

Translation and Self-Translation in Today's (Im)migration Literature

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Anastasija Gjurčinova,
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Abstract: In her article "Translation and Self-Translation in Today's (Im)migration Literature" Anastasija Gjurčinova discusses contemporary (im)migration literature in Europe as a phenomenon that offers new opportunities for comparative literary research especially as related to the issue of the translation and reception of literary works. Gjurčinova considers (im)migrant authors who write in their native tongue and then translate their works — or have them translated — into the adopted language and others who prefer writing their literary works directly in the latter language. Through references to the work of relevant scholars of comparative and world literature Gjurčinova elaborates on these issues by identifying the tradition and context for studying these works and through illustrations of actual practices with examples from three Italian (im)migrant authors: Amara Lakhous, Gëzim Hajdari, and Božidar Stanišić.

Anastasija GJURČINOVA

Translation and Self-Translation in Today's (Im)migration Literature

Comparative literature has been closely related to translations and translation studies since the beginning of its history. Comparing literary texts from different national literatures — the main goal in the early period of comparative literature — meant studying the dialogue and the communication in the "interliterary" field, which was impossible to consider separately from the process of translation (see, e.g., Dagnino <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss5/7>>; Đurišin, *Theory*). Thus, a comparative literature scholar had to speak at least three languages and these were, preferably, leading European languages: English, French and/or German, sometimes adding Italian, Spanish, or Russian to the list. However, by the end of the twentieth and especially in the twenty-first century, the idea of comparative literature has started changing: instead of representing relations and communication between single, mostly European national literatures, prompted by globalization comparative literature has reinvented — starting in the 1990s and increasing by the 2000s — the idea of world literature(s) (see, e.g., Damrosch; D'haen; D'haen, Damrosch, Kadir; D'haen, Domínguez, Thomsen; Đurišin, *Čo je svetová*; Gnisci, Sinopoli, Moll; Lawall; Pizer; Sturm-Trigonakis; Thomsen; see also Tötösy de Zepetnek and Mukherjee). Literary studies are constantly trying to keep up with literary production, which in turn expands and transforms constantly and does not always fit into existing models. Scholars in comparative and world literature appear best suited in the development of new reading and interpretative models because they are oriented towards the study of relations, contacts, parallels, and communication among different literary phenomena.

The idea of world literature appeared in European cultural history in the Renaissance through the concept of the *Respublica Litteraria*, which described a wide community of writers and works in different languages: the notion was employed, for example, by Francesco Barbaro in 1417 and by Erasmus of Rotterdam in the sixteenth century. This concept was popular during the Enlightenment too and became particularly notable in the nineteenth century, when it was re-elaborated by Goethe, who gave resonance to the idea of *Weltliteratur*: "I am more and more convinced that poetry is the universal possession of mankind, revealing itself everywhere and at all times in hundreds and hundreds of men... I therefore like to look about me in foreign nations, and advise everyone to do the same. National literature is now a rather unmeaning term; the epoch of world literature is at hand, and everyone must strive to hasten its approach" (Goethe qtd. in Eckermann 165-66). Goethe put an emphasis on literary communication, reception, and translation considering the necessity to develop literary and cultural exchange among the various nations of his time. His well-known concept contributed to the rise of comparative literature, which emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century. The reimagined idea of world literature in our time, however, offers a different concept moving toward the idea of "transnational," "intercultural," or even "transcultural" literary studies. It was perhaps Earl Miner's 1990 *Comparative Poetics: An Intercultural Essay on Theories of Literature* that marked the beginnings of this interest launching the model of East-West studies within comparative literature.

