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GIVING VOICE TO THE HYBRID SELF.
 SELF-TRANSLATION AS STRATEGY BY FRANCESCA
 DURANTI / MARTINA SATRIANO

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The link between translation and migration has become a popular topic in recent studies, which put forward the assumption that one of the main effects of migration is the disruption of the grounding of the self in the mother tongue, as movement across cultures breaks the constitutive relation between language and identity. Accordingly, this article explores how self-translation intervenes in the process of redefinition of identity in the context of mobility, through a reading of Duranti's self-translated novel *Sogni Mancini / Left-handed Dreams*. I take as starting point the assumption that heteronymous translation is a mediated form of communication that deprives migrants of their voice: as translated beings, they are subjected to an external act of interpretation and representation, which controls their subjectivity and agency. Self-translation, instead, has an empowering dimension as an unmediated and autonomous form of communication that returns migrants their voice, thus shaping them as agents – and not receivers – of translation. Thus, I illustrate how Duranti's will to voice and represent her hybrid identity affects her storytelling, as well as the linguistic performance of her self-translation, which results into a specific translating approach aiming to 'hybridise' the text. I aim to demonstrate that the intentional hybrid form of her self-translation is part of an ideological operation aiming to enact a discourse against the 'monolingual paradigm', and to illustrate the creative and existential possibilities of hybridity.

Secondo recenti studi sul legame fra traduzione e migrazione, uno degli effetti della migrazione sarebbe la disgregazione del sentimento dell'identità, inizialmente radicato nella lingua materna. Il movimento tra lingue e culture, infatti, mette radicalmente in discussione la relazione costitutiva tra lingua e identità. Questo contributo intende esplorare come il processo di auto-traduzione intervenga nella ridefinizione dell'identità in un contesto di mobilità, analizzando il romanzo autotradotto di Francesca Duranti, *Sogni Mancini / Left-handed Dreams*. Partendo dall'ipotesi che la traduzione allografa sia una forma di comunicazione mediata che priva l'autore migrante della sua voce, essendo un atto esterno di interpretazione e rappresentazione che controlla la sua soggettività, si propone l'ipotesi che l'auto-traduzione costituisca, di contro, una forma di comunicazione non mediata e autonoma che restituisce la voce all'autore in quanto agente – e non ricevente – della traduzione. La volontà di Duranti di auto-rappresentarsi attraverso un'identità ibrida influenza la sua narrazione e la prestazione linguistica della sua auto-traduzione, concretizzandosi in una personale strategia di traduzione mirata a 'ibridizzare' il testo. Questo procedere si inserisce in una più ampia operazione ideologica, che punta a destabilizzare il 'paradigma monolingue' del lettore e a illustrare le possibilità creative ed esistenziali dell'ibridità.

I THE LINK BETWEEN SELF-TRANSLATION, IDENTITY AND MIGRATION

Self-translation is the practice involving bilingual writers who create a text in one language, and then translate it into another language. A number of scholars have addressed the reflexive dimension,¹ which is inherent in such practice; they highlight how

¹ Cf. for instance, RITA WILSON, *Parallel Creations: Between Self-Translation and the Translation of the Self*, in *Creative Constraints. Translation and Authorship*, ed. by Rita Wilson and Leah Gerber, Clayton (VIC), Monash University Publishing, 2011, pp. 47-65 and ANTHONY CORDINGLEY, *Introduction*, in *Self-Translation: Brokering Originality in Hybrid Culture*, ed. by Anthony Cordingley, London, Continuum, 2013, pp. 1-10.

researching self-translation can provide interesting insights into translation² in general, but also into the bilingual self.³ Drawing on these studies, I investigate the phenomenon of self-translation within migratory contexts, examining how it intervenes in shaping a migrant identity. The reason why identity is such an important issue in research on migration can be traced back to what Yildiz calls ‘the monolingual paradigm’. According to this paradigm, people possess one language only: their mother tongue. The relationship with the mother tongue is believed to set the boundaries defining who we are, and to affect the way we operate and function within a specific community.⁴ The movement between different languages and cultures, therefore, breaks the constitutive relation between language and identity, thus disrupting the grounding of the self in the mother tongue, and forcing migrants to renegotiate and redefine their selfhood, as well as to rethink taken-for-granted concepts, such as home and belonging. For this reason, migrants have often been defined as ‘translated beings’;⁵ in order to function within the new community, the way they perceive and relate to reality has to be redefined and transferred from one linguistic and cultural dimension to another: “[...] translation takes place both in the physical sense of movement or displacement and in the symbolic sense of the shift from one way of speaking, writing about and interpreting the world to another”.⁶

In the light of this, I refer to the studies by De Fina, Cronin and Polezzi that explore the link between translation, migration, and identity.⁷ These studies investigate how translation and self-translation impact differently on the construction of a migrant identity. Heteronomous translation constitutes a mediated communication which shapes migrants as passive objects of an external act of interpretation and representation, thus limiting their subjectivity and agency. By contrast, self-translation is seen as an autonomous practice that returns to migrants their voice, and reduces their diversity and distance from the new society.⁸ Voice in this instance refers to the ability to actively communicate and operate within a given community. This term has linguistic, cultural, and social connotations, as it regulates and determines the mechanisms that renegotiate and redefine migrants’ spaces of action and interaction within the new society.⁹ Through

2 Several scholars (MICHAËL OUSTINOFF, *Bilinguisme d'écriture et auto-translation*. Julien Green, Samuel Beckett, Vladimir Nabokov, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2001; JAN WALSH HOKENSON and MARCELLA MUNSON, *The Bilingual Text. History and Theory of Literary Self-Translation*, Manchester, St Jerome Publishing, 2007; XOSÉ MANUEL DASILVA, *Estudios sobre la autotraducción en el espacio ibérico*, Bern, Peter Lang, 2013) stress that self-translation leads to rethink traditional concepts and notions of translation theory, such as the notion of originality, and the dichotomy of author and translator.

