

**Salvador Espriu**

**PRIMERA HISTORIA D'ESTHER**

**THE STORY OF ESTHER**

Translated from the Catalan

by

**Philip Polack**

1989

**THE ANGLO-CATALAN SOCIETY**

# THE ANGLO-CATALAN SOCIETY OCCASIONAL PUBLICATIONS

- No. 1. Salvador Giner. *The Social Structure of Catalonia*  
(1980, reprinted 1984)
- No. 2. Joan **Salvat-Papasseit**. *Selected Poems* (1982)
- No. 3. David **Mackay**. *Modern Architecture in Barcelona* (1985)
- No. 4. *Homage to Joan Gili* (1987)
- No. 5. E. Trenc Ballester & Alan Yates. *Alexandre de Riquer* (1988)
- No. 6. Salvador **Espriu**. *Primera història d'Esther* with English version by  
Philip Polack and Introduction by Antoni **Turull** (1989).

© Catalan text: Estate of Salvador Espriu 1989

© English version: Philip Polack 1989

© Introduction: Antoni Turull 1989

Produced and typeset by Sheffield Academic Press Ltd

Printed by BPCC **Wheatons** Limited, Exeter

Cover design by Joan Gili

**British** Library Cataloguing in Publication Data available

ISSN 0144-5863

ISBN 0-9507137-5-9

## CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	7
PRIMERA HISTÒRIA D'ESTHER/ THE STORY OF ESTHER	16

## INTRODUCTION

Salvador **Espriu i Castelló** was born in 1913, into a **well-to-do** family of Jewish origin, in Santa Coloma de Farners (in the province of Girona). From the age of two, however, he lived in the little seaside town of Arenys de Mar, where the family came from, and in the city of **Barcelona**, and it was to these two places that he really belonged.

**Espriu** showed early signs of literary promise. His first book, *Israel*, written in **Castilian** Spanish, was published by the time he was sixteen. A rather shy and retiring man, Espriu was an avid reader and at this stage was influenced by the Spanish authors Ramon del **Valle-Inclán**, Gabriel Miró and by the Catalan Joaquim **Ruyra**, all three of them remarkable for the originality and richness of their language, something which could later be said of Espriu himself. Choosing now to write in Catalan, when Catalan culture was enjoying a period of prosperity under the second Spanish Republic, he published *El doctor Rip* when he was just eighteen and *Laia* in the following year, narratives of some originality which show him drawing away from the restrained formality which had prevailed in Catalan literature during the preceding years.

The 1930s were full and creative years for Espriu: he graduated in Law and Ancient History, he published further stories, in the collections *Aspectes* and *Ariadna al laberint grotesc*, he formed a close friendship with the **Majorcan** poet Bartomeu **Rosselló-Pòrcel** (1913-1938) and both came directly under the influence of the foremost poet of the period, Carles Riba (1893-1959). During the Civil War he was on the Republican side and survived the downfall of Catalonia; in the year of the victory of Franco's insurgent forces, among whom there were many Catalans from **Espriu's** social group, he wrote the play *Antígona* on the classic theme of war between brothers.

That same year, 1939, when he was still a young man of twenty-six, another event was to leave its mark on him for life: the death of his father, which meant that he had to take on responsibility for the family law

practice, in which he was always to work in a subordinate position because he never showed any desire to qualify as a notary. From this time on he lived the life of a recluse, withdrawn and silent, partly because of his own character, but motivated also by the repulsion he felt for the **authoritarian**, Catholic and military forces which had once again, and with vicious cruelty, renewed their grip on Catalonia and the whole Spanish state.

The language and culture of the Catalan people were particular victims, singled out because of their **identification** with the Republic and because of the autonomy they had so **fully** enjoyed in the 1930s: newspapers and periodicals in Catalan were now banned, books could be published only with great **difficulty**, **Castilian** alone could be used in schools, all expressions and symbols of community identity were banned. It was in this context, in the 1940s, that Salvador **Espriu**, a moderate man, realising that all the ideals of the pre-war and war years had become reduced to that of simple survival, made this **situation** of crisis the insistent theme of what can be considered the central products of his mature *œuvre*: the poetry of *Cementiri de Sinera* (1946) and *Les cançons d'Ariadna* (1948) and the **'improvisation** for puppets' *Primera història d'Esther* (1948). The move from prose to a highly distilled poetic idiom is now confirmed and in these three books one discovers the technique and the sources of inspiration which were to inform the rest of his literary output or what he ironically called his '**expansions of vanity**'. As in the title of his first book of poems, the world of infancy and adolescence in Arenys (in reverse '**Sinera**') is irrevocably linked with the theme of death. This same world of Arenys, similarly conceived, appears as the frame for *Primera història d'Esther*, a vigorous affirmation of the Catalan language, immensely rich in its vocabulary and full of characteristic turns of phrase, in which Espriu applies the conventions of the **esperpento—defamiliarisation** through **distortion—to** the original Bible story. Satire and lyricism are mingled here as they are in the *Cançons d'Ariadna*. Also fully developed in *Esther* is **Espriu's** persistent **mythification** of the childhood world of **Arenys-Sinera**: in his preface to the Catalan editions he highlights the impact made upon his youthful imagination by a set of French prints, illustrating episodes from the story of Esther, that had decorated the house of a dearly loved aunt.

Espriu never abandoned his work as a lawyer; he revised and slightly extended his prose repertoire, produced a small amount of criticism, *Evocació de Rosselló-Porcel i altres notes* (1957) and a late play *Una altra Fedra, si us plau* (1978). The **poetry-drama** symbiosis, already present in

*Primera història d'Esther*, is apparent too in the way that some of his poems readily lent themselves to dramatic rendition in the theatrical montage of *Ronda de mort a Sinera* (1966), directed by Ricard Salvat. But it was with his poetry that he consolidated his name, with collections such as *Les hores* and *Mrs. Death*, both from 1952, *El caminant i el mur* (1954), *Final del laberint* (1955) and above all *La pell de brau* (1960) which had a great impact throughout Spain as well as in Catalonia itself. *La pell de brau* stands as one of the key works of Catalan social poetry, along with *Vacancespagades* (1960) by Pere Quart (pseudonym of Joan Oliver, 1899-1986), belonging to a time when poetry in this vein was gathering an enthusiastic following and was linking up with the voice of protest and self-affirmation of the Catalan *Nova Cançó*. Espriu maintained his status as a 'modern classic' and continued writing poetry—*Llibre de Sinera* (1963), *Setmana Santa* (1971) and *Per a la bona gent* (1984)—right up to his death.

In 1972 Salvador Espriu was awarded the *Premi d'Honor de les Lletres Catalanes* and he was proposed several times for the Nobel Prize for Literature. It was probably because he did not write in any official state language that he never received this ultimate accolade. He died in Barcelona in 1985 and was buried in the little cemetery of Arenys de Mar.

\*

There is good reason to suppose that originally Espriu never expected his 'improvisation for puppets' to be seen on stage: the *dramatis personae* of all Catalan editions gives the six main characters and then an impish reference to 'the others that will take their turn at speaking', followed by a similar throw-away comment to the effect that stage directions are redundant. The text is much more a 'play for voices' than formal stage drama (as its English translator has perceived so well and registered in felicitous acknowledgements to the Dylan Thomas of *Under Milk Wood*). Even so *Primera història d'Esther* ('first' presumably because there is a second book in the Apocrypha) has enjoyed several widely acclaimed professional productions. The play's first performance was given by the Agrupació Dramàtica de Barcelona in March 1957 at the Palau de la Música **Catalana**, with music by Manuel Vails and directed by Jordi **Sarsanedas**. Five years before this, though, preparations had been made for a performance, with the same director, in the garden of a wealthy Barcelona family. A cast, including well-known figures such as Maria Aurèlia Capmany, Dr. Jeroni de **Moragas**, Joan Oliver and Rosa **Leveroni**,

had been rehearsed and the stage had been erected, when the owners of the garden suddenly took fright (presumably because of the political **implications** of the play) and cancelled the performance, giving the excuse that some of the family silver had been stolen during the preparations. This prompted a hilarious exchange between **Espriu** and Joan Oliver of some forty *décimes* (as yet unpublished) lampooning the family.

The whole grotesque episode is of a piece with the play itself. For the grotesque, **satirical** element is one of the three strains which, as his commentators stress, run through all **Espriu's** work, constantly in play with the lyrical-elegiac and with the poet's acute social critique. These three elements are integrated in the *Primera història d'Esther* with a particular complexity, because in this **work**—a play within a **play**—there are two totally separate worlds which interact at various moments and **fuse** completely at the end of the work: the '**real**' world of Arenys, **mythified** as Sinera (a sublimation of the author's own life), on the one hand, and on the other, the world of Shushan, the biblical world, presented in the form of a puppet show. The grotesque element is concentrated entirely in King **Ahasuerus** and the characters connected with him, clearly showing Espriu's determination to denounce the stupidity and cruelty of dictators and tyrants. The satire, which runs through the whole play, comes chiefly from the mouths of those who represent the people. The lyrical and elegiac passages culminate in the words of the all-seeing blind **man**—**The Most High**, showman and **oracle—who** at the same time provides the moral point of view. But the social dimension of the work is not confined to this moral view; it appears too in the events the play recounts.

The treatment of the Jewish minority by the Persians can be identified to a considerable extent with the treatment of the Catalans by the Spanish dictatorship. But Espriu was no fanatical partisan: in a letter to the translator he wrote of his *entre bancs i entre bancat país*—his '**'troublesome** and troubled **country'**—and added '**But** do not trust it too far: that is my honest **advice**'. He saw how quickly power can turn the oppressed into the oppressors: the frustrated massacre of the Jews by the Persians is followed by the massacre of the Persians by the Jews.

At the end of the play the two **worlds**—**Sinera** and **Shushan**—**merge** in the person of **The Most High**: the performance had opened with him and it is he who closes it with an intensely moving speech, asking the audience to pray for a number of real people, dead and living, for him and for the poet **Selyf-Espriu**, for the Jews and their **friends** and, transcending the spirit of the Old **Testament**, for their enemies. Knowing the author's lack of any

traditional faith, we might feel that the plea for such a prayer was merely **rhetorical**. It is perhaps more fitting, however, to interpret it as the expression of a desire for universal **brotherhood**, completely at one with **Christianity—a** formula which the social poets of the Spanish state sometimes used, consciously or unconsciously and only occasionally with such force, to challenge the Franco regime **from** a position the censors could not assault. The original readers and public of *Esther* were certainly able to decipher the artistic coding of the work and to find there a message of great relevance to their circumstance.

**Espriu** was obsessed by death: ‘**my** work is a meditation on **death**’, he said to S. **Paniker** in 1969, ‘**in** order to rid myself of the fear of **it**’. Like many genuinely creative **talents**, the poet faced up to what plagued him most and made poetry of it. We can see that the *Primera història d’Esther* is the finit of long reflection on the Spanish Civil War and the Second World War which followed it, leading him to the rejection of all forms of violence and all forms of injustice, in order to reach the sacred principle of humanity which, for Espriu, was **peaceful co-existence**. The message is all the more poignant if it is related to the dark days in which *Esther* was written.

\*

By the time the translator, Philip **Polack**, read the play in 1970, the restrictions on Catalan language and culture had been partly relaxed: they were dancing *sardanes* in front of the cathedral in **Barcelona**, and the Catalan pop and protest singers were in full cry. What appealed to him in the play was the ingenious use it made of the Esther **story—as** familiar to him as it had been to **Espriu—and** the genuine universality of a treatment which so proudly asserts ‘**parochial**’ roots. The play, he felt, deserved a wider audience, and as a **solution** to some of the difficulties involved, the setting was transferred from Catalonia to Wales. This deft move is to be seen as a literary **strategem** rather than as a parallelism to be taken literally. The comparison between Catalonia and Wales does, nevertheless, raise some important considerations concerning minority communities, their sense **of** identity and their **relations** with more powerful neighbours: the priority of language as token of identity; the deep relevance of community feeling, traditions and symbols; the ways in which their differentiated character is constantly in danger of being engulfed and reduced to ‘**folksy**’ superficiality.

The reasons for the transposition to Wales were threefold: first, to make clearer to British readers or audiences the **distinctiveness** and richness of

the Catalan culture of the original, to show how different it is from that of the ruling power, particularly through linguistic **signs—speech** and **names—and** through some of its customs; secondly, to suggest that the problems of minorities are not confined to Catalonia; and thirdly, to express and perhaps capture for others some of the warm affection and nostalgia that **Espriu** felt for a place and a people and turned into the myth of **Sinera**.

By no means all the problems of translation were solved by the '**Welshing**' of the setting. Espriu, on his own admission, wrote *Esther* as though he were composing '**the** last will and testament of the Catalan language', as a linguistic and poetic monument to a culture he felt acutely was in danger of annihilation. To this **end—in** keeping with the increasing inwardness and the almost mystical **hermeticism** of his other poetry, and in response also to the pressures of **censorship—he** sought the innermost resources of his native tongue. These he filtered and intensified, retaining maximum stretch over a range that extends from local dialect and the colloquial to the most refined formality. One of his motives was clearly to mark, for all time as it were, the uniqueness of the Catalan language, and the writer was **fully** aware of the demands he was placing upon his audiences and readers, as is evidenced in The Most High's reference to '**indigestible words...** a dying form of speech almost unintelligible by now to many of **us**'. Espriu himself on one occasion even announced that he intended to translate *Esther* into Catalan! This knowing allusion to the work's **notorious 'difficulty'**, even for native **Catalans**, is a measure of the challenge confronting his translator into English. The reader of this parallel-text edition can judge for himself the extent of Philip **Polack's** success and even perhaps test **Espriu's** own judgement, expressed in the letter reproduced, that the English version achieves perfection.

This version of *Esther* was first performed, slightly abridged and under the title of *Good Queen Esther*, by the Department of Hispanic Studies of the University of Bristol in February 1979, directed by John Lyon and Philip Polack, and with music by Colin Sell.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The translator would like to express his warm appreciation of the help given to him by Montserrat Roig and, through her, by the author himself.

The **Anglo-Catalan** Society is happy to acknowledge the following debts of gratitude:

To **Antoni Turull** for his '**historic**' commitment to this project.

To Philip Polack for generously agreeing to publication in the **Anglo-Catalan** Society Occasional Publications series, and for his dedicated involvement in preparing the whole text for the printers.

To Dr. Josep **Espriu** and to Edicions 62 of Barcelona (especially Josefina Revilla) for their consideration in granting permission to reproduce the Catalan text of *Primera història d'Esther*.

To the Fundació Congrés de Cultura Catalana and to the Institució de les Lletres Catalanes (Departament de Cultura de la Generalitat de Catalunya) for grants which have made the present edition possible; to the **Instituto de España en Londres** for continued support to the **ACSOP** series.

To Pauline **Climpson** and her colleagues at Sheffield Academic Press for their patience and professionalism in seeing this volume through all the stages of production.

**Barcelona, trenta-u** d'agost de mil **nou-cents setanta-quatre.**

Dr. A.P Polack  
Bristol.

Estimat amic:

Vaig llegir de **seguida—i**, amb molta sorpresa de la meva banda (perquè el meu anglès és prim com orella de gat), sense **entrebandcs**—la seva **traducció-adaptació** de la meva "Esther". Li hauria pogut retornar, per **tant**, la **pulcríssima** còpia molt **abans**, però m'atinc al que li vaig dir en la meva carta. Demà **passat**, dia dos de **setembre**, faré que l'hi sigui **enviada**, amb aquesta carta, per correu aeri certificat. Vulgui **acusar-me'n** rebut. Moltes gràcies d'avançada.

El seu treball és **perfecte**, sense exageracions ni afalacs de cap mena, i la perfecció no es pot comentar, s'imposa pel seu propi valor. No li he de tocar ni una sola **coma**, no li he de formular ni un suggeriment ni una objecció. Goso suposar que la feina li haurà potser costat una **mica**, però que també s'hi ha divertit. M'agradaria molt que un **públic anglès-gal·lès** també s'hi distragués, un dia o un **altre**, que "**Novareba**" i el seu "entourage" **quedessin**, gràcies a **vostè, mitificats i—honestament—universalitzats**. Els seus '**indigestible words**' ho són menys que els meus, potser per la gran tradició **idiomàticο-literària** anglesa, sense trens, ruptures i decadències com els que nosaltres hem hagut de patir i **encar** patim (no sense una bona part de culpa ben nostra), sens dubte pel seu domini de les dues **llengües**, al que s'han d'afegeir el seu bon gust i la seva sensibilitat.

El seu encert no és pas més gran a la prosa que als versos. Com que he llegit la seva "translation" paraula per paraula, coma per **coma**, m'he adonat prou que vostè no ha defugit cap dificultat ni **problema**, que no s'ha "menjat" res ni ha tirat mai pel camí del mig, com se sol dir. S'ha plantejat l'obra amb tant rigor com me la vaig plantejar jo **mateix—i** perdoni la **immodèstia**, però no trobo una manera de **dir-ho** més curta i entenedora. I la seva extrema polidesa arriba fins a les **petitíssimes** esmenes materials, de la seva mà, als fulls **1, 3-5, 7, 9-15, 17-18, 24, 26-31, 36-39, 41, 43, 45-48 i 50-53**, amb els dos versos manuscrits sencers al **full 51**. Admirable.

Ja sé que a vostès, els britànics, els molesta molt les expressions de felicitació, **d'arlaudiment**, etc. Nosaltres, els **catalans**, som també eixuts, si no, **sovint**, mesquins: tot per a mi, res per als altres. Aquesta doble tradició **convergent**—almenys, en **aparença—m'imposa**, ben a desgrat meu, li ho asseguro, que ara em limiti només a **dir-li**: "**Gràcies**, moltes gràcies." Sempre sincerament seu **afm**.

Salvador **Espriu**

TO PHILIP POLACK

Barcelona 31 August, 1974

Dear friend,

I have read straight **through—and**, to my great surprise (because my English is as feeble as a cat's ear), without **difficulty—your** translation-adaptation of my '**Esther**'. I would have been able, therefore, to return your fine copy much earlier, but I am keeping to what I said in my letter. The day after tomorrow, 2 September, I shall have it sent to **you**, with this letter, by registered air mail. Please acknowledge its receipt. Many thanks in advance.

Your work is perfect, without any exaggeration or flattery at all, and one cannot comment on perfection, it speaks for itself. I have not had to touch a single comma of it or make any suggestion or raise any objection. I like to imagine that the task may have taxed you a little, but that you also enjoyed it. It would give me great pleasure if an **Anglo-Welsh** audience could enjoy it too, one of these **days**, if 'Novareba' and its '**entourage**' could, thanks to **you**, become a myth, something genuinely universal. Your '**indigestible** words' are less so than mine, possibly because of the great English linguistic and literary tradition, without the breaks, ruptures and periods of decay that Catalan has had to **suffer** and is still suffering (not without a certain amount of blame on our **part**), certainly because of your command of the two languages to which must be added your good taste and sensitivity.

You have been as successful with the prose as with the verse. As I have read your '**translation**' word by word, comma by **comma**, it has become very clear to me that you have not tried to avoid any difficulty or problem, that you have not '**skipped**' anything or taken the easy way out. You have conceived the work as **strictly** as I did **myself—forgive** my immodesty, but I cannot find any other way of saying it shortly and plainly. And your extreme care goes as far as making the minute corrections, in your own hand on pp. 1, 3, 5, 7, 9-15, 17-18, 24, 26-31, 36-39, 41, 43, 45-48 and 50-53, with the two whole manuscript Unes on p. 51. Admirable.

I know that you British are embarrassed by expressions of congratulation, praise, etc. We Catalans are austere too, if not, frequently, niggardly: everything for me, nothing for anybody else. The convergence of this double **tradition—apparently**, at least—**compels** me, much against my will, I assure you, to limit myself to saying

'**Thank you**, thank you very **much**'.

Sincerely yours  
Salvador **Espriu**

*Personatges:*

**L'ALTÍSSIM  
LA NEUA  
EL REI  
AMAN  
ESTHER  
MARDIQUEU**

I els altres que aniran parlant.

*L'acció, simultània a **Sinera** i a la veïna **Susa**.  
Imagina els trucs escenogràfics que et convinguin.*

*Characters'.*

THE MOST HIGH  
SNOW WHITE  
**THE KING**  
**HAMAN**  
ESTHER  
**MORDECAI**

And the others who will take their turn at speaking

*The action takes place simultaneously in Novareba and nearby Shushan.  
Imagine as many tricks of **scenography** as you see fit.*

*Characters actually appearing*

*In Novareba:*

THE MOST HIGH  
**GERAINT**

*In Shushan:*

KING **AHASUERUS**  
QUEEN **VASHTI**  
**MORDECAI**  
ESTHER  
**EMMELINE**  
**HAMAN**  
**ZERESH**  
**MEMUCAN**  
**HARBONA**  
**BIGTHANA**  
**TERESH**  
**HEGAI**  
**ATHAC**  
EXECUTIONER  
OLD NICK  
DAI BEN **RHACS**  
DEATH  
**ELIASHIB**  
MARIONETTES, COURTIERS, CITIZENS, JEWS, ELDERS OF **ISRAEL**,  
RABBIS

**ALTÍSSIM:** Que Déu us doni sempre la seva llum. Jo, l'Altíssim, cec d'aquesta parròquia de Sinera, tinc missió de convocar nens i crescuts... no a la 'Sala Mercè', ara de magna esbaldirada, que tant li convenia..., sinó al jardí dels cinc arbres, sota el roser de la pell leprosa, la troana, la camèlia, el libanenc i la palmera gànguil, avui, una tarda d'estiu, sense cap núvol al cel, segons quedo notificat per la xerra caritativa de la Neua. Mossèn Silví Saperes, el nostre propi senyor ecònom, us convida als putxinel·lis de Salom, a mirar i aprendre la bíblica i vera història de la bona reina Esther. Veniu, amb la quitxalla, vilatans, patricis, homes, dones i compatriots! Les hores s'afeixuguen, hi ha molta calma a mar, xiscles pels rials les orenetes. **¿On** trobareu més divertiment i més amable aire, per un preu, diguem la suposició, gairebé de franc? Promès, ho deixo al fibló de cada consciència: que la voluntat fixi l'entrada. **Rotlleu-vos**, doncs, a **pler**, entorn del petit teatre. Feu via, que ja el rei s'emprova la corona del seu càrrec, el gran rei, a Susa, lluny d'aquí, prop d'aquí, potser davant aquests mateixos nassos. Els ninots parlaran i ballaran, moguts per la misteriosa traça de **l'Eleuteri**, el fill de la Marieta, el noi de la casa del costat, que un dia s'escolerà, com sabeu, sense temps ni d'un badall, les cames ben tallades, arreplegat per una **màquina**... Però avui Salom li encarrega encara de comandar la **bellugor** dels seus titelles. Procureu de **distreure-us** una estona i **oblidar-vos** de tot el mal que ens ha de succeir. Després, quan el sol s'hagi post i l'Hereu **Quiliè** camini contra la fosca de Sinera amb la canya d'encendre els fanals, anireu **xano-xano** a sopar i a esperar la son i la gràcia d'un nou matí, per a qui **arribi**. I prego al selecte d'amainar gatzara, car la representació comença. **¿Estàs** a punt, rei de Pèrsia?

