

# TICONTRE

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TEORIA TESTO TRADUZIONE

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## TICONTRE. TEORIA TESTO TRADUZIONE

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## CORPO E TEMPO. EROS AND MELANCHOLY IN GËZIM HAJDARI'S TRANSMEDITERRANEAN POETICS\*

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This article elaborates on the intersection between sensual imagery, melancholy and exophony in Gëzim Hajdari's *Poesie scelte (1990-2007)*, an anthology that presents extracts from nine of his poetic works, collecting together almost twenty years of poetic activity. Firstly, it provides a background to Hajdari's oeuvre, describing the context for the flourishing of his double language (Albanian-Italian). Secondly, it explores the characteristics of *Poesie scelte* and the significance of the work within Hajdari's intellectual journey. Thirdly, it analyses three main themes: otherness, body and eros. While these words are all foregrounding tropes in the collection, they surface with varying intensity in the different stages of Hajdari's poetics. The analysis illuminates the prevailing of otherness, in the first phase; body, in the central phase; and eros, in the mature phase. The examination of sensual tropes in *Poesie scelte* is read in light of Hajdari's progressive acquisition of the Italian language, and the development of his exophonic voice, and aims to trace the effect of movement in mobilising sensual imagery within the inner qualities of the versification process.

Questo articolo esplora le intersezioni fra immaginario sensuale, malinconia e esofonia nel volume antologico *Poesie scelte (1990-2007)* di Gëzim Hajdari. Il volume contiene estratti da nove sillogi hajdariane e si configura dunque come un quadro di sintesi di circa vent'anni di attività poetica. Una prima sezione contestualizza la poetica di Hajdari e descrive il progressivo sviluppo della sua lingua doppia (albanese e italiana). Una seconda sezione si concentra sulle peculiarità di *Poesie scelte* nel quadro della parabola poetica e intellettuale di Hajdari. In una seconda parte l'articolo si concentra su tre temi principali: alterità, corpo ed eros. Tutti questi termini si configurano come centri semantici nel percorso hajdariano; tuttavia affiorano con vari livelli di intensità in diverse fasi. L'analisi illumina il prevalere di un immaginario proiettato verso una percezione di alterità in una prima fase, verso il corpo in una fase intermedia e verso l'eros in una fase più matura. L'analisi dell'immaginario sensuale e delle figure del desiderio in *Poesie scelte* è sviluppata in luce dell'acquisizione progressiva dell'italiano da parte di Hajdari e della conseguente evoluzione della componente esofonica e mira a illuminare questi processi nei vari livelli della versificazione.

### I INTRODUCTION

Bie shi vazhdimisht  
në këtë  
vend

ndoshta ngaqë jam i huaj

Piove sempre  
in questo  
paese

forse perché sono straniero.<sup>1</sup>

In 1993, roughly one year after his forced migration to Italy, the Albanian poet Gëzim Hajdari published the above text as part of his first exophonic collection.<sup>2</sup> This text was destined to become an icon for the generation of migrant writers who arrived in Italy during the last three decades of the twentieth century, and who contributed to the building of an increasingly robust body of literary works in the Italian language. It was during

\* Acknowledgment: some background sections and findings of this article are based on my doctoral dissertation *Exophonic poetics in contemporary Italy* (ALICE LODA, *Exophonic Poetics in Contemporary Italy. Versification and Movement in the Works of Hasan Atiya Al Nassar, Barbara Pumbösel and Gëzim Hajdari*, PhD Dissertation, The University of Sydney, 2017).

<sup>1</sup> GËZIM HAJDARI, *Ombra di cane*, Frosinone, Dismisura, 1993, p. 47.