3 Cordingley highlights the ‘self-fashioning factor’ that is involved in self-translation. Cf. CORDINGLEY, *Introduction*, cit.

4 YASEMIN YILDIZ, *Beyond the Mother Tongue. The Postmonolingual Condition*, New York, Fordham University Press, 2012, p. 2.

5 Cf. ANNE MALENA, *Presentation*, in «TTR: Traduction, Terminologie, Rédaction», VI/2 (2003), pp. 9-13 and MICHAEL CRONIN, *Translation and Identity*, Oxford-New York, Routledge, 2006.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 45.

7 ANNA DE FINA, *Identity in Narrative. A Study of Immigrant Discourse*, Amsterdam, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2003; CRONIN, *Translation and Identity*, cit.; LOREDANA POLEZZI, *Translation and Migration*, in «Translation Studies», V/3 (2012), pp. 345-356.

8 I refer to Polezzi: “Translation, while offering migrants a voice, also reiterates their difference and insists on controlling who does the speaking, where and when” (*ibid.*, p. 349).

9 For the concept of voice, I refer to Cronin (CRONIN, *Translation and Identity*, cit.) and Polezzi’s (POLEZZI,

self-translation, therefore, migrants move from being passive objects to active subjects, from being ‘translated beings’ to ‘translating ones’. As translating beings, they are able to express their voice, and set the boundaries that define their level of integration, or exclusion, of participation and adaptation to the new community; essentially, they can redefine the personal and collective identity they choose to adopt, as well as the role they choose to play, and what position they aim to occupy within the new society.

Assuming that the act of migrating forces individuals to redefine their voice, migrants can choose to adopt three different attitudes:

- They can silence their former voice, and replace it with a new voice in the L2. This strategy is similar to what Cronin calls assimilation, that is, an attempt “to incorporate themselves into the language and the culture of the host group”;¹⁰
- They can reject the L2, and continue to express themselves through their L1. In this case, though, they will be always dependent on translation;
- They can find a way to let both voices emerge; this strategy is similar to what Cronin calls accommodation, i.e. the attempt “to negotiate spaces of resistance and of survival for the language and the culture of origins”.¹¹

Accommodation, then, seems the only behaviour that allows migrants to develop autonomous forms of representation and participation in their new society, and to retrieve and express their voice in both languages. From this perspective, it constitutes a form of hybridization, intended as the condition of the bilingual and bicultural individual who brings his/her two linguistic and cultural systems together. In doing so, the individual finds a space where old values and frames can be transposed and readapted, in order to create transcultural forms.

On these grounds, I draw a parallel between accommodating and writing multilingual texts, both practices which emerge from the migrants’ ability to live in the interspace between more languages and cultures. Among these forms, I focus on self-translation: through the process of creating two different versions of a single product, bilingual writers textually reproduce the heterogeneous nature of their self. This self is made up of two linguistic and cultural identities. The fact that these two linguistic and cultural identities are allowed to coexist on the page reflects their coexistence within the single individual as well.

Beginning with this parallel, I investigate *Sogni Mancini*,¹² a novel written and self-translated¹³ by Francesca Duranti, a writer¹⁴ who divides her time between Italy and

Translation and Migration, cit.) notion of agency. Nevertheless, I use the term ‘voice’ because it has a more overt linguistic connotation. For this reason, I believe it is more relevant to a translation-based study of migration.

¹⁰ CRONIN, *Translation and Identity*, cit., p. 52.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² FRANCESCA DURANTI, *Sogni Mancini*, Milano, Rizzoli, 1996.

¹³ The title of the English version is *Left-Handed Dreams* (FRANCESCA DURANTI, *Left-Handed Dreams*, Leicester, Troubador Publishing, 2000).

¹⁴ Francesca Duranti has won several literary prizes, such as the prestigious Premio Campiello. She is well-known abroad as well, and her novels have been translated into eighteen languages.

America. I look at her self-translation as an instrument to create spaces of concurrence and communication between her source and target languages and cultures, and to move beyond a monolingual and monocultural condition.¹⁵ Duranti's use of specific writing and translating strategies aims to shape and convey a specific migrant and 'identitarian' discourse, in favour of fluidity and multiplicity. Essentially, the attempt to defend and foreground the foreignness of reality and life generates a specific form of self-translation, which aims to reproduce and represent the foreignness of language. This specific discourse is grounded in Duranti's experience of transmigration, and it is voiced and inscribed in the text, through her storytelling and her translational act.

2 FRANCESCA DURANTI AND MARTINA SATRIANO: THE HYBRID SELF

Francesca Duranti is the pseudonym for Maria Francesca Rossi. Born to a rich Italian family, she grew up as a bilingual, having learnt Italian and German simultaneously. Eventually, she rejected German. Taught by private tutors, Duranti came to believe her tutors' main mission was to keep her apart from her mother. As such, learning German came to be a traumatic experience for her. This separation from the mother¹⁶ acquires a double meaning, as the mother can be perceived not only in the physical sense of 'person who gives you birth', but also in the linguistic sense of 'native language'. Both definitions refer to the concept of mother as something that sets and defines one's relationship with his/her origins. From this perspective, learning German – i.e., acquiring a second language – means to break the relation with the mother and with one's identitarian past; essentially, to become rootless. Duranti's rejection of German seems to validate the assumption that individuals are biologically and affectively tied to one language only. Nevertheless, this assumption, which is inscribed within the monolingual paradigm, is questioned when she consciously, and freely, chooses to live and write also in a second linguistic code, the English language: apart from self-translating one of her novels, she normally works as a translator from English into Italian.¹⁷

By establishing another channel of linguistic connection, Duranti recognises the familial and creative potential of the L2, and demonstrates that languages are not only given, but can also be appropriated. Within this scenario, her (self)translating experience becomes an instrument to transfer herself from one linguistic and cultural system to the other. At the same time, her decision to divide her time between Gattaiola (Lucca) and New York implies a physical transfer from one place to another.¹⁸ This process of transmigration allows her to "forge and sustain simultaneous multi-stranded social rela-

15 I refer to Yildiz's study of multilingual practices as attempts to 'move beyond the mother tongue' (YILDIZ, *Beyond the Mother Tongue*, cit.), that is, to rethink and rewrite the forms and the meanings that the monolingual paradigm holds.