**REI:** **Calma**, favor, una mica. Enfilo l'estrada del meu setial, a perorar des d'allí amb la majestat que m'escaigui. Saludo amb la **previa**, de tota manera, el públic. Abillat de rei, figura que sóc l'amo de cent **vint-i-set** províncies, els noms de les quals, un darrera **l'altre**, em jugo un pam de màneç d'aquest ceptre, pedreria inclosa, que no sabria recitar de cor ni

MOST HIGH: May God's gift of light be yours for ever! I am the Most High, a blind man of this parish of **Novareba**, and it is my duty to call young and old **together**. . . not in the Parish Hall, which is being given a good **spring-cleaning** (and heaven knows it could do with **it**). . . but in the garden with the five trees, under the rose bush with the scabby bark, the **privet**, the mountain ash, the cedar and the stunted monkey-puzzle tree, this very day, this **beautiful** summer **evening**, without a cloud in the sky, as my Snow-white's charitable chattering tongue informs me. The Reverend **Irfon Jefferies**, our own vicar here, is inviting you to the poet **Selyf's** puppet show, to see and inwardly digest the true and biblical story of good Queen Esther. Come, now, with your little ones, townsfolk and gentry, men, women and fellow citizens! There's time on your hands, the sea is calm, the swallows twitter as they skim over the river. Where else will you find such entertainment, such a sweet breeze, at a cost, let us say, of **next-to-nothing**? I give you my word, I shall leave it to the pricking of each man's conscience: pay whatever you like for your ticket. Come in, then, and sit yourselves down where you want to, round the little theatre. Hurry now, for the king is trying on the crown he has to wear, the great king **of Shushan**, a long way from here, very near here, right under your very noses, maybe. The puppets are going to talk and dance, manipulated by the wonderful skill of Hector, **Mair's** son, the boy next door, who, as you know, will one day bleed to death, before you can say knife, with his legs cut clean off, caught up in a machine. But today **Selyf** can still get him to control the antics of the marionettes. Try to relax for a bit and forget all the troubles that are coming to us. Later, when the sun has set and **Watkin** Bryn Haul makes war on the dark night of Novareba with his lamplighter's pole, you will go slowly back to supper and wait for sleep and the grace of a new morning, if God grants it to you. And may I ask the ladies and gents of the audience to stop their noise, because the show's starting. Are you ready, King of Persia?

KING: Don't hurry me now, I am walking towards the platform where my throne is, to declaim from there the majesty which **becomes** me. With these few words, anyhow, I greet the audience. You see me dressed up as a king and the lord of one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, whose names, one after the other, I'm **willing** to bet a chunk of the handle of this sceptre, jewels and all, not one of you could recite by

el bon minyó del noi de la senyora **Martina**, aquí tan valent **empolistrat** de pitet i **marinera**, ni tampoc, potser, el mateix doctor **Pericot**, i ja veieu de quina carta me n'arribo a anar. Em dic, **víctim**, **Assuerus**, acerba mena de bunyol de vent per a la sencera **vida**, que **Salom** ha provat sense èxit de desinflar amb les martingales més subtils de la **metonomàsia**. Incomptable el nombre dels meus súbdits, no dibuixaries tampoc **límit** a les meves riqueses. Regno des de fa tres anys i, no gens cruel d'entranya (ho **juro!**), porto escapçada una grossa justa de germans, de senzill i àdhuc de doble vincle, tant per evitar que hom m'engavanyi el fruir tranquil del dia de demà, com per respecte al principi d'upa de sotmetre't de grat als costums d'on et trobis, i jo sóc a Pèrsia i Media, païssos que gaudeixen, gràcies a aquestes i altres mides **discretíssimes**, d'una avançada **envejable** sanitat pública. Els sacerdots del foc sancionaren, endemés, la **profilaxi** i m'ompliren els narius d'encens **absolutori**. I no surto avui, d'altra banda, a parlar de rigors i misteris del govern, sinó a anunciar-vos el gran banquet del vi, al meu palau, amb el qual **commemoro...** No recordo el que assegura el majordom de torn que commemoro. Això sí: de pedreny senyorívol, passaré, amb el somriure als llavis, per pur dret d'obligació, amargues estones de **coragre**. M'acompanyen ministres, prínceps, generals i **eunucs—ecs!**—, dels quals hi ha a la **cort**, malgrat la meva **repugnància**, una **escarafallosa** munió, **genuïna** pesta. Vénen amb **mi...**

**ALTÍSSIM:** **Afluixa, para**, que el **plançó** de la senyora Martina se'n mostra vehement a etzufar-nos ell tot **solet** les llistes.

**REI:** Engega, doncs, sense **ensopecs**, **Tianet**, bufó.

**TIANET:** **Mehuman**, **Bizta**, **Harbona**, **Hegai**, **Bigtan**, **Teres**, **Abagta**, **Atac**, **Zetar**, **Carcas...**

**REI:** Uns quants eunucs d'entre els de més supòsit. I els **prínceps...**

**TIANET:** **Memucan**, **Carsena**, **Aman**, **Sethar**, **Admata**, **Tarsis**, **Meres** i **Marsena**.

**ALTÍSSIM:** Una **estampeta** de premi, representant la gloriosa santa Rita, de part de mossèn **Silví**, per al local fenomen. Que Déu ens el conservi i ens el faci créixer tan eixerit i **applicat** com al present observes. I mira

heart, not even Mrs. Price's good little boy there, so fine and smart in his sailor suit, nor perhaps even Dr. Daniel himself, so you can see what a safe bet I'm making. My name, unlucky creature that I am, is **Ahasuerus**, a bitter sort of overblown sneeze of a name that I'm saddled with for as long as I live, which **Selyfhas** tried to deflate by the subtlest subterfuges of the art of the alteration of **nomenclature**—but without success. You could not number my subjects nor set a limit to my store of wealth. I've been on the throne three years now and, though I'm not in the least cruel at heart (I **swear!**), I've had decapitated a round gross of brothers, singly and even doubly related, both to avoid any interruption to my **peaceful** enjoyment of the morrow and out of respect for the admirable principle of willing submission to the customs of wherever you happen to be, and I happen to be in Persia and **Media**, countries which, thanks to these and other very sensible measures, enjoy an advanced and enviable standard of public health. The priests of fire, moreover, gave their blessing to these prophylactic steps and filled my nostrils with the incense of absolution. Really though, I haven't come here now to talk about the rigours and mysteries of government, but rather to tell you about the great drinking feast I'm having in my **palace**, in order to **commemorate**. . . I'm afraid I can't remember what it is the **major-domo** on duty assures me I am commemorating. What is certain is that, with my delicate digestion, and a smile on my lips, I shall endure bitter hours of heartburn. I shall be surrounded by ministers, princes, generals and **eunuchs**—ugh!—of whom the court, although they nauseate me, have a mincing multitude; they're an absolute pest. With me **come**...

**MOST HIGH:** Hold on a moment. Mrs. Price's little olive plant is dying to recite the list for us by himself.

**KING:** Off you go then, **Geraint**, bach, and without a slip mind.

**GERAINT:** **Mehuman, Bizzetha, Harbona, Hegai, Bigthana, Teresh, Abagtha, Hathach, Zethar, Carcas**. . .

**KING:** Some of the eunuchs with the greatest standing in the land. And the princes.

**GERAINT:** **Memucan, Carshena, Haman, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meresh and Marsena**.

**MOST HIGH:** A coloured portrait of the hero **Owain Glyndwr**, given by the Ref. **Jefferies** as a prize for the local wonder-boy. May God preserve him and make him grow up as bright and diligent as we can

també, no et **torbis**, com surten a l'escenari els anomenats i dansen segons l'humor de **l'Eleuteri**. Ah, **Nani** Valls, arrenca de fagot i tímboles! Guarneix i subratlla amb xim-xim condigne la magnificència del gran **monarca**, la pompa d'un jorn **apoteòtic**.

**BIGTAN:** Apoteòtic!

Aquest mot exòtic  
em torna neuròtic,  
**prostàtic**, cianòtic,  
**elefantiàtic**,  
**penibètic**, tític  
i àdhuc apoplectic  
i **arterioscleròtic**.

**REI:** La son ja no agafo  
ni prenen hipnòtic,  
excitat en veure'm  
tan apoteòtic.

**MEMUCAN:** Oh senyor despòtic,  
**fel·loplàstic**, mític!  
El vil fang **demòtic**  
et saluda **extàtic**,  
**mefític**, luètic.

**REI:** Un perill ben crític  
del trasbals eròtic.

**MEMUCAN:** El teu jou **sincrètic**,  
**paterno-asiàtic**,  
fins permet que un òptic  
sigui matemàtic.

**COR DE TITELLES:** Sobirà estrambòtic:  
sense accent **emfàtic**  
ni tampoc escèptic,  
entonem un càntic  
d'amor patriòtic.  
Que puguis, oh **màstic**  
**elàstic!**, al pòrtic  
del palau fantàstic,  
seure majestàtic,  
per mil anys de fàstic,

all see he is now. And look now, **don't** get alarmed: all the people he mentioned are coming on to the stage and are going to dance as Hector's fancy makes them. Hey there, Dai Band! Get cracking with the bassoons and kettledrums! Provide some suitable **tin-pan** alley music to enhance the splendour of the great monarch, the glory of a day that really **is... apotheotic.**

**BIGTHANA:** Apotheotic!

A word that's so exotic  
That it makes me feel neurotic  
**Diabetic, cyanotic,**  
**Elephantiac,**  
**Prostatic,** paralytic,  
And even apoplectic  
And **arteriosclerotic.**

**KING:** I never get a wink of sleep  
Though helped by a **hypnotic,**  
Excited as I am to see  
Myself apotheotic.

**MEMUCAN:** Oh noble lord despotic,  
Thermoplastic, mythic!  
The filthy scum demotic  
Salute you now ecstatic,  
Zymotic and **mephitic.**

**KING:** A peril **hypercritic**  
Of experience erotic.

**MEMUCAN:** Your gentle yoke syncretic,  
**paterno-Asiatic,**  
lets a student of the optic  
follow courses **mathematic.**

**CHORUS OF MARIONETTES:** Oh monarch estrambòtic,  
In a tone that's not bombastic  
Nor in any way dyspeptic,  
We sing a song romantic  
Of a love that's patriotic.  
Oh may you, great elastic  
Mastic, sit majestic  
In your citadel fantastic  
A millennium **nauseatic,**

\*

com avui, simpàtic  
jorn **apoteòtic**.

UN TITELLA: Tic, tic.

REI: **¿Al** reial 'Cor de l'Esperança', o desvergonyiment o cues? **Botxi**, localitza'm el **bronquític** responsable de les notes subversives i talla'l de seguida a **trossets**, d'accord amb certa llei que sancionarem.

TITELLA: S'arrossegà un verm badoc, fill de **marfanta**, en demanda de clemència. Si **s'abellia** la **víscera** de la pietat **autocràtica** a concedir-me una sola paraula **vivificadora** de perdó, **m'agemoliré**, rebuig de **tènia**, fins a fer-li eternes **mamballetes**.

BOTXÍ: Bastarà **ajupir-te, manu**, per tal que un servidor t'amidi còmodament **tendrums** i molses i et festegi amb cortesia les costelles i altres diverses mostres de **cocals**. I no se **m'atabuixi** en la **comesa**, que prou la ganiveta és esmolada.

TITELLA: Apoteòtic, **poteòtic**, **oteòtic**, **teòtic**, **eòtic**, **òtic**, tic, ic! . .

ALTISSIM: Ai, ja no piula, el malastruc!

BOTXÍ: Al cuc no resta suc ni bruc: **menda**, la justícia, no li pot arranar més l'alè. Amb permís, m'emporto les deixalles, a **aprofitar-les** per a la **grípia** del bestiar del Compare Flac.

BIGTAN: Escenes com aquesta es descabdellen sovint a Susa, sobretot en el transcurs de les **freqüentíssimes** diades **apoteòtiques**. La severitat de les ordenances aconseguí, però, cal convenir-ho, que els perses cantin unànimes i amb força harmonia. Pregunteu qui sóc? **Bigtan**, capità de la guàrdia del palau, company de Teres, i integro, amb l'al-ludit, la secreta oposició del rei, agreujats contra ell d'ençà que, després de resseguir, un vespre mortal, les aixetes del **casalici—car** el tirà baladrejava, o **embriac** o foll, que sentia degotar-li des d'alguna la sangota dels germans damunt la **clepsa—**, ens regalà en **recompensa**, mofant-se de nosaltres, no un elefant, com pels cànonys **pertocava**, sinó un ase salvatge, un dimoni **d'onagre**, el qual esmicolà una amor de **barcades** de terrissa de ca 'Els Nois Grossos', importades de Sinera a **nòlit** nostre. **Assuerus** rigué, en saber-ho, fins a pèrdua **d'esma**, i

As on this sympathetic  
Day **apotheotic**.

A MARIONETTE: **Tick,tick.**

KING: Do I detect a touch of insolence in the royal Choir of the Band of Hope, or was that a coda specially written for the occasion? Executioner, locate the **bronchitic** responsible for those subversive notes and chop him instantly into little pieces, in accordance with a certain law which we hereby promulgate.

MARIONETTE: An absent-minded abject worm crawls before you pleading for clemency. If the bowels of autocratic compassion could be moved to let fall one life-giving word of pardon, I'll grovel like tape-worm droppings and offer you eternal obeisance.

EXECUTIONER: All you need do, you poor fish, is bend down so that yours truly can measure up the gristly bits and the fatty bits and **tickle—very politely—your** ribs and other salient portions of your anatomy. And don't excite me while I'm doing the job, because the chopper's quite sharp.

MARIONETTE: Apotheotic, **potheotic**, **otheotic**, **theotic**, **ecotic**, otic, tic, ic! . . .

MOST HIGH: Not a squeak left, poor bugger!

EXECUTIONER: There's one worm won't turn again. This humble arm of the law couldn't get his breathing rate much lower than that. With your permission, I'll take away the remains; they'll come in handy in Hungry Joe's beast-house.

BIGTHANA: We have scenes like this pretty often in Shushan, especially during our extremely frequent apotheotic days. The severity of the laws, however, has had the effect, I must admit, of making Persians all sing the same tune in absolute harmony. You want to know who I am? I'm **Bigthana**, captain of the palace guard, Teresh's buddy, and he and I together make up the secret opposition to the king: we've been fed up with him ever since that dreadful night we had to check all the taps in the **citadel—just** because the tyrant, who was either drunk or out of his mind, kept screaming he could feel the blood of his brothers dripping out of one of them onto his **nut—and** the reward he **gave** us wasn't an elephant, which is what the rules say it should be, **but—just** to take the **micky—a** wild ass, a filthy great beast that smashed to smithereens some beautiful boatloads of Swansea pottery we'd imported from **Novareba** at our own expense. **Ahasuerus** laughed when he heard

actualitza **encara**, vingui o no a to, a les tertúlies, el record de la **lletja** facècia. I Teres i jo, vexats sempre i empobrits a partir d'aleshores, ens dediquem a **ensalivar** dolceses de venjança i esperem, vetllem i conspirem.

**MARDOQUEU:** El Sant d'Israel ha posat Mardoqueu a la porta del palau per destorbar els susdits propòsits i endegar després els afers a **profit** de la nissaga de Jacob. Mentrestant, suporto pruïja de **mentagra** i armo, les vetlles d'hivern, a redós de braser, belles partides de **tuti** amb **Secundina**.

**SECUNDINA:** Si, **mi-te'l**, quin remei li queda a una? És un vell pelut, **sutjós**, amb **crostam** a la barbassa. Una al-lota de posat esquerp ve a portar-li aquí la **minestra**, car ell no m'abandona mai l'entrada, vigila que vigilaràs, no sé a quin aguait, vigila que vigilaràs. Quan juguem, és **illestíssim** a adjudicar-se atots per al seu guany, amb tant d'abús, que m'enquimero i m'entrenganes de clavar-li amb l'escombra un **juli d'escaiença** i llançar-lo, **esbalandrat**, a les **desemparances** del carrer. Sinó que a **l'acte** m'asserenyo i em faig: 'Bah! ¿Una, amb tants maldecaps i la feina dels encàrrecs, Secundina aquí, Secundina **allà**, sola i sempre amatent a la porta? **Anem**, tolera l'avi i les seves patotes, perquè t'entreté, t'ajuda i serveix **encara**, certus, de **companyia**'.

**AMAN:** Detesto el captaire **garoler** que xiuxueja de sol a sol amb la portera i no s'alça ni saluda quan travesso el cancell. En enlairar-me a primer **ministre**—i sóc, pels senyals, a les envistes del cobejat **triomf**—, encetaré una política d'extermini contra els jueus, culpables únics, com és notori, de tots els mals que trobessis a Pèrsia, i enllestiré l'escàndol del **repugnantíssim** ancià d'aquella raça. Avui, tanmateix, distraguem-nos una estona dels nostres antics odis i lliurem-nos a les delícies del convit.

**REI:** Tens **cori-mori**, **Aman?** Verdeges, sembla. Atansa't, amic, no et decandeixis. I vosaltres també, senyors: heus aquí el xarel-lo, el do de les vinyes àuries de Sinera, tramès, sense reparar en despeses, dels propis **prodigiosos** cellers de can Nineta. Beveu-ne a **tentipotenti**, que

about it till he could hardly stand up, and at parties he still trots out the story of that filthy trick, whether it's to the point or not. And Teresh and I, still smarting from it, and still poor as a result of it, devote ourselves to keeping our appetite for revenge permanently whetted; so we wait and watch and plot.

**MORDECAI:** The Holy One of Israel has put **Mordecai** at the gate of the palace to foil the aforementioned plans and to arrange matters afterwards for the benefit of the seed of Jacob. Meanwhile I suffer from itching sores on my chin and sit by the brazier all through the winter evenings playing nice games of bezique with **Emmeline**.

**EMMELINE:** Well yes, I mean to say, what else can one do? He's a hairy old man, all grimy and got scabs on his chin. A surly-looking chit of a girl brings him his daily bit of grub here, because he never leaves my gate, just sits watching night and day, night and day, though heaven only knows what he's watching for. When we play cards, he always manages to get the trumps into his hand, cheating so much it drives me mad and makes me want to give him a good bashing with a broomstick and throw him out on his neck into the street to fend for himself. But when it comes to it, I calm down again and say to myself: '**Bah!** Here you **are**', I say, '**with** so many worries and so much to do, **Emmeline** here, **Emmeline** there, all alone and always on duty at the gate. Come on, my girl, you just put up with grandad and his tricks, because he amuses you and helps you, and what's more he's company for **you**'.

**HAMAN:** I loathe the sight of that garrulous old beggar who sits there all day long whispering to the portress and doesn't stand up or salute me when I walk through the gate. When I rise to the rank of Prime Minister—and the indications are that I am in sight of the coveted prize—I shall initiate a policy of extermination of the Jews, who are solely responsible, as everyone knows, for all that's wrong in **Persia**, and that will put paid to the outrageous conduct of that peculiarly repulsive old man, who is one of the race. Today, however, let us forget our ancient hatred and abandon ourselves to the delights of the banquet.

**KING:** Are you feeling peckish, **Haman?** You look a bit green about the gills. Come inside, my friend, and get your strength back. And you too, gentlemen: here's the famous brown ale from the Vale of **Neath**, transported without regard for cost from the breweries of Evan Evans

ningú no es constrenyi. Beveu a **pòtis**, si voleu, car no m'acabareu els **barralons**.

CORTESANS: L'exclusiva **munificència** del príncep ens engreixa a rebentar en aquests temps admirables.

REI: Xo, **aduladors**, conducta! De tota manera, gràcies, gràcies: celebro l'alegria. M'escarrasso a **acontentar-vos**, és la veritat. Fins al punt d'ordenar que vingui la reina **Vasthi** a amenitzar-nos el fraternal, a arrodonir la festa. **L'esvelta**, petita, **bellíssima** Vasthi, la meva feliç vida. **Prepareu-vos**, nobles, a contemplar com camina **l'alba**, el lliri dels jardins del cel. Esclaves, agenceu Vasthi. Que es presenti davant nostre, amb la corona i l'aspecte rutilant de les solemnitats.

VASTHI: No vull venir.

UN EUNUC: Senyor, la reina diu que no vol venir.

REI: Com, com, com? A vegades **sordejo**.

VASTHI: Car **Assuerus**, brau marit,

assabenta't pel meu crit  
que **refuso** d'assistir  
al banquet magne del vi.

REI: ¿Ho motiva la salut  
o ja em tractes de **llanut**?  
¿Se't **sorolla** una denteta,  
em prepares la **traveta**  
o sospites que les noies  
del servei **t'afanen** joies?  
Si t'espanta la **fatiga**,  
et duran, gentil **amiga**,  
en **baiard**, ben ajaguda,  
a l'indret de la beguda.  
¿O potser un de l'ajust  
t'ha donat qualche disgust?

VASTHI: No, no em sento gens cansada  
ni m'han pres cap arracada.  
Als calaixos res no **falta**,  
no tinc aire de malalta,  
**i** ningú del teu favor  
no **m'entenebreix** l'humor.

**Bevan.** Drink to your heart's content. Drink by the gallon, if you want to, you **won't** get to the bottom of the barrels I have in store.

COURTIERS: The sovereign's unique munificence fills our bellies to bursting point on these splendid occasions.

KING: Oh you flatterers, you're going too far! Anyway, thank you, thank you; I'm delighted you're all in such good spirits. I do do everything in my power to keep you happy, I must admit. I've even gone so far as to order Queen **Vashti** to come and grace our friendly gathering, to give the finishing touch to our festivities. Slender, dainty, ravishing Vashti, sweet light of my eyes. Prepare, noble gentlemen, to see how the dawn comes forth, the lily of the garden of paradise. Slaves, get Vashti ready. Let her appear before us with her crown and the brilliant apparel of solemn occasions.

VASHTI: I'm not coming.

A EUNUCH: Sire, the Queen says she's not coming.

KING: What, what, what? I'm a little hard of hearing sometimes.

VASHTI: **Ahasuerus**, husband dear,

to what I'm shouting lend an ear:

To show myself **off** **refuse**

For all your nobles on the booze.

KING: Could sickness now the reason be,

Or will you make a fool of me?

Maybe a little tooth is aching

Or a trap for me you're making,

Or do you think the servant girls

Are walking off with all your pearls?

If the thought of weary feet

Puts you off, why then, my sweet,

You can be carried in a litter

To watch them knocking back the bitter.

Or is there one among the chaps

Who has offended you, perhaps?

VASHTI: I'm not tired at all in fact,

All my jewellery is intact,

Nothing's missing from the chest,

I'm really feeling at my best;

And there's no one at your feast

Whose sight offends me in the least.

REI: **Vasthi meva**, t'he passat  
mil capricis, de bon grat.  
Ara **pensa**, mira bé  
el que més a tots convé.

VASTHI: No t'enganyaré a petons  
ni m'empescaré raons.  
Net i clar: no vull venir,  
ve-t'ho aquí, pobra de mi!

REI: Aconsella'm, Memucan.  
Has vist mai un cas **semblant?**  
¿Em decanto pels ulls grossos  
o li trenco part dels ossos?

MEMUCAN: Famós rei, et desplaurà  
el discurs d'un ancià.

REI: Tant se val! Belluga els llavis:  
esperem de tu mots savis.

MEMUCAN: Permet, doncs, que t'obri el pit  
i declari el meu neguit.  
Si li feies ara el tato,  
deixaràs seny i **gaiato**,  
oh suprem pastor de Media!  
Considera la tragèdia  
dels teus súbdits, endemés:  
un fatal, tètric procés.  
Tots, llevat d'alguns porucs  
i del gremi dels eunucs,  
som, evidentment, casats.

REI: El més gran dels disbarats,  
amollar-te al matrimoni.

MEMUCAN: En donem pla testimoni.  
Però l'ordre social  
es recolza en aquest mal.

REI: Prossegueix, ensomo on vas,  
**solemníssim** taujanàs.

MEMUCAN: Quan les dames del país  
endevinin mig somrís  
de victòria al rebel rostre,  
notaràs, monarca nostre,

KING: My sweet, I've gladly given way  
To a thousand fancies every day.  
Just think a bit, don't spoil the **fun**,  
And do what's best for everyone.

VASHTI: Honeyed words are out of season,  
And I can't invent a reason.  
I'm not **coming—there**, that's flat!  
Poor little me, I'm made like that.

KING: **Memucan**, be my counsellor,  
Did you ever see the like before?  
Shall I pretend my eyes are dim  
Or shall I tear her limb from limb?

MEMUCAN: My lord, an aged man's ideas  
Cannot but displease your ears.

KING: Oh what's the odds! Your thoughts unfold,  
Let's hope the words you speak are gold.

MEMUCAN: Then let me open up my heart  
And what I fear I will impart.  
If this time you spare the rod,  
You'll spoil the child, I swear to God.  
You, Medes' and Persians' noble master,  
Need to consider the disaster  
For all your subjects; your intent  
Creates a fearful precedent!  
All here, except the few weak-willed  
And, of course, the eunuch's guild,  
We're all married, I'll be bound.

KING: What greater folly can be found  
Than getting tied for life in youth?

MEMUCAN: We can bear witness to that truth.  
And yet our whole society  
Is based on this iniquity.

KING: Come on, you rascal, more of that.  
I guess what you're driving at.

MEMUCAN: When the ladies of this place  
Glimpse upon the rebel face  
The faintest smile of victory,  
Then you, oh King, will surely see

com no queda bri de pau  
a cap casa ni palau.  
Car és cert que, si no t'alces  
a dictar fort escarment,  
des d'aquest **precís** moment  
elles portaran les calces.

**REI:** Les senyores manaran?

Llur costum, vell **Memucan!**

**MEMUCAN:** Mes d'ara endavant sens límits,  
els agosarats i els tímids.

Les mullers no fermarem  
ja mai més dintre l'harem.  
I seran, desvergonyides,  
els corcons de nostres vides.

**REI:** Calla, prou! **Quina** sentència  
em proposa la prudència?

**MEMUCAN:** Si la llesta gata maula  
no t'honora avui a taula,  
foragita-la del llit  
conjugal, ans de la nit.

**REI:** Decidir-se pel repudi  
és un pas digne d'estudi.  
Altrament, perdo, amb l'esposa,  
llum, estrella, somni, rosa.

**MEMUCAN:** Sacrifica't per l'esclat  
i el prestigi de l'Estat,  
pel sofert sexe viril  
i altres coses per l'estil.

**REI:** Sigui! Aparto la perversa  
del meu tàlem i conversa.  
I deseu-la en un convent,  
a pa i aigua, per turment.

**VASTHI:** No podràs. Corro a Sinera,  
amb galant, cotxe i cuinera.  
Menjarem, durant la **fuga**,  
**pinyonet**s, **matafaluga**,  
**raïm**, **menta**, **melmelada**,  
**rogerons**, carn de becada.

That every shred of quiet and peace  
Will soon in house and palace cease.  
So to our course of action, which is:  
Punish her with heavy hand,  
Or else from now on in the land  
It's our wives will wear the breeches.

KING: Our wives will tell us what to do?

Dear **Memucan**, that's nothing new!

**MEMUCAN:** There'll be no limit to their power,  
Strong men and weak alike will cower.  
Henceforth we cannot hope to scare 'em  
By shutting them inside a harem,  
But overcoming all resistance  
They'll be the bane of our existence.

KING: Enough, enough! And what decree

Springs from your perspicacity?

**MEMUCAN:** If the cheeky little beast  
Will not come to grace the feast,  
You must deprive her of her right  
To share your bed, before tonight.

KING: To settle for repudiation

Merits much consideration.  
I'd lose, together with my wife,  
My light, my star, my sleep, my life.

**MEMUCAN:** Learn to renounce and bow to fate  
For the greater glory of the State,  
For men's Lib you must strike a blow,  
And all that sort of thing, you know.

KING: All right! The creature I'll dismiss

From any share of married bliss.  
Shut her in prison out of sight  
On bread and **water—serve** her right!

**VASHTI:** You won't! To Cambria I'll hie me,  
With cook and coach, and lover by me.  
We shall eat, on our way out,  
**Laverbread** and **Teifi** trout,  
Slices sweet of honeyed lamb,  
Welsh cakes with blackcurrant jam.

I diré que l'euga pari  
a l'hostal de Mont **Calvari**.

**REI:** Se m'escapa qui millor  
**m'entenia** el païdor.

Quant d'enuig, dol i tristesa,  
amb la intimitat malmesa!  
Em retiraré a **recés**.

a queixar-me, cavallers.

**MEMUCAN:** No t'escau la mala ganya:  
et convé nova companya.

**ALTÍSSIM:** **Galiveu** tràfecs d'embut:  
o casori o solitud.

**CORTESANS:** Visca el nostre salvador,  
vencedor d'un escurçó,  
del verí de les femelles!

Tofrenem **llor i poncelles**.

**ALTÍSSIM:** **Palatins**, funesta **gisca**.

**CORTESANS:** Visca el rei **Assuerus**, visca!

**ALTÍSSIM:** Mentre el rei se'n amaga a purgar el fel de la seva desil-lusió,  
els cortesans es basquegen a triar-li una altra dona. Després de  
mastegar-ne penjaments, afirmen ara, sense envermellir, que les noces  
són, en aquestes circumstàncies, el desideràtum per a Assuerus. Cal o  
no **junyir-te?** Plet antic com el món: no t'hi encaparris, creu-me. Passo  
prou treballs a **comunicar-vos** l'enrenou de Susa, quina mena de feroç  
empenta mobilitza l'exèrcit esgarifós de les fadrines, **temibilíssim** pop  
de cent mil **tentacles**. ü vosaltres, donzelles de Sinera, menyspreareu  
la considerable oportunitat? Pèrsia no pararà, advertiu-ho, massa lluny  
de **Kapurthala**. **¿La vostra boniquesa** temeria altrament competicions?  
Au, a bodes us convido, noies de **l'Escarabar** i del Tussol! Que la  
trompeta del nunci amplifiqui la meva crida i **l'emmeli** d'extrem a  
extrem de la vila i més enllà, almenys fins a la torre dels Encantats. I si  
necessitàveu (enteneu el sentit i preneu-ne la recta intenció) **campir**  
qualque pedaç de tela, apuntalar adobs o alguna **catxaruta aixaropada**,

And I'll enjoy my lover's charms

In comfort at the Tawe Arms.

KING: She's gone, the one who understood

The food that did my stomach good.

The pain, the grief, the aching void,

When intimacy is destroyed!

Gentlemen, I'll take my leave

And go in solitude to grieve.

MEMUCAN: Do not resign yourself to fate:

What you need's another mate.

MOST HIGH: Face it, here's a pretty mess:

Wedding bells or loneliness.

COURTIERS: God bless our King, who for us all

Has broken **from** the serpent's thrall.

We're slaves to **women's** wiles no more!

Here's wreaths for you and girls galore.

MOST HIGH: These courtiers stink like any drain.

COURTIERS: Long may **Ahasuerus** reign!

MOST HIGH: While the King hides away from us in order to purge himself of the bitterness of his disappointment, the courtiers are hard at it trying to choose a new wife for him. After making a whole heap of ribald remarks on the subject, they now **declare—without** a blush, mark **you—that**, under the circumstances, marriage is the best solution for Ahasuerus. Should one get spliced or shouldn't one? The oldest argument in the world! It's not worth **bothering** your heads about it, believe me. I've got a hard enough job on as it is, trying to tell you about the turmoil in **Shushan**, the sort of ferocious urge that is driving on the monstrous regiment of spinsters, a dreaded octopus with a hundred thousand tentacles. And you, maidens of **Novareba**, are you going to turn down such a remarkable opportunity? **Persia**, you know, can't be too far from **Mecca—or** the Mecca Ballroom, I should say. Anyway, how could you, with your beauty, possibly be afraid of competition? Come now, I summon you to the festivities, you girls from **Taibach** and **Groes**. Let the voice of the town crier carry my call abroad, from one end of the town to the other and **further** still, at least as far as Mumbles Head. And if you should need (understand now what I am saying and put the right interpretation on it), need to dye some bit of cloth, sew on a patch or concoct some syrupy brew,

aduneu-vos amb la **Neua**, la **Bòtil** i aquelles dues ànimes cristianes de la Coixa Fita i la **Narcisa** Mus: ni les bruixes de Vallgorguina no les guanyarien a **manetes**, tocant al punt i **xup-xup** del teto calent o del brou de l'herba de **seguissets**. I freno, desgraciat d'un hom, car esberlo, **sembla**, segons mossèn **Silví** mana avisar-me, el carro pel pedregar. Afegiré només, amb les degudes llicències, que també el call de Susa remena i **bolla**, davant les expectatives, com una mata de xanguet.

**MARDOQUEU:** ¿Temptem fortuna, cosina Hadassa, filla meva?

**ESTHER:** El que determinis. Manada, sóc persona obedient.

**SECUNDINA:** No, si la tal xicota, feréstega com et cauria de bell antuvi, s'expressa d'habitud amb molta lletra.

**MARDOQUEU:** Descomptava la resposta. D'ençà que quedà òrfena **d'Abihail**, el meu oncle, he criat Hadassa, a qui anomenem Esther, i l'he pujada en la temença del Senyor i la ciència de les Escriptures. Perquè, si la casa i les riqueses són l'heretatge dels pares, la dona prudent és de **Jahvè**.

**ESTHER:** Aigües pregones les paraules de la boca de l'home, torrent desbordat, deu de saviesa.

**MARDOQUEU:** Qui aconseguí bona esposa **aconseguí** el bé i la benevolència de Déu.

**ESTHER:** La dona virtuosa és corona del seu marit. Però la **dolenta, corc** dels seus ossos.

**MARDOQUEU:** Anell d'or al nas d'un porc és una dona bella i mancada de seny. Dona **forta**, qui la trobarà? Car el seu preu sobrepassa el de les gemmes.

**ESTHER:** Una dona graciosa i assenyada obtindrà glòria i edificarà la seva casa.

**MARDOQUEU:** El cor del marit descansa en **ella**, i guanys de tota mena no li faltaran.

**ESTHER:** Ec., IX. 9.

**MARDOQUEU:** Cnt., VII. 1.

**ESTHER:** Sal. CXIX. 105.

**VELLES D'ISRAEL:** Irreprotxable de doctrina. Oh, sí, irreprotxable!

**MARDOQUEU:** I què de cantarella?

**VELLS D'ISRAEL:** De la més **pulcra**, polida tradició.

**MARDOQUEU:** I de registres?

**VELLS D'ISRAEL:** Nacre!

just tell Snow-white and Black Annie, and those two dear good souls, Lame Jane and Jessie **Bevan**: not even the witches of Dinas **Mawddwy** or **Myddfai** could hold a candle to them when it comes to brewing up some steaming potion or mixing love philtres. And I must put the brake on, because I'm wandering off the **track**, it **seems—so** the vicar has sent to tell **me—running** into deep water. I'll just **add**, if you'll allow me, that the **Shushan** ghetto is in an absolute whirl at the prospect, darting about like a shoal of minnows.

**MORDECAI:** Shall we try our luck, cousin **Hadassah**, my child?

**ESTHER:** Whatever you decide. You have but to command, I will obey.

**EMMERLINE:** You know, she's a disagreeable little madam if ever there was one, this girl, but I must say she talks like a book.

**MORDECAL:** I knew the answer before I asked. Ever since her father died, my uncle **Abihail** that was, I have reared Hadassah, whom we call Esther, and brought her up in the fear of the Lord and in the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. Because if a house and riches are the inheritance of fathers, a prudent wife is from the Lord.

**ESTHER:** The words of a man's mouth are as deep waters, the **wellspring** of wisdom, a flowering brook.

**MORDECAI:** Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing and **obtaineth** favour of the Lord.

**ESTHER:** A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband; but she that **maketh** ashamed is as rottenness in his bones.

**MORDECAI:** As a gold ring in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman without discretion. A woman of valour, who can find? For her price is far above rubies.

**ESTHER:** A gracious and wise woman obtaineth honour and **buildeth** her house.

**MORDECAI:** The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her and he hath no lack of gain.

**ESTHER:** **Eccl. IX,** 9.

**MORDECAI:** Song of Songs. VII, 1.

**ESTHER:** Ps. **CXIX,** 105.

**ELDERS OF ISRAEL:** Faultless learning. Absolutely faultless.

**MORDECAI:** And what about her **cantillation?**

**ELDERS:** In the sweetest and most elegant tradition.

**MORDECAI:** And her command of the registers.

**ELDERS:** Pure silver.

**MARDOQUEU:** Crèdit?

**VELLS D'ISRAEL:** A bastament, àdhuc.

**MARDOQUEU:** Avança, doncs, Esther, vers un destí d'estrella. Guarda't, però, de revelar la teva estirp i el teu poble: crec d'evidència no haver de recalcar per quins motius.

**ESTHER:** El caut en aquest temps **calla**, car el temps és dolent.

**SECUNDINA:** Ja en el disparador, **gronxem-nos-hi**. Confrontaria de gust la joveneta amb el **Tianet. Ara**, això d'atrapar **Assuerus, galivances**. Sí, com jo!

**MARDOQUEU:** Tu deixa'ns penetrar. Quant a la **resta**, em refio de l'enginy d'ella i de l'eunuc **reposable** de les dones del palau, **Hegai**, que és amic meu i, per la **brama**, un expert.

**HEGAI:** En confiança, entenc, sí, d'agulles i cosmètics. Dictamino, per tant, d'untar-la i **maurar-la** sis mesos amb exquisit oli de mirra i altres sis amb ungüents d'Aràbia i pomades precioses. Quan l'**aromatització** i el tremp siguin perfectes, idearé un conjunt de farbalans i **puntes**... Oh, ja m'inspiro, una fantasia **folla**, folla! Et prometo de presentar-la **policresta**, seductora: breu, de capritx. I no vigilis no pateixis per via de moral, que resulto, prou ho saps, de condició ben inofensiva i em ve, a més, d'ofici ser força primmirat.

**MARDOQUEU:** Friso. Escurça'm el **periode** de tastets i **provances**. No m'entretinguis amb postures el **roseç** de l'actual agonia.

**ESTHER:** Pondera't, cosí. Per a tot hi ha el seu temps i per a cada cosa hi ha avinentesa sota el cel.

**SECUNDINA:** Impossible per a aquesta trampa. Pobra **noia**, me la miro i represento un espantall, amb els bonics i **galindaines** del **cosonet**. **Mardoqueu**, però, endavant i crits, sense **avenir-se** a raons, endavant, no sé a l'últim quines **atxes**. Uf! Li entebiono una tassa de cordial, perquè cuido que el **patafi** haurà d'estabornir-lo.

**ALTÍSSIM:** Lluny d'osques. **Secundina.** Quan Assuerus contempla Esther, li col·loca la corona al front i l'erigeix en reina en lloc de **Vasthi**.

**MORDECAI:** Backing?

ELDERS: To the utmost limit, if need be.

MORDECAL: Go forward, then, Esther, to a glorious destiny. Take care, though, not to make known your ancestry or your people; I don't think I need dwell on the reason why.

ESTHER: The wise man holds his tongue these days, we live in troubled times.

EMMELINE: Well, now you're in for it, make the most of it. You know, I'd like to see this girl up against our **Geraint**. Of course, the idea of hooking **Ahasuerus** is **ridiculous—castles** in the air. She's as much chance as I have!

MORDECAI: You just let us in. For the rest, I put my faith in her ingenuity and in the skill of the eunuch in charge of the palace women, **Hegai**, who is a friend of mine and, by all accounts, an expert.

HEGAI: In confidence, yes, I do know a thing or two about needles and cosmetics. I pronounce, therefore, that she shall be anointed and massaged for six months with the most exquisite oil of myrrh and for a further six with ointments of Arabia and precious pomades. And when the **perfuming** and refining processes are complete, I will dream up a creation of flounces and lace. Oh, I can see it now, a mad, mad caprice! I promise, when I launch her, she'll be already skilled in all the arts of seduction: in fact, something out of this world. And don't give yourself sleepless nights worrying about the moral aspect, because, as you know, I am not in a condition to harm anyone, and besides, in my position, I have to be extremely careful.

MORDECAI: I'm in too much of a hurry for that. Cut down the period of tests and trials. Don't prolong the agony of the present moment with all these antics.

ESTHER: Keep calm, cousin. To everything there is a season and a time to every purpose under the heaven.

EMMELINE: Not for this **trick**, there isn't. Poor girl, I can just picture her, an absolute scarecrow, with that nancy boy's **frills** and fripperies. But there's no stopping **Mordecai**, he won't listen to reason; on he goes, into the breach, dear friends, and heaven known what breeches he'll end up in. **Ouf!** I'll make him a nice cup of tea, he'll be feeling ever so flat with the disappointment.

MOST HIGH: Right **off** target, **Emmeline**. When Ahasuerus looks at Esther, he pops the crown on her head and makes her queen in place of **Vashti**.

**SECUNDINA:** I ara! **Comencem** a beure'ns el senderi, a l'avísada cort de Susa?

**ALTISSIM:** Repara que el **vaitot** del rei té mèrit.

**SECUNDINA:** Ni tampochon**negaria**. Que se serveixi **detallar-nos, tanmateix**, per què escull, per al paper de pròpia i **legítima**, aquesta **inconeguda** en la foscor.

**REI:** a) Perquè tants **perfums** i llaços em maregen una mica, b) Perquè m'ha pescat de filis i no **garla de música**. c) Perquè diu que no li resta parentela a qui fer rica. d) Perquè jura i m'assegura que no **m'obrirà** cap **plica**. e) Perquè puc enyorar **Vasthi**, i ningú ja no em predica. Ah, memòria de Vasthi, la claror dels cims llunyans! L'ocàs ridiculitza l'anhel de felicitat, mot prohibit a la **boca**, obsec a **l'oïda**, nom d'un singular, dolorós, incomprendible sentiment. Ara aspiro tan sols a la **calma**, a **entreabaltir-me** xau-xau, xau-xau, amb una dolçor lenta.

**ESTHER:** Posa el cap, rei, a la sina  
olorosa a **tarongina**.

Posa el cap en el meu pit,  
com si fos coixí de llit.

**REI:** Recordo amb malestar certs **rodolins**, Esther, **Em** canviaries els teus per altres versos, per exemple **estramps**, si no t'ocasionava molèstia?

**ESTHER:** Ho intentaré. **Versejar** m'és, però, un poc **dificultós**, t'ho participo.

**REI:** Em plau de constatar-ho per les **mostres**, no t'hi amoïnis. Agombola'm, que no em **refredi**. Les parrelles se'm clouen. Vaig endormiscant-me, sembla.

**TERES:** El rei tus, **rondineja**, es belluga cercant jeia. La son no **trigarà**.

**BIGTAN:** Aprofitarem avui l'ocasió, Teres: desembeina el sabre. Bo, nous estossecos, **malviatge!** **Paciència, Assuerus**, que prou ens vagarà de receptar-te juleps d'eternitat, dintre un moment, amb el silenci que ja arriba. Introduïm-nos a peu de mitjó a l'alcova dels **jovençans**, a cobrar d'un cop el saldo d'antics comptes.

**TERES:** M'entusiasmaria ajornar-ho, conspirar una estona més, ara que tant n'apreníem. Altrament, el glaç del **trespol m'enrampa** les cames. A tu no? Si se m'augmenta el fred, et prometo **d'enrederar-me** abans d'atènyer les cortines del llit. L'ànsia de la fressa també **m'esparvera**. I

**EMMELINE:** You don't say! Are we starting to go off our heads in this wise court of **Shushan?**

**MOST HIGH:** You must admit that the King's gamble has its merits.

**EMMELINE:** I don't deny it. All the same, perhaps he will be kind enough to give us the reasons why he is choosing this obscure, unknown girl to be his lawful wedded wife.

**KING:** (a) Because her scents and furbelows have put me in a **flutter**. (b) Because she's timed it right and doesn't bore me with her **chatter**. (c) Because she has no relatives to feed on the **Exchequer**. (d) Because she swears she'll never read a single royal **letter**. (e) Because, **perhaps**, now **Vashti's** gone, there's no one left to bicker. Ah, the memory of **Vashti**, bright as the distant peaks! The sunset makes a mockery of the desire for **happiness—the** word the lips must not utter, that falls obscenely on the ear, the name of a singular, painful incomprehensible emotion. Now I only long for calm, long to sink gently into a peaceful sea of sweetness.

**ESTHER:** Lay your head, King, on my bosom,  
Fragrant now with orange blossom.  
Lay your head upon my breast,  
And, as on a pillow, rest.

**KING:** I **have** an uneasy recollection of certain rhyming couplets, Esther. Would you mind changing **yours**, to free verse for example, if it's not too much trouble?

**ESTHER:** I'll try. But I warn you, I do find **verse-making** rather hard.

**KING:** So I am happy to see from the sample provided; don't worry. Wrap me up well, so that I won't catch cold. My eyes are **closing**. I'm dozing off, apparently.

**TERESH:** The King is coughing and muttering, moving around to find a comfortable position. He'll be asleep soon.

**BIGTHANA:** We'll seize our chance today, **Teresh**; **unsheathe** your sword. Well, if he isn't coughing again, confound it! Be patient, **Ahasuerus**, we shall have plenty of time to prescribe sweet draughts of eternity for you, any moment now, in the approaching silence. Let's slip into the bridal chamber **in** our stocking feet and settle the old scores at one stroke.

**TERESH:** I should be delighted to put it off, to go on conspiring a little longer, now that we are learning so much about it. Besides, I've got cramp in my legs from the cold floor. Haven't you? If I get any colder, I swear I shall be frozen stiff before I reach the **bed-curtains**. I'm so

afraid of making a noise too: it **terrifies** me. Suppose the door creaks? The whole palace will be on us in a flash.

**MORDECAI:** One man alone, the beggar at the gate, will fell the bragging captains. Yes, the poor Jew, the fragile old man, is the instrument of the Lord.

**TERESH:** Can you hear, **Bigthana?** A thousand toothless mouths are muttering in the shadows, my ears have caught their murmuring. The spirits from the visions of the night will rise up.

**MORDECAI:** Does he know **Eliphaz** the **Temanite's** speech, or is it just a question of expressions coinciding? A nice thing it would be if they were to arouse my **exegetic** sympathies by irrelevant quotations from the Bible.

**TERESH:** The owl flies hooting past my head, hostile shadows lie in wait along the walls, sinister mouths gape there in the darkness. Oh, how the night resounds with the mocking of the devil!

**MORDECAI:** If he goes on like this, he'll have me scared too.

**TERESH:** Let's pull out of this, **Bigthana:** I have a nasty feeling they're going to discover us. And then, if we kill the king, they'll only put a worse one on the throne. '**With** every wash a sheet **lost**', as my mother used to say, God rest her soul.

**MORDECAI:** Are they going to choose this moment to start a philosophical discussion? God **forbid**—I always either have to join in or burst.

**BIGTHANA:** Are you pleading for **Ahasuerus** or are you on his side, you coward? Are we going to waver or draw back now, with our shoes off, on the threshold of the chamber? Be a man, Teresh. No one can fathom in advance the causes of success or failure, the path along which his dreams and actions will take him. Dark destiny drives us on, showing us an enigmatic horizon. We only enjoy *talking* about our plans, carrying them out annoys us and will perhaps disappoint us, agreed, but boasting commits a man and there's no going back. Or do you really think that if we turn tail now, we shall be able to look each other in the face tomorrow and calmly talk about rabbit shooting or the latest matrimonial scandals in **Shushan?** Weighty words, even when they are dictated by a frivolous mind, inexorably entail momentous actions.

**TERESH:** I can't think of any suitably stupid repartee for all that. Say the word then. I'll **co-operate**.

**MORDECAI:** They've finished their **arguments**, their tongues are sticking

Branden les armes nues, llisquen pel marbre a guisa de llops. L' hora d'intervenir, braços febles! **M'abalanço d'improvís** a llurs esquenes, els sobto amb esgarips esgarifosos. Ajut, els lleials, els **sentinelles**, que hom atempta contra la vida del rei!

**SECUNDINA:** Curses, **esvalots**, torb, desori. **¿Què garganteges**, vell, enmig de la **babel**?

**MARDOQUEU:** Tresca, Secundina, aixeca els patis. I vosaltres, sobirans senyors, **llevieu-vos**. Incrimino aquests d'intent de **regicidi**.

'**REI:** D'on, el perill? Em defensaré i protegiré, no caduquejo. Ah, els capitans subjecten tanmateix el brètol, d'una **gallarda estampa**, **valga'm!** Amb tal fesomia, sobraran dilacions processals: la culpa li és ben **allevadissa**.

**ESTHER:** **Espavila't**, espòs, i distingeix, et prego, qui increpa i aguanta a qui.

**REI:** Què insinues? **Bigtan** i Teres, assassins en aprenentatge? I **fuig!**... O potser ho ensopegues, ara m'adono de llur esglai. Que enteres, sota aquestes grapes! M'explico, però, el pànic dels minyons, presoners del campió de les **bubotes**. **¿I tot el bé de Déu de barba que tragina li pertany per justos i autèntics títols**, sense amagar-hi, per **remuntar-la, postis de cap mena?** Si un dia decidies **tondre't**, l'avi, que et **torisquin** les tisores d'en **Calau** Pòrtules o les miraculoses d'en Fèlix **Parrissa**. Malfia't d'arriscar-te al vigor d'altres barbers, t'ho recomano. I el mal? Tan apoderat te'l noto, que ni el balsam del Papa Innocent no **l'amorosiria**, em penso.

**SECUNDINA:** Hi clisses. Jo, en **persona**, he aplicat als **brians**, mesos i mesos, amb diligència i magna llei, escuma d'or, oli rosat, blanquet cru, a escrúpols, a dracmes, a diners, a dojo, fins a buidar-ne la tenda de la **Mariàngela**. Per al dedins de la **victèria**, em formalitzo, quan s'escau, a administrar-li, matí i tarda, un vas regular d'aigua de **pimpinella**, flor de nimfa i créixens. Com si res. Ell i la **natura, entemats** en els tretze d'axioma. Filla, una creu!

**REI:** A matèria esgotada i esforços **nuls**, resignació, no t'alteris. Bé, en pretèrit el perill i el rebombori, tornem a les nonetes, abans d'apuntar

to the roof of their mouths. Brandishing their naked **weapons**, they slip stealthily over the marble floor. Time for action, you frail arms! I'll suddenly rush out behind them and terrify them with **fearful** yells. Help! Help! Sentries, loyal subjects, they're trying to kill the King!

**EMMELINE:** Alarums, **excursions**, shouts and yells. What are you babbling about old man, in all this bedlam?

**MORDECAI:** Stir yourself, **Emmeline**, raise the alarm. And you, sovereign lord and lady, get out of bed. I accuse these men of attempted regicide.

**KING:** Where? Where's the danger? I shall defend and protect myself, I'm not senile yet. Ah, it's all right, the guards have got hold of the wretch; a nasty bit of work and no mistake. With a face like that, there'll be no need for legal formalities: he's the obvious culprit.

**ESTHER:** Wake up, my love, and see who's accusing and holding on to whom.

**KING:** What are you suggesting? **Bigthana** and Teresh, would-be assassins? Get away with **you!**... Or perhaps you're right, now I can see how terrified they are. They're absolutely stiff with fright, under those great claws. All the same, I can understand the panic of these boys, captured by the champion Frankenstein of all time. And that king-size beard he carries round with him, is it genuinely his by right, no hidden false bits covering the gaps? If you ever decide to have it cut, grandad, get the skilful scissors of **Dewi** Price or **Gareth** Williams to do the shearing. Be careful, don't entrust yourself to the rough hands of other barbers, that's my advice. And that skin disease you have? I can see it has such a hold on you that not even Tiger Balm would soothe it, I imagine.

**EMMELINE:** You're right there. I, with my own hands, have treated the boils for months and months, persevering with liberal applications of soap **bark**, oil of roses, raw white lead, by the scruple, the **drachma**, the dinar, the bucketful, until I emptied Mary-Anne the Herbs' shop. For his inner cleanliness, I take it upon myself, when it's convenient, to give him, night and morning, a regular glass of pimpernel water, water-lily flower and **water-cress**. Not a scrap of good. Nature and him, always at loggerheads. What an affliction, my dear!

**KING:** When you're dealing with **worn-out** material and zero effort, you must stop worrying and make the best of a bad job. Well, now that the danger and the rioting are all past history, let's go back to **bye-byes**

l'alba. Soldats, lliureu al botxí el parell **d'emmudits** infeliços. Nens, nens, com lamento la lleueresa! No **paíreu** la broma de **l'onagre**, ho endevino? **Escassa** imaginació i excés de geni, defectes nacionals de **Pèrsia**, admitem-ho. En fi, valor i curt suplici, adéu! I que els escribes detallin a la meva crònica aquests esdeveniments memorables.

**SECUNDINA:** Tothom desfila, i a tu, ni les gràcies. Ai, company, que els negocis se t'endeguen a la biorxa!

**MARDOQUEU:** làctica. Esther i jo treballem de sotamà.

**SECUNDINA:** Millor, si te n'acontentes: no t'he de contrariar. **Apa**, no et plantifiquis. Sortim també, que tantes agitacions, a les petites i en cos de **camisa**, només et proporcionen **calapàndries**.

**ALTÍSSIM:** Mardoqueu se'n **va**, amb **l'aliada, banyaabaix**, un poc **desconcertat**, observeu-ho. A l'escenari sense putxinel-lis hauria de descendir el teló, en un respir d'entreacte, mentre la drapaire brisa matinal recull i s'emporta, pels solitaris carrers de Susa, últimes gelors de lluna i estrelles. En la pausa **rumiaríem**, si més no, la pedregada de **trosos** vocals que l'autor ens ha etzibat amb **mandrons** d'una parla **moribunda**, ja gairebé inintel·ligible per a molts de nosaltres. **Salom**, però, ho ordena altrament, i jo, la groga, m'he d'enginyar a **omplir-vos** el lapse amb acudits i notícies de carnestoltes. Sapigueu, doncs, que **l'Eleuteri**, amb la gargamella a l'escarlata (d'estrafer **l'espinglet** dels ninots), es beu a glops, per suavitzar-la, unes quantes gracioses fresques—i no **t'alleris, Tianet**, a corregir-me, car a **Sinera** sempre ho pelarem així. ítem, que **Bigtan i Teres** pujaren, modestos de **capteniment**, al cadafal, a ensenyar-nos canes i canes de llengua **saburrosa**, tan bruta, que el florenceu prescriví, per **màrfeques**, un **purgatiu** de cavall, tanmateix acüvíssim. ítem, que els historiadors historiaren la història amb històries d'historiografia **historiada—i**, ans de qualificar l'embolic d'estirabot, et demano de fixar-te en la manera com historien els **historiadors**. ítem, que dama **Alfina** i dama **Betina** i dama **Gambardina** inauguren, en **lassar-se de batxillejar**, espasmes del **nirviós** de la corda fluixa, úniques en la crispació i en el sofrir, segons ens ho **bruelen**. ¿I els altres **bordejaran** tau-tau, potser? No, **mentida**, escolteu-ho amb polca:

before dawn breaks. Soldiers, hand this **pair** of tongue-tied wretches over to the executioner. Boys, boys, how I regret your indiscretion! You couldn't take that joke with the donkey, am I right? No imagination and no **patience—Persia's** national failings, let's admit it. Oh, well, courage, a quick end, and so goodbye! And let the **scribes** record these memorable events in my chronicle.

EMMELINE: They're all marching off, and not even a word of thanks for you. The best-laid **schemes**... eh, my **friend?**

MORDECAI: Tactics. Esther and I are working underground.

EMMELINE: That's better, if it makes you happy. I shan't stand in your way. Come on now, don't take root here. Let's go away too, because with all this rushing around in the early morning, and you with only your shut on, you'll catch your death if you're not **careful**.

MOST HIGH: **Mordecai** goes off with his playmate, dejected, a bit disconcerted, as you can see. On the puppetless stage the curtain ought to come down at this point, for a breather between scenes, while the **rag-and-bone** morning breeze collects and carries off, through the empty alleys of Shushan, the last frosty particles of moon and stars. In the interval we would be able, if nothing else, to chew over the volley of indigestible words the author has flung at us with the slings of a dying form of speech, almost unintelligible by now to many of us. **Selyf**, however, has arranged it differently, and I, the stand-in, have to find a way of filling the gap with witty remarks and funny stories. Let me tell you, that Hector's throat is burning (from imitating the falsetto of the puppets), and to soothe it he's sipping a few cool bottles of **frizz—and** don't you start correcting me, **Geraint**, because in **Novareba** we always mangle the word like that. Item, that **Bigthana** and Teresh walked with modest bearing up to the scaffold, only to show us yards and yards of furry tongue, so dirty that the police spurgeon, a bit late in the day, prescribed a horse drench for them, a very powerful one at that. Item, that the historians **historified** the history with histories of histrionic **historiography—and**, before you dismiss the **jingle** as a feeble joke, I'll ask you to think how historians do in fact write their history. Item, that Lady **Alphina** and Lady **Bettina** and Lady **Gambolina** grew tired of playing the cultured **grande dame** and began to contort themselves with attacks of nerves and **palpitations**, moaning that their pains and spasms were unique. And nobody else felt a thing, I suppose? No, not true, listen to it set to music:

Tots patim. Les cadires  
**sòn** coixes, i se'ns claven  
els llistons a l'esquena.

Això, quan Déu ens deixa seure, de tard en tard, com a la senyora Maria Castelló, lectora immòbil. No, no botzineu, assuaugeu bramuls, madones. **Uniu-vos** als silenciosos que sirguen i **tomballen** dintre el **resclum** de la ratera sense escapatòries. I prou d'aquest coll, perquè se m'obliga ara a engiponar la cançó de **Iehudi**, **Iehudi** dels **Anchisi**, no importa si de Susa o de **Sinera** o de la ciutat d'en Nyoca. Trempa la **guitarra**, **Neua**, **Embraga**, embranquem-nos i **sallem**:

lehudi, marit sastre  
de jaç **sollat**,  
no troba barretines  
ni estrenyecaps  
que puguin amagar-li  
aquell gran dany.  
Regira en va botigues,  
caixes, encants,  
mostrant arreu les noses  
del front al ras,  
on nien caderneres  
i qualche **gaig**.  
Després d'inútil brega,  
de molt trasbals,  
el bon minyó **d'Anchisi**  
s'ha refredat.  
Amb **esternuts** trontolla  
fins el **Mont-Alt**,  
s'embussa, expectorava,  
li raja el nas.

We all **suffer**. The chairs  
Wobble and make ridges  
All the way down our backs.

On the rare occasions, that is, when the good Lord allows us to sit down at all, quiet like **Selyf's** Aunt **Llywela**, who used to read without moving a muscle. No, no murmuring, sweet wenches, moderate your bleating. Join the silent ones who stagger round and sweat their hearts out in the stench of the rat-trap which has no exit. And **that's** enough of that tune, because they're making me put in the song about **Yehudi** of the Pellegrini family, whether they're from **Shushan** or Novareba or Abertawe itself doesn't matter. Tune the guitar, Show-white. Start up, one, two, three, we're **off**:

Yehudi was a tailor  
Whose wife had run away;  
At night his bed was lonely  
And bis head was bare by day.

The horns grew on his forehead  
So he couldn't find a hat;  
Every hatter in the country  
Said '**We've** none as big as **that!**'

They went on growing bigger  
**And** he said '**What** shall I **do?**'  
The birds that nested in them  
Would answer him '**Cuckoo!**'

At last the winds of winter  
That blew about his head  
Made him cough and shiver  
And his nose a cherry red.

So vigorous his sneezes  
He made the Beacons shake;  
His throat was sore and husky  
And his head began to ache.

Aleshores comença  
 a **reguitnar**,  
 damunt els responsables  
 del greu **cadarn**.  
 un cúmul **d'improperis**  
 i **marramaus**  
 que li **cabriden** ganes  
 d'escampar sang.  
 Del pensament a l'obra,  
 tan sols un pas:  
 en **vesprejar** cosia  
 amb un punyal  
 els cossos de la dona  
 i el seu amant.  
 Com més cus, més forada  
 el **drut gallard**  
 i converteix l'esposa  
 en un **buirac**.  
 Llurs pells no li valdrien  
 ni per **fustany**:  
 les llença de pastura  
 al calamars.  
 A poc a poc se'n **torna**,  
**pengim-penjam**.  
 Ja no tus, i les gorres  
 prou li entraran.  
 Però de sobte cauen,  
 galtes avall,  
 espesses **llagrimotes**  
 de **saurí** fart.  
**Iehudi** plora, plora  
 que ploraràs.  
 Ai, **sastrinyoli** ranci,  
 sentimental!

Sí, vilatans, guarir de mariugues costa car, tant als Anchisi com a **Assuerus**, el qual **febreja**, d'ençà del recent **poti-poti**, i defèn a Esther d'entrevistar-se amb ell en una mesada, potser per tal de no contagiar-

At last he lost his **temper**:  
'I really think it's time  
That those who caused my sickness  
Should **suffer** for their **crime**'.

He came upon the couple  
Lying cosy in a bed;  
He sewed the two together  
With a dagger for a thread.

He so hemstitched the lover,  
The basting was so thick,  
He looked like a pincushion,  
Every inch a prick.

Not even for a lining  
Would their skins be any good,  
So he threw them in the Channel  
To give the fishes food.

He came back walking slowly,  
He coughed and sneezed no more;  
The headgear fitted nicely  
That he had worn before.

But down his cheeks came rolling,  
When he sat down to eat,  
The tears all big and salty  
Of a crocodile replete.

Beside his tailor's dummy,  
Upon his tailor's stool,  
**Yehudi** wept and wept and wept,  
Poor sentimental fool!

Yes, my friends, curing our ailments is a costly business, both for Pellegrinis and for **Ahasuerus**, who has a fever as a result of the recent hullabaloo and has forbidden Esther to visit him for a month, perhaps

la, si fos passa. Estubat, **empeguntat** i força **empotingat**, el rei de Pèrsia aplega els seus consellers, amb la intenció de desempalregar-se temporalment del feix de l'imperi, que el rebenta de veres, com de seguida us ho manifestarà.

**REI:** Conductor ja sense gaire delit del carro **baluerna**, després de molts trontolls de **vigflies** i batecs, habilito **Aman** per als **ooixques** més peremptoris. Si **gruares** el fuet i les regnes, **ufaneja** en el futur amb llur maneig.

**AMAN:** En encarregar-me, en ple tràngol, del timó de la nau, m'ajupo, **nostramo**, a besar-te la **sandàlia**. Responsabilitat i prerrogatives m'aclaparen ensembs.

**REI:** Alerta, amb l'emoció, a rodolar de **trompis**. Em consternaria que des del principi la closca et **tombegés**.

**ALTISSIM:** **Pifres, nyigo-nyigo, redoblants** de **cerimònia. Àulics**, de bocaterrosa! **Assuerus** disposta a la destra **d'Aman** l'anell emblemàtic del poder.

**REI:** Enllestirem de pressa. Redreceu-vos, senyors, i **acomodeu-vos** per oir el programa del ministre. Tu, res d'emfasitzar, controla't els **arpegis**. Que tothom et copsi directrius i consignes. I dissimula si badallo, car la nyonya em va espatlant de mica en mica la urbanitat.

**AMAN:** El meu pedagog, un esclau d'origen hel·lènic, m'educà en el culte del **laconisme**.

**REI:** Detall encoratjador. Debuta.

**AMAN:** Amb la venia. Rei de reis, **pròcers** i llinatges de **Pèrsia**, cortesans, eunucs i cavallers!

**REI:** Dos punts.

**AMAN:** Jo hi discernia admiratiu, ai ai!

**REI:** Pst, dos punts. No t'altivis i empalma.

**AMAN:** **D'allò...** eunucs i **cavallers...** Ah, sí! Ara que assumeixo les funcions inherents a aquest **setial**, segon del reialme per la volençà de l'august **monarca...**

**REI:** Etc. **Alforra** adorns **d'exordi**. Teca, **visir**. Esbossa'm les bases de la teva **política**.

**AMAN:** Te la perfilaré: ordre públic com a clau de volta, prestidigitacions

so as not to pass it on to her if it's infectious. Steamed in hot baths, larded with ointments, and dosed up to the eyeballs with medicines, the King of Persia calls his counsellors together with the idea of temporarily shedding the burden of his empire, which is really killing him, as he will now tell you.

KING: I, the no longer very enthusiastic driver of this cumbersome old cart, after much cogitation, vacillation and frequent **insomnia**, delegate **Haman** to deal with emergency moves. If you longed to get hold of the whip and reins, you can boast in future that you have them in your hands.

HAMAN: Taking charge, at the height of the storm, of the ship's tiller, I bow, master, to kiss your sandals. Responsibility and **privileges** both weigh heavily upon me.

KING: Look out, don't fall flat on your face with all this emotion. I should be most upset if you lost your head before you even started.

MOST HIGH: Fifes and drums, boom-boom, **peep-peep**. Courtiers, kiss the dust! **Ahasuerus** is putting the ring, the symbol of power, on to Hainan's right hand.

KING: Come now, let's be brief. Sit up, gentlemen, and prepare to hear the minister's programme. And you now, no rhetoric please, control your sound effects. See that everybody grasps your guiding principles and slogans. And forgive me if I yawn, because idleness is slowly getting the better of my good manners.

HAMAN: My teacher, a slave of Hellenic origin, brought me up to worship brevity.

KING: A reassuring detail. Begin.

HAMAN: With your permission. King of **Kings**, illustrious lords of **Persia**, courtiers, eunuchs and distinguished gentlemen!

KING: Colon.

HAMAN: Alas, I gave it an exclamation mark.

KING: **Tut**, tut, a colon. Don't get above yourself and go on from where you left off.

HAMAN: **Right**... eunuchs and distinguished **gentlemen**... Ah yes! Now that I am assuming the functions vested in this throne, as second in the kingdom by the will of our august **sovereign**...

KING: Etc., etc. Spare us the introductory flourishes. Get to the point, vizier. Give me an outline of your policy.

HAMAN: I'll put it in a nutshell for you: law and order as corner stone, deft

de clemència i tralla, **intangibilitat** de l'os **bertran** dels **funcionaris**, pa a **betzef** (en el paper), foments calents d'indústria i **cultura**, forces vives al bany **maria**, extermini dels jueus.

**REI:** Resum **disert d'estadista**, et felicito. Quant a la magrana final, ja m'has polsat ben bé l'opinió?

**AMAN:** La **degolladissa** extasiarà la púrria pucera, delerosa de **joguinejar** i expansionar-se. I les resultes beneficiaran el teu patrimoni amb deu mil talents de plata, que posaré a les mans dels tresorers.

**REI:** Consigna'l s al Fisc, partida '**Fons de Rèptils**'. Uix, algú ha de pagar els plats romputs! ¿I per a quan, la gresca?

**AMAN:** Als daus de **Saurimonda, el tretze d'Adar**. Ve't **aquí** l'edicte. El sanciones?

**REI:** Imprimatur!

**ALTÍSSIM:** Partiren correus a totes les satrapies, amb còpies del ban i instruccions del privat per als governadors. **Plor**alies al call de Susa.

**JUEUS:** Persecució damunt els nostres lloms! A **sepultures** d'ase ens abocaran.

**JUEVES:** A **senallades**, ai! Ens arrossegaran a **xolls** i femers, entre la immundícia de les carronyes, orbats del cel de Jerusalem.

**MARDOQUEU:** Confusió i afront ens cobreixen. Perquè pecàrem contra **Jahvè**, nosaltres i els nostres pares, des de la joventut fins aquest dia.

**JUEVES:** Dia d'estralls i de **fosca**, dia obscur i de núvol sobre les roques i les torres altes.

**JUEUS:** Com peixos agafats a la xarxa, com ocells presoners en el parany, talment així ens atrapa i ens sobta el temps de l'infortuni.

**MARDOQUEU:** Ens **emmenaran** entre el nombre dels difunts, els difunts sense memòria en llur destí immutable.

**JUEUS:** Dejuneu, els cecs vacil·lants a veredes de tenebra.

**JUEVES:** Salva'ns, Déu, refugi nostre per generacions i generacions, de la ira dels adversaris del nom d'Israel.

**MARDOQUEU:** Marxo ennegrit, i no pel sol. Esquinço el mantell i **encendro** la testa. M'aixeco i clamo pels carrers. Dirigeixo el meu plant vers on sojorna el rei.

juggling with clemency and the big stick, immunity for all state officials, free bread for all (on paper), therapeutic applications of industry and culture, feather beds for the ruling classes, extermination of the Jews.

KING: A statesmanlike speech, I congratulate you. As regards the final... solution, have you sounded public opinion?

HAMAN: The massacre will delight the lousy plebs, who are always ready for a bit of **fun** and games and a chance to let off steam. And the proceeds will add to your resources two thousand talents of silver, which I will put into the hands of your treasurers.

KING: Pay them into the Exchequer, Slush Fund Department. **Pouf**, *someone* will have to foot the bill! And when will the fun start?

HAMAN: According to Old Moore's Almanack, on the thirteenth of **Adar**. Here's the edict. Will you approve it?

KING: Imprimatur!

MOST HIGH: Messengers went out to all the King's provinces, with copies of the proclamation and instructions **from** the chief minister to the governors. Lamentations in the **Shushan** ghetto.

JEWS: Persecution rains upon our backs! They will cast us into asses' graves.

JEWESSES: By the cartload, **oyveh!** Into **dungheaps** and cesspools they will throw us, along with the filth of carrion, without the sky of Jerusalem above our heads.

MORDECAI: Confusion and outrage overwhelm us. Because we have sinned against the Lord, we and our fathers, from our youth even until now.

JEWESSES: Day of horror and gloom, a dark and cloudy day upon the rocks and high towers.

JEWS: Like fishes caught in the net, like birds in the snare of the fowler, so are we caught and surprised by the hour of misfortune.

MORDECAI: They will number us among the forgotten dead, the dead without memorial in their unchangeable destiny.

JEWS: Fast, you who wander as blind men on the paths of darkness.

JEWESSES: Save us, oh God, our refuge in every generation, from the wrath of the adversaries of the name of Israel.

MORDECAI: I walk in darkness and not in sunlight. I tear my garments and put ashes on my head. I lift up my cry in the streets. I turn the voice of my complaint towards the dwelling-place of the King.

**SECUNDINA:** Condolences, Mardoqueu. Ceres Esther? És al mirador, cantussejant i fent **frivolé**. Des **d'aquí** pots sentir-la.

**ESTHER:** Quan et perdis endins

del desert de la tarda  
i t'assedeui el blau  
de la mar tan **llunyana**,  
et sentiràs mirat  
per la meva mirada.

Etern príncep, Jacob,  
tindràs sempre companya  
que peregrini amb tu  
per segles i paraules.  
Suportaràs la mort,  
com a l'ocell la branca.

Ai, enemic **cami**  
de les hores i l'aigua,  
galop d'altius arquers  
contraris a l'estàtua  
de sal; de qui volgué  
esdevenir de marbre!  
Si et tombes, els teus ulls  
glaçaran esperances.

Poble trist, amb record  
de ciutats molt cremades.  
No t'aculi cap repòs  
d'ombra **bona**, de casa.  
Només **somnis**, al fons  
de la meva mirada.

**MARDOQUEU:** Ai, tu, Esther! Ai, ai, tu, Esther! Ai, ai, ai, tu, Esther!

**ESTHER:** Que es cala foc, cosí? Em sobresaltes.

**MARDOQUEU:** Reina, deixa la filoja. Ai, **reina**, que ens esclafaran per  
manament **d'Aman!**

**ESTHER:** Reporta't, Mardoqueu, No autoritzo expressions de **raval** ni  
cacofonies. D'altra **banda**, coneix ja el pregó. Véns, a causa d'ell, tan  
mal compost?

**EMMELINE:** My **condolences, Mordecai.** Are you looking for Esther? She's on the balcony, singing to herself and doing her crochet. You can see her **from** here.

**ESTHER:** When you are parched and lost  
In the desert's trackless waste  
**And** thirst for the distant blue  
Of the sea in the mirage haze,  
Then you will feel on you  
My tranquil gaze.

Oh Jacob the Prince, a friend  
Will always lead your hand  
**As** you wander through the hate  
Of centuries and words.  
You will only feel death's weight  
As the branch a bird's.

A hostile road you **tread,**  
Beset by the archer's pride.  
Pillar of salt is all,  
Not marble, to mark who dies.  
Move on! Hopes, if you fall,  
Freeze in your eyes.

Sad people, the cities burned  
**Are fuel** to your mind.  
The road ahead is bleak,  
No warming fireside gleams;  
For welcome you must seek  
In my eyes for dreams.

**MORDECAI:** Ah, Esther! Ah, ah, Esther! Ah, ah, ah, Esther!

**ESTHER:** Where's the fire, cousin? You frighten me.

**MORDECAI:** Queen, put down your crochet. Oh, Queen, they're going to do us in, a sinister command direct from **Haman**, the Prime Minister.

**ESTHER:** Mordecai, control yourself. I won't allow coarse expressions or jingles here. Anyway, I know about the proclamation. Is that why you've come here in such a state?

**MARDOQUEU:** Sí, flemàtica filla. I a insinuar-te que pidolis **commiseracions** del teu marit per a nosaltres.

**ESTHER:** Indicat amb **mònita**. El suggeriment, però, m'ha de penetrar a poc a poc.

**MARDOQUEU:** Oh, no ens atropellem, reflexiona! Tu no fores mai una noia **eixelebrada**, tanmateix.

**ESTHER:** En tot hi ha sempre un sis o un as, catedràtic.

**MARDOQUEU:** El nostre as ets tu, un as pelat, ben **sull**. **Trumfa els naips d'Aman, no gallinegis.**

**ESTHER:** És que no dec atansar-me ara a **Assuerus**, sota pena de la vida.

**MARDOQUEU:** I què? **¿Lad'Israel no compta més, per ventura?** No pensis en la teva ànima, exposa't. Qui sap si per a aquesta hora algú et féu arribar al tron.

**ESTHER:** Ah, la **factura**, eclesiastès?

**MARDOQUEU:** No parlo a l'assemblea, sinó a tu.

**ESTHER:** Una simple suposició dialèctica: i si m'hi negava? Tothom, excepte **Secundina**, ignora **aquí** la meva procedència.

**MARDOQUEU:** Una altra simple suposició dialèctica: i si algú l'**esbombolava?** Sospesa pros i **contres, galanxona**.

**ESTHER:** Ho **capisso**. He de filar prim, per força, encara que l'egoisme natural no en tingui ganes. Val més que em faci un mèrit, amb la gestió, davant les tribus, que no pas que un o un altre **propali** el meu secret, eh, pare?

**MARDOQUEU:** Àngela!

**ESTHER:** Em mudo, doncs, i veuré el rei. I si moro, que mori!

**MARDOQUEU:** No moriràs, sinó que viuràs, i illoarem amb tu les obres de **Jahvè**.

**VEUS DE JUEUS:** Per aquesta porta del nostre Déu, per aquesta porta entraran els justos.

**VEUS DE JUEVES:** Vosaltres, els qui cavallqueu en eugues blanques, vosaltres, els viatgers, a xaloc i a garbí, divulgueu el valor d'Esther, la benaurada.

**MARDOQUEU:** Car es presentà a Assuerus amb perill, i li tocà la punta del ceptre d'or, i gosà formular-li una petició salvadora.

**ESTHER:** Oh, bon rei, espòs i home! Oh, bon home!

**MORDECAI:** Yes, you **phlegmatic** child. And to suggest that you might beg your husband to show some sympathy for us.

**ESTHER:** A brilliant suggestion. All the same, it will be some time before the idea sinks in.

**MORDECAI:** Oh don't let's start insulting each other, do some thinking! You were never stupid as a child, after all.

**ESTHER:** There's a right and a wrong call for every hand, professor.

**MORDECAI:** In this one, you are our solitary ace of **trumps—unguarded**. Trump Haman's cards, don't beat about the bush any longer.

**ESTHER:** The thing is that I musn't approach **Ahasuerus** now, on pain of death.

**MORDECAI:** So **what?** Is Israel's life not worth more than yours, by any chance? **Don't** think about your own skin, take the risk. Perhaps it was for this very hour that someone guided you to the throne.

**ESTHER:** So now I must foot the bill, **eh**, preacher?

**MORDECAI:** I am not talking to the assembly, but to you.

**ESTHER:** A simple dialectical hypothesis: supposing he refused me? Except for **Emmeline**, nobody knows my origin here.

**MORDECAI:** Another simple **dialectical** hypothesis: supposing someone revealed it? Weigh up the pros and cons, my love.

**ESTHER:** I understand. I am compelled to walk the tightrope, even though my natural egoism would prefer to do nothing about it. It is better that I should win golden opinions **from** the tribes, by taking the step, than that someone or other should **disclose** my secret, eh father?

**MORDECAI:** Exactly.

**ESTHER:** I'll change my mind, then, and see the King. And if I die, I die.

**MORDECAI:** You will not die, but live, and we shall praise with you the works of the Lord.

**VOICES OF JEWS:** This is the gate of our God, through this gate the righteous shall enter.

**VOICES OF JEWESSES:** You who ride upon white mares, you the travellers through wind and rain, make known the valour of Esther, blessed among women.

**MORDECAI:** For she appeared before Ahasuerus at the risk of her life and touched the top of the golden sceptre and dared to frame a petition for salvation.

**ESTHER:** Oh good and virtuous King, husband and man! Oh virtuous man!

REI: Bé, senyora meva, us saludo.

ESTHER: Uí, ui, els papus, quin visatge!

REI: És el meu, no en gasto d'altre. Què buscaves?

ESTHER: La meva **ànima**, que és a les teves mans, ben sencera.

REI: La punta del ceptre te la retorna.

ESTHER: **Estintola'm** la mercè amb un gotet **d'aiguanaf**. Em desmaio.

UNS CORTESANS: La fatxa del monarca **estamordí** la flor. Ungit facinerós!

ALTRES CORTESANS: Amb nyepes de nyeu-nyeu **desbarba** el boc. Estremia **descaradura!**

RABINS: Reputem **deuterocanònica** aquesta basca. I no l'entenem ni poc ni molt, perquè la passa en grec.

REI: Eh? Sí que **papissoteges**. Vejam el pols. **Normalíssim**.

ESTHER: Malgrat tot, defalleixo. Si no per afecte, socorre'm per **cortesia**.

REI: Ve't aquí els meus braços, tanmateix d'un vell. No t'hi repengis massa.

ESTHER: Són tal com jo els desitjo. Ah, recobre excels, em conserves la vida!

REI: I per què te n'havia de privar?

ESTHER: Se t'ha despintat ja la prescripció?

REI: Ximplerías! Em reviscola veure't, margarita, car em **caboriejo** entre **fraram**. Què vols que faci ara?

ESTHER: No pas l'amor, **embrida't**. Sols **demanó**...

REI: Concedit d'avancada, tant si és una surra com la meitat del regne.

ESTHER: Ni una cosa ni l'altra. Només, que t'asseguis demà a la meva **taula**, amb **Aman**, el nou primer ministre.

REI: Ai, la meva salut fràgil, pobre estòmac! Un àpat? No sé si el podré resistir.

ESTHER: Els reis compleixen el que prometen.

REI: Ho crec, ho crec, però l'excepció confirma la regla, et diuen. **¿He** de prescindir de mi mateix, del meu gust i **tarannà**, del que em convindria?

ESTHER: Em surts expressament amb **falòrnies**?

KING: Well, wife, I greet you.

ESTHER: Oh dear, what a way to say hello to your little wife! What a face!

KING: It's mine, the only one I have. What do you want?

ESTHER: My life, which is altogether in your hands.

KING: The top of the sceptre gives it back to you.

ESTHER: Back up your favour with a sip of orange-flower water. I am fainting.

SOME COURTIERS: The flower of the court has wilted at the sovereign's scowl. Oh royal villainy!

OTHER COURTIER: With her silly simpering she has tamed the ogre. Oh brazen effrontery!

RABBI: We consider this **queasiness deuterocanonical**. And we do not understand it at all, because she is **suffering** from it in Greek.

KING: What's that? You're muttering so I can't hear. Let's feel your pulse. Absolutely normal.

ESTHER: All the same, I'm fainting. If you won't do it out of affection, at least help me out **of courtesy**.

KING: Here are my **arms**, then, though they're only an old man's. Don't lean on me too much.

ESTHER: They are as I desire them. Ah, exalted protector, you preserve my life.

KING: And why should I have robbed you of it?

ESTHER: Has the prescribed remedy stopped working then?

KING: Nonsense! Just looking at you, my treasure, gives me new life. I have endless worries with nothing but men around me. What do you want me to do now?

ESTHER: Not make love, restrain yourself. All I **ask** . . .

KING: Granted in advance, whether it's having someone whipped or a half-share of my kingdom.

ESTHER: Neither one nor the other. Simply that you should dine with me tomorrow, together with **Haman**, the new Prime Minister.

KING: Oh my frail health, my poor stomach! A banquet? I don't know if I can stand it.

ESTHER: Kings carry out what they promise.

KING: I know, I know, but the exception proves the rule, they say. Must I **sacrifice** myself, my tastes and habits, everything that suits me?

ESTHER: Are you trying to put me **off** with these cock and bull stories?

REI: **Dona**, dona, ep! No t'emboliquis.

ESTHER: Ai, amb el mareig perdo l'oremus!

RABINS: Quin grec més incomprendible!

REI: Apreneu-lo, carat, que prou hi sou a temps.

ESTHER: Apreneu-lo, i tant! A mi em resulta útil de saber-lo.

RABINS: Sí, feliç del qui conquistà la saviesa i obtingué la intel·ligència.

ALTRES RABINS: Potser. Mes el molt estudi, **aflicció** de la carn.

RABINS: Objectem!

ALTRES RABINS: Protestem!

REI: Educació a la sinagoga i ordre en aquesta sala! **Uixers**, buideu-la.

UNS CORTESANS: Gràcies a Esther, avui ens hem entretingut.

ALTRES CORTESANS: Gràcies a Esther, ens retirem edulcorats.

ESTHER: Un moment, **pareu-vos!** Davant els bados i els dignataris, decideix-te, rei.

REI: Uf, la **positura!** Els bíceps em **formiguegen**, tu, redreça't. I vosaltres **bifurqueu-vos, ollaó!**

ESTHER: No, mentre no te'm comprometis.

REI: **Apuntala'm, Aman.** No et reservis, enze, t'ho conjuro.

**AMAN:** A mi, amb franquesa, m'enarta la distinció de la graciosa reina.

REI: Ai, d'acord, campanut, d'acord, **turmentosa!** Què, els esperits ja et revenen? Hala, doncs, santa nit. I que ella i els genis immortals em fortifiquin, per als embats del fricandó de demà.

**AMAN:** Si la reina ens en dóna (i suposo que no, car no sabria **imaginarme'l** un guisat típic de festes), tant de bo que ens l'acompanyi amb un saborós suquet de **moixernons**, com ho solien **condimentar** a **Sinera**, per a **Solom**, de petit, la senyora Maria Castelló i les dues germanes Draper, i li surti tal com elles ho aconseguien: la cosa més bona del món. O ho cuines ara amb el teu record i aquella olor de menta i de tardes remotes **d'estiu**, quan la mar i els camps et semblaven nous de trinca i respiraven encara tots els qui estimaves? Quants pujaren pel camí dels xiprers, quantes veles enllà dels horitzons, quantes boques

**KING:** Now then, my girl! Don't go too far.

**ESTHER:** Just a lapsus linguae from being muzzy-headed.

**RABBIS:** It's all absolute Greek to us!

**KING:** Learn it for heaven's sake, it's the right moment.

**ESTHER:** Yes, learn it, you'd better. I find it very **useful**.

**RABBIS:** Yes, happy is the man that findest wisdom and the man that obtaineth understanding.

**OTHER RABBIS:** Perhaps. But much study is a weariness of the flesh.

**RABBIS:** We object!

**OTHER RABBIS:** We protest!

**KING:** Silence in the synagogue and order in this hall! Clear it, ushers.

**SOME COURTIERS:** Thanks to Esther, we have had some entertainment today.

**OTHER COURTIERS:** Thanks to Esther, we depart in a sweeter **frame** of mind.

**ESTHER:** One moment, stop! In the presence of the spectators and the dignitaries, make your decision, King.

**KING:** **Ouf!** What an awkward position you've put me in! I've got pins and needles in my arms, do get up. And all of you, remove yourselves, quick march!

**ESTHER:** Not until you've promised.

**KING:** Back me up, Hainan. **Don't** just stand there, you dolt, for heaven's sake.

**HAMAN:** Frankly, I am delighted by the honour the gracious Queen bestows.

**KING:** All right, then, you pompous creature: all right, my little torturer. Oh, you're coming to now, are you? **Off** with you, then, good night. And may sleep and the immortal spirits strengthen me to face the onslaught of tomorrow's lamb broth.

**HAMAN:** If the Queen gives us some (and I don't suppose she will, because she couldn't imagine it was a typical festival dish), I hope she will serve it with grated cheese, like the one Mrs. **Llywela** James and the two Draper sisters used to serve it with, in **Novareba**, for **Selyf**, when he was a boy, and that it turns out like theirs: the nicest thing in the world. Or is it your memories now that give it its flavour, and the scent of mint and of distant summer evenings when the sea and fields looked fresh and new and all those you loved were still alive? How many have gone the long road home, how many sails have gone below the

emmudides per a la llengua del teu poble! Qui et collirà les taronges dels jardins d'Occident, qui et reconduirà pels senders de Sepharad, qui et cantarà la cançó de la teva vida? Salom, home perdut, solitari amb Déu: què li diràs del teu temps, de tantes hores? ¿Perdonarà potser l'urc dels teus pecats humils, gràcies a l'humil fricandó que de nen vas menjar, a la menta que pogueres flairar, al dolor de la ploma amb què m'obliges a parlar-te? A mi, un titella adversari d'Israel, adversari teu, no més efímer que tu, cal que et consti. Un titella que clama, contra el teu real fracàs, per les ombres de Susa, l'angoixa i la por dels seus èxits de comèdia. Ah, Zeres, muller meva,obre'm, corre! Tanca a fora la nit de la ciutat, la nit de Salom, la nit esglaiadora del titella.

ZERES: Serà la veu d'Aman, del meu car príncep?

AMAN: Et cal, per identificar-la, que refili? Doncs et trino:

'Dio ti dia bona sera; son venuto,  
gentil **madonna**, a veder come stai;  
e di bon core a te **mando U saluto**,  
de **miglior voglia** che **facesse** mai.  
Tu sei **colei** che sempre **m'hai** tenuto  
in questo **mondo** inamorato **assai**:  
tu sei colei per **cui io** vo **cantando**,  
**giorno** e notte me vado **consumando**.'

ZERES: Desafines l'estrambot i ments més que ningú. Per tant, no hi ha dubte, ets el meu marit, prou d'òpera. Salut, escura't bé de peus i entra.

AMAN: Petons a cada **galta**, i torna'ls. ¿Com emplenares el teu jorn d'avui, esbravada memòria de **poncella**?

ZERES: Passant **bugada**, repassant **roba**, endreçant calaixos, **clenxinant** fills, **tustant-los**, renyant cambreres, resseguint botigues i esperant-te a tu: el de sempre.

AMAN: I no has rebut visites?

ZERES: Sí, també: l'àvia **Parysatis**, la tia Atossa, el cunyat **Smerdis**, el mag **Sembobitis**. . . Els **contertulians** habituals.

horizon, how many mouths have fallen silent that spoke your people's tongue! Who will pick the apples for you in the gardens of the west, who will lead you along the paths of Cambria, who will sing you the song of your own life? **Selyf**, you man **adrift**, alone with God: what will you tell him about your time here, about all the hours you spent? Will he forgive you perhaps the pride of your humble sins, thanks to the humble broth you ate when you were a boy, to the mint you could smell, to the torment of the pen with which you are forcing me to speak to you? Forcing **me**, a puppet who is hostile to Israel, hostile to you, and no more ephemeral than you are, I'd have you know. A puppet who **proclaims**, through the shadows of **Shushan**, the anguish and fears of his make-believe triumphs, in contrast to your real-life failure. Ah, Zeresh, my dear wife, open the door quickly. Shut out the night of the city, **Selyf's** night, the terrifying night of a puppet.

**ZERESH:** Could that be the voice of **Haman**, my beloved prince?

**HAMAN:** Must I warble before you can identify it? Very well, I'll sing for you:

Dio ü dia bona sera; son venuto,  
gentil **madonna**, a veder come **stai**;  
**e di** bon core a te **mando il saluto**,  
**di miglior voglia** che facesse mai.  
Tu sei **colei** che sempre **m'hai** tenuto  
in questo mondo inamorato **assai**:  
tu sei colei per **cui** io vo **cantando**,  
**giorno** e notte me vado **consumando**.

**ZERESH:** You sing the **refrain** more out of tune and tell more lies than anyone else. So there's no doubt about it, you're my husband, and that's enough opera for one day. Hullo, wipe your feet well and come in.

**HAMAN:** Kisses on both cheeks, reciprocated. How have you spent your time today, faded memory of maidenhood?

**ZERESH:** Doing the washing, mending the **clothes**, turning out drawers, combing children's hair, boxing their ears, finding fault with the servants, looking round the shops and waiting for you. The same as usual.

**HAMAN:** You didn't have any visitors?

**ZERESH:** Yes, I did: granny **Parysatis**, aunty **Rotta**, brother-in-law **Cacatis**, the wizard **Sembobbitis**. The usual lot.

**AMAN:** Us fou almenys amena la conversa?

**ZERES:** Tots navegàrem una mica més cap al remolí de la mort, cadascú dalt de la barca de la inalterable estupidesa pròpia.

**AMAN:** Em sones **lapidària**, rosa te.

**ZERES:** Tinc migranya.

**AMAN:** Per variar. Sento que la indisposició **t'emmurriï**, perquè jo, en canvi, venia molt content: demà dinaré, per primer cop, en la intimitat d'Esther i **d'Assuerus**. Ah, Zeres, amb descendència, partidaris i riqueses, fortalesa i poder, culminarà en aquest banquet la meva glòria!

**ZERES:** ‘Pourvou que cela **doure**’, com deia sor Ephrem o no sé quina altra monja de la Presentació de Sinera. El destí i els homes et **trairan**. A la **llarga**, cauràs de corcoll.

**AMAN:** Oh, no! Tots els homes, llevat dels jueus, són els meus germans. Ho porta el catecisme.

**ZERES:** ¿Per què el càndid tigre s'obstina a alimentar somnis bunyols de be, a fonamentar la seva conducta en el polsim de decàlegs de papallona? Jueus o no, tots els humans et són enemics, sense exceptuar-ne Esther i **Assuerus**. I malfia't sobretot d'ella: tragina un formidable nas de sis. Em diràs que sóc **maniàtica**, però trobo que s'assembla a aquell captaire que tant et mortifica.

**AMAN:** Absurd! A **Mardoqueu?** Aquest nom m'és com jalapa, l'únic tàvec que fibla les gropes del meu succés.

**ZERES:** I per què no l'hi encastes d'una manotada?

**AMAN:** Sí, ja l'esclafaré. Per Adar, amb els altres malfactors.

**ZERES:** No, tot seguit. Allibera't la teva obsessió, filaberquí de digestions i sestes. Apaivaga el teu odi amb una bella **samuga** i una forca alta de cinquanta colzes.

**AMAN:** Hi toques. Retorno a palau, a tramitar l'autorització constitucional d'Assuerus. A trenc d'alba penjaran el vell. I cridaré després, ben fort, davant tothom, com ho faig ara, des d'aquesta finestra, a la pau de les estrelles: ‘**Quina** resplendor la del rostre del monarca, quin benaurat convit el de la reina **Esther!**’

**REI:** El convit de demà i la resplendor del rostre del **rei—el** meu, afigureu-

**HAMAN:** At least you had some pleasant conversation?

**ZERESH:** We all sailed a little **further** towards the whirlpool of death, each in the craft of his own immutable stupidity.

**HAMAN:** You sound jaundiced, my little tea-rose.

**ZERESH:** I have a migraine.

**HAMAN:** Just for a change. I'm sorry your indisposition makes you so disgruntled, because I, on the other hand, have come home very happy: tomorrow, for the first time, I am to dine alone with Esther and **Ahasuerus**. Ah, Zeresh, now that I have heirs, influence and wealth, strength and power, this banquet will set the seal on my pride and glory.

**ZERESH:** 'Pourvou que cela doure', as Miss Rees or some other teacher said at the **Novareba** College for Young Ladies. Destiny and men will betray you between them. You'll fall on the back of your neck in the end, you'll see.

**HAMAN:** Oh no! All men, except the Jews, are my brothers. The catechism says so.

**ZERESH:** Why does the innocent tiger persist in cherishing **pipe-dreams**, in basing his behaviour on **soap-bubble** decalogues? Whether they're Jews or not, all men are your enemies, not excepting Esther and Ahasuerus. And above all don't trust *her*: she has a tremendous outsize nose. You may think I'm crazy, but I'd say she has a **look** of that beggar who humiliates you so.

**HAMAN:** Ridiculous! Of **Mordecai**? Oh, that name is like a purge to me, the single horsefly that stings me in the posterior of my success.

**ZERESH:** Why don't you **bring** your hand down and squash him flat?

**HAMAN:** Of course I'll squash him flat. In Adar, along with the other criminals.

**ZERESH:** No, do it now. Get rid of your obsession; it's like a pneumatic drill boring away at your digestion and your after dinner nap. Satisfy your hatred with a good rope and a gallows fifty cubits high.

**HAMAN:** You're right. I'll go back to the palace and arrange for **Ahasuerus's** constitutional authorisation. When dawn breaks, they'll hang the old man. And afterwards I shall shout out loud in front of everybody, just as I'm doing now, from our windows, under the peace of the stars: '**How** radiant is the face of the sovereign, how glorious is the banquet of Queen **Esther!**'

**KING:** Tomorrow's banquet and the radiant face of the **king—mine**, mark

vos!—il·lusionen i exalten **Aman, provinent** al capdavall de l'**espardenya**: judico, per la **matusseria** de mans i turmells, que els avis encara li **fangaren**. A mi, en canvi, com m'afeixuga l'obligació de **banquetejar**, esdevinguda a poc a poc feina gairebé única de la magistratura! Per compte que hi posi, menjaré i beuré força més del que em resultaria higiènic. Equanimitat i complaença arrosseguen prou, ho constato amb **angúnia**, a tolerar i cometre excessos. D'altra **banda**, als meus àpats, solemnes o no, sorgeixen sovint incidències complicades, costoses, d'un enuig enorme. En un d'ells se'm **fongué Vasthi**. ¿Amb qui **estirabec** m'atribolarà Esther en el transcurs del pròxim? Aquesta noia comença a inquietar-me. Més exacte, m'alarmà de veres. Endevino la truita voraç al fons de l'aigua **mansa**, l'urpa imperiosa dintre el primitiu embolcall de sol·licitud. Audacíssima, **serena**, s'esvaní amb una manca **mestrívola** de **verisme**, exagerant amb **impudor** la **nota**, com si assagés, artista tranquil·la de la ironia i del desdeny, a emmotillar-se al gust i als **gambals** d'un públic de **províncies**. La basca d'Esther fou d'una convenció tan estilitzada com el meu propi gest ferotge. Amb el cos sencer semblava reptar-me: 'Bah, el meu desmai i la teva truculència, freq a freq! Tu i jo, experts **oficients** incrèduls d'un indispensable ritu, hem d'acomplir de comú acord la part de mester necessària per a destriar com més aviat millor el gra de la palla. Et mostro al descobert els trucs d'un joc, el propòsit del qual consisteix tan sols a imposar-te el meu domini. Tu, però, els admetràs i en sofriràs sense reacció les conseqüències, perquè, en proclamar que t'envido amb catxa, et col-loco en el dilema d'haver-te de manifestar o benigne intel·ligent o d'una brutalitat modèlica, i només el desassossec de l'**alternativa** ja t'obliga a somriure, senyal **magnífic** per a mi. La **blanesa** constitueix l'índole més intima del teu tarannà, almenys de cara a les dames, no provis a **dissimilar-m'ho**. Vasthi ho sabia, i jo ho he après: ets simplement un fofo. Accepta d'un cop la teva vera imatge i et divertiràs potser una **mica**, tu, de naixença presoner del tedi, si entres, còmplice volenterós de la fal·làcia amanida per domesticar-te, al cercle subtil que traço al teu entorn. Em valc de la **comèdia**—que menyspreo, **consti**—com a símbol de la meva intenció, mostra **parlaire**,

**you!—dazzle** and excite Hainan, who **after** all is a simple son of the soil: judging by the thickness of his hands and ankles, his grandparents were still wielding a spade. I, on the other hand, what a burden I find this duty of attending banquets, which has become almost the sole task of the administration! However careful I am, I shall eat and drink much more than is good for my health. An easy-going, indulgent temperament leads one, fairly quickly, it pains me to observe, to tolerate and commit excesses. And then again, at my feasts, solemn or not, complicated happenings frequently occur, which are very expensive and enormously tiresome. In one of them Vashti faded out of my life. What devastating brick will Esther drop in the course of the next one? This girl is beginning to worry me. To be precise, she really alarms me. I sense the voracious trout in the depths of the quiet pool, the commanding claw under the traditional cloak of solicitous affection. Bold as brass, cool as a cucumber, she fainted with a masterly lack of realism, overacting blatantly, like an artist skilled in the portrayal of irony and disdain, trying to adapt herself to the tastes and understanding of a provincial audience. Esther's swoon was as conventional and stylised as my own expression of fury. With her whole body she seemed to challenge me: '**Bah!** My fainting and your temper, knock for knock! You and I are sceptical experts presiding over a necessary rite, and by mutual agreement we have to use the degree of professional know-how needed to sort out as quickly as possible the grain from the chaff. I show you openly the tricks of a game whose only purpose is to assert my power over you. You, on the other hand, will accept them and put up with the consequences, because, by making it quite obvious that my move is a fake, I put you in the awkward position of having to be either kind and intelligent or utterly beastly, and the mere anxiety of having to make that choice has already started you smiling, which is an excellent sign from my point of view. Weakness is the absolute essence of your character, at least when **you're** dealing with women, don't try to pretend it isn't. Vashti knew that all right, and I've picked it up: you'll always be under a woman's thumb. Just accept your real image and perhaps you'll be happy for a bit, you who have been boredom's prisoner ever since you were born, if you let yourself be a willing party to the fraud **I've** devised to tame you and step into the subtle circle I draw round you. I use my **play-acting—which**, let me say, I **despise—as** a symbol of my

endemés, de la meva sòlida actitud conservadora. Acato els costums establerts, salvo en rigor les aparences. **Fixa-t'hi**, te'n dono exemple. Quins comentaris els de la cort i de **Susa**, si no m'hagués decantat a exhibir en el pas d'ara una plàstica adequada a l'espant canònic! En resum, des del punt de vista social em considero satisfactòria. ¿Què demaneu els homes, sobretot en **casar-vos**? Garanties de pau, calma, ordre, seguretat, **equilibri**. Em comprometo a **concedir-les**, no t'**engalipo**. **Vasthi fugí**, jo em quedo i romandre. **Vasthi** no féu mai res del que volies, tu acabaràs fent sempre el que jo vulgui: marco amb precisió les diferències. Tanmateix, et mantindré les **bimbirimboies** de la jerarquia i del poder, t'aviciaré mentre em siguis dòcil i m'esforçaré fins i tot a estimar-te, en relació directa amb graus i mèrits de la teva submissió. I això et bastarà, m'imagino, sense més **porfidia**, car em suposo dispensada de virar vers el sector apologètic de l'instint maternal i altres agraïdes bestieses **complementàries**. A aquestes altures del mut discurs, he capitulat, per la meva **vergonya**, i brodàrem aleshores la resta de l'escena **amb** una total absència de decorum, de respecte intern per a l'ortodòxia dels nostres respectius papers. Un èxit. Els observadors sagaços fruïren del ritme **cadarnós** de l'espectacle, els esmussats ingenus s'empassaren com de costum el patetisme de pinyol. Però després, **dissipada** l'eufòria d'histrió, em contemplo nàufrag sota la fèrula d'Esther. De bell antuvi, he **d'avenir-me** a assistir a un tec, la primera ordre. La situació i el mateix acte em contrarien tant, que no em serà possible aquesta nit d'adormir-me. Em tombo i volto sense repòs enmig de la inútil **sumptuositat** dels coixins i les sedes. Quin recurs evitarà **despacientar-me**? Que em llegeixin, a veure si trexo el son. A mi, els gentilhomes! Desenrotlleu el llibre de les memòries de les coses dels temps. I tu, **Atac, veuarra de cabiscol**, entona'm amb monotonia les fetes darreres del meu regnat. **Així**, mentre el remei obra, refrescaré de passada els records vacillants.

**ATAC:** 'I **Bigtan** i **Teres**, capitans anorcs de la quarda del rei, determinaren de matar **Assuerus**, el sobirà senyor. I **Mardoqueu**, un captaire que seja a la **gatzoneta**, de dies i de nits, al pòrtic i al cancell del palau, s'alça i **impedí** l'anotat despropòsit de **Bigtan** i **Teres**.'

**REI:** Malaguanyats, me'l s miro. Patien d'una molt honesta opacitat

simple intention, a talking demonstration, too, of my completely conservative attitude. I respect the established conventions, I keep up appearances, strictly speaking. Look, I'll give you an example. Think of the talk **there'd** have been in the court and in **Shushan**, if I hadn't decided to put on the performance required by regulation terror. Altogether, from the social point of view, I think I'm satisfactory. What do you men ask for, above all when you marry? Guarantees of peace, calm, order, security, balance. I undertake to give them to you, I don't cheat you. **Vashti** ran away, I am here and here I'll stay. **Vashti** never did what you wanted, you will end by doing what I want: I choose my words **carefully** and the distinction is accurate. Anyway, I shall keep up all the trappings of rank and power, I'll make a fuss of you so long as you're amenable and I'll even make an effort to love you, in direct proportion to the degree and value of your docility. And that will be enough for you, I imagine, without any further argument, since I don't suppose I'm expected to switch to the maternal instinct apologia line and other complementary idiotic expressions of **gratitude**'. At this point in her silent harangue, I gave in, to my shame, so we sketched in the rest of the scene with a total absence of decorum or internal respect for the orthodoxy of our **respective** roles. It was a success. The shrewd observers enjoyed the broken rhythm of the performance, and the naive morons, as usual, lapped up the hammy pathos. But now, when the actor's euphoria has evaporated, I see I am a castaway in Esther's power. For a start, I have to agree to attend a supper, her first command. The situation and the act itself vex me so much that I shan't get to sleep tonight. I'm tossing and turning endlessly in all this useless luxury of silks and cushions. What can be done to stop me working myself into a frenzy? Let them read to me and see if I can get some sleep that way. Here, **gentlemen-in-waiting!** Unroll the book of records of the chronicles. And you, **Athac**, with your great precentor's voice, entone monotonously the latest events of my reign. So, while the remedy is **working**, I shall incidentally refresh my uncertain memory.

**ATHAC:** '**And Bigthana** and **Teresh**, eunuch captains of the King's guard, resolved to slay **Ahasuerus**, their sovereign lord. And **Mordecai**, a beggar who sat day and night at the palace gate, rose up and prevented the outrage that Bigthana and Teresh purposed to **do**'.

**KING:** Poor lads, poor lads. They suffered from a very honourable mental

**mental**, que els permetia sempre d'ocupar qualsevol càrrec representatiu a la nostra comunitat civilitzada. Pertanyien al tipus dels satisfets que diuen, a repèl de tot advertiment, 'desgust', 'me'n vai', 'asmari', 'morigués', 'cea' o 'reloitge', i se senten capaços de persistir en eternes dissensions familiars des del part del nebot **primogènit**, per si calgué anomenar-lo '**Pere**', com l'avi patern, a qui tocà de **padrinejar** i **així** ho desitjava, o '**Carles-Albert**', com **imposà**, potser amb l'afegit d'algun '**Maria**', la **bel·licosa** distinció de la cunyada. No entenc com els xicots cometesen la imprudència d'obligar l'honorabile **botxi** a escurçar-los una mica de talla, amb els fenòmens inherents a aquest gènere de manipulacions. Hauria resultat preferible d'endreçar d'un cop, per exemple, l'horror del noli me **tàngere** de **Mardoqueu**, **perillosíssim** per a la salut del país. **Em** dura encara una mena de menjançó, d'ençà d'haver entrellucat el vell, i em deprimeix que un tal cessant **d'aldufer** salvés la vida d'un príncep de la meva prosàpia. Quin premi li concedírem?

ATAC: Cap, si no **m'etivoco**.

REI: Em **sosprens**. I per què vaig negligir-ho?

ATAC: És que allò **coincidí** amb la mel del teu segon matrimoni.

REI: Altra vegada Esther, **ponce'm disfressant** sever, la ronda de la guilla. . . I a destemps, **enfastidit**, sense ganes, hauré de simular una barroca gratitud pel jueu, si em vull estalviar penjaments **pòstums**. . . Un jueu, hum! Un jueu? potser el fill del meu pare avui podria riure... Lector, cerca'm **Aman**.

**AMAN**: Volo, volo, **ve-te'm** aquí, a sotmetre't un urgent assumpte de **justicia**.

REI: Escolta'm abans. Un súbdit, en circumstàncies, em fou abnegat i fidel. Al meu lloc, com el distingiries?

AMAN: Oh, planeta **meva**, zenit! **¿A** qui, sinó a mi, al·ludeix **Assuerus** en aquests **termes**? . . . Vestiria el baró amb les teves sagrades robes, li cenyiria el **front** amb la **diadema** de **Pèrsia**, el muntaria en el millor dels teus poltres i el passejaria per Susa, servit de **palafréner** pel cortesà més noble.

myopia which always allowed them to occupy any important post within our civilised community. They belonged to the smug class of people who, despite all correction, persist in saying '**deteriate**', '**adaption**', '**skelington**', '**Febuary**', '**peumonia**', '**anenome**' or '**ekcetera**', and are capable of carrying on endless family wrangles, after the birth of their first nephew, over whether he ought to have been called '**Dai**', like his paternal grandfather, who was his godfather and wanted just that, or '**Clarence**', which was finally forced on him, perhaps with a '**St. John**' thrown in, by the aggressive refinement of the sister-in-law. I can't understand how those boys could have been so unwise as to compel the worthy executioner to reduce their height by a few inches, with all the consequences entailed by that sort of operation. It would have been preferable to cure at one stroke, for example, that terrible infection of **Mordecai's**, which is a serious threat to the country's health. I've gone on feeling a sort of itch ever since I saw the old man, and it depresses me that a superannuated fiddler like him should save the life of a prince of my illustrious lineage. What reward did we give him?

**ATHAC:** None, as far as I know.

**KING:** You amazes me. Why did I overlook it?

**ATHAC:** It was because it coincided with the honeymoon of your second marriage.

**KING:** Esther once again, sweet hiding sour, the fox on the **prowl**... and so, long after the event, with feelings of disgust and without any desire to do anything at all, I shall have to feign extravagant gratitude to the Jew, if I want to avoid posthumous **curses**... A Jew, **mmm!** A Jew? Perhaps my father's son could manage a bit of a **giggle**... Reader, fetch me **Haman**!

**HAMAN:** I come on wings, I am here, to submit an urgent matter of justice to you.

**KING:** Listen to me first. A subject of mine, in certain circumstances proved himself unselfish and loyal. In my place, how would you honour him?

**HAMAN:** Oh, star of mine, this is your zenith! To whom can **Ahasuerus** be referring in such **terms**, if not to **me**?... I would clothe the man in your sacred raiment, I would encircle his brow with the diadem of **Persia**, I would mount him on the finest of your chargers and I would have him ride through **Shushan**, with the most noble courtier serving **him** as groom.

**REI:** Sigui **així** amb **Mardoqueu**, aquell de la **conjuració** de **Bigtan i Teres**.

I tu, **Excel·lència**, el meu primer ministre, li menaràs el cavall caminant al seu estrep.

**ALTÍSSIM:** Compta fins a cent pels teus, no els perdis. Quina **engalzada** de **catxap, Aman!**

**AMAN:** La meva fe esdevé plom fos, una bena de sang m'encega. Ca **lladrador**, ca **lladrador**, des de quin cau m'encalces? Em rebaix a nivells d'escombraries, a l'escarni d'un dèspota.

**MARDOQUEU:** En la misericòrdia del meu Déu vaig posar la meva esperança. Lloaré la mà benèfica que de sobte m'enalteix.

**AMAN:** **D'improvis**, per les fires de Susa, un simi jueu mesura amb **xurriaques** la meva espinada. **¿Per** què em sobrevé aquest estret?

**MARDOQUEU:** Oh, no ho examinis, no analitzis! Tanmateix, et noticio que, a més de practicant, sóc un **xambó**.

**SECUNDINA:** I tal, i tal! Hi papes.

**AMAN:** Malgrat tot, ni a tu ni el teu poble no us han d'indultar. Car jo guardo encara la veu del rei.

**MARDOQUEU:** A vegades, un home **s'ensenyoreix** dels altres per al seu detriment.

**ALTÍSSIM:** Hi ha tants carrers a Susa, per a suplici del visir, com jaculatòries als llavis de Mardoqueu. La briva s'agitava al reclam de la **xaranga**, els vaillets **eixorden** al seguici, s'endomassen balcons. Fins Sinera s'emplena de l'eco del xivarri.

**UNA DONA:** Ja el de la batuda **d'Adar?** Buidaré, doncs, amb profit els cistells de la mercaderia. Maces i matraques, irrompibles i de **baratilli!** Comprin-ne, comprin-ne, per al nen i la nena.

**UNA ALTRA:** Glorificat toqueu matines, si som a Corpus! **Aparella** el confetti, les auques, serpentines i ginesta.

**UNA NOIA:** Mare, mare, la **mulassa!**

**VEÏNES:** Deseu els **boixets**, puntaires. S'atansen unes trampes que fan els gegants.

**ALEF:** ¿Que giravolten dansadors com els de la ciutat de les Santes?

**BET:** Les Santes del juliol, gala de la maresma.

**GUÍMEL:** Una petita pàtria entre les vinyes i el mar. I el plàcid cant dels grills als rials solitaris.

KING: Let this be done to **Mordecai**, the man who discovered the **Bigthana** and Teresh conspiracy. And you, Excellency, my Prime Minister, shall lead his horse, walking by its head.

MOST HIGH: Count up to a hundred, don't lose yours. The biter bit, eh, **Haman**?

**HAMAN:** My faith has turned to molten lead, a bandage of blood blinds me. Hound of hell, hound of hell, from what dark hiding-place do you harass me? I am descending into depths of filth and ordure, submitting to the derision of a despot.

MORDECAI: In the mercy of my God I placed my trust. I shall praise the beneficent hand which suddenly exalts me.

**HAMAN:** All of a sudden, through the markets of **Shushan**, a Jewish ape is laying about my shoulders. Why has this **terrible** thing happened to me?

MORDECAI: Oh, don't try to account for it, don't analyse! Anyway, I must tell you that, as well as being a practising Jew, I thrive on lucky breaks.

**EMMELINE:** Yes, you can say that again!

**HAMAN:** In spite of everything, there won't be any reprieve for you or your people. Because I still have the King's support.

MORDECAI: Sometimes, a man rules over others to his own hurt.

MOST HIGH: Unfortunately for the vizier, there are as many streets in Shushan as there are pious ejaculations on the lips of Mordecai. The rabble are cavorting to the strains of the band, the children's cries deafen the procession, they're hanging flags out on the balconies. As far away as **Novareba** you can hear the echo of the sound.

A WOMAN: Is it the **Adar** beat-up already? I'll make a bit, then, out of selling the contents of my baskets. Clubs and cudgels, unbreakable, going cheap! Buy up, buy up, for your little girls and boys!

ANOTHER: You're a bit ahead of the calendar, it's only Carnival time. Get out the right things, confetti, streamers, broom.

A GIRL: Mum, mum, **here's** the dragon!

NEIGHBOURS: Put away your **lace-making**, girls. There are some drummers coming, as big as carnival giants.

**ALEPH:** Are there dancers like in the Eisteddfod?

BETH: The July Eisteddfod, the glory of the whole coast?

**GIMMEL:** A little region all on its own, between the hills and the **sea**. And the peaceful singing of the grasshoppers in the lonely fields.

**DÀLET:** I la **fusa** callada de les barques. I el clapoteig de les granotes als bassiols recòndits.

**HE:** I la lenta boira per les cases blanques. I els vells pins.

**UAU:** I **andarejar** pels solcs, pel cementiri. I un cel clement.

**ZAIN:** Damunt la comparsa de la Mort i en Banyeta, damunt la **dringadera** del **carret d'en Quel·la**, damunt els **andamis** de l'ós Nicolau.

**HER:** Damunt la cabra **funàmbula** de les **gitanes**, damunt els saltimbanquis entenebrats de la saca.

**TET:** Damunt aquest **bòria** avall, on el reu **cabestreja**.

**IOD:** Damunt la cadència i els **ahucs**.

**QUEL·LA:** Hi ha cap pell de conill?

**LA VEUD'ALGUÚ:** Tia **Maria**, que passes **farina**,  
**catric-catrac**, allibera'm del sac!

**QUEL·LA:** Hi ha cap pell de conill?

**LA VEUD'ALGUÚ:** Tia **Maria**, la meva padrina,  
**catric-catrac**, allibera'm del sac!

**BANYETA:** **Manyaguet, manyaguet**, no t'**alçuris**, que tot just t'estrenes a la bossa del guirigall i no t'has d'eximir, troni o llampi, de xerricar a la faràndula. L'esprimatxat compare i jo, còmics de la llegua, en contracte de companyia amb l'escorxador i el **paperassa**, rastregem les petjades **d'Aman**, el qual cabriolarà avui a la cort, al nostre ballet, a l'hora de les postres, quan hom l'**arreplegui** per al sarró **curullíssim**, on el magre soci em **trasmuda** en **llepoldies** engrunes i **sobrances** de les estovalles del món. Aquesta **manduca** ens representa paga del treball, per la resta gratis. Ah, llaminadures, quantes! Tu, tu i tu, dòcils a **enfardar-vos?** Tu, tu i tu, prou us **xarparem!** I res de **camanduleries**, aquí dintre. No t'estiris ni t'arronsis, que la **xarpellera** no t'enceti. Si el viatge **t'incomoda**, resistència! D'altra **banda**, enregistrat per a can Pistrlaus, no exigiràs amb si bemoll que se't transporti a la **xirinxina**.

**ZERES:** **Aquell** a qui les hienes signen com a llur vianda, on s'entaforarà?  
La teva **cresta**, **Aman**, no toma més **ludibri**, i ni lleixius ni lustracions

DALETH: And the fishing boats silently sailing off. And the plop of the **frogs** in the unseen pools.

HE: And the mist moving slowly across the white houses. And the old **oaktrees**.

WAW: And the strolls over the ploughed land, past the cemetery. And a mild sky.

ZAYIN: Stretched over the masquerade of Death and Old Nick, over the tinkling bell on Dai Ben **Rhacs'** cart, over the dainty walk of the performing monkey.

HETH: Over the gypsies' acrobatic goat, over the contortionists in the darkness of the sack.

TETH: Over the slope of the hill, where the criminal walks with the halter round his neck.

YOD: Over the music and the shouting.

DAI BEN RHACS: Any old **rags**, any old clothes?

A VOICE: Mary, Mary, from the dairy,

Hear me shout, please let me out!

DAI: Any old rags, any old clothes?

A VOICE: Mary, Mary, my good fairy,

Hear me shout, please let me out!

OLD NICK: Now then, ducky, don't get excited, you've only just started in this show and, come rain, come shine, you're not going to get out of making your little contribution to the fun and games. My slender friend and I, strolling players both, under contract to the slaughterer and the public prosecutor, are on the track of **Haman**, who will be doing pirouettes in our ballet, later on today in the court, at dessert time, when he's been caught for the chock-a-block bag, where my lean colleague transforms into tit-bits for me the scraps and crumbs from the dinner-tables of the world. This food is all I get paid for my work, the rest I do for nothing. Ah, how many dainty morsels I see here! You and you and you, all ready for packing up? You and you and you, I'll watch you all right! And no funny business inside here. Don't try stretching yourselves out or shrinking into a ball, the sacking might scratch you. If you're uncomfortable on the journey, grin and bear it! After all, when Old Nick comes for you, you don't sing an aria asking for a sedan chair and light refreshments.

ZERESH: The man whom the hyenas mark down for their food, where shall he hide? Your poor proud head cannot endure more mockery,

no et purificarien. Et pintaves suara la **cigonya**, i un bufec de la sort et xucla els queixós. Un **mesell** jueu, **encamellat** per befa a l'excelsa **sella**, entrebancava la teva arrogància i te l'esterreja de **bocadents**.

**AMAN:** Per **fangals** de deshonor, on m'abismo. En un tomb, la roda al-lucinant em desbaratà empreses i projectes, abans que el seny conjecturés inicis d'esfondrada. Declinava cap a Pabjecció, a la **infamia**, mentre sentia que **m'encimbellava** fins al firmament. 'Tots som **fal·libles**', **cantilena**, i assimilem a estudi, minuciosos, els **tropells** amb què ens contarà la incoherència d'un **idiota**, però sempre ens ha d'estranyar quan les riallades lúgubres giren full al nostre capítol sense més pàgines. Pel que respecta a mi, caduc **polític**, que els factors em fitxin com a **irrisió** de Susa i em traslladin amb aquest **marxamo** al vehicle de **l'arriet**.

**ALTÍSSIM:** Avant! Ja no ets homo si no reacciones. Fixa't que encara et mantens al **front** de la cancelleria. ¿No ho **pinxejaves** així amb **Mardoqueu**?

**AMAN:** Al principi de la **bornada**. Després, l'inri de la **xàquima m'endogalà** per complet.

**ALTÍSSIM:** Doncs accelera't, apresta l'equipatge, **toca**, toca **pirandó!** Val més quiso viu que lleó mort, considera.

**AMAN:** Els clapits de la **canilla** em **paralitzen**. ¿Ion m'encabiria, si no és de **guimbarro** a les alforges del dimoni? **Encalafornat** allí, els vaivens del carruatge **m'escrostonaran** potser a poc a poc, sense martiris.

**ZERES:** Si t'absenten, com s'empitjorarà la meva rutina! O m'arrabassaran també família i casa? Sí, en totes les dissorts **aürtaré**, anant a la deriva.

**MARDOQUEU:** I t'enfonsaràs amb marit i bandolers, en xocar amb l'escull d'Israel. Pel to de la complanta, Aman, de complexió **limfàtica**, no **batallrà**, la **personeta**. I jo, al portal del rei, amb **Secundina**, esperaré amatent el cove i el peix.

**SECUNDINA:** **Certus** que el número **d'aquest** visir no es cantarà mai més als **biribisos**. I gràcies que una no jugava a la seva rifa: als temps que corren, si la **marres**, tururut **ginjola**.

**ALTÍSSIM:** Al nostre segle erudit i romàntic, sense més norma que els mals

neither lye nor lustrations will make you clean. You saw yourself as cock of the walk, and the merest breath of chance has taken the wind out of your sails. **A** leprous Jew, hoisted into the exalted saddle for a jape, deflates your pride **and** drags it through the dust.

**HAMAN:** Through quagmires of humiliation, in which I sink. With one turn, the dazzling wheel has ruined my plans and ventures, before the mind could even guess at the possibility of a fall. I was dwindling into degradation and disgrace, even while I thought I was soaring to the firmament. '**We** all make **mistakes'**—**the** old **cry**—**and** we diligently absorb at school all the possible infirmities which the incoherence of an idiot will use to tell our tale, but it still **surprises** us when the melancholy laughter turns the last page of our chapter. As far as I'm **concerned**—**a** politician on his way **out**—**let** the freight agents write me down as the laughing-stock of Shushan and carry me to the donkey waggon with that label attached.

**MOST HIGH:** Courage! You aren't a **man**—**dim eitha'dyn** - *if* you **don't** react to this. You're still at the head of the chancellery, aren't you? Didn't you boast about that to **Mordecai**?

**HAMAN:** At the beginning of the ride, yes. Afterwards, the indignity of the bridle act completely throttled me.

**MOST HIGH:** Well then, step on it, pack your bags and beat it quick! A live dog is better than a dead lion, remember.

**HAMAN:** The baying of the hounds is paralysing me. And where could I hide, except as a crust in the devil's bags? Tucked away there, the jolting of the cart might chip me away crumb by crumb, without any **further** torment.

**ZERESH:** How my daily round will suffer, if they take you away! Or will they carry off house and family as **well**? Yes, as I drift helplessly along, every possible misfortune will be mine.

**MORDECAI:** And you'll go to the bottom with your husband and his crew, when you come up against the reef of Israel. Judging by the tone of his lament, **Haman**, with his wishy-washy temperament, isn't going to put up a fight, the big cissy. And I, at the **King's** gate, with **Emmeline**, will wait with watchful eye for the prize to fall into our laps.

**EMMELINE:** This vizier's number isn't coming up at the bingo, that's clear. And its a good job yours truly didn't have it on her card. The way things are now, if you miss your **shot**, you've had it.

**MOST HIGH:** In this learned and romantic century of **ours**, when malice is

sentiments, et **defineixen** com a figures de delicte, en un **parpelleig**, llengües, idees, **pistrincs**, **inòpies**, gestos, **raneres**, **penellons** i races. I si de tu **s'encaterinen** i t'encasellen, hom et despatxa, enmig de **dicteris**, a qualsevol **patíbul**, endiumenjant-te prèviament de pallasso, amb la boca esqueixada d'orella a **orella**, de pur panxó de joiós maquillatge.

**SECUNDINA:** Com el **d'Aman** al dinar de la reina. Eunucs i **porrers** l'hi conduïren, amb la colla d'en **Banyeta estalonant-lo** i aparat de policia i precaucions militars. Per a ell menys **xeflis** que calvari, al pobre ministre se li nua el bocí.

**REI:** A fe, doncs, que em pensava que s'hi **aferrussaria**. Quan jo era jove, amb passejadess fomentàvem l'apetit.

**ESTHER:** Calarà potser als dolços.

**REI:** Ho poso en quarantena. No, guaita'l convuls, pròxim a l'**espeternec**, **leri-leri**.

**ESTHER:** T'excedires, al matí, de **borrasquer**. I l'**aterreixen**, a més, els **mascarots** del fons de la sala.

**REI:** Qui són?

**ESTHER:** El diable i la seva quadrilla: el botxí, **Quel·la l'escassigallaire** i el dallador.

**REI:** Per qui vénen?

**ESTHER:** Per ell, l'hoste, aviat llur **guisofi**.

**REI:** Ah, encara bo! Ànima per **ànima**, 'anima mea'. Mentre no **m'empaitin**, benvinguts com a antigues i agradooses **coneixences**. I qui els introduïa al **gaudeamus**?

**ESTHER:** La meva voluntat que **Aman** sucumbeixi.

**REI:** Per quin motiu?

**ESTHER:** Perquè sóc jueva.

**ZERES:** Ai, la **tarota remarcada**, pipoli!

**REI:** Els pronòstics mai no em fallen: ja **calamarseja** a la **pitança**. Tanmateix, noia, que **temerària**!

**ESTHER:** Qui no s'arrisca no pisca. Des d'aquest instant, avorten, de soca i arrel, insídies i quimeres. Perquè he **pinxat** les teves cartes, prou ho **saps**.

**REI:** El paquet sencer?

the general rule, anything can get you branded as a criminal, in a **second—the** language you speak, your **ideas**, having money, not having money, the look on your face, the way you **breathe**, the chilblains on your feet, the colour of your skin. And if they take a fancy to you and docket you, they'll send you off, hurling insults at you, to some scaffold, doling you up beforehand like a clown, with the make-up laid on so thick to make you look happy that your mouth is just a great gash from ear to ear.

**EMMELINE:** Like **Haman's**, now he's going off to have supper with the Queen. Eunuchs and mace-bearers lead him in, with Old Nick's forces in the rear and the whole parade of police and military protection. It's more like a Last Supper than a banquet for the poor Minister; he can't swallow his food.

**KING:** Upon my word, I thought you'd come back hungry. When I was a boy, we used to go for walks to get up an appetite.

**ESTHER:** Perhaps he'll fall for the dessert.

**KING:** I'll reserve judgement. Look at him, he's red in the face; he'll be kicking his legs out next and frothing at the mouth.

**ESTHER:** You went too far, this morning, with that rag procession. And anyway he's terrified of the mummers at the back of the room.

**KING:** Who are they?

**ESTHER:** The devil and his gang: the executioner, Dai Ben **Rhacs** and the **Grim** Reaper.

**KING:** Who have they come for?

**ESTHER:** Him, our guest, their next dish **of pigswill**.

**KING:** Ah, that's all right, then! A life for a life, my love. As long as they aren't after me, **they're** welcome as old and agreeable friends. And who asked them to the party?

**ESTHER:** My desire for **Haman's** death.

**KING:** Why should you want **that**?

**ESTHER:** Because I am Jewish.

**ZERESH:** **Ah**, didn't I tell you she had a big nose, that kid?

**KING:** My predictions are never **wrong**; there's a skeleton at the feast already. All the same, my girl, you've been a bit rash, **haven't** you?

**ESTHER:** Nothing venture, nothing win. From this moment on all your snares and wiles are doomed to failure. I've seen your **cards**, you must know that.

**KING:** The whole hand?

**ESTHER:** Pinta per pinta. **Plega**, per tant, **Assuerus**, i redueix-te, taciturn, a mà callada.

**SECUNDINA:** Entre l'**insult** i el bitxo del xató, el rei es **congestiona** i va a orejar-se.

**ESTHER:** Molt higiènic. No l'acompanyo, per l'etiqueta d'atendre el comensal.

**SECUNDINA:** Fina criança!

**ALTÍSSIM:** Corresposta amb **pífies**. El rei a l'hort, **Aman** les adotzena, en crisi de pànic, a les plantes d'Esther.

**AMAN:** Si em vaig infamar, reina, enderroco als teus peus l'edifici de la meva fanfarría.

**ESTHER:** No **criaturegis**, visir, que guanyares, en **fanatitzar-te**, oposicions a **calcomania**.

**AMAN:** No t'**ablaniràs**, bella i **diamantina** hebrea?

**ESTHER:** No. **Calbezges** massa, ullat des del canapè.

**SECUNDINA:** I arribes, amb el retorn del rei, als anissos.

**REI:** Per tendir a **pilleries** de **triclini**, ¿**Enderivells** de ribald, en un espai domèstic tan estricte? **Carpetada!** Que l'estossinin, socarrin o **esquarterin**, mentre s'estronqui, d'un cop i per sempre, la seva carrera de patum.

**HARBONA:** ¿I si l'escanyaves al giny que **enflocava** per a **Mardoqueu**? Al cap i a la fi, si la soga **tiba**, la identitat **ponderal** deixa indiferents els **contempladors**.

**REI:** No **articulegis** més, perfecte. A la forca, el botifler, **bitllo-bitllo!**

**BANYETA:** Ja ets al nostre **elenc**, Aman, no t'**emmorronis**. Et presento els camarades, amb l'enhorabona de l'empresari.

**LA MORT:** Encaixem.

**QUELLA:** Bé, i ell, **xitxarel·lo?**

**BIGTAN I TERES:** Hola!

**CORD'ESPECTRES:** Hola!

**BOTXÍ:** **Pif-paf, pif-paf!** Et masego, maco i casco, fins a anestesiar-te a patacades, només que perquè m'ho **encarranquinen**.

**BANYETA:** Ara, **espalmat** pel patapum, d'una consistència de **gelea**, et **metamorfosaràs** a pleret en **peixopalo**, a través d'un extens repertori. I et domiciliaré, pel tobogan de les **gusarapes**, al confort del carreró

**ESTHER:** Spot by spot. So give it up, **Ahasuerus**, and come quietly, you sulky old thing.

**EMMELINE:** What with the insult and the peppers in the sauce, the **King's** gone red in the face and is going out to get some fresh air.

**ESTHER:** Very good for the health. I shan't go with you: etiquette requires me to stay and look after my guest.

**EMMELINE:** There's breeding for you!

**MOST HIGH:** One bloomer after another. With the King out of the room, **Haman** starts pleading, panic-stricken, at Esther's feet.

**HAMAN:** If perhaps I got ideas above my station, here at your feet, your Majesty, I reduce to rubble the edifice my boasting built.

**ESTHER:** **Don't** be childish, vizier: you've got yourself branded as Champion Bigot, for all time.

**HAMAN:** Won't you relent, you beautiful, adamantine Hebrew maid?

**ESTHER:** No. Viewed from the sofa, you're going very bald.

**EMMELINE:** And, with the King's return, you've had your chips.

**KING:** On account of a certain tendency to behave as though you were at a Roman orgy. Are you trying your filthy plebeian tricks here in the narrow confines of this home? Case closed. Away with him! Let him be beheaded, roasted or **quartered—anything**, provided his wretched puppet life is smashed for good.

**HARBONA:** Supposing you hanged him from the contrivance he was getting ready for **Mordecai?** **After** all, as long as the rope is taut, the spectators don't mind who provides the weight.

**KING:** Good, say no more, perfect. Off to the scaffold with the quisling, and **double-quick** too

**OLD NICK:** You're on our list now, Haman, don't get excited. I'll introduce you to the boys, with the compliments of the management.

**DEATH:** In with him, then.

**DAI:** **O.K.;** how goes it, little **titch?**

**BIGTHANA & TERESH:** Hullo!

**CHORUS OF GHOSTS:** Hullo!

**EXECUTIONER:** Wham! Wham! Pow! I'll thrash you, beat you and wallop you until you don't feel no more **pain—that's** the job I've been landed with.

**OLD NICK:** Now, basted all over and reduced to the consistency of a jelly, you will gradually change into dried codfish, passing through an extensive repertory of intermediate stages. And I shall house you, via

intestí sense sortida. Abans, però, **confraternitza**, per **solaçar** els potentats de **Pèrsia**, a la saragata dels meus rigodons. Al compàs, xicot, que esmolo. Un, **dos**, tres: presto!

**AMAN:** Atzucac, **catric-catrac**,

**rerialles!** En escac,

m'engarjolen dins el sac,

als **abisso**s del parrac,

**malsonyós**, enmig de **brac**,

perquè **s'arrigoli** el drac.

**LA VEU D'ALGU:** **Esdernec**, des de gojat

**m'esbarrava**, lluny d'esbat,

a **timberes** de maldat.

Aviat **esmaixellat**,

giravolto, sense **aflat**

pel **requint** del **xafarnat**.

**CAF:** **Ganyó** gueto, guenyo, quec,

**magriscolis**, barbamec.

dels meus **nítols** el **llefec**

del **benguí** n'és ben sedec.

Com **m'embroca** l'abonyec

del batzac del catacresc!

**LA VEU D'ALGÚ:** Pel baptisme, cristià.

Pels sentits, **pilloc** pagà.

Per la **pega**, català.

La **carota**, d'albardà.

I aquest morro, de senglar

**barrigant** rera la gla.

**LAMED:** El **renoc** **raucava** al rec

florilegis de renec,

francesilles per al **llec**,

mentre corbs de **cuitós** bec

amb **esquifria** em deixen cec,

tot **xautant-se** del meu prec.

**MEM:** La **mulé**, **xupa**, **cuïc**,

per **ninou**, malgrat l'abric,

**m'endinyava**, sense **explic**,

un pessic dins el melic.

the slippery slide of worm-alley, in the comfort of the visceral passage which has no exit. But before that, to entertain the potentates of **Persia**, join together in the gyrations of my rigadoons. In time, lad, because I'm sharpening my knife. One, two, three, off!

**HAMAN: Clickety-clack, a cul-de-sac!**

Curtains! Check-mate! Outlook black!  
Now they stuff me in the sack,  
In my nightmare sleep a pack  
Of yelping hounds are on my track,  
To make of me the monster's tack.

**SOMEONE'S VOICE:** From the start I couldn't win.

Joyless, I went plunging in  
Down the dark abyss of sin.  
Mouth awry in toothless grin,  
Round the dancing floor I spin,  
Driven by the trumpet's din.

**KAPH:** Skinflint, squinting, skiving scab,  
Skinny, scraggy as a crab,  
Old Nick has always longed to grab  
My guts and lay them on the slab.  
Bashed **about**, alas how drab  
And woebegone I look, **pwr** dab!**SOMEONE'S VOICE:** Christian by my infant creed,  
Pagan, what my senses need,  
Welsh, my heart that's born to bleed.  
Mask of jester, hiding doubt,  
Beady eyes and swinish snout,  
Ferreting the acorns out.**LAMED:** Bloated frogs in every creek  
Croak their blasphemous **Newspeak**,  
Swallowed as gospel by the meek;  
And crows with swift ferocious beak  
Peck my eyes out, leave me weak,  
Mocking what I blindly **seek**.**MEM:** Death's sting, stiletto, bodkin **prick**,  
Has penetrated through my thick  
Overcoat, and made me kick  
The bucket, so that my life's quick

Ai, **joell**, brèvol **xemic**,  
prou **auxino** al ritme inic!

**NUN:** A l'ombreta d'un **aloc**  
m'adormia com un soc  
—per capçal només un **roc**—,  
quan **m'escarrabillo** al toc  
**repelenc** i, pell al **noc**,  
m'esfetgego, tan **renyoc**!

**SÀMEC:** Un parell de mots amb 'sóc'  
rimaré, i àdhuc amb 'joc'.  
Més de 'boc' i 'moc', no puc:  
**vejam** tu, versista ruc.

**AIN:** Pel meu lluc, massa feixuc:  
ni ho trauria per retruc.  
**Repussall, xaruc, matxuc**,  
en belar perdo el remuc.

**BANYETA:** Amb tentines d'embriac  
de **mistela** i de conyac,  
la **cataifa** del rebrec  
dirigeixo. Cap rebec,  
tanmateix, al meu repic,  
no replica mai, ni un xic.  
I si ho **fa**, fort o **pioc**,  
d'un **carxot** el torno a lloc  
(també tusto algun maluc  
amb varetes de saïc).  
Sentiràs d'arreu el xac.  
Atzucac, **catric-catrac!**

**ESTHER:** El marit i jo agraiм l'esbarjo de sobretaula i, encara més, la brusca batuta que domava la **fúriadel clarí** i la **nacra**, vívida fins avui a la fantasia de **Salom** des de l'atzar d'un **empolsat** prefaci. **Agilíssims** en la tramoia, tant com en la **contradansa**, els comediants singulars desapareixen amb el canceller, cancaneta per al meu il·lustre i ja immutable cromo: Esther, la **lluor** d'Israel. I no **mussitis**, **Assuerus**, contra la meva **prosopopeia** de **matrona** i, per enllestar l'endreça que, **endillunsada** o no, propugno, revoca les lletres **d'Aman**, escrites per

Flame is but a flickering wick  
—**This** syncopation makes me sick!

**NUN:** Sleeping deep beneath an oak,  
Stretched out on a ragged cloak,  
At the sudden touch I woke  
And, feeling the repulsive poke,  
Shrivelled like a skin in soak

—**That's** quite baroque (some say '**baroque**')!

**SAMECH:** I can rhyme by '**hook**' or '**crook**',  
But '**cook**' and '**spook**' I cannot brook;  
You, pop singer, try your luck!

**AYIN:** When I get stuck, I run amuck,  
Rhyming '**taunt**' with '**maiden aunt**'  
And ditto '**want**' and '**cant**'—you can't!  
Though I never shirk my work,  
This sort of quirk drives me **berserk**.

**OLD NICK:** Stinking drunk on **Armagnac**,  
I control this filthy pack.  
Any rebel from the wreck  
Quickly gets it in the neck.  
If a tick dares try a **trick**,  
I knock his block off with my stick,  
And if he tries to crack a joke,  
He'll get another loving stroke.  
No one dares to pass the buck  
Or I chuck him in the **muck**,  
Lay him smack upon his back.  
**Clickety-clack**, a **cul-de-sac**!

**ESTHER:** My husband and I greatly appreciate the **after-dinner** entertainment and even more the stroke of the baton which tamed the fury of trumpet and drum, still vivid in **Selyf**'s imagination from his chance early encounter with the story. As nimble on the stage machinery as they were in the dance, the quaint actors disappear with the Chancellor, who provides the indispensable basis for my famous and henceforth inalterable portrait as '**Esther**, the glory of **Israel**'. So don't grumble, **Ahasuerus**, about my matronly pomposity and, to put the finishing touch to the settlement for which, though we all have a '**morning after**' feeling, I am still **pressing**, revoke Hainan's letters

exterminar els jueus escampats a les cent **vint-i-set províncies**. I segella l'**edicte**—perquè la dolenteria dels sàtrapes no s'excusi, per apòcrif, d'**acatar-lo**—amb l'anell reial, que liuraràs a la custòdia del meu cosí **Mardoqueu**.

**REI:** Oh, oh, **aclarim** situacions, Esther! **¿No** afirmares, en contraure matrimoni, que no tenies família?

**ESTHER:** Una mínima inexactitud oportunista. Mardoqueu, que va servir-me de tutor, és, però, el meu únic parent: no n'ha de sortir cap altre de **trascantó**.

**REI:** **¿He** d'avesar a alternar amb aquest succedani de sogre?

**ESTHER:** Sí, i ni una **sil·laba** més, o al-ludeixo a una jerarquia **vexatòria**. D'altra banda, en una política de '**tothom** d'accord i al seu xabec', repartirem **així** les diverses tasques: tu jeus, ell **representa**, jo mano. I afegiré que Mardoqueu potineja tecnicismes de finances, un munt de bagatelles **d'arbitrista**. Per tant, prova'l, supera **prejudicis**, **dóna-li** l'anell. **Ahà**, bon minyó, al-leluia!

**MARDOQUEU:** **Al'leluia!** Alegra't, Jacob, i beneeix **Jahvè** al seu temple, a la ciutat del seu gaudi.

**ALTÍSSIM:** Rialles hebraiques a Jerusalem, llàgrimes gentils a Susa. Tanmateix, en ascendir el **besunya** pròdig, **Secundina** estrena davantal i **espolsadors**.

**SECUNDINA:** Me'n vaig amb ells a fer dissabte: talli qui talli el bacallà, una es queda sempre de portera.

**ALTÍSSIM:** Amb aquesta observació com a fermall, l'**inclit gallimarsot** finalitza la sèrie dels seus parlaments, quan per Susa es difon l'exultació dels **hosannes**.

**MARDOQUEU:** Atengueres, Déu nostre, el plany dels miserables, el plany dels desvalguts i els humils.

**ELIASIB:** I ara els preservats en aquest dia venim al teu davant amb les nostres **culpes**, sense les quals no som i amb les quals ens impossibilites de subsistir. I jo, **Eliasib**, el sacerdot, esmentaré els preceptes en la congregació dels germans i m'alçaré avui a proferir anatemes contra els **prevaricadors**.

ordering the extermination of the Jews scattered over the hundred and twenty-seven provinces. And seal the **edict—so** that the wickedness of the satraps may not find an excuse for disobeying it by doubting its **validity—with** the royal ring, which you will deliver into the safe keeping of my good cousin **Mordecai**.

KING: Oh, oh, let's get this clear, Esther! Didn't you say, when we got married, that you had no family?

**ESTHER:** An opportunist's tiny terminological inexactitude. Mordecai, who acted as my guardian, is, however, my only relative: I shan't be bringing any more out of the bag.

KING: And must I get used to hobnobbing with that father-in-law substitute?

**ESTHER:** Yes, and not another syllable from you, or I shall have to allude to the hierarchy that humiliates you. Further, in a policy based on '**live** together in peace and every man under his own **vine**', we shall share the work as follows: you take it easy, he acts in public, I give the orders. And I would add that Mordecai can chatter quite reasonably about financial technicalities, the amateur politician's endless babble. So try him out, overcome your prejudices, give him the ring. Ha-ha, good boy, hallelujah!

**MORDECAI:** Hallelujah! Rejoice, Jacob, and bless the Lord in his temple, in the city of his exultation.

**MOST HIGH:** Hebraic laughter in Jerusalem, heathen tears in **Shushan**. Incidentally, now that the prodigal lynx is rising to fame, **Emmeline** has a new apron and new dusters.

**EMMELINE:** I'm taking them along to do the cleaning. Whoever runs the show, yours truly is still the portress.

**MOST HIGH:** With this acute **observation** to mark the close, the illustrious **maid-of-all-work** brings her speeches to an end, while throughout Shushan spreads the jubilation of the **hosannas**.

**MORDECAI:** Thou hast hearkened, oh Lord, unto the complaint of the wretched, the cry of the helpless and humble.

**ELIASCHIB:** And now we whose lives have been preserved this day come before **thee** with our faults, without which we are nothing and with which **thou** hast made it impossible for us to survive. And I, **Eliashib**, the **priest**, shall make mention of the precepts in the congregation of brethren and stand today to utter curses against those who pervert justice.

**MARDOQUEU:** I digui tot el poble: '**Amén**'.

**ELIASIB:** Escolta, doncs, Israel: **Jahvè** és el teu Déu, l'únic Déu dels cel s i de la terra, l'ésser sense fi ni origen que ningú no pot odiar.

**MARDOQUEU:** I digui tot el poble: '**Amén**'.

**ELIASIB:** Com la gerra conté la **gerrada**, Déu conté el nombre i l'**harmonia**, l'ordre, el somni, el temps i el perdó.

**MARDOQUEU:** I digui tot el poble: '**Amén**'.

**ELIASIB:** Està escrit: '**No** faràs imatge de la **Divinitat**'.

**MARDOQUEU:** I digui tot el poble: '**Amén**'.

**ELIASIB:** Anatema contra l'idòlatra, contra el qui adora simulacres i teraphim.

**MARDOQUEU:** I digui tot el poble: '**Amén**'.

**ELIASIB:** Anatema contra el qui postula meravelles i demana mostres de la presència omnipotent de Déu.

**MARDOQUEU:** I digui tot el poble: '**Amén**'.

**ELIASIB:** Anatema contra el qui mercadeja amb les coses santes i converteix la religió en puntal de l'opulència o en via practicable tan sols pels cretins.

**MARDOQUEU:** I digui tot el poble: '**Amén**'.

**ELIASIB:** Està escrit: '**Déu** s'estima a si mateix amb un infinit amor **intel·lectual**'.

**MARDOQUEU:** I digui tot el poble: '**Amén**'.

**ELIASIB:** Anatema contra el qui revolta instints i sentiments contra l'imperi de la raó, l'alta lluminària de l'amor de Déu en la tenebra de l'home. Res al marge de la raó, res en pugna amb la raó, res per damunt de la raó, excepte Déu!

**MARDOQUEU:** I digui tot el poble: '**Amén**'.

**ELIASIB:** Està escrit: '**Observaràs** el repòs del setè jorn i les meves **diades**'.

**MARDOQUEU:** I digui tot el poble: '**Amén**'.

**ELIASIB:** Està escrit: '**Honoraràs** el teu pare i la teva mare, no robaràs, no cometràs adulteri, no **mentiràs**'.

**MARDOQUEU:** I digui tot el poble: '**Amén**'.

**ELIASIB:** Anatema contra l'assassí i l'incendiari, contra el blasfem, l'avar, l'envejós i el **perjur**.

**MARDOQUEU:** I digui tot el poble: '**Amén**'.

**ELIASIB:** Anatema damunt el qui suscita la rancúnia del primitiu contra la supremacia de l'esperit.

**MORDECAI:** And let all the people say: '**Amen**'.

**ELIASCHIB:** Hear, then, oh Israel: **Jahveh** is your God, the only God of the heavens and the earth, the being without beginning or end whom nobody can hate.

**MORDECAL:** And let all the people say: '**Amen**'.

**ELIASCHIB:** As the **wine-jar** contains its measure, so God contains harmony and number, order, vision, time and forgiveness.

**MORDECAI:** And let all the people say: '**Amen**'.

**ELIASCHIB:** It is written: '**Thou** shah not make an image of the **deity**'.

**MORDECAI:** And let all the people say: '**Amen**'.

**ELIASCHIB:** Cursed be the idolater, he who worships idols and **teraphim**.

**MORDECAI:** And let all the people say: '**Amen**'.

**ELIASCHIB:** Cursed be he who demands miracles and even calls for proof of the omnipotent presence of God.

**MORDECAI:** And let all the people say: '**Amen**'.

**ELIASCHIB:** Cursed be he who traffics in holy things and turns religion into a prop for wealth or a path that only cretins can tread.

**MORDECAI:** And let all the people say: '**Amen**'.

**ELIASCHIB:** It is written: '**God** loves himself with an infinite intellectual **love**'.

**MORDECAI:** And let all the people say: '**Amen**'.

**ELIASCHIB:** Cursed be he who arouses instincts and emotions against the rule of reason, the **lofty** lamp of God's love in the darkness of man. Nothing beyond reason, nothing in conflict with reason, nothing above reason, except God!

**MORDECAL:** And let all the people say: '**Amen**'.

**ELIASCHIB:** It is written: '**Thou shalt** observe the Sabbath day and all my feasts'.

**MORDECAI:** And let all the people say: '**Amen**'.

**ELIASCHIB:** It is written: '**Thou** shalt honour thy father and thy mother, **thou** shalt not steal, **thou** shalt not commit adultery, **thou** shalt not lie'.

**MORDECAI:** And let all the people say: '**Amen**'.

**ELIASCHIB:** Cursed be the assassin and the incendiary, the blasphemer, the miser, the covetous and the perjurer.

**MORDECAI:** And let all the people say: '**Amen**'.

**ELIASCHIB:** Curses upon him who excites the hatred of the uncivilised against the supremacy of the spirit.

**MARDOQUEU:** I digui tot el poble: '**Amén**'.

**ELIASIB:** Anatema contra el qui posa cadenats de paüira o **vesc** de recels a l'expressió de les ànimes.

**MARDOQUEU:** I digui tot el poble: '**Amén**'.

**ELIASIB:** Està escrit: '**Reverenciaràs** l'infant i la dona. **Enduraràs** privacions pel vell i pel **malalt**'.

**MARDOQUEU:** I digui tot el poble: '**Amén**'.

**ELIASIB:** Anatema contra el tip que no socorre la fam d'altres genives.

**MARDOQUEU:** I digui tot el poble: '**Amén**'.

**ELIASIB:** Anatema contra l'escriba que ven la ploma a **rossins** victoriosos i **s'envileix** a exalçar, per or o per temença, el sabre i el triomf.

**MARDOQUEU:** I digui tot el poble: '**Amén**'.

**ELIASIB:** Anatema contra el savi insensible al sofriment del dèbil, que es tanca a la torre de vori d'una serenor cruel.

**MARDOQUEU:** I digui tot el poble: '**Amén**'.

**ELIASIB:** Anatema contra el covard que calla quan el mal governa i anteposa a la consciència l'escalfor del seu ventre.

**MARDOQUEU:** I digui tot el poble: '**Amén**'.

**ELIASIB:** Anatema contra el qui escandalitza els innocents i els simples.

**MARDOQUEU:** I digui tot el poble: '**Amén**'.

**ELIASIB:** Anatema contra l'incredul en la remissió dels pecats i en la vida perdurable de l'esperit.

**MARDOQUEU:** I digui tot el poble: '**Amén, amén**'.

**ALTÍSSIM:** Mentre els jueus **salmodien** el sublim formulari, executen des de les poltrones ministerials llur revenja. A Susa degollen en **quaranta-vuit** hores **cinc-cents** barons. **Tianet** us brindarà una llista dels **conspicu**.

**TIANET:** **Forsandata, Dalfon, Asfata.**

**MARDOQUEU:** ¿**No acabdillaven** els qui ordien la nostra ruïna?

**TIANET:** I **Forata, Ahalia, Aridata.**

**MARDOQUEU:** ¿**No ens avorrien** aquests amb el major dels odis?

**TIANET:** I **Farmasta, Arisai, Aridai i Vaizata.**

**ALTÍSSIM:** Els sicaris suprimeixen també deu fills **d'Aman**, i Esther, femella **baciva**, ordena que pengin al pal els cadàvers: **així** ho llegiràs al text **protocanònic**. ¿**Interpolació**, costum **llevantí**, escarment macabre? Ai, com m'aboco damunt el buit! ¿**En** l'horror de la vall, em revestiré

**MORDECAI:** And let all the people say: ‘**Amen**’.

**ELIASCHIB:** Cursed be he who fastens padlocks of fear or shackles of suspicion upon the expression of thought.

**MORDECAI:** And let all the people say: ‘**Amen**’.

**ELIASCHIB:** It is written: ‘**Thou** shah reverence women and children. Thou **shalt suffer** privations for the sake of the sick and the **aged**’.

**MORDECAI:** And let all the people say: ‘**Amen**’.

**ELIASCHIB:** Cursed be he who satisfies his own hunger and does not relieve the hunger of other mouths.

**MORDECAI:** And let all the people say: ‘**Amen**’.

**ELIASCHIB:** Cursed be the scribe who sells his pen to victorious hacks and, through fear or for gold, degrades himself by extolling the triumph of the sword.

**MORDECAI:** And let all the people say: ‘**Amen**’.

**ELIASCHIB:** Cursed be the scholar who is unmindful of the suffering of the weak, who shuts himself up in the cruel serenity of an ivory tower.

**MORDECAI:** And let all the people say: ‘**Amen**’.

**ELIASCHIB:** Cursed be the coward who is silent when evil rules, and puts the warmth of his belly before his conscience.

**MORDECAI:** And let all the people say: ‘**Amen**’.

**ELIASCHIB:** Cursed be he who outrages the innocent and the simple.

**MORDECAI:** And let all the people say: ‘**Amen**’.

**ELIASCHIB:** Cursed be he who does not believe in the remission of sins and the everlasting life of the spirit.

**MORDECAI:** And let all the people say: ‘**Amen**’.

**MOST HIGH:** While the Jews are chanting the sublime ritual formulas, they are also busy, sitting in ministerial easy chairs, carrying out their revenge. In **Shushan** they slay five hundred men in forty-eight hours. **Geraint** will give us a list of the outstanding ones.

**GERAINT:** **Parshandatha, Dalphon, Aspatha.**

**MORDECAI:** Were they not the leaders of those who plotted our ruin?

**GERAINT:** And **Poratha, Adalia, Aridatha.**

**MORDECAI:** Did they not hate us with a very great hatred?

**GERAINT:** And **Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai** and **Vaizatha.**

**MOST HIGH:** The hired assassins also liquidate ten sons of Hainan's, and Esther, who is barren, orders their bodies to be hanged on the gallows: thus you may read in the **protocanonical** text. An interpolation, **perhaps**, an old Levantine custom, or a macabre object-lesson? Let me

de **justícia** i m'asseuré a escorcollar el plet del **proísmo**? La vigoria de la ballesta correspon només a una mà glòriosa, un suprem **sotjador** escruta precipicis i actes. Per la mortal angoixa, obriu, **titelles**, els llavis i eleveu un himne al jutge i **fletxer**.

REI: El teu arc, sagitari,  
enlaira la vilesa  
del llot a vol harmònic  
vers la pau pressentida.

ESTHER: Israel **edifica**  
al cim dels mil·lenaris  
miratges d'esperança,  
quan el plor regna fora.

MARDOQUEU: De lluny governes,  
braç secret, la perfecta  
corba del temps, immòbil  
poder **indefugible**.

ESTHER: Alçàrem una casa  
d'aconseguida calma.  
A l'entorn, **captiveri**  
d'hostils ones amargues.

MARDOQUEU: En la nit acompleixes  
aquell etern designi  
que agermana la cursa  
de l'home i de l'estrella.

REI: Negre llac. No penetren  
vents del desert ni l'alba  
el mur subtil, la vida  
del cristall sense imatges.

COR: Tu que veus la **sofrènça**  
del nostre esforç inútil,  
jutge i arquer, retorna'ns  
a l'alta llum que ens guia.

ALTISSIM: Vilatans, patricis de Sinera: som a les acaballes de la faula. El sol s'ajoca enllà dels turons del **Mont-Alt**, una ora suavíssima es desvetlla al Mal Temps i ens portarà sentors de fonoll i de **menta**, l'aigua cau a primes gotes per la molsa del safareig del trító, ulls del

not lean too far over the void! In the darkness of the valley, who am I to put on the robes of righteousness and scrutinize my neighbour's cause? The strength of the bow belongs to one glorious hand alone, one supreme eye scans deeds and disasters. For the sake of our mortal anguish, open your lips, puppets, and sing a hymn to the judge and archer.

KING: Archer, your marksman's bow

Raises base human clay  
In swift harmonious flight  
To an apprehended peace.

ESTHER: Israel ever builds

Over the gulf of time  
A bright mirage of hope  
When weeping reigns without.

MORDECAI: From far your unseen arm

Governs the perfect curve  
Of tune, you motionless  
Inevitable power.

ESTHER: We shall erect a house

Of consecrated calm.  
Around us, slavery  
Of hostile bitter waves.

MORDECAL: By night you execute

The everlasting plan  
By which you link the course  
Of mankind and the stars.

KING: Black lake. No desert gales

Or winds of dawn can pierce  
The fragile wall, the life  
That sends no image back.

CHORUS: You who see the pain

Of our vain efforts here,  
Archer and judge, restore us  
To our ancient guiding light.

MOST HIGH: **Townsfolk**, gentry of Novareba: we have reached the closing stages of our story. The sun is retiring **behind** Mynydd y Gaer, a gentle breeze is stirring **in** the wood, bringing us scents of fennel and mint, the water **falls** in little drops over the moss of the fountain with the

vespre comencen a esguardar-nos. La Neua es prepara a passar **safata**, com us he promès, sols als **volenterosos** d'amollar-li uns cèntims. Als dits de l'**Eleuteri**, els putxinel·lis acoten el cap, a manera de salutació cortesa, i abandonen l'escena per jeure, al fons de la **capsa**, en una barreja immòbil. Després del que heu sentit, els jueus **occiren**—ho afegeix la **crònica**—**setanta-cinc** mil adversaris de llur poble i commemoraren amb dos dies **solemnes**, que Israel celebra periòdicament des d'aleshores, la intercessió d'Esther i el terme dels dejunis i del clamor. I el rei imposà tributs a l'imperí i a les illes allunyades en la boira de l'horitzó, i Mardoqueu governà en nom seu, sota el dictat d'Esther, imagina't com, procurant, sembla, això sí, una mica de bonança per a la nissaga de Jacob. I un altre príncep succeí més tard **Assuerus** en el tron de Susa i tornà potser a perseguir les tràgiques **tribus** del Trànsit. I continuà la cadena monòtona de lluites, assassinats, infàmies i disbauxes, car a Pèrsia i arreu del món una cruel estultícia esclavitzà des de sempre l'home i fa de la seva **història** un mal somni de dolor tenebrós i àrid. **¿I de què et servirà furgar, Salom**, contra aquesta imprescriptible llei, en el misteri de les paraules, anhel d'insensatesa, cavalleria desbocada que t'arrossegà a la destrucció? Maleït tu, orgullós foll perdedor de tot, excepte d'una estèril tristesa **lúcida**, que amb rictus de desdeny i amb precària burla trepitges el teu cor en la solitud. Ai, vosaltres, els **morts** espectadors, compadiu, però, el gos assedegat que es llepa fugint els trencs de **pedrots i vergassades**, apiadeu-vos del qui s'endinsa sense retorn pels presidis de l'enyorança i dels anys! I no te'n riguis, **Tianet**, i escolta la veu feble que s'adreça, amb preferència, a tu i als teus companys de joc, des de l'**ambó** momentani. **Atorgueu-vos** sense defallences, ara i en créixer, de grans i de vells, una almoina recíproca de perdó i tolerància. Eviteu el màxim crim, el pecat de la guerra entre germans. Penseu que el mirall de la veritat s'esmicolà a l'origen en fragments **petitíssims**, i cada un dels trossos recull tanmateix una engruna d'autèntica llum. I si algú dels qui m'entenen creu encara que és una obra digna i noble evocar amb esperit religiós lesombres **predecessores**—car ningú no sap si l'alè de vida dels fills de l'home munta enlaire i si l'hàlit de la bèstia davalla devers la **terra**—, que pregui avui pels difunts de **Sinera**. Pregueu pels

dragon's head, nightfall eyes begin to watch us. Snow-white is getting ready to pass the hat round, as I promised you, only to those who are willing to spare a few coppers. In Hector's hands, the puppets bow their heads by way of courteous farewell and leave the stage to go and lie in a motionless heap at the bottom of the box. After what you have heard, the **Jews**—so the chronicle adds—slew seventy-five thousand enemies of their people and commemorated by two solemn days, which Israel has celebrated at the proper season ever since, Esther's intercession and the end of their fastings and lamentation. And the King laid a tribute upon the empire and upon the islands far away in the mists of the horizon, and **Mordecai** ruled in his name, as Esther dictated, you can image how, apparently obtaining, it is true, a little prosperity for the seed of Jacob. And later another prince succeeded **Ahasuerus** on the throne of **Shushan** and began again perhaps to persecute the tragic tribes of the Diaspora. And the monotonous series continued—of conflicts and assassinations, excesses and infamies, because in Persia and all over the world a cruel idiocy has always enslaved man and made his history a nightmare of dark and barren pain. And what is the point, **Selyf**, of your trying, in defiance of this unalterable law, to probe into the mystery of words—a lunatic urge, a **runaway** horse that is dragging you headlong to destruction? Damn you, you vain fool, annihilating everything except a lucid, sterile melancholy, you who with a **scornful** sneer and dubious mockery trample on your own heart in solitude. Ah, you, the **watchful** dead, show compassion for the thirsting **dog**, licking as he runs the gashes from thrown stones and lashes, have pity on the man who moves deeper and deeper, past all hope of return, into the prisons of yearning and of years gone by. And don't laugh, **Geraint**, at the feeble voice which is speaking particularly to you and your playmates, from the pulpit of the moment. Give without fail to one another, now and when you grow up, the mutual charity of tolerance and forgiveness. Avoid the greatest of all crimes, the sin of war between brothers. Remember that the mirror of truth was shattered in the beginning into tiny fragments, and yet each bit reflects a spark of genuine light. And if anyone who is listening to me still thinks it is a worthy and noble task to recall in a pious spirit the shades of our **forebears**—because who knows whether the spirit of life of the sons of men goes upwards and the spirit of the beast goes downward to the **earth**?—let him pray today

ximples de la vila, dinastes incomparables sota el prestigi d'en Trictrac, els mendicants que captaren de porta en porta, per places i carrers, una minsa i reganyosa caritat, durant generacions senceres. I per les opulentes **families**, ja extingides, dels Tries i els Pasqual, dels Pastor i els Vallalta. I per la senyora Maria Castelló, que segué llegint en una cadira ranca. I per la dama dels **Antommarchi**, l'estugosa Angèlica, de professió **malalta**, condemnada fins al seu traspàs, des de la infància a una senectut **extrema**, a endrapar cada **dia**, amb cert **desmenjament** aristocràtic, un parell de pollastres capons, únic requisit **d'escaiença** a les seves delicadeses. I per l'Esperanceta **Trinquis**, colgada per la neu en un clot, prop de la via del tren. I per l'Escombreta, **proferidora** dels **espinguets** més aguts que mai s'hagin llançat de llarg a llarg de la costa. No oblideu tampoc els Torres, que anaren i vingueren a través dels cinc oceans, i els altres pilots i mercaders que els emularen. I els pescadors **confrares** de sant Elm i els calafats i mestres d'aixa de les antigues **mestrances**. I els **comparets** i macips de sant Roc, que **veremaren** les nostres vinyes i desfilaren a les processons, quan el **raím verola**. Pregueu també per Tomeu Rosselló, a qui **Salom** incorpora a la llegenda sinerenca. I pel notari i el bisbe, el nebot i l'oncle, abans amos **d'aquest** jardí, que **posseïren** un talent **claríssim** i una enorme personalitat autoritària i bondadosa. I pel metge Miquel, i el ric **Xifré**, i el filòsof Moles, i la resta innumerable. I per l'**Eleuteri**, i per mi, i pels amics dels jueus, i pels jueus i llurs enemics.

## FI DE LA IMPROVISACIÓ

for the people of **Novareba** who have passed away. Pray for the town's dim-wits, an incomparable bunch under Drunken Jimmy's direction, the beggars who went from door to door, through streets and squares, asking for a little grudging charity, for whole **generations**. And for the wealthy families, now extinct, the Jeffreys, Griffiths, Powells and Lloyds. And for Mrs. **Llywela** James, who used to sit reading in a rickety chair. And for the lady up at the big house, the squeamish Angelica, an invalid by profession, condemned for life, from infancy to extreme old age, to consume each day, with a certain aristocratic reluctance, a couple of capons, the only fare which suited her fastidious taste. And for **Lisi'r** Dablen, buried by snow in a ditch beside the railway line. And for Annie the Broom, who uttered the shrillest screeches you ever heard along the whole coast. Don't forget the Morgans, who came and went over the seven seas, and the other pilots and merchants who followed their example. And the fishermen, singing in the harbour taverns. And the miners and the **steelworkers**. And the ploughmen and farmhands who sowed and reaped the corn and sang the harvest home. Pray too for Dylan Thomas, whom **Selyf** includes in the Novareba legend. And for the rector and the lawyer, uncle and nephew, who once owned this garden, men of outstanding talent and kindly and commanding personality. And for Dr. Jones and rich **Hywel** and Williams the philosopher. And for Hector and for me, and for the friends of the Jews, and for the Jews and their enemies.

END OF THE IMPROVISATION