Several contemporary theoreticians also deserve a mention with regard to the notion of world literature, especially those who deal with subjects related to postcolonial and/or cultural studies. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, for example, introduced the idea of "planetary" comparative literature in her 2003 *Death of a Discipline*, where she suggests that "otherness" should be our starting point especially if we want the humanities to be able to provide interpretative models for understanding the new social phenomena in today's world (see also Tötösy de Zepetnek's conceptualization of the "other" in his *Comparative Literature*). In his 2003 *What Is World Literature?* David Damrosch argued for world literature conceived less as a vast canon of works and more as a matter of circulation and reception suggesting that texts which function as world literature are those which work well in and even gain in various ways from translation. To Damrosch world literature is not a list or a library, but a different way of reading those texts, a possibility of "detached engagement with worlds beyond our own place and time" (281). The remodeled notion of world literature, according to Pascale Casanova in her *The World Republic of Letters*, is not a harmonious phenomenon, but a conflicting jungle of national literatures based on national (ethnic) languages. Casanova rejects the humanist idea of a

world literature that can transcend the historical and political conflicts around the world which are an everyday concern to writers of so-called "peripheral" literatures. While the tradition of comparative literature was predicated on the notion of "national literatures," there is an increasing number of literary works from the postcolonial world, from transnational cultures, from (im)migrant authors who are located outside of that history. Otherness and the intercultural dimension are among its immanent elements expressed in society at large and in literature in particular (see, e.g., Sturm-Trigonakis).

Nomenclature may vary and terminology may be changed, but it can be argued that what we used to call the literature of exile, nowadays is more often called "literature of (im)migration." However, both conditions of exile and (im)migration mean writing in a new country other than one's homeland, and in a new language other than one's mother tongue. In his *Reflections of Exile* Edward W. Said wrote that "Most people are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home; exiles are aware of at least two" (186; see also McClennen). What happens in this transformation is mostly a passage from a binary logic typical of exile literature to a movement, a mixture of cultures, races, and languages present in the discussions about (im)migrant literatures. This change offers a passage to a transnational, cosmopolitan, multilingual, hybrid map of the world. The notion of "(im)migrant literature" often describes the literature of authors who have come to Western Europe from southern or eastern parts of the continent or other parts of the world as refugees or in search for more decent living conditions and who have started writing in an adopted language. Thus, their literary works are a mixture, a hybrid, or *métissage* of the old and the new stories, the old and the new language, the old and the new culture (immigrant literature is of course a much researched field for example in Canadian scholarship where immigrant writers' works are included the country's literary canon at least since the 1980s: for a bibliography see, e.g., Tötösy de Zepetnek, Sayed, Beneventi <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweblibrary/canadianethnicbibliography>>). Sometimes (im)migrant authors were already writers in their homeland; other times, it was their (im)migrant condition that turned them into writers and it was their extraordinary experience that demanded to be expressed through a literary text. In his *Imaginary Homelands* Salman Rushdie wrote that "Literature is the one place in any society where, within the secrecy of our own heads, we can hear voices talking about everything in every possible way" (429).

Language is clearly one of the biggest problems an (im)migrant or exiled author encounters. In "The Condition We Call Exile," Joseph Brodsky claimed that "For one in our profession, the condition we call exile is, first of all, a linguistic event ... What started as a private intimate affair with the language, in exile becomes fate — even before it becomes an obsession or a duty" (108). Exile leads to isolation, one is on one's own, alone with oneself, and with one's language, and no one and nothing between them: language is one of the most dramatic experiences in exile. According to Amin Maalouf in his 2000 *In the Name of Identity*, language is usually one of the elements that betrays the (im)migrant: the accent, the syntax, grammatical gender, etc. Out of all allegiances, Maalouf considers language to be the most decisive because within our identity it usually comes even before religion (131). But Maalouf also insists on the importance of admitting that different linguistic allegiances may live in peaceful coexistence within our identity. The only answer for Maalouf is a voluntary policy aimed at strengthening linguistic diversity and based on a simple idea that "nowadays everybody obviously needs three languages. The first is his language of identity; the third is English. Between the two we have to promote a third language, freely chosen, which will often but not always be another European language. This will be for everyone the main foreign language taught at school, but it will also be much more than that — the language of the heart, the adopted language, the language you have married, the language you love" (140).

Which language is, then, to be used by the (im)migrant? Writers have to make a difficult choice between their native tongue and the adopted language and they find themselves in a strange condition: they find themselves in-between languages (Bhabha). What advantage can a choice of a new, adopted language bring? Leszek Kołakowski wrote that "We can use a foreign tongue simply because we have to, or we can try to discover linguistic treasures in it that are unique to it, untranslatable, and which therefore not only enrich our technical ability to communicate, but our mind as well" ("Praise" 58). An (im)migrant author never really "belongs" to his/her actual location and even those conditions of non-belonging can be a challenge in discovering new possibilities generated by the encounter between one's own language and the new one. Czesław Miłosz claimed that the

writer in exile has an advantage regarding the language because she/he experiences it as a living creature and can escape the banality of its use: the poet looks at his/her own language from a different perspective and new aspects of the language appear (19). And according to Milan Kundera in his 2010 *Encounter*, Vera Linhartova, a Paris-based Czech writer, once said that "So, I chose the place where I wanted to live, but I have also chosen the language I wanted to speak ... People will protest ... sure, a writer is a free person, but is he not the custodian of his language? Isn't that the very meaning of a writer's mission? ... It is often asserted that a writer has less freedom of movement than anyone else, for he remains bound to his language by an indissoluble tie. I believe this is another of those myths that serve as an excuse for timid folks" (Linhartova qtd. in Kundera 104). This confirms that a writer is not a prisoner of any language.

Maybe we are really paralyzed by monolingual prejudice. Free to choose among languages, an (im)migrant author gets close to the stimulating concept of Creolization elaborated by Edouard Glissant whose idea of multilingualism is an original one. According to Glissant, it is important to be aware of the existence of other languages around us: "in the present context of multiple literatures and of the relation of poetics with the chaos-world, I can no longer write in a monolingual manner ... an immense drama, an immense tragedy from which my own language cannot be exempt and safe ... And therefore I cannot write monolingually in my language: I write it in the presence of this tragedy, of this drama ... One cannot save one language in the world by letting the others die" ("From 'Introduction'" 119). Applied to cultures, this is a process that constitutes an interpenetration of cultural elements to form a new whole: the uniqueness of the idea of Creolization lies in the unpredictability of the elements that meet within it. This concept is also applied to translation, considered by Glissant as "one of the most important arts for the future" (121). The translator, according to Glissant, invents a language, which is necessary as a link between the first and the second language. Thus, it is language itself that produces the "unpredictable." Consequently, translation is central to this new Creolized thought. It is an art of escaping from one language into another, without erasing the first and allowing the second to appear (see Glissant, *Poetics* 95-96). Glissant is aware that in this "new" language something is usually "lost," but he thinks that this is exactly the part of us that tries to reach out to the "other." For translation is a two-way street: "I speak to you in your language voice, and it is in my language use that I understand you" (Glissant, *Poetics* 107). Writing in one language, whatever that may be, implies a desire to meet all languages of the world; whereas any single language, powerful or not, which does not venture out to make contact with other cultures and does not enter into interrelations with other languages, is surely bound to be impoverished in the long run (Glissant, *Poetics* 110). An application of Glissant's concepts is offered by Armando Gnisci in his 2003 *Creolizzare l'Europa* where he argues that to study (im)migration literature one needs to have an intercultural poetics. This poetics defines as (im)migrant literature the work produced by authors who write in a language different from their own, in which they might or might not have written before, but in which they continue writing and engaging in self-translation in both directions (Gnisci, *Creolizzare* 8).

Next, I consider the above-discussed concepts with regard to three examples of Italian immigrant writers: the Algerian Amara Lakhous, the Albanian Gëzim Hajdari, and the Bosnian Božidar Stanišić. Lakhous has lived in Italy since 1995, first in Roma and then in Torino. He is the author of several popular works including multiethnic mystery novels narrating the story of a multicultural Italy. His most famous work, his second novel *Scontro di civiltà per un ascensore a Piazza Vittorio* (2006; translated as *Clash of Civilizations over an Elevator in Piazza Vittorio* [2008]), won various literary awards and was made into film, directed by Isotta Toso. This text has an interesting linguistic history: first it was written in Arabic, with the unusual title of *كيف نرضع ابننا من غير أن نعضه* (How to be Suckled by the Wolf without Getting Bitten) and published in Algeria in 2003; then it was rewritten in Italian by the author himself and published three years later in Italy. It is clear that we are dealing here with a case of translation and self-translation. In the first years of his immigrant status in Italy, Lakhous insisted on writing in Arabic because he believed that this was a way of preserving the memory of and the link to his homeland. In an essay written in 2000 and published in 2001, he tells a story about a touching conversation he had with another immigrant writer in Italy, the Brazilian Julio Monteiro (<http://www.disp.let.uniroma1.it/kuma/narrativa/Amara_Lakhous.html>). That night Monteiro cried, confessing that the country of Dante lay heavy on him since he had recently started writing a book of