16 RITA WILSON, *The Writer's Double. Translation, Writing, and Autobiography*, in «Romance Studies», XXVII/3 (2009), pp. 186-198, p. 188.

17 For instance, she has translated Virginia Woolf's short stories.

18 Every year, she spends six months in Gattaiola, and six months in New York.

tions that link together¹⁹ her origin and host country. By deconstructing the binary opposition between source and target languages, as well as between point of departure and point of arrival, Duranti relocates herself – both linguistically and geographically – in an in-between space of connection and interaction, that produces a fluid movement beyond oppositional and essentialist categories defining the world. In this intermediate space, created by the continuous contact between her two linguistic and physical spaces, she is constantly engaged with processes of translation, negotiation and mediation, which allow her to interweave different elements, and create new meanings.

The need to move beyond dichotomies and binary oppositions appears to be the essential spark that nourishes both her poetics and her attitude in life. Duranti continuously attempts to break the dichotomy of the author and the character; most of her novels are overtly autobiographical, or draw inspiration on her life. *La Bambina*²⁰ explores her childhood and her difficult relationship with her mother. In *Sogni Mancini*,²¹ the protagonist is Martina Satriano, an Italian woman who moved from Tuscany to New York, in order to teach at the local university. Due to the similarities between the fictional character's life experiences, and Duranti's own, Martina appears as Duranti's alter ego.²² Moreover, the story is told in the first person, thus further reducing the distance between author and narrator, and reinforcing the overlap between Duranti and Martina.

By self-translating her own novel, Duranti moves one step further, deconstructing also the binary opposition between author and translator. At the same time, the choice to create a double text, both in Italian and English, disrupts the traditional separation between original and translation.²³ Her literary experience seems an attempt to mend the breach between life and writing, as well as between writing and translating; a way to look for “a fluid and dynamic ‘third way’, a convergence of opposites and a totally novel concept that transcends the notion of oppositions rooted in the established cultural praxis”.²⁴ Duranti's narrative can thus be seen as a counter-narrative, aiming to go against oppositional and absolute concepts, and to redefine and represent the complex and multiple nature of the self. Therefore, it does not surprise at all that Duranti began writing in order to satisfy “un'esigenza liberatoria, quasi volesse in tal modo psicanalizzare se stessa”.²⁵ The definition of narrative as an instrument to ‘write the self’ can be better understood if we refer to Cavarero's theory of the narratable self; in “*Relating*

19 NINA GLICK SCHILLER, LINDA BASCH, and CRISTINA SZANTON BLANC, *From Immigrant to Transmigrant: Theorizing Transnational Migration*, in «Anthropological Quarterly», LXVIII (1995), pp. 48-63, p. 48.

20 FRANCESCA DURANTI, *La Bambina*, Milano, La Tartaruga, 1976.

21 DURANTI, *Sogni Mancini*, cit.

22 Given the nature of the novel, Duranti decided to self-translate it, in order to “give as authentic a voice as possible” to a woman whose life and identity result from the constant intertwining of Italian and Anglophone worlds (DURANTI, *Left-Handed Dreams*, cit., p. v).

23 As explained in the introduction to the English version of the novel, both versions were “Conceived of and developed simultaneously in both Italian and English. The English version has had a somewhat more extended process of evolution, and has undergone a number of revisions for over four years after the Italian edition was published” (*ibid.*).

24 *Ibid.*, p. viii.

25 This is what Duranti admits in the preface to her first novel, *La Bambina*, published in Italy in 1976. Cf. DURANTI, *La Bambina*, cit.

Narratives: Storytelling and Selfhood”,²⁶ Cavarero states that human beings desire to express who they truly are. In doing so, they elude the unsettling and puzzling feeling of being defined as a ‘what’, and of being universally categorised. The uniqueness of their identity can be expressed only through the narration of their life story. From this perspective, Duranti’s decision to write and self-translate can be linked to her need to affirm the uniqueness of her hybrid identity.

Nonetheless, Cavarero also states that we cannot tell our own story, but that we need someone else to tell it. Duranti circumvents this problem with the use of the literary device of the alter ego. As such, she creates a novel that can be identified as autofiction,²⁷ and manages to simultaneously locate herself inside and outside the narration, giving the impression of having her own story told by others.

The deconstruction of identity as a unitary and fixed entity is symbolically entrusted to Martina. Noticing something peculiar in the way she holds her cards while playing bridge, she convinces herself of being a corrected left-handed. This belief leads her to question and deconstruct the traditional view of the self as a finished and coherent unity. Martina realizes that one’s identity is not a pre-determined entity, but a dialogical and composite one. Determined to prove her assumption, and to give voice to “all the other contiguous entities, hitherto suffocated and overshadowed”²⁸ potential possibilities of her selfhood, she starts registering her dreams with the help of a Machine. Her aim is to demonstrate that dreams constitute a parallel reality, where these potential possibilities can be represented and expressed. Life, exactly like identity, can be multiple and varied, and it is not limited within spatial, temporal or even linguistic borders. In doing so, Duranti destabilises the legitimacy of reality as the only possible and concrete form of existence, and suggests that human beings can have multiple affiliations with several linguistic, cultural, physical and material spaces. This aspect is further emphasised by the fact that, in her dreams, Martina operates within a liminal space, where she constantly mixes places and people belonging both to Italy and America: “I reviewed the dream in my mind [...]. The stormy sea was obviously Italian. [...] The road, on the contrary, couldn’t be in Italy”.²⁹