<sup>2</sup> See Section 2 below.

these crucial decades that Italy was transforming, as a result of socio-political regional and global dynamics and with increasing acceleration, into a migratory destination.<sup>3</sup> The early 1990s in particular, the period during which Hajdari initiated his translingual literary pathway, were critical years in terms of migration entering the public scene in Italy, and these years saw a notable emergence of works by migrant writers.<sup>4</sup> The first works to capture the wider attention of audiences, publishers and scholars were mostly autobiographical narratives addressing the journey and the initial stages of the authors' lives in Italy, thus works focusing on memorialising movement and passage. They were often co-authored with an Italian journalist or author, and gained significant dissemination early on in this period.<sup>5</sup> The genre of poetry, on the other hand, developed in a more peripheral yet fluid space, as I have previously noted.<sup>6</sup> Poems were mostly collected in dedicated anthologies with limited distribution, and they developed largely outside of editorial constraints.<sup>7</sup> Despite their key cultural and aesthetic significance, the corpus of works of this generation of migrant poets remained separate to a large extent from the rest of the Italian poetic production.<sup>8</sup>

Hajdari's short verse lends itself to at least three layers of reading, all of which are relevant for the present study. First of all, it recalls, through its sharp diction, a perception of alterity, where anthropomorphised natural elements are potential participants in constraining the subject. Secondly, the deictic form suggests the subject's incontrovertible location in a space that is nevertheless distant and exilic. Thirdly, the author's decision to inflect the text in two languages that flow parallel to each other (the Albanian version on the left hand page preceding the Italian one on the right) is suggestive of his will to immediately forgo to the idea of linguistic fixity. Furthermore, the distribution of the words in the double unfolding of the text, which reveals a strong correspondence between compositional balances in the two languages, suggests that the author pays an almost sculptural attention to the signifiers' plastic values. Words seem to be employed

- 3 See ASHER COLOMBO and GIUSEPPE SCIORTINO, *Gli Immigrati in Italia*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2004; MARIA IMMACOLATA MACIOTI and ENRICO PUGLIESE, *L'esperienza migratoria: immigrati e rifugiati in Italia*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2010.
- 4 See the pioneer works GRAZIELLA PARATI, *Mediterranean Crossroads: Migration Literature in Italy*, Madison, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1999; ARMANDO GNISCI, *Creolizzare l'Europa: letteratura e migrazione*, Roma, Meltemi, 2003; for a comprehensive historical reconstruction see CHIARA MENGOZZI, *Narrazioni contese. Vent'anni di scritture italiane della migrazione*, Roma, Carocci, 2013, pp. 11-37.
- 5 On the early collaborative autobiographies and implications of co-authorship and linguistic editing see CATERINA ROMEO, *Meccanismi di censura e rapporti di potere nelle autobiografie collaborative*, in «Between», v/9 (2015), MENGOZZI, *Narrazioni contese*, cit., pp. 18-21.
- 6 See ALICE LODA, «Dolce era la notte». *Iraqi and Iranian poets in Italy: metrical-stylistic implications of translingual versification*, in «Italian Culture», XXXIII/2 (2015), p. 106.
- 7 The most renowned anthology of texts by migrant poets in contemporary Italy is *Ai confini del verso* edited by Mia Lecomte, who pioneered studies in this field (MIA LECOMTE (ed.), *Ai confini del verso*, Firenze, Le Lettere, 2006). Lecomte, together with Luigi Bonaffini, later published a selection of these texts in a bilingual edition (English and Italian): MIA LECOMTE and LUIGI BONAFFINI (eds.), *A New Map: The Poetry of Migrant Writers in Italy*, Los Angeles, Green Integer, 2007. The two anthologies feature works of twenty and seventeen poets respectively, including Gëzim Hajdari, Barbara Pumhösel, Božidar Stanišić, Vera Lucia de Oliveira, Hasan Al-Nassar.
- 8 For dynamics of reception see MIA LECOMTE, *Di un poetico altrove: poesia transnazionale italoфона (1960-2016)*, Firenze, Cesati, 2018, pp. 51-64.

as weighted materials, as *bodies*, and in the end their weight is distributed evenly in the two languages.