short stories in Italian neglecting his beloved Portuguese. Later that night Lakhous, reflecting on Monteiro's words, understood that Monteiro's exile was obviously "completed," whereas his own was an "uncompleted one," because he still fought the temptation to write in Italian. He claimed that he wrote in Arabic and then translated what he had written primarily to get himself out of isolation. However, he was still writing in his native tongue because that was the bridge connecting him to his memory. He wondered what would happen if the bridge somehow broke one day, and concluded that on such an occasion he would cry, as Julio Monteiro had done (Lakhous <http://www.disp.let.uniroma1.it/kuma/narrativa/Amara_Lakhous.html>).

Today we can confirm that he indeed wrote his third novel, *Divorzio all'islamica a viale Marconi* (2010; translated as *Divorce Islamic Style* [2012]) directly in Italian, but there is no testimony whether he cried about it. In an interview he stated that he wrote this new novel in Italian from the start and since it takes place in Italy, it would not make sense for people to speak Arabic in it (see Ruta 16). On another occasion, he has added that in a manner of speaking he had Arabized the Italian and Italianized the Arabic. And this going back and forth between languages was very important to him (see Brogi <<http://ojs.unica.it/index.php/between/article/view/152>>). The most interesting experience for my discussion, however, remains Lakhous's second novel, his *Scontro di civiltà per un ascensore a Piazza Vittorio*, as he spent several years rewriting and to some extent re-conceiving the story in Italian. The protagonist of the book, set in Rome, declares himself to be the "son of the she-wolf" and claims to be nourished by the Italian language as if it were a baby bottle, while being positioned between Romulus and Remus. Lakhous seems to be speaking through his character when the latter says that "Italian is my daily milk" and "translation is a journey over a sea from one shore to the other... Sometimes I think of myself as a smuggler: I cross the frontiers of language with my booty of words, ideas, images and metaphors" (*Clash* 109) ("L'italiano è il mio latte quotidiano ... La traduzione è un viaggio per mare da una riva all'altra ... Qualche volta mi considero un contrabbandiere: attraverso le frontiere della lingua con un bottino di parole, idee, immagini e metafore" [*Scontro* 155]).

Lakhous's point about his choice of language as an immigrant author is important because he chose to write in Italian to try to get himself out of isolation. In the chapter "Translation as *littérisation*" Casanova also deals with this issue while treating "the importation of literary texts written in 'small' languages or ones belonging to neglected literatures" when translation amounts to acceding to the status of literature and gives these texts access to literary visibility and existence (135). For translation is not simply a form of naturalization or the passage from one language to another, but is also a *littérisation* "as any operation — translation, self-translation, transcription, direct composition in the dominant language — by means of which a text from a literarily deprived country comes to be regarded as literary ... these texts must in one fashion or another be translated if they are to obtain a certificate of literariness" (Casanova 136). Further on in her book, Casanova gives an example similar to the method chosen by Lakhous, which she finds in the work of another Algerian author, Rachid Boudjedra, who has written many of his texts in French first and then translated them into Arabic himself and vice versa, thus operating continually between two languages: "The porousness between the two languages made possible by bilingualism therefore encourages a perpetual transit back and forth between them" (268).

My second example is the work of Stanišić, a Bosnian poet and prose writer who has been living in Italy since 1992. From among his works good examples are *Primavera a Zugliano* (A Spring in Zugliano), *I buchi neri di Sarajevo* (Black Holes in Sarajevo), *Non-poesie*, and *Bon voyage*. He continues to write in his native tongue and has his works translated into Italian by a professional translator so that his words may reach his readers through the filter of another language, the Italian of translation. Aware that he needs the Italian language to get close to his readers, he tried writing one of his texts, a 2006 play called *Il sogno di Orlando*, directly in Italian. The action of the play takes place in Trieste and it concerns a pacifist character, Orlando, and a group of exiles from the former Yugoslavia. For his text, Stanišić said he needed a plain language stripped to its bare essentials which could be achieved using his adopted Italian: "For writing this play I chose Italian, in which I have hitherto expressed myself only in short narrative forms, writing nonfiction and occasionally my non-poems. In fact, I needed a language practically reduced to the essence of what I wished to express and Italian, a language that I do not know through and through, offered me just that" ("Per la

realizzazione di quest'opera teatrale ho scelto l'italiano, in cui finora mi esprimevo solo nelle forme narrative brevi, scrivendo saggistica e qualche volta le mie non-poesie. In realtà, mi serviva un linguaggio quasi ridotto all'essenziale di ciò che volevo esprimere e l'italiano, lingua che non conosco fino in fondo, me lo offriva pienamente" ["Il sogno"<http://www.el-ghibli.provincia.bologna.it/id_1-issue_06_26-section_1-index_os_4.html>]). The writing of literature occurs to Stanišić almost as a stroke of fate, a mystery that erases the signs of one's descent and transforms itself on the page into a form of the event, and a journey with stops and no certain landings, especially if made in a language that does not belong to the author initially as his/her native tongue (see Di Lucchio, <<http://www.disp.let.uniroma1.it/kuma/cinema/kuma8-teatro-staniscic.html>>). Thus, Stanišić's relation to the Italian language is changing, becoming richer, and sometimes more complicated. Every new Italian word learned, written, or pronounced by the author gives rise to other journeys which might lead to some fortunate intuitions, but to errors and mistakes too. All of it, of course, is the essence of creation, which could not exist without this conversion. Using the words of Lakhous, we can say that Stanišić is living his "uncompleted exile" insisting on writing in his native tongue, in Serbo-Croatian, a language that no longer exists, although for him it remains a bridge to his homeland: he calls it his "Yiddish."

My third case may be the most relevant to my discussion: it is about the poetry of Hajdari, an Italian immigrant author of Albanian descent. Living in exile in Italy since 1992 mostly for political reasons, Hajdari has become one of the most prominent poets in the last two decades, a winner of various literary awards for his poetry books including *Antologia della pioggia* (Anthology of the Rain), *Sassi contro vento* (Stones Against the Wind), *Corpo presente* (Body Present), *Stigmata*, *Maldiluna* (Moonsickness), *Poema dell'esilio* (Poems of Exile). Hajdari is renowned for having written and published all of his poetry in bilingual, parallel editions: Albanian and Italian. Thus he offers a double perspective writing in two languages and insisting that he does not even translate himself, but writes two originals and that writing two originals for him is not a betrayal, but a real dialogue. There is no hierarchy between the two versions, each is different but still "original." Hajdari made of it his own "poetics," which can be deduced from his verses, too. For example, in a poem dedicated to the beautiful, but poor young Albanian prostitutes, he writes: "To you, beautiful girls from Albania, / Of whom I think in two languages / Sorrowfully ... Wherever you are in the world / Hopefully" ("Per voi, belle ragazzed'Albania, / a cui penso in due lingue / con tristezza ... Ovunque siate per il mondo / con speranza" [*Poesie scelte* 150]).

The meaning of language and words is crucial in Hajdari's poetry and he creates powerful wordplays. For example, the city of Trieste is always related to sorrow ("triste Trieste" [in Italian, "triste" means "sad"]), and Albania's capital Tirana to tyranny ("Tirana, sei il mio amore e la mia tirannia" [*Poesie scelte* 110], which literally translates as "Tirana, you are my love and my tyranny"). The poet sacrifices everything in the name of words, of poetry: "You, Word, have bewitched my language and my mind / To go after you, / I said goodbye to the homeland, to my loves. / I've done everything in sacrifice to you" ("Tu, Parola, mi haistregato lingua e cervello / per correre dietro di te, / ho detto addio alla patria, addio agli amori. / Cosa non ho fatto in sacrificio per te" [*Poesie scelte* 183]). But the poet feels as if what he is doing is in vain. In Hajdari's poetry the words are stones thrown against the wind: "We get going at night... / We're going to the seaside to talk / And throw stones against the wind" ("Partiamo di notte ... / Andiamo al mare per parlare / e lanciare sassi controvento" [*Poesie scelte* 81]). The same metaphor is present in one of his most popular poems: "Wherever I go in the West / I will bring along this gaunt face of mine ... / ... Maybe on a rainy day / I will die, too, / in the street, / killed by my stones / thrown against the wind" ("Ovunque io vada in Occidente / Porterò con me il mio volto scavato ... / ...Forse in una giornata di pioggia / morirò anch'io, / per strada, / ucciso dai miei sassi / lanciati contro vento" [*Poesie scelte* 124]). The words, his material and his instrument, which seem to arrive nowhere, are of course part of the language, or, better yet, when it comes to Hajdari's poetry, of languages. However, this is not even a matter of pure bilingualism, but something more. At the end of a poem dedicated to all the people in Europe, Hajdari summarizes his own existential condition: "I write these verses in Italian / and I agonize in Albanian" ("scrivo questi versi in italiano / e mi tormento in albanese" [*Poesie scelte* 155]).

Writing, celebrating, or suffering: everything is done in two languages. In a text titled "La lingua del paese ospitante come una nuova 'infanzia'" ("The Language of the Host Country as a New

'Childhood'), Hajdari tells the story of his linguistic passage from Albanian to Italian and how he discovered "for the first time" that our identity is "not related to a territory, but to a language, memory, culture; you migrate not from one country to another, but from one language to another, from one memory to another, from one culture to another. Now you are on a perpetual Journey" ("Per la prima volta scopri che la tua vera identità non è legata ad un territorio, ma è legata alla lingua, alla memoria, alla cultura; tu migri non da un paese all'altro, ma da una lingua all'altra, da una memoria all'altra, da una cultura all'altra. Ormai sei in un Viaggio perenne" [http://www.el-ghibli.provincia.bologna.it/index.php?id=2&issue=02_11&sezione=5&testo=0]). He confirms Emil Cioran's thought that "We do not live in a country, but in a language" claiming that the hospitality of the new language can really save the foreigner from the ice of foreignness: "The new language of the host country acts as your 'mother.' One starts anew, with a new 'childhood'; one perceives sounds and meanings, but cannot speak. You become an 'adult child with an angelic face'" ("La nuova lingua del paese ospitante ti fa da 'madre.' Si torna da capo, ad una nuova 'infanzia'; si percepiscono i suoni e i significati, ma non si riesce a parlare. Sei un 'bambino adulto dal volto angelico'" ["La lingua" <http://www.el-ghibli.provincia.bologna.it/index.php?id=2&issue=02_11&sezione=5&testo=0]). Hajdari claims that this new language becomes a child's language through which one rediscovers the world: "One begins writing one's first words in the new language of the host country. One needs to think and conceive things in Italian; one needs to breathe and dream in Italian. One needs to imagine and love in Italian. Even the locals occasionally, when they talk to you, do it gently, treat you as a child; they address you in verbs in the infinitive. // Italian becomes a 'child' language in the mouth of the other and relives its own 'childhood'; it is a language within the language. It is neither Albanian, nor Italian, and it is both at the same time. Both languages find themselves in exile: Italian exiled into Albanian and Albanian exiled into Italian" ("Si iniziano a scrivere le prime parole con la nuova lingua del paese ospitante. Si deve pensare e concepire le cose in italiano; si deve respirare e sognare in italiano. Si deve immaginare ed amare in italiano. Anche la gente del posto, in alcuni casi, quando ti parla, lo fa con tenerezza, ti tratta come un bambino; ti si rivolge con i verbi all'infinito. // L'italiano diventa una lingua 'bambina' nelle labbra dell'altro, e rivive la propria 'infanzia'; è una lingua nella lingua. Non è né albanese, né italiano, e nello stesso tempo è l'una e l'altra. Tutte e due le lingue si trovano in esilio: l'italiano esiliato nell'albanese e l'albanese esiliato nell'italiano ["La lingua" <http://www.el-ghibli.provincia.bologna.it/index.php?id=2&issue=02_11&sezione=5&testo=0]). For Hajdari, both languages are in "exile" while poetry becomes a "linguistic migration" of sorts. Only through this kind of poetry can the author become the citizen of the world he/she desires to be.

In the case of Hajdari we cannot speak of bilingualism, but of a double language, translanguage, or transpoetry. Poetry as transpoetry, according to Paolo Valesio, means that the poetic activity is always somehow related to the translation process. Transpoetry brings together two elements that may be among the most important in today's debate about literature: exile and translation (Valesio 293) and Viktor Berberi states that in Hajdari's work the idea of translation in a technical sense disappears: what remains is its metaphysical sense, a shadow of translation that poetry always carries along (Berberi 312). The concept of translatability, of the translational power of literature, is built in the poetry of Hajdari. This then brings me back to the problem of translation, self-translation, and the concept of world literature today.

(Im)migrant writers translate themselves continuously from their native tongue into the adopted language. Gnisci recounts an interesting story about a Russian immigrant author in Italy, Nikolai Lilin: "Lilin had to mentally translate himself from Russian into Italian — at least at the beginning of his writing activity in Italy. The editors of his publishing house then *translated* Lilin's texts into our literary language, through an intralingual operation we call *editing*, in order to turn them into excellent and successful literary products, as they are and have become" ("Lilin ha dovuto *tradursi* mentalmente in italiano dal russo — per lo meno nei primi tempi della sua scrittura in Italia. La redazione della sua casa editrice ha *tradotto* nella nostra lingua letteraria, attraverso l'operazione editoriale intralinguistica che chiamiamo *editing*, i testi di Lilin per farne dei prodotti editoriali eccellenti e di successo, quali sono e sono diventati" [La letteratura 27]). Here Gnisci emphasizes what Casanova has also pointed out as a necessity of *littérisation*, namely a process to be accomplished in order to achieve "literary visibility" and success. And Brodsky described how some models of the human and of humanity at the turn of the twenty-first century are among the most unfortunate conditions of human existence: exile

and displacement, and offers models to "translate" them through literature. Similarly, in his 2009 "Traducendo il mondo" Gnisci points out that a literary work "translates" the world in a linguistic form, summarizing it in a narration, or into another literary language. This "other language" is poetry or literature itself. Writers actually translate the world for us from within. The implication of these reflections is that those who deal with literature at the same time deal with translation, even when they do not know it. According to Susan Sontag, a literary work possesses the quality that, for want of a better word, we call translatability. Literary translation for Sontag is a branch of literature and it is anything but a mechanical task: "Every language is part of language, which is larger than any single language. Every individual literary work is part of literature, which is larger than the literature of any single language" (177). This view places translation at the center of the literary enterprise.

In conclusion, translation is the "circulatory system" of world literature. The role of translation, then, as well as of literature itself is to secure and deepen the awareness that other people, people different from us, really do exist. This would be the new concept of world literature, which, according to Franca Sinopoli is subject to numerous cultural transformations, but is also able to restore itself again, like a phoenix (116). I can only agree with Gnisci when he claims that (im)migrant literature gives rise to humanity itself because it "is a primordial feature (of a first order: literally) of human destiny and of the state of writing. It is a virtue and pain, or even a state of existence and an adventure, which gives rise to humanity as such and allows it to produce its imaginary and discourses" ("La migrazione è una qualità primordiale (di ordine primo: alla lettera) del destino degli umani ed è la condizione della scrittura. È un valore e un dolore, o anche una condizione di esistenza e un'avventura, che origina l'umanità come tale e le permette di produrre l'immaginario e discorsi" [Creolizzare 77]). Thus, let us agree and say that (im)migrant literature really is capable of inverting the literary canon and is becoming the real mainstream of our time.

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