Martina’s aim to demonstrate the weakness of the traditional view of the self is nourished by her belief that such a discovery could help fight against intolerance. Indeed, rethinking and rewriting the notion of otherness as something that does not exist only outside, but also inside the single individual, undermines all the ideas and beliefs that racism and prejudices are built on. Once again, this ideological drive can be seen in relation with Duranti’s use of writing as a tool to redefine the self; the narratable self³⁰ longs to tell his/her story as a unique –and therefore diverse– individual.³¹

²⁶ ADRIANA CAVARERO, *Relating Narratives, Storytelling and Selfhood*, London, Routledge, 2000.

²⁷ This is a literary genre which is in between fiction and autobiography. The story which is narrated is fictional but it draws inspiration on the author’s life (SERGE DOUBROVSKY, *Fils*, Paris, Galilée, 1977, PHILIPPE GASPARI, *Autofiction: Une Aventure Du Langage*, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 2008).

²⁸ DURANTI, *Left-Handed Dreams*, cit., pp. ix-x.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

³⁰ CAVARERO, *Relating Narratives, Storytelling and Selfhood*, cit.

³¹ In this regard, Cavarero states that “Philosophy’s failure to name ‘who’ someone uniquely is [...] also signals

Duranti's writing, then, can be seen as 'trans-writing', writing as an instrument to transport the self beyond oppositional and unitary concepts, and to rewrite it within multiple and dialogical spaces. This trans-writing becomes what Nikolaou and Kyritsi define as a "textual journey of self-discovery".³² In being continuously transferred from one dimension to the other, the self is rewritten not as a stable and fixed entity, but as a dynamic one, which is constantly 'in divenire'. Identity is a matter of becoming, not of being, something that emerges in the interspace between constant uprootings and re-groundings: "Call me Robinson. Given that in life we go from one shipwreck to the other, losing most or all of our possessions, each time forced to give up most or all of our privileges, habits, affections, and so on, I take some consolation [...] in examining what I have left and seeing what can be made of it".³³

3 FICTIONAL REPRESENTATIONS OF HYBRIDITY IN *SOGNI MANCINI/LEFT-HANDED DREAMS*

I will now analyse *Sogni Mancini/Left-handed Dreams*, in order to illustrate how Duranti fictionally represents the main character's becoming into a transnational and hybrid individual. To this purpose, I will refer to Somers and Gibson's narrative theory.³⁴ Somers and Gibson assert that there is a connection between narrative and the mind; the fictional world serves as a framework to explore this connection. As discursive practices and narrative structures – such as voice and focalization – are part of an ideological operation, they impact on the construction of the plot, and of the author's identity. For this reason, narrative constitutes a privileged locus for the study of identity.³⁵

I specifically analyse how the author reworks and redefines three traditional migrant tropes:³⁶ the notion of home, the feelings of belonging and un-belonging, and the concept of memory. My intention is to highlight the strategies of accommodation undertaken by Martina, through which she manages to negotiate spaces of survival for both her Italian and American identity.

In looking at the concept of home, I explore the relationship Martina has with both her origin and host country. During the first phase of migration, migrants often recall images of their original home, in order to compensate for their sense of loss and estrange-

a failure of traditional western politics. It indicates, for instance, the extent to which traditional philosophy and politics respond to universals, rather than to unique persons and their interaction. As a result, the link between narration, and the revelation of 'who' someone is through that narration, offer a new sense of politics, an alternative way of understanding human interaction" (*ibid.*, p. ix).

³² PASCHALIS NIKOLAOU and MARIA-VENETIA KYRITSI, *Translating Selves. Experience and Identity between Languages and Literatures*, London, Continuum, 2008, p. 197.

³³ DURANTI, *Left-Handed Dreams*, cit., p. 14.

³⁴ Cf. MARGARET R. SOMERS and GLORIA D. GIBSON, *Reclaiming the Epistemological 'Other': Narrative and the Social Constitution of Identity*, in *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity*, ed. by Craig Calhoun, Oxford (UK)/Cambridge (USA), Blackwell, 1994, pp. 37-99.

³⁵ DE FINA, *Identity in Narrative*, cit., p. 1.

³⁶ As Burns says, migrant literature is always characterised by a series of tropes; migrant writers refer to them to make sense of their displaced condition and to come to terms with it. Cf. JENNIFER BURNS, *Migrant Imaginaries, Figures in Italian Migration Literature*, Oxford, Peter Lang, 2013, p. 15.

ment. This point is well explained by Martin and Mohanty's distinction between 'being home' and 'not being home'.³⁷ This distinction is articulated around ideas of safety and familiarity connected with the feeling of 'being home' (ideally embodied by the native country), and ideas of unsafety and unfamiliarity connected with the feeling of 'not being home' (ideally embodied by the host country). This distinction is based on a conventional notion of home, which is place-related: home is the geographical space where one was born, which is made of familiar images, people, tastes and sounds. By contrast, the new place is embedded with ideas of alienation and unfamiliarity. This traditional view seems to be reiterated at the beginning of Duranti's novel, where the long list of objects and scenes through which Martina recalls her origin home clearly recreates it as an idyllic and intimate place, existing only within specific and well-defined spaces and times:

"I fell into a sleep filled with the jumbled images of Nugola as it was: the jars of artichoke hearts in oil lined up on the shelves I built for Mamma's pantry, the mulberry trees in the church square, the village doctor's house [...]. On our side of Nugola, [...] there was Poggio di Mezzo with mushrooms growing in clusters under the shrubs of heather, the multicolour flash of the bee-eaters as they cut across the patches of sky one could see through the branches of the dense oaks".³⁸