The poem can also serve as a first glimpse into the author's poetics. First of all, Hajdari is a migrant poet, who began to adopt what would become one of his languages of poetic expression (Italian) entirely in his adult life, and as a result of forced displacement. According to recent scholarship, his Italian poetics can be defined as exophonic, wherein exophony indicates the ability to produce creative works in a language other than one's mother tongue.<sup>9</sup> This is a common pattern in literature, particularly in the Italian context in which the coexistence of languages has been a foregrounding feature of the entire literary tradition.<sup>10</sup> In the present context, the notion of exophony frequently tends to more narrowly address the intersection of allophonic expression and migratory dynamics and it is within this semantic nuance that I employ the term herein.

This article will elaborate on the intersection between sensual imagery, melancholy and exophony in Gëzim Hajdari's *Poesie scelte (1990-2007)*.<sup>11</sup> After providing background information on the author and his works, it will explore three crucial themes related to three different inflections of sensual and melancholic imagery in different phases of Hajdari's poetics: otherness, foregrounding an initial phase; body, prevailing in a central phase; and eros, dominating a later phase. The article will contextualise the analysis of these three motifs within Hajdari's poetic interpretation of displacement and within the quality of his exophonic diction, so as to track their embodiment at the deepest levels of the versification process, in the materiality of the texts.

## 2 CONTEXT

### 2.1 THE DOUBLE LANGUAGE. GËZIM HAJDARI'S POETICS

Gëzim Hajdari, born in the small village of Hajdarai in Albania in 1957, is one of the most renowned voices within the poetics that emerged from the massive movement of people to Italy during the last three decades of the past century. Anthologised in a number of initial works that aimed to closely capture this phenomenon, he now possesses a consolidated corpus of translingual Italian-Albanian works that have been translated into several languages and are attracting a growing number of dedicated scholarly publications worldwide.<sup>12</sup> As one of the founders of the Albanian Republican party and

9 See MARJORIE PERLOFF, *Language in Migration: Multilingualism and Exophonic Writing in the New Poetics*, in «Textual Practice», XXIV/4 (2010); CHANTAL WRIGHT, *Writing in the 'Grey Zone': Exophonic Literature in Contemporary Germany*, in «GFL: German as a foreign language», III (2008); *Exophony and Literary Translation: What It Means for the Translator When a Writer Adopts a New Language*, in «Target», XXII/1 (2010).

10 See for example the seminal studies GIANFRANCO FOLENA, *L'italiano in Europa. Esperienze linguistiche del Settecento*, Torino, Einaudi, 1986 and *Il linguaggio del caos. studi sul plurilinguismo rinascimentale*, Torino, Bollati Boringhieri, 1991.

11 GËZIM HAJDARI, *Poesie scelte: (1990-2007)*, Nardò, Controluce, 2008, henceforth PS. To facilitate description, poems from PS are marked here with a progressive numeral in order of their appearance in the collection, followed by the abbreviation of the section (if relevant) and number of lines cited.

12 See in particular the three monographs ANDREA GAZZONI (ed.), *Poesia dell'esilio. Saggi su Gëzim Hajdari*, Isernia, Cosmo Iannone, 2010; ALESSANDRA MATTEI, 2014. *La besa violata: eresia e vivificazione nell'opera*

then of the Democratic party, he left his native country in 1992 in order to escape the violent and repressive atmosphere that characterised the post-communist years and the transition to democracy, and as a consequence of his life having been threatened due to his political and intellectual activities.<sup>13</sup> These circumstances are recalled and epicized in his renowned long poem *Poema dell'esilio*:

Dopo la sconfitta della Democrazia  
sono stato costretto ad abbandonare la patria, di notte,  
sotto la pioggia, senza una stretta di mano;  
perché minacciato di morte.  
È per questo che mi perdo nell'esilio, amici miei.

La mia unica colpa è stata di non aver accettato compromessi,  
denunciando gli abusi e i crimini del vecchio regime  
e quelli del nuovo regime di Berisha  
sulla stampa locale e nazionale.  
È per questo che mi sento felice in esilio, amici miei.<sup>14</sup>

Arriving at the port of Trieste on a windy night in April 1992 («portavo con me la tristezza: terra senza nome / e i manoscritti avvolti in fretta nel fazzoletto bianco» PS131, 4-5) and settling in Frosinone, Hajdari then began to patiently reconstruct his scholarly and poetic apprenticeship in his second language, Italian.<sup>15</sup> His first collection, *Ombra di cane* (1993), was followed by an impressive number of publications: poetry collections (the core of his aesthetic research) but also narratives, dramatic pieces, translations, and critical and scholarly publications.<sup>16</sup> Within the panorama of Italophone poetry of the 1990s, the disruptive force of his translingual verse immediately stood out: «Ho conosciuto Gëzim nel 1995, ad Agnone, durante un reading di poesia [...]. Quando fu

*di Gëzim Hajdari*, Roma, Ensemble, 2014; SARA DI GIANVITO, *In balia delle dimore ignote: la poesia di Gëzim Hajdari*, Nardò, Besa, 2015.

- 13 On the intersection between Albanian and Italian history and literature from a postcolonial perspective and for an analysis of the works of selected Albanian-Italian authors see EMMA BOND and DANIELE COMBERIATI (eds.), *Il confine liquido: rapporti letterari e interculturali fra Italia e Albania*, Nardò, Besa, 2013.
- 14 GËZIM HAJDARI, *Poema dell'esilio*, Santarcangelo di Romagna, Fara, 2005, pp. 12-14. See also GËZIM HAJDARI, *Breve panorama della poesia albanese dagli anni trenta ad oggi*, in «Kúmá», III/1 (2002), a scholarly counterpart to this work.
- 15 The poet attended university in Rome and simultaneously started to collaborate with several Italian journals and publishers (see ANDREA GAZZONI, *Introduzione. Cantare nel sisma dell'esilio*, in ANDREA GAZZONI (ed.), *Poesia dell'esilio. Saggi su Gëzim Hajdari*, Isernia, Cosmo Iannone, 2010, pp. 9-61). Today he is the director of the series "Erranze" for the publisher Ensemble.
- 16 Further poetic works include *Sassi contro vento*, Milano, Laboratorio delle Arti, 1995; *Corpo presente*, Tirana, Botimet Dritëro, 1999; *Antologia della pioggia*, Santarcangelo di Romagna, Fara, 2000; *Erbamara*, Santarcangelo di Romagna, Fara, 2001; *Stigmate*, Nardò, Besa, 2002; GËZIM HAJDARI, *Spine Nere*, Nardò, Besa, 2004; *Maldiluna*, Nardò, Besa, 2005; *Peligorga*, Nardò, Besa, 2007; and *Delta del tuo fiume*, Roma, Ensemble, 2015, this latter work published after PS. The travel writings include GËZIM HAJDARI, *San Pedro Cutud: viaggio negli inferi del tropico*, Santarcangelo di Romagna, Fara, 2004; *Muzungu: diario in nero*, Nardò, Besa, 2006.

il suo turno di lettura, i versi caddero sull'uditorio come schegge».<sup>17</sup> In 1997 Hajdari was awarded the Montale prize for an unpublished sylloge in Italian that later flowed into *Corpo presente*, one of the capstones of his explorations of body, matter and mobility.<sup>18</sup> This contributed to the diffusion of his work to a wider national and international audience.

The corpus of Hajdari's works constitutes a solid and quite homogeneous body of theoretical and aesthetic research revolving around the intersection of displacement and the human condition. Overall, his investigation relies on two pillars. Firstly, a civil inspiration leads his work to converge on an epic celebration of the displaced community through the different genres practiced, and to single out ontological and epistemological spaces that are opened due to the experience of movement. This view, which is instinctively and theoretically nourished from the beginnings of his literary activity, eventually leads the poet to individuate communality in displacement as the sole possible way to recover beauty, purity and a form of salvation:

I harbor immense esteem for exilic poets, who are symbols of the cultures of the worlds, who inspired and continue to inspire entire generations to a better life – a more pacific, human and tolerant one. They teach everybody how to be exiles and migrