Above - Juliet Jacques, *To Be Free*, 2017, *Speak Through You*, Hot Wheels Projects, Athens, 2018. Photo: Alexandra Masmanidi
Right, from top - Jesper List Thomsen, *The Body, The Body, The Tongue; The Neoliberal I; Blackbirds*, 2018, reading extract from a work in progress, *Speak Through You* at Hot Wheels Projects, Athens, 2018. Photo: Alexandra Masmanidi; Cally Spooner, *United In Stomach Flu, London Weeps*, novel in progress, reading, *Speak Through You* at Hot Wheels Projects, Athens, 2018. Photo: Alexandra Masmanidi

What happened in the scene captured by the photograph is the subject of some dispute. One version is that the Italian artist angrily confronted his Welsh counterpart and publicly denounced him for distracting attention from the official program. For the purposes of this text, we might allegorize Merz as representative of the established power and Davies as the figure of an oppressed community.[3] In which case the wider symbolism is clear, and would make the photograph a touchstone for anyone inclined to argue that the whole institutional system of contemporary art—from art schools to commercial galleries and state-funded museums—is skewed against local practitioners and minority cultures, which are not only neglected but actively disdained.

But this account of the event, and the reading it supports, is contradicted by other reports. Writing in the immediate aftermath of the Eisteddfod, Ifor Davies—a close friend of his namesake artist—wrote that, as Merz approached Davies, the Welsh national anthem was being broadcast over the crowd through loudspeakers. Merz, who didn't speak Welsh but was determined to express his support, attempted some "phonetic improvisations" of "Hen Wlad fy Nhadau."

As someone who grew up on the Welsh borders, was introduced to contemporary art by a girlfriend at art school in Wrexham, and remains suspicious of the intricately networked art world even as I become more implicated in it, I want very much to believe this latter account. That the vanguard Italian artist would join Davies in song in a Wrexham field seems to me not only wonderfully funny—Welsh is notoriously difficult for nonnative speakers to understand and pronounce—but also admirable.

The photograph offers some supporting evidence for this version of events. That this was a surreal rather than an antagonistic encounter is borne out by the watching boy's hilarity, the woman's air of bafflement, and the bemused smile playing on Davies's lips. More circumstantially, it is also difficult to imagine that Merz, who as a teenager was imprisoned for participating in the antifascist resistance during the Italian occupation, would be so ignorant as to shout down a protest made on behalf of an oppressed culture.

For the purposes of this text, let's assume that Merz was singing along. By lending his voice to a protest against a system in which he was complicit, he is both vocal—in the sense of amplifying the song—and silent, in the sense that he does not seek to interpret, represent, or appropriate the sentiment expressed by it. Crucial to the legitimacy of the gesture, and the possibility that it might offer a model for other expressions of solidarity, is this valiant and necessarily doomed attempt at a language in which he does not "belong."