According to Pilný & Wollace,³⁹ however, this idea of home as spatially and timely fixed is misleading and outdated, because it ignores the mutable essence of reality. Therefore, it is destined to fall when migrants make the 'return home', because the fictionalised image does not match the reality they see. Martina's visit to her hometown, in Italy, exemplifies this:

Every day I would go to my Treasure Island. Beneath the tangle of heather, I would find mushrooms, which my mother would dry and sell, and wild asparagus. I would pick arbutus berries for my father to make illegal grappa, or look for other treasures [...]. All this had disappeared. I walked across the village from one end to the other as far as the cemetery and back again to what once had been Poggio di Mezzo. The dune had been levelled and squared off, the Elephants' Ballroom no longer recognisable. [...] I didn't have a point of reference [...].⁴⁰

The romantic relation to the native place is broken, as she realises that the concept of home is only an artificial and relative construct, and that every place can be invested with different levels of strangeness or intimacy. At this stage, she is ready to enact her process of rethinking of home, and re-ground in a new location, as her decision to anticipate her return to New York clearly demonstrates:

³⁷ BIDDY MARTIN and CHANDRA TALPADE MOHANTY, *Feminist Politics: What's Home Got to Do with It?*, in *Feminism Without Borders, Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*, ed. by Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1988, pp. 85-105, p. 106.

³⁸ DURANTI, *Left-Handed Dreams*, cit., p. 16.

³⁹ ONDREJ PILNÝ and CLARE ELIZABETH WOLLACE, *Global Ireland, Irish Literatures for the New Millennium*, Prague, Litteraria Pragensia, 2005, p. 116.

⁴⁰ DURANTI, *Left-Handed Dreams*, cit., p. 6.

I didn't even unpack the small bag I had brought with me. It was there sitting on a chair, as if I were staying in a hotel. From the window I couldn't see the country I remembered, but only the dismal suburbs that were gradually cementing together the beautiful old Tuscan cities and villages. I missed my New York apartment. [...] There was nothing left for me to do in Nugola. [...] It was too late for everything. I called Alitalia to change to an earlier flight to New York.⁴¹

The concept of home takes on a metaphorical status; it refers not only to the physical space where one was born, but also to a set of linguistic, social, and cultural features, i.e. elements, meanings, and values that define the space where individuals fit and function. Re-grounding in a new context, then, means to rearticulate that “narrative about origin and identity”⁴² which is established in the concept of mother(tongue, -land), and to enact that process of translation and redefinition of identity that migrants are believed to go through. This aspect is further reinforced by the fact that Martina goes back to Italy for her mother's funeral. The referral to the mother-daughter's relationship hints at the continuity with one's origins, which is symbolically represented and secured exactly by this relationship. Hence, the death of the mother anticipates Martina's rupture of her bond with the past, and lays the foundations for the questioning and redefining of her identity. In the book, Martina wonders: “Why let me get there just as she departed, she who had probably been the start of it all?”⁴³

Re-grounding, for Martina, means to accommodate, that is, to recreate a homely dimension which is not spatially, linguistically and timely defined; to open up channels of connection and identification with both the Italian and the American contexts, in a constant movement between countries that constitute two different, but interconnected points. This back-and-forth movement allows Martina to construct her “simultaneous embeddedness”⁴⁴ in both societies.

This process of accommodation becomes apparent in the position she adopts with respect to traditional migrant issues. For instance, it is well represented in her fluctuating sense of belonging and un-belonging. These concepts refer to the perspective that migrants use in looking at and judging habits, behaviours and events of the host society. In doing this, they can adopt an external perspective – thus reiterating their distance and un-belonging; or, they can adopt an internal perspective, thus locating themselves within the host society. Martina manages to take a simultaneously external and internal stance with respect both to the origin and the host country, to be simultaneously inside and outside, to maintain “the insider's outsideness”.⁴⁵ She reproduces and recreates this attitude through her bridge game, defined as “an exercise of de-identification and re-identification”,⁴⁶ which allows her to think of herself in the third person.

41 *Ibid.*, p. 10.

42 YILDIZ, *Beyond the Mother Tongue*, cit., p. 12.

43 DURANTI, *Left-Handed Dreams*, cit., p. 4.

44 GLICK SCHILLER, BASCH, and SZANTON BLANC, *From Immigrant to Transmigrant: Theorizing Transnational Migration*, cit., p. 48.

45 HOMI K. BHABHA, *The Location of Culture*, London-New York, Routledge, 1994, p. 14.

46 DURANTI, *Left-Handed Dreams*, cit., p. 26.

Despite being a proud Italian, Martina identifies specific cultural, social, and political traits of the Italian society that pushed her to leave and which make it impossible for her to return 'home'. At the same time, she shows a mixed disposition towards the American society. On the one hand, she is ready to adapt and to conform to local rules: "Two blocks before my stop another delay while the driver let down the rear door for a woman in a wheelchair. I conformed to the strict American code, I didn't sigh, I didn't raise my eyes to heaven, I didn't keep looking at my watch".⁴⁷

On the other, her desire to conform does not overstep a specific point. This attitude is manifest in the homeless episode. One day, going back home, Martina stumbles into the body of a tramp. Her first reaction is to adapt to the American custom of ignoring him and passing by. Later on, though, she decides to intervene and help him, thus creating disconcertment and embarrassment in people around her: "I was embarrassing everybody. I was a foreigner not going by the rules [...]. There was a limit to my willingness to adapt to the local etiquette. My zeal to conform didn't go beyond a certain point".⁴⁸

Here, Martina is claiming her right to partially belong, and to "dwell in the beyond";⁴⁹ basically, to ground herself 'in the here and now', but to also invest these spaces with a revisionary and revolutionary intervention. This is the empowering dimension of accommodation that allows her to escape the danger of a "total translation";⁵⁰ that is, the danger of being subjected to an external and complete act of assimilation to the new society. Rather, she enacts a process of self-translation, through which she manages to create a space where her original diversity does not disappear, but intersects with new meanings and values. In this in-between space, Martina can fully exploit and express her hybrid potential, as she manages to preserve her subjectivity, simply reframing it according to the American context.

This aspect is particularly evident even if we consider the relationship she has with her memories. In the novel, she is surrounded by people who try to forget.⁵¹ For example, her sister Carmelina decides to burn every bridge with her past, to the point that she even changes her name to Milly:

[...] I understood perfectly that she only pretended to remember, not to disappoint me by admitting that her memory and mine had selected our recollections in opposite ways, erasing what we had in common and turning us into strangers [...] with the death of our mother, even the memory of Nugola [...] had become

47 *Ibid.*

48 *Ibid.*, pp. 81-83.

49 BHABHA, *The Location of Culture*, cit., p. 14.

50 CRONIN, *Translation and Identity*, cit., p. 57.

51 Migrants often feel the need to forget their home, in order to move on and to create a new one where they are. As a matter of fact, "to forget 'roots' and past experience is perhaps to invest more positively in the process of migration, seeking opportunity, rather than dwelling on loss" (BURNS, *Migrant Imaginaries, Figures in Italian Migration Literature*, cit., p. 99). Nostalgia, which represents the desire and the need to live in the past, leads migrants to live always in another time and space, thus preventing them from taking advantage of the present, and from creating good conditions for a brighter future.

a cumbersome link to a past she no longer needed. [...] That's how she is. Some people have to forget in order to move on.⁵²

The same attitude is shared by Costantino, Martina's first love, who cuts all ties with everyone after he moves to America: "I had succeeded in distancing myself from sad memories, I didn't want anything to attach me to the past again... You know, I'm not the only one in America who wants to forget".⁵³

Both Carmelina and Costantino show a willingness to assimilate, thus hiding those traits that mark their linguistic, cultural, and even physical otherness. This attitude is strongly in opposition with that displayed by Martina, who, on the contrary, appreciates her memories and struggles to maintain a sense of continuity with her origins: "I was a year old when we left Potenza – and yet I don't feel I'd be myself without the memories of Lucania that my mother had passed on to me".⁵⁴

Martina's desire to keep her memories is part of her process of accommodation, and it is grounded in the desire to create connections between her past and her present. She attempts to preserve spaces for her origin culture to survive and to express itself. Concurrently, she does not reject her host culture, but manages to find points of contacts with it. Thus, she creates a space where mutual interactions and influences are possible. Hence, Martina represents the true hybrid self, who appreciates the constant feeling of uprooting and re-grounding, and recognizes "the potential of inhabiting a space of in-betweenness"⁵⁵ that allows her to read anew and rewrite already existing forms:

"My eyes will always be black and my hair will go grey but never yellow. I won't call my children Dexter, Saville or Kenneth. I won't leave a homeless man to die alone on a sidewalk. Nothing will convince me that capital punishment is necessary. I won't ever believe a bidet is an unbecoming fixture. I'll go on loving this country and I'll go on being in part an outsider".⁵⁶

I have claimed that Martina can be seen as Duranti's alter ego, as both women experience the condition of migrating to an English-speaking country. In narrating a story that matches her own story, therefore, Duranti is performing an act of self-narration. This act contributes to reproduce a specific 'identitarian' discourse, through which the migrant writer attempts to question and renegotiate those concepts inscribed in the monolingual paradigm. As so far illustrated, this translational discourse emerges from her life experience, as well as in her storytelling. In the following section, I will illustrate how this specific discourse is reproduced also in her translational act; essentially, how the hybrid dimension of her existence accounts for the specific textual and translating strategies that she adopts. To this end, the original text is manipulated, recreated, rewritten.

52 DURANTI, *Left-Handed Dreams*, cit., pp. 6-7.

53 *Ibid.*, pp. 90-91.

54 *Ibid.*, p. 7.

55 JOPI NYMAN, *Home, Identity, and Mobility in Contemporary Diasporic Fiction*, Amsterdam, Rodopi, 2009, p. 60.

56 DURANTI, *Left-Handed Dreams*, cit., p. 115.

4 A HYBRID SELF-TRANSLATION

Considering self-translation as a form of rewriting “inspired by ideological motivations, or produced under ideological constraints”⁵⁷ allows for an understanding of those translation strategies that do not seem to belong to standard translation practices and which, as such, set self-translation apart from non-authorial translation.⁵⁸ Jung defines these changes as ‘revisional’, and states that they represent “the actual decision of the author [...] to rewrite his text, rather than translate the original”.⁵⁹ For instance, this category includes those changes to the ST (source text), which appear in the TT (target text), and which are not required by the re-contextualization of the former.

Noticeably, Duranti adopts specific writing and translating strategies that intentionally produce a hybrid text, and enact a hybrid process. This aim is overtly expressed in the introduction to the English version: “although the author took great care to ensure the syntactic and lexical accuracy of the text [...] she insisted that certain linguistic quirks, neologisms, words that she (or rather her protagonist) created on the model of the Italian lexicon, be kept, precisely to that effect. Thus the English spoken by the Italian protagonist [...] acquires a vague and natural ethnic flavour – ‘a scent of basil’ – a reminiscence of Italy that adds to the authenticity of the story”.⁶⁰

In discussing the hybrid text, I refer to Oustinoff’s study of self-translation. In *Bilinguisme d’écriture et auto-traduction*,⁶¹ he classifies three different forms of self-translation, based on the degree of intervention carried out by the self-translator, and on how this intervention affects the degree of creativity of the TT. The form I identify as hybrid is what Oustinoff defines as ‘auto-traduction décentrée’. It constitutes a form that is in between equivalence and creativity, with only single deviations from the ST, and a high degree of multilingualism, as traces of the source language appear in the target language. This self-translation, then, is based on a mutual and complementary exchange between the languages involved, which produces a certain level of strangeness. This linguistic and cultural interference constitutes a stylistic device: the text becomes the space where the two languages can interact.⁶² The self-translator consciously chooses to relate different systems, in order to demonstrate the richness of new meanings and forms that originate when differences meet and mutually influence each other.

To this end, Duranti, for example, frequently uses linguistic devices, such as code-switching.⁶³ By expressing her voice in a supposed monolingual context that, though,

57 ANDRÉ LEFEVERE, *Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame*, London-New York, Routledge, 1992, p. 7.

58 Cf. LUCIA ARANDA, *Handbook of Spanish-English Translation*, Lanham, UPA, 2007; and CORDINGLEY, *Introduction*, cit.

59 VERENA JUNG, *English-German Self-Translation of Academic Texts and its Relevance for Translation Theory and Practice*, Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang, 2002, p. 49.

60 DURANTI, *Left-Handed Dreams*, cit., pp. v-vi.

61 OUSTINOFF, *Bilinguisme d’écriture et auto-traduction*. Cit.

62 The scholar identifies also an ‘Auto-traduction naturalisante’, aiming to be perceived as a natural and original creation in the target language, as if there was no intervention by the translator; and an ‘Auto-traduction (re)créatrice’, that recreates the ST to the point that many differences can be noticed between ST and TT.

63 The term refers to the mixing of two or more languages and codes. This phenomenon is frequent in

through the insertion of foreign words, discloses its internal diversity and heterogeneity, Duranti manages to move beyond the supposed identification with one single language, and to affirm and establish affective and creative connections with both languages. Code-switching, thus, becomes a strategy of double presence and affiliation. By reconfiguring the concepts of maternal and foreign language, and by denying their binary relation, Duranti brings them together in a space where both contribute to the redefinition of her subjectivity.

As Martina's story is mainly set in America, it is not surprising that the Italian version presents a higher number of code-switching.⁶⁴ For instance, code-mixing recurs when Martina describes her 'American life', and uses English words to refer to her daily activities (lecture), food (bagel), places (basement, salad bar), people (doorman, superintendent), and so forth. In the traditional use of foreign words, these terms are typically italicized. This stylistic choice foregrounds their presence in the text: the reader's attention is deliberately drawn to the italicized words, and to the additional meanings these words carry. In order to investigate what function code-switching fulfills in Duranti's text, I refer to Montes-Alcalá's classification of the seven functions⁶⁵ of codeswitching.⁶⁶ At times, the insertion of foreign words performs a purely lexical function; for instance, Duranti of necessity has to resort to using an English word, either because it has no specific equivalent in Italian (downtown, uptown), or because it refers to culturally-charged items (tan and nails). Nevertheless, to Montes-Alcalá's classification I add an eighth function that I call ideological. Indeed, Duranti mainly chooses to code-switch in order to produce a hybrid text. To this end, for instance, she frequently inserts sentences wholly in English, such as idioms (that's America, for God's sake), or sentences that reproduce the dialogues in a more natural and realistic way (Are you ok?). Therefore, in code-switching, she uses her bilingual perspective to create a multilingual text that aims at deconstructing and destabilizing the monolingual paradigm in which her reader is included.

Examples of code-switching can be found in the English version too. Duranti sometimes decides to leave in some Italian words, especially when she refers to culturally-charged items (Fiat, carabinieri, Pulcinella, Corriere). These items are usually not italicized but, in three cases, she decides to add an explanation in the notes at the end of the book: Scavolini, Lucania, and tressette. Perhaps Duranti believed these words to be lesser known and recognizable for an American audience.⁶⁷ While the Italian version is full of English sentences, the English version contains only one complete Italian sentence: "Ciao [...]. Una razza, una faccia".⁶⁸ A Greek woman tells this sentence to

bilingual communities, as it implies some degree of competence in all the languages involved.

64 It is interesting to notice how both versions are full of French and German words as well. This aspect reinforces the hybrid nature of the novel.

65 The seven functions are: lexical need, clarification, stylistic need, idioms, emphasis, quotations and triggered switches. Cf. CECILIA MONTES-ALCALÁ, *Code-switching in U.S. Latino novels*, in «Language and Literature», XXIV/3 (2015), pp. 264-281.

66 Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 264-281.

67 As a matter of fact, English and Italian have a different status; therefore, some of these lexical choices might be due to the fact that English is better known abroad than Italian.

68 DURANTI, *Left-Handed Dreams*, cit., p. 53.

Martina, in order to stress the closeness of Italians and Greeks. In quoting the Greek woman, Duranti emphasises her words, and further increases the hybrid nature of the novel.

One interesting example of contact and contamination between both languages is constituted by words and sentences built on the model provided either by English or Italian. For instance, Duranti coins the verb ‘to de-southern’,⁶⁹ defining the action of depriving someone of the Southern Italian traits. Duranti decided to keep it despite the fact that the verb does not sound like proper English. The verb, resulting from the interaction between English and Italian, demonstrates how two different linguistic systems can merge and create new forms.

Particularly interesting is also Duranti/Martina’s use of the Italian word ‘naturalezza’, used in opposition to the English ‘naturalness’:

The problem is how to succeed at being unnatural with sufficient naturalezza. I can only express my meaning in Italian, because the word ‘naturalness’ I found in the dictionary a few days ago has for me such an unnatural ring. ‘Naturalness’ does really translate ‘naturalezza’, a word that means a way of being, of behaving, living or feeling. [...] I wonder.⁷⁰

Duranti decides to maintain and incorporate the Italian word in the English text, thus depriving it of its visibility; the Italian word becomes familiar for the American reader, who ceases to perceive its otherness. In bringing the two languages together, but not mediating between them, Duranti aims to demonstrate how languages do not constitute two self-contained and independent systems and that, despite their differences, they can be intelligible to each other.

The following passages provide examples of what I mean by ‘hybrid process’. This definition refers to the performance of self-translation as a continuum, that is, as a process where both writing and translating are combined together, in the attempt to redefine each other’s boundaries. Self-translations can thus be seen as continuations of the writing process, as moments where the self-translator can re-enact his/her authorial voice, and continually rewrite a version according to the other language and culture. Through this encounter and exchange, self-translators discover that the source text has several potential meanings that still need to be explored.⁷¹ This fusion aims to break the conventional binary opposition between both practices, as part of an ideological operation attempting to contest all dominant monolingual positions, and to claim the supremacy of multiplicity and fluidity over purity and singularity. Self-translation is used as an instrument to challenge traditional theories “of subjectivity, collectivity, and belonging, as well as a theory of aesthetic creativity”,⁷² and to offer an alternative way to conceive of and perceive reality.

69 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

70 *Ibid.*, p. 117.

71 Anselmi states that (re)writing in another language “draws attention to the possibilities opened by the contact of a text with another language” (SIMONA ANSELMI, *On Self-translation. An Exploration in Self-translators’ Teloi and Strategies*, Milano, LED, 2012, p. 90).

72 YILDIZ, *Beyond the Mother Tongue*, cit., p. 38.

This aspect is evident in the following examples where, even if the author tries to maintain the original structure, a number of changes can still be observed. For instance, the otherwise inexplicable substitution of ‘thirty seconds’ with ‘ninety seconds’ is indicative of the fact that the writing process is continuing: writing and translating are simply transitory spaces of continuous rethinking and rewriting:

Prima il suono: rauco, né musica né rumore. Poi il sussurro: «Sei italiana ma vivi a New York. Hai quarantadue anni. Questa è la mia voce: la tua. Racconta il nostro sogno» [...]. Quando, avendo misurato trenta secondi di silenzio, la Macchina capì che non avevo più niente da dirle, smise di registrare.⁷³

First a rasping sound, neither music nor noise, then a whisper “You’re Italian but you live in New York. You’re forty-two years old. This is my voice: yours. Tell me your dream” [...]. After ninety seconds of silence the Machine understood I had nothing more to say and stopped recording.⁷⁴

In line four, the movement from the Italian to the English text presents an interesting change in perspective, as “il nostro sogno” becomes “your dream”. The Machine is the instrument that Martina uses in order to connect both her dream-like dimension and the dimension of reality, as well as to bridge the gap between her right-handed and realised self, and her left-handed and potential self. In the English version, then, the shift from the inclusive ‘nostro’ to the exclusive ‘your’ determines a change in perspective which reinforces Martina’s dualistic sense of the self, thus demonstrating how the writer consciously uses the narrative voice as a way to represent and recreate her protagonist’s sense of fragmentation and displacement. Thus, she manages to illustrate her condition as an experience of continuous transit, which makes her continuously shift from an insider to an outsider perspective, from inclusion to exclusion.⁷⁵

This movement across and beyond borders characterises Duranti’s experience of transmigration. Moreover, it constitutes an essential point to understand why, for her, it is so important to affirm a narrative of double belonging. Transmigrants are defined as “immigrants whose daily lives depend on multiple and constant interconnections [...] and whose public identities are configured in relationship to more than one nation-state”.⁷⁶ Within this scenario, Duranti’s experiences of self-translation and multilingual writing become instruments to overcome “the problematic of inclusion into the monolingual paradigm”;⁷⁷ to escape from her mother(tongue, land)’s claim to exclusivity, and to establish affective and creative connections and identifications with both Italian and English spaces. In creating the same text simultaneously in two languages, and in inserting foreign words within the monolingual text, Duranti produces a back-and-forth movement between Italian and English, which mirrors her physical movement between Tuscany and America.

This point becomes clear if we refer back to the distinction between translation and self-translation, where I outlined the empowering dimension of the latter, as the only

73 DURANTI, *Sogni Mancini*, cit., p. 49.

74 DURANTI, *Left-Handed Dreams*, cit., p. 25.

75 This point is stressed also in Wilson’s analysis of the novel. Cf. WILSON, *The Writer’s Double*, cit., p. 193.

76 GLICK SCHILLER, BASCH, and SZANTON BLANC, *From Immigrant to Transmigrant: Theorizing Transnational Migration*, cit., p. 48.

77 YILDIZ, *Beyond the Mother Tongue*, cit., p. 121.

practice that allows migrants to autonomously and actively redefine their voice. Duranti's attempt to establish connections with both linguistic systems correspond to her strategy of resistance to a total assimilation, intended as a form of surrender to the values and meanings of the new society. Belonging to both contexts, instead, means to accommodate, that is, to engage with an autonomous and self-conscious process of redefinition of identity; thus, the self is detached from exclusive identifications with specific linguistic, cultural, or geographical spaces. As Appadurai and Breckenridge claim, every displacement possesses a series of collective memories "whose archaeology is fractured".⁷⁸ Self-translation is a powerful instrument that helps to make sense of such fragmentation, and to perceive it as a gain. Source and target languages, in merging with one another, contribute together not only to the creation of the text, but also to the redefinition of the migrant self who, inscribed in multiple linguistic and cultural contexts, finds a way to exploit and express the creative and existential possibilities of hybridity.

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Self-translation; (trans)migration; identity; hybridity; monolingual paradigm.

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