more to discover about Hadrian’s wall while he was admiring the elaborate mosaics of the Volubilis Roman site in Morocco on the postcards I showed him. Lawrence asked me if I was good at darts. I had never tried. No problem! He was ready to teach me. Next thing we were playing darts. He won of course, but nevertheless asked me to be in his team that night at Bowness. After a chat with Roy who had been to Morocco looking for a rare bird on the Atlas Mountains and another chat with Lynn who asked me about the type of poetry I wrote, we return Patsie and I to Bowness for dinner. Lawrence was going to dress up and join us at the Kingsarms Pub for the darts game. Roy, Johnty, Lawrence, Lynn, Kevin, Patsie, Bill ! Great people and poetry as a tool to remember them !

On The Border

*Being on the border
on the edge,
on the verge
on the brink
on the brim
on the rim
on the fringe
on the coast
on the bank
of Scotland and
finding an open door*

*No boundaries
no barriers
no pillar of Hercules to crush
no Rubicund to cross
only a few stoned dwarf Wall
in a dreamlike nature
now veiled in mist
now blooming in the sun*

And

*People !
All the Grahams and the Bells
the Ogles and the Pringles,
the Armstrongs and the Robsons
the Nixons and the Dixons
the Scotts and the Elliotts
The Ridleys and the Beatties*

*All these and other Reivers,
Once dreaded warriors
Now peaceful farmers or
Haafnetters
Joined for ales or else
In Kingsarms Pub
with no arms but
darts to play and jokes to share*

(Page one of two)

*I felt tempted
In this land
teeming with ghosts
to ask Hadrian's soul
perhaps present and invisible
in some corner of this pub
where his fort once stood,
ask his two thousand year old soul
about people and barriers.*

*And I could almost sense
a smile on his face
as he would tell me:
"Poets and poetry taught me
History's ephemeral vanity and
the strength of life over stones
at the self moment I was building
Walls"*

*And Hadrian's soul
Vanished
As Lawrence in his Scottish kilt
Gave vent to a cry of joy :
He had won the darts game !*

***Inspired by people in
Bowness-on-Solway
Written in may 2002 in
Casablanca Morocco***

A Piece of Paradise Bowness-on-Solway, Thursday April 4, 2002

Since I had yesterday, turned left at Kingsarms Pub and walked south to Port Carlisle, today had to be my turning right exploring the west part of Bowness. So I walked past the Pear Tree farm where I was to visit Jim Eldridge, Bowness's writer, past the Bowness school and a few houses further I was out of Bowness lounging the sea. I decided to explore a sort of small narrow peninsula which I told was part of the railway to Scotland that was built in the early twentieth century but only functioned for three years. I walked for a little while, and the birds songs, the quality of silence invited me to sit down and freely enjoy this magic place. As to keep some of the magic for later I drew my note book and my pen from my bag and started writing :



A Piece of Paradise

The sky this morning is under my feet, for the sky here is not hopelessly blue as in my country. Here, it generously rains itself into the ground and grows back velvety green. (The second I finished this line, the sun came out !) Well, I will not take my line back since Scotland across me has decided to be veiled in misty mystery like a dreamy oriental woman. Birds around me underline the spiritual depth of silence with their harmonious, colourful songs. I rise my eyes for inspiration and a diamond gently held by crossed weeds shines in the sun. It looks like the sun wants to play a hide and seek game with me on this spot of the universe. Dew and sun ! So many liquid diamonds to treasure with your eyes and keep safe in a secret corner of your memory .

Still spiting me the sun now hot on this side of the shore stretches his arms and indecently tries to unveil Scotland which resists him like a shy young girl. Insisting still, the many armed ball of fire darts his hot rays through my clothes and forces me to take my off coat. I complain to a green ladybird who ignores me and goes on. I walk back to Bowness, my shadow on my left side and the sun above my head.

Do we take peaceful moments for granted on a howling planet. Who should I thank for a morning of evasion into a paradise purity ?

God for having spared small heavens like this from frantic madness !

Hadrian for having built a wall which is gathering us today !

The not so Barbarian people north of this island who conquered their land back and used "God good old stones" (left by Hadrian) to build their cathedrals. Proud and free like other "Barbarians in my country who loved freedom and resisted the Romans !

I would certainly thank you people of this land who have been so kind as to have protected its peace and beauty, and Steve Chettle for his beautiful idea of gathering poets and poetry from all ex-Roman colonised countries for his Writing on the Wall Project and his sparing no effort to make of the project a very appreciable reality.

Dreaming, Writing or having lunch before closing time ? Here you have to choose. It was a little after two when I came back to the village. Bowness pub was closed. Well I won't starve! The British Bed & Breakfast as well as their hotels have the wonderful habit of supplying an electric kettle, instant coffee, tea bags, milk and biscuits. A nice, comforting attention for regular lunch missing people like me. I could always have a nice dinner after my poetry reading tonight. Back to Patsie and Bill's I sat to prepare the reading as I drank tea and ate biscuits. Reading was to take place at 1900 at the Lindow Hall in Bowness. It was my first reading and though a bit nervous about the kind of audience I would have, I felt confident enough since they were several people I had already met. Steve comes from Newcastle at six o'clock. Reading is announced for seven at the Lindow Hall at Bowness as posted by Patsie in Bowness and other close villages.



Poster made by Bill and Distributed by Patsie in Bowness and Burgh by Sands

Steve and I listened to the broadcast of the BBC interview we had with Belinda at Radio Cumbria. I felt thankful to Belinda for a very nice interview. We then went to the Hall at half past six to prepare the room, as Steve had some slides to show for the presentation of the Writing on the Wall Project. People came gradually, from Bowness and Port Carlisle. Small audience because it overlapped with two other events planned for long before : A conference on the Railway and a Women Institute gathering. We had a good quality of audience though, and a nice dialogue after the reading.

Time for dinner after my first cultural encounter with the inhabitants of this region. Well it is forgetting that Kingsarms pub serves no dinner after nine o'clock. I drink some mineral water and engage in a conversation with John who is introduced to me by Steve. John is a "sixtiish" year old man who has heard the interview on the Radio : 'You said you liked people in this land' with an appreciative look in his eyes. 'Absolutely, there is a great quality of friendliness and openness around here' I reply. 'I learn more from my cattle than from human beings who could be real beasts' As he talked I was thinking that we can sometimes invest more hope in the awareness of people like John, their common sense and dignity than in any elaborate politics. Wherever I have been in the world, talking to people, real people and not virtual intellectuals or greedy technocrats, has always brought back to me a sense soothing happiness. It was getting late and John had to drive back to his farm and I went back to the guest house where Patsie was kind enough to prepare a bowl of carrot soup for me. You can't live on poetry alone !



The Bay at Anthorn

Biking around the Loop ! Bowness Peninsula April 5, 2002

Inasmuch as yesterday was my “meet-the-Cumbria sun” day, today, though sunny, is my “meet-the-Cumbria-North-Wind” day. It looks like nature’s elements are taking turn in introducing me to their version of the spring in this area ! Up and refreshed with a nice shower and a compensating breakfast, I asked Patsie (What would I do without Patsie!) if she could suggest a nice place to explore.

‘You could go down to Milefortlet, passed the old railway, there are some nice ponds with birds.’

‘Is it far ? I have to come back at two I have a meeting with Jim Eldridge at two and I’d like to have some lunch today !’

‘How are you at biking ?’

‘I’m O.K.’

She went to the back yard and came back with a bike for me. Great ! I thank Patsie and off I went joyfully biking. I had not’ biked for years. It was windy and I appreciated my daughter’s sports coat and the scarf Patsie advised me to take.

Bill had shown me the way : 'Just keep going, can't miss it. The road went around the peninsula and came right back to Bowness.' He also lent me his digital camera, mine having decided to stop functioning for some reason and with no store around I was stuck. (What would I do without Bill!).

Bowness being uphill, whether you left the village South to Anthorn, East round the peninsula or West to Carlisle (You could only swim to Scotland North!), you would be going down the hill. So here I was gliding down east, with the wind in my back. A red car with an old couple passed by me and stops a few yards down. As I level with the car the driver asked me :

'Excuse me. Do you know where the Roman Fort is ?

'Well, there used to be a fort where Bowness village is. But there is no actual fort to visit. (Don't I feel local ! After all Moroccans did garrison this fort !)

'You'd better talk to someone from the village though, since I'm not from here.

'Where are you from ?'

'Morocco.'

'Morocco ! Hal bitahki arabi ?' (do you speak Arabic ?) he asks me in Arabic.

'Maaloum !' (Of course I do).

And believe it or not Mr Lamb (as he tells me his name is) starts this conversation in Arabic where he tells me he is Scottish, in charge of the Lamb Family; he had worked in the Middle East for twenty years and, having crossed the border for so many times , it was still the first time in his life he was driving along The Wall ! I tell him about the Writing on the Wall project and how I fit as a Moroccan poet in the project and gives the leaflet about the project. A woman on a bike approaches us.

'Excuse me. Are you from around here ?' I asked. 'This Gentleman has some questions about Hadrian's Wall.'

'Yes. You are the Moroccan poet staying at Bill and Patsie's. I'm Helen Patsie's cousin. I'm sorry I couldn't come to the reading, it was overlapping with another meeting.'

And Helen gave information to Mr. Lamb on "where the wall used to be". Dear old ghost of a wall ! Helen and I said good bye to the couple and rode along together down the hill till Helen reaches her house. The wind still following me, I kept joyfully biking down the way, stopping now and then for the picture of a breath taking view of the mash, the sea, or the blooming gorse. Then the farms became scarce with more grazing land for cattle and sheep. I kept turning left as Helen and Bill had advised me. The wind now was facing me. Cold North wind. As if the wind was not enough the road now was running uphill and it got harder and harder for me to bike. I got down and walked. For several miles I saw absolutely no one except cows and sheep. Conversations with local people had sensitise me on sheep and I looked at them both as picturesque since they differ in shape from the sheep in my country and, as survivors to the terrible foot and mouth disease. The sheep though in their thick fleece looked peaceful and more comfortable than me in this land. Fighting the wind here proved to be no easy business for me. I stopped at a farm, knocked at a door and asked the lady who opened the door how far I was from Bowness. She said I was exactly half way. Half Way ! This means I have another eight miles to go. It is half past one and I had to meet Jim at two ! Here I was in the middle of nowhere with a bike I could not ride with this wind which has set his mind not to let me move. I walked, dragging my bike along, to Anthorn. Ah a village ! A village alright, but not a soul to ask for anything. I did not want to knock at anybody's door.

Off the road, facing the village a beautiful little bay and... some daffodils ! I decided to stop for a picture. I put the bike down on the grass and took a picture thinking as a futile revenge that the wind was not admitted into the camera and that I was going to take the bay and the daffodils back with me and leave the cold wind behind me. The sound of a car motor attracted my attention. Coming from the South, a white mini-van was approaching. I waved to the driver who stopped.

‘would you happen to be going to Bowness ? I can’t bike anymore and I have an appointment at two.’

‘I’m going to the cross section but for £3.50 I can take you there.’

‘Thank you. I really appreciate it.’

Now if this is not luck, what is ? I was seven and a half miles from Bowness with a bike facing an adverse, stubborn wind and no hope and, fifteen minutes later I was in Bowness. I give the bike to Patsie told her about my windy adventure while she prepared a quick salad that I will have no time to eat anyway. I packed my salad in bread and left it in my room. At two o’clock sharp I am welcomed by Jim Eldridge in his beautiful Pear Tree Farm . Close escape of the third kind !

I could then relax and exchange some ideas with Jim who offered me tea and biscuits. Lynne Jim’s wife whom I met briefly as I had come for a quick first visit, was away in Scotland for a few days. Jim who though not from Bowness had found a peaceful Farm in the village and become “The writer” in Bowness. I highly appreciated Jim’s simplicity. A life of writing for children and adults, many prestigious awards in and out of U.K. had in no way spoiled his modesty, his being so sensitive to bottom line problems of humanity. Does he read French ? Yes he does and I gladly dedicated my short story book “Jellabiates” where traditional Moroccan clothes narrated thirty years of the life of Hakima down and out of Paris and Casablanca. He also offered me his last book on the teenagers who were taken from this region for WWI. Before we realised it was already five o’clock. I took leave from him and walk back to Patsie’s where I finally have my lunch and sit down to jot a few notes down for my journal.

In the evening, I walk to Kingsarms Pub for a hot meal. I have no idea that the evening is going to be one of inauguration. Two middle-aged men I had already seen in the pub were standing at the bar. They belonged to “the early drinkers group”, as Patsie puts it, those who come for an early drink and then go back home. After the normal greetings, (everybody greets everybody here), I ordered a drink (not much choice for me, mineral water or coke!) and a meal. By the time I left Bowness I would have tried every meal in the pub! Ernie and Sam introduced themselves. I talk to them of the reason of my presence in Bowness. Ernie told me that Sam, him and Roy (whom I had met in the Hope and Harbour Inn in Port Carlisle belong to the Obnoxious Club. “The Obnoxious club ?” Sam explained that they call themselves “obnoxious”



Sam and Ernie at Kingsarms Pub Bowness on Solway

Because they don't beat about the bush to tell people what they think. 'Oh well, I think, in that case, I can be admitted in your Club : I can be quite direct myself.' And I went on telling them about how I resigned from the United Nations Development Programme since I was not getting "developed" and how I had written so on my letter of resignation, which was troublesome for my boss. How I left that secure but uninteresting job and flew to Paris with close to no money, found a job as a babysitter and, enrolled at the University to develop myself all by myself. They loved the story and admitted me in the Obnoxious Club !

Now how many foreigners can boast of belonging to a private club in the U.K. in less than one week after they set foot on the British soil ?

Saturday, April 6, 2002,

Steve called me after breakfast, reminding me that he was coming to pick me up for the Birdoswald afternoon poetry reading. I decided to just stay in my room for journal writing and preparation of the reading, in the company of the birds singing on the trees facing my window. I heard the sound of wheels on the garden's gravel. It was Steve. We had lunch at Kingsarms and left for to Birdoswald. In Birdoswald the wall was apparent, the site was a real concrete Roman site. We rushed to the building where the poetry reading was to take place. Having asked the poets to be on time, Steve was anxious to get the room ready. The first poet I meet is Robert Fortsythe who has focused on W.H. Auden's deep interest to Hadrian's Wall. Then Katrina Porteous comes with Sue a musician accompanying Katrina's poetry with the pipes. We had time for a chat and coffee at the site's store and café.

Time for the reading. Kitty, the fourth poet involved in the reading arrived to the relief of Steve who was beginning to worry (no easy thing to be a manager of any cultural event!)

The "show began with Kitty. Witty Kitty looks like the exact poet to work with kids, which she did superbly with kids in Ravenglas . She read some of the kids poems and her own poetry with flavours and scents of herbs used by the Romans, to the enchantment of the close to forty people audience.

Robert Fortsythe's poetry is academic but genuine, deep and accessible. His work on W.H. Auden brings a new light to the life and work of the poet in his deep attachment to this region. Robert's poetry boosts our sensitivity in this "Post everything age" as he calls it.

Before reading my poems I told the audience that any time things were important for me to write them or for them to write me they usually were spiritual and universal. Though I was "The foreigner" , I could sense a good communion with the audience. We were living on the same planet : Poetry ; more so with Peter Mortimer, Kitty's companion and a great poet as I will later discover in meeting him, listening to his poetry and, reading his courageous book *Broke Through Britain*.

Then comes Katrina Porteous whose poetry deeply touched me. Deep writing and very passionate reading harmoniously woven to Scottish pipes played by Sue.

Why do I feel that this woman, this poet had been here for centuries as she read her poetical experience with the farmers in Northerumberland ? Why did she personify every element of the nature she described ? I suppose the answer "is blowing in [Northerumberland's] wind".

This is the magic of poetry ! In a few minutes, with a few words kneaded with joy, suffering, flesh and soul, two or several people, perfect strangers become instant friends.

After the reading Steve and his brother who had driven for four hours to come to the poetry reading, and I take a tea break at the site café then we go for a walk around the Roman site. Cold, strong wind but the sight is breathtaking. Those green hills and valleys spotted with white sheep are a beautiful sight of abundance for someone like me coming from semi-arid Morocco where springs quickly die out to long dry summers under a pitiless sun.

Time to go back. We say good by to Steve's brother and Steve drive us back to Bowness. The wind must have had its way to our stomach since Steve and I had a good full dinner with tea and pudding for dessert at Kingsarms pub. Steve left for Newcastle and I lingered in the pub. People gradually came. Ernie was among the first comers ; he introduced me to Armstrong or "Army" for his friends. Army a "thirtiish" happy looking fellow, had never been out of this region. 'I feel lost as soon as I loose sight of the chimney of my house' he says. A little late Bill and Patsie came with a group for a drink after Church. Church on Saturday evening ? Yes. There is no Catholic service in Bowness. Catholic service was held on Saturday evening at St-Michael's Church in Burgh-by-Sands. Bill introduced Sue and Robert from Burgh to me. We chat for a while. Sue invited me for a visit of Port Carlisle the next day in the afternoon. We agree that she would come after me at two in the afternoon. Ernie came after me to join the quiz game to raise money for Bowness school. £1.00 per

person. OK. I'm in. Ernie decides to call our group "The Moroccan Haaf Netters. We have fun but we loose and get a pack of sweet so we don't cry ! We laughed it out and I walked back to the Guest House.

Original Braggarts Sunday April 7, 2002

Up at 7:00. Read some of Robert Fortsythe book on W.H. Auden. Went down to hear Patsie's lovely accent each time Each time I call her name I hear a "Helleoo" back before she serves me her wonderful breakfast. Dear Patsie so kind and helpful, she and Bill will certainly be part of a vivid memory of this place and its people. After a long relaxing bath, and some writing I walked to the pub for a healthy, full farm lunch : roast beef, mashed potatoes, green peas, carrots, broccoli's and cauliflower. Then back to my room. At two o'clock Sue came to collect me. She drove me to Port Carlisle. After a bit of conversation with her husband, we went out for a walk. We met Keith a school teacher who was enchanted by the idea of having a Moroccan poet giving poetry workshops to kids in the region. Would it be possible for me to do that in his school ? He noticed my hesitation and I explained to him I had to check how this could fit in the project's agenda. We left it there and said good bye. We walked to the ex-harbour and I realised I had already come there with Joa the miner a few days ago. Then Sue shows me Heskett House, a house near hers where there is one stone taken from the wall. It even had Latin scripture on it. Dear old wall !

Sue took me to her lovely little garden where she has a tiny pond with frogs. The sun was very hot. We talked. She had been a school teacher. She takes part to several social activities. A very kind and active lady. Time for her to take back to Bowness as she needed to take care of her husband.

The day being absolutely enchanting, I could not stay in my bedroom. I walked east along the shore. Greeting and comment about the weather throughout the village. Down the hill from Bowness School in a sort of natural parking lot off the road before you reach the mash and the beach beyond it, there was a car parked, packed with teenagers. Five boys and one girl. They tried to attract my attention. I looked at them. Can you show us the way to ??? I approached the car. I could see that's what they expected.

'I'm not from here. Sorry !'
'where are you from '
'Morocco'
'Hey ! We'd like to visit your country!'
'You'll like it there.'
'Do you smoke grass ?'
'No. I don't need to. I love freedom and there other free and healthy ways to fly without dope !'
'.....'
'Do you like Cumbria ?'
'Yes you people are great'
'So you like us !' (happy look !)
'Absolutely! Kids nice meeting you'.



I walked along the road west of Bowness for a while. Then I saw some people walking and even a noisy motorbike going back and forth beyond the marsh band right on the beach. I thought I could trespass with no problems. I manage to walk through the bushy marsh ; perhaps “jump” would be a better word for there was water between the weedy bushes; then I got on the beach. The sun was getting ready to set. I enjoyed walking on this hard, muddy beach where numerous little mounds sculpted by some sea worms were casting long evening shadows, turning the beach into a huge surrealistic painting.

Encouraged by several sunny, dry days I kept on walking. I wanted to reach the end of the old railway that reached into the sea toward Scotland. That was counting again without the cheeky elements of Mother Nature. Without warning me a bit, the ground became mushy and walking on step too many I fell into the mud. My shoes, my socks, my pants and my “look-at-the-world-through-women’s eyes” Beijing bag, all had a taste of the Solway’s salty mud. So be it ! After the Sun, the Wind, this is my welcome to the Mud day.



On my way back to the village, I found the kids still packed in their car. How about getting out for some fresh air and a picture. They got out quarrelling about who was the best looking guy. I said it was Kersti the girl. One of them remembered that he had to pee and so he did. Do I have any children ? Yes a boy 22 and a girl 18. Shining eyes of the boys : was she in Bowness with me ? No sorry. Kids' joy and livelihood is so communicative. The Mother and the teacher in me joined to say a warm good bye to Daniel and his brother Carl to Mark who claims to be the most sexy of the group, to Martin, Daniel and Kersti whom I nominated just then, the most beautiful girl in Cumbria.

This was going to be my only Sunday in Bowness but a memorable one for sure.

Back to my room for a shower, fresh clothes and I was ready for dinner ! Ernie and Sam as usual. Sam greets me with : Oh! Oh! Here is Trouble. I took that as a compliment from the toughest Obnoxious Club member. Being teased is being accepted. I decided to be studious though : I ordered dinner and asked David for Kingsarms Guest Book to browse people's impressions of the place and of Hadrian's wall in general. The book was quite thick and peoples opinions contrasted from "bloody wall" (three times) to great appreciation. Mostly UK people and a few foreigners. At the beginning of the book there was a typed list of dated events ; some quite interesting : The Roman Fort, built of timber, turf and clay in 125. The visit to Bowness of Aenas Sylvius (later Pope Pius II) in the fourteenth century. The Great of Bowness Bell stolen in 1648. Port Carlisle Harbour built by Lord Lonsdale. An ancient cross found in the sands of Anthorn.

Going as far back in time on board of a guest book of a tiny village like Bowness-on-Solway, brought back to mind the great historical dimension of this land. The reading put me in a meditative mood. I also come from a land charged with thousands of years of history where every piece of land every old stone has witnessed historical events. And you feel that people in front of you here and now, naturally bear this long chain of events. Well you can't meditate too long in a joyful pub ! Ernie had gone out and come back with Linda his partner, Jane whose husband has died last year, Mike, Mel and his wife were now in the club and we ended up singing , then I read some of my poetry to them. We had great time. I tried playing darts and obnoxious Sam says that if he were me he would stick to poetry. I finally made it back to Walls Ends' where I wrote an acrostic with the word Obnoxious . The acrostic goes :

Original
Beautiful Braggarts
No
Ordinary, Obsequious
Xenophobic
Idlers
Or
Useless
Slies

Well, if you don't like the fact that poets are entitled to invent words you can always replace "Xenophobic" by "Xenophobia stricken" and "Slies" by "Sly Folks" since any stupid computer with no sense of poetry would underline any word you invent in red. It's your choice.

Monday, April 8, 2002

After breakfast, I walked to Bowness school to check about my workshop with the kids there. Weather it was to take place on Tuesday or Thursday was still an open question. Steve had not called me yet so I walked first to the telephone cabin to call him. He wasn't in. I left a brief message and walked to the school where I had a brief encounter with Kris Rafferty, the director. On my way back, I felt my heart pounding heavily. I was getting weaker and weaker. I had planned to take the bus to Burgh-by-Sand for a quick visit to their school as well. I certainly couldn't be on the go in this kind of state. I went to bed and tried to rest. I felt so bad that my sleep was agitated. I woke up an hour later, too late for any lunch. I made some tea, had biscuits and an apple. I felt a little better in spite of the continuous heart pounding. Patsie came in. She thought I was out. She is so sorry to see me sick and I promise her I wouldn't die on her ! She did the room and I sat down to prepare the workshops for the kids. I was more anxious to get ready for the children than I was for adults. It had to be funny, lively and, interesting . I was looking more for their complicity than for their mere passive listening.

I first prepared a "Mary Poppins" bag. I wasn't home and I didn't have much but I gathered a few elements : three scarves; a bottle of perfume; some weird looking weeds that could be the ancestors of pine cones; a small pair of scissors for a sound to recognise (later confiscated by customs officers at the airport as a potential arm), some small coloured chocolate Easter eggs Patsie had nicely put in a little bowl on my dresser; a pack of salted peanuts I had. By and by as I was preparing my magic bag and thinking of the kids I was coming back to life and forgetting my health problems. Preparing a talk for children could be trying but so rewarding.

I then dressed up for dinner. I had been invited by Ernie and Linda. At seven o'clock I was at Ernie's house. A large well kept house on the Bank facing Scotland. We had a nice chat. Ernie and Linda served the best food I was going to have during all my stay (save Patsie's beautiful breakfasts.) : Venison for meat, a deer Ernie had hunted two months earlier, a finally cooked and subtly seasoned variety of vegetables, probably fine wine too, but I don't drink, ice cream for dessert. After dinner I asked Ernie to talk to me about his Haaf netting hobby. I was curious about this local fishing technique. He showed me a black and white picture of haaf netters . A haaf is a big wooden frame with a net. It is a team fishing. The fishermen would line in the water and move quickly as the tide comes up. The last one on the line would move to the first place and so on until the original first becomes last. A sort of fishing against the tide daring game. Ernie was telling people who had difficulty pronouncing my name that for a haafnetter like him it was easy "Haafnet" being close to "Hafsa"! What do you know ! my parents had never thought of that. By half past ten, I thanked Ernie and Linda for a very nice evening and left.



Couscous in Carlisle Tuesday, April 9

I still feel a little weak today, but exploring must go on. Can't afford to waste an exploring day. I had decided to take the bus (or the "boos" as they say here) to Carlisle. The weather is fine, a blessing for me with the sea (blue today) on my left side and the greenery of the farms alternating with picturesque houses with their old fashioned chimneys made obsolete with central heating.

The bus arrives in Carlisle, walk by its impressive cathedral. In the garden of the cathedral an anachronistic fluo sign says "If you think God is far, guess who moved away!" I walked to the centre of town where I saw everybody suddenly freeze as they faced the lowered national flag on top of the town hall. What was going on? "Queen Mother burial whispers a policeman. I froze with the rest of Carlisle's population After a two minute tribute to Queen Mother, people came back to life. I would later hear a Scottish Parliament member say about the Queen: "you can shed tears because she has gone or you can smile because she has lived". I headed for the Tourism Office for a map of Carlisle. Closed: tribute to Queen Mother. Well, I had to rely on some of my nomadic origins and on pedestrians' kindness to find my way about the city: English Street, Castle Street by the Cathedral, into the Tullie House. The lady at the reception desk recognised me from my last visit and gave me a free access ticket. Quickly, because she had to go back to watch the Queen's Mother funeral on television. Coming from another ancient kingdom I could understand!

For my second visit to this museum I thought I would take more time and visit the more recent British parts as well as the Roman ones. I started with the old Tullie

House where there was a special exhibit on child education in the nineteen century and paintings by artists from Carlisle. In The garden a group of children where having lunch with their teachers. I met them again later on, as they and their teachers were dressed as Romans while visiting the roman side of the Museum . I introduced myself to them and briefed them rapidly on my trip and my Moroccan ancestors who garrisoned Hadrian's Wall. I then said good bye and went on with my visit.



I visited the Roman part of the museum, their real objects and reconstituted life, their gods where one can sense an influence of some Celtic gods and goddesses as well as Christianity. Then I moved a little closer in history to the other influential people of this region The Border Reivers who have left a terrifying mark in people's imagination. It seems that the region has from Roman time up until the Act of Union signed in (1707) has always been a boiling one. Northerners being dreaded and fought.

Mosaic in the Tullie House



It was three o'clock and hunger made me look at my watch. I also had to be careful not to miss the bus. I went to the Tullie House cafeteria where after some hesitation I opted for an "oriental chicken dish. "Oriental" it was ! or sort of. You never how orient or occident travel out of their cultural borders. The food was good but a funny combination : beef with Chinese sauce and mushrooms with...couscous ! Now couscous is a typical Berber dish throughout North Africa from Morocco to Lybia. In my life as a North African I've had couscous in many different ways, but this was alien to me. It was not too bad though and it made me laugh. I decided to call the day a Coucous in Carlisle day !

I got out of the Tullie House and as was heading for the bus station, I heard someone call my name and I saw Sue, my teacher friend from Port Carlisle. Lovely coincidence. It made Carlisle more familiar. Did I want a ride back , Well yes ! after a few errands, we chat our way back to Bowness. In the evening, as I entered the pub for dinner, Dave said : 'Where you in Carlisle today ?' 'Well, Yes ! How did you know ? 'I saw you on television' 'I suppose I entered British history today as I was paying tribute to Queen Mother' I joked. The evening started as a nice lively one : Manchester United was playing against Argentina when the captain of the Manchester team fell and broke his foot, which lowered everybody's spirit. I did feel sorry for Roy who was usually so cheerful and looked so depressed. I said good bye and left.

Cumbria by nose ! Wednesday, April 10

Another exploring day. Burgh-by-Sands was where planned to go. Patsie was going to visit her mother and I asked her to give me a lift. The first place I wanted to visit is the school. I found it. It was recess time and children showed me the director's secretary's office : I told her I was the Moroccan poet who was to do poetry workshops with the school kids the following day and I had just come for a prospecting visit to briefly meet children. She introduced me to the director Mr. Ken Reid who in turn introduced me to the teachers and to the students in each class of the school. After this brief encounter, I left the school and went to my second planned visit : St Michael's Church.

St Michael's Church in Burgh-By-Sands was built, as I read on a sign at the entrance of the church, in the twelfth century with stones from Hadrian's Wall. The signs further says : "King Edward The First came here to cross the Solway and subdue the Rising under Robert the Bruce. He died on the March and was brought into the church to lie in state on 7 July 1307. The fortified tower was a refuge during the border raids."

I was fleeing no raiders. I just entered the church garden, lingered there for a while heeding to the eloquent silence of the dead in the graveyard, then pushed the low door of the church. It wouldn't open. I asked a lady gardening in the neighbouring house. "You just have to push it harder "she answered and offered to open it for me.

Charming lady. After a little chat she says good bye and left me in this church that has been standing for a long time and witnessing so much history and human thoughts, misery, expectations. I sit on a bench. Some one had left a prayer book and a typical English cap. I took the prayer book, skimmed through it, sang the songs I knew to join my voice to the universal human quest. After this meditative rest I went out of the church. Outside, the light was dazzling after the shadowy atmosphere of the church. I headed North to visit King Edward's monument. The day was absolutely marvellous. The sky was intensively blue and the vegetation luxurious. I went back to the Wall's course then took the direction of the monument. I asked an old lady walking her dog if I was on the right direction and how far it was. Yes and it was a three mile walk. I had walking shoes and the weather was so gentle. The road was bordered with grazing land. I took time to look at the sheep. After the foot and mouth plague I looked at them like heroic survivors and took picture of a few. I could see King Edward's monument in the distance. As I arrived at the monument, I notice there was a working crew who were restoring it. I took a few pictures . Focusing on the landscape roused mixed feelings in me : The sheep as survivors, King Edward as a dead symbol of history and power and, the Nuke plant in distant Scotland as potential death !

On my way back to Burgh, having already explored the area with my eyes, I decided to use my nose for the better or the worse : Near some farms it was rather nauseous. I thought about my workshop with Burgh's School and I sat on the grass at the edge of the road and wrote a little funny poem for them :

Scents

*Scent of sea
and
Scent of soil*

*Scent of cattle
and
Scent of sheep*

Scent of trees

and

Scent of flowers

Welcome to Burgh-by-Nose

Thursday, April 10, 2002

Poem dedicated to all the pupils of

Burgh-by-Sands School

Hafsa Bekri Lamrani

Thursday, April 11 2002

Steve came at ten and we left for Bowness school after I regretfully took leave from Patsie and Bill. The workshops in both Bowness and Burgh schools were really fulfilling. We addressed two different groups in both schools. Steve presented the project, asked the kids if they had heard of or visited the Wall, showed them a map pointing at countries from which Mediterranean people like me had come to help build and garrison Hadrian's Wall. He showed them where Morocco was and introduced me.

Now what kind of talk to give about poetry without being a bore ? Make it interactive :

- What is poetry to them ?
- Do they like it ? Why ? Why not ?
- Do they think words are important ?
- What kind of material can they gather and save for poetry ?
- Do animals and plants talk? How?
- Can a dog or a cat recount his yesterday or tomorrow ? Importance of the time notion for writing.
- *Can words be friends ? Enemies ?*

The idea being to bring kids to realise that poetry originates from our body, our souls, our minds and, our immediate environment, our specificity as a human species, that it could be a funny, enchanting, liberating activity and not a mere academic complex, unreachable one ; that it did not have to be locked in rigid rhymes.

I introduced these notions to both young and older kids. With younger kids the Mary Poppins bag worked marvels : we played feeling, smelling, touching, tasting, then seeing games with them before I read a few easy, close to nature poems to them. Their response was lively and lovely. With the older kids there was more of a debate. Especially with a poem on words I had written on the universal language we all speak beyond our local vernacular. In this poem the first stanza is composed of the same question which I ask in nine languages, as a reference to the nine months we all spend in a woman's womb. For example, that question from one boy was : 'You mean we can speak any language and we discard all of them and speak only one ?' Speak with your heart to kids and they *will* understand !

WORDS, WORDS, WORDS

هل تنكلم العربية؟
هل + تنكلم + العربية؟
هل + تنكلم + العربية؟
هل + تنكلم + العربية؟
هل + تنكلم + العربية؟
هل + تنكلم + العربية؟
هل + تنكلم + العربية؟
هل + تنكلم + العربية؟

Do you speak English?
Hablas Espanôl?
Parlez - vous français?
Sprechen Sie Deutsch?

What are words?

Sounds
bound by meanings
agreed upon
by people clustered
on the earth
of a fluid planet

What are words?

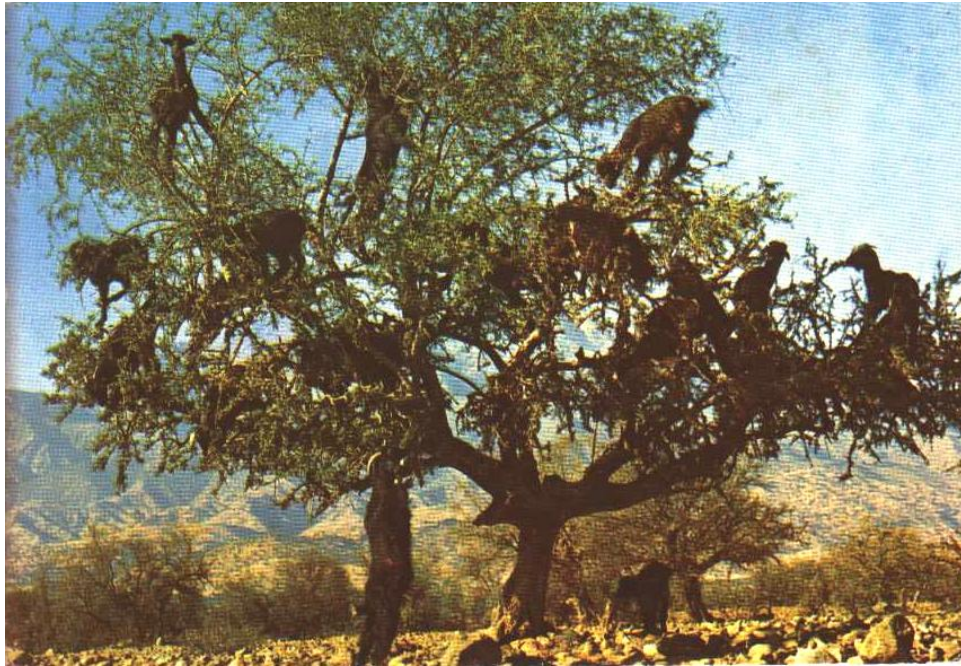
Invisible ghosts
roving among human beings
messengers and actors
roaming in and out
of our brain
linking us in a fragile
yet strong chain

What are words?

Aerial fairies weaving
Love and Hate
Joy and Sorrow
Poverty and Wealth
Honesty and Treachery
into
the same different
tongue we all
whisper, cry or sing

I was really moved by their enthusiasm and their depth. Give something true to children and they'll know it ! At Burgh's school Sarah and Debbie had prepared an interview for me. I answered all their questions then Steve and I left followed by lovely kids chirping like little sparrows who were given more recess for the occasion.

The school children following me will remain one of the best memories I will take back from this place :



The Moroccan Goat Tree



***To all the beautiful young souls
in Bowness-on-Solway and Burgh-by-Sands***

*Never will I forget
the sunshine in your eyes
as you were listening to me
and playing
the great poetry game
of heeding to life
with all your senses
as I was trying
to share with you
the greatest and
most beautiful poem
of the universe
Love !*

***Hafsa Bekri-Lamrani
Casablanca April 19, 2002***

I feel sad leaving this area where I had come with nice expectations and which I leave rich with great memories of a haven of peace and beauty. The Solway region will have been a real stop and turning point on my way. A place of harmony between this area and a new area in my soul.

On the way to Northumberland

It's time we went ! I have always been fascinated by the grammatical time treatment in this English phrase. Its link between present and past is magical and sad at the same time. Today, the phrase underlines the nostalgia in me. We then leave Cumbria for Northumberland where we were to meet the rest of the poets in Segedenum for a poetry reading at the Roman Museum. We arrived early evening at Hadrian's Lodge, the hotel where the Iraqi poet Hashem Shafiq was staying. Steve introduced me to Shafiq and left for last minutes arrangements at the Museum. Hashem had lived in England for twenty years. He had lost nothing of the gentle ways of his oriental culture. We talked for a while ; he had been to Morocco and knew a lot of the Arab cultural milieu from Iraq to Morocco. We ended up having common friends and acquaintances.

Time for the show. Another ten minutes of chatting as Hashem and I walk the Museum. There I discover the musical and bold poetry of Bill Herbert, Hashem Shafiq's strong poetry asking walls for "a time without masks", the gentle and deep rooted poetry of Linda France, the wild, deep and pertinent poetry of Peter Mortimer. After the reading we went to Hadrian's Lodge for more socialising between poets. Peter Mortimer was going to Bowness to perform with his strolling players, the Cloud Nine Troubadours and he highly appreciated my "obnoxious" acrostic which he took as a visiting card to the Bowness obnoxious crew. Trying to have dinner at the hotel was another vain tentative. It was past the time. It's sometimes hard being a Mediterranean on the Border ! On the way to the airport hotel where I was booked, Steve nicely stopped for me to get some food at some non stop store.

Last day on the Wall ! Friday April 12, 2002

This is going to be my last day exploring your wall, emperor Hadrian ! Steve came to pick me up at the hotel. The schedule was for Hisham to work with two schools in Wallsend and South Shields and for me to visit the Segedenum and Arbeia forts and museums. If upon my arrival I was not impressed by the wall itself, I must say as I am leaving the Wall's area that I am absolutely impressed by the work of creativity, conservation and reconstruction granted to this Wall as a World Heritage. I spent the morning in Segedenum Museum where there was so much to learn and to enjoy. With modern technology you could listen to the recording of two people having a conversation in Latin, as you were playing Roman electronic games or watching actors on a screen talking about their lives and roles in the Fort. I thought then that having a great historical heritage is not enough, it is what you make of it that counts.

Around noon, there was an announcement for me to join Hashem and Steve on the Museum tower. Steve had to go to Newcastle to solve some bank problems. I stayed with Hashem and offered to translate his poem on Hadrian as we had lunch. I loved that poem in Arabic and thought it would be nice for my local colleagues to be able to enjoy it :

Hashem Shafiq's poem :

To Steve Chettle

*In the first century
There was a Roman King
To whom the stones submitted
And the Rebel land yielded
And the sea
and the blue colour of these skies*

*The stars came to accompany him
The moon saluted him and
Descended as a guest to his fort
The flowers announced his scents
The trees walked long distances
to salute him*

*The eagles landed on his shoulders
The wolves befriended him
And the desert obeyed his tracks
I see here in Newcastle his
Nickel soled sandals, his heavy
Ring-mails and his iron cape*

*What kind of plundering King is this
Who chases out of his capital all the
"Barbarians" of the world and builds
This steady wall in the face of
Older Times,
Against the wind
Against spears plotting elsewhere ?*

*There was a King
Celebrated by time and
Surrounded by the horizon*

*Newcastle
April 9, 2002*

**Translated from Arabic by
Hafsa Bekri-Lamrani**

By the time Steve came back Hashem and I had finished lunch and translation. We were ready for our afternoon at South Shields where Hashem had another workshop and I was to visit the Arbeia Museum. Coming from the other end of the Wall on the Solway where Moors had stayed close to 2000 years ago I was hardly surprised to find a site which bears an Arab name. "Arbeia" is feminine for Arab in the Arabic Language. It also means an Arab woman. I strolled around the museum and the forth outside which was a supply base for garrisons on the Wall.

As Steve and Hashem came back by three twenty, we suddenly heard explosions and saw huge swirls of black smoke come from the harbour across the Arbeia Museum. As I was to read later in "The Times" The Distillex factory which took fire, recycled waste solvent and other chemicals. We felt very much concerned as we watched the foul fumes and heard the police warn people to run away. Fortunately there were no injuries. This marred our day, however.

We drove North to Cullercoast to meet Peter Mortimer for dinner. Peter showed us a Mediterranean restaurant. The food was good, the owner was Greek, the waiter Tunisian. I asked for olive oil. They had some. I was not going to leave a Roman site without having had olive oil. Now the circle was full : from olive oil in Morocco to olive oil at Hadrian's Wall. Steve, Peter, Hashem and I had a very fruitful conversation : I learned from Hashem that there was a female Iraqi princess and poet, Queen Khidwana some 7000 years B.C. ! As for Peter, he had courageously travelled through Britain without a red penny and written a book about his adventure. We left the restaurant. My last day in the U.K. was ending I said good bye to Peter and Hashem and Steve took me back to my hotel. The perfect gentleman that Steve is makes sure I have a trolley for my luggage at Four o'clock in the morning, asked the receptionist to photocopy my translation of Hashem's poem. Steve said good by and left and I realised that my Hadrian's Wall adventure was finished. The end ? Perhaps a new beginning on the road of my human adventure ?

Hafsa Bekri-Lamrani
June 2002 – Casablanca, Morocco

AKNOWLEDGMENTS

This journal about the people, the landscape and the history of the Hadrian's Wall region would have never been written without the Writing on the Wall original idea of Steve Chettle and the tremendous amount of work he invested to make of it a local as well as a universal success. So would like to thank him very warmly.

Very special tanks to Patsie and Bill Knowles who were always ready to offer the extra help with warm friendship.

My friendship and best wishes to everyone I met and socialised with in Bowness, Port Carlisle and Burgh by Sands and elsewhere along Hadrian's Wall.

Many kind thanks to all the poets of the Writing on the Wall Crew for sharing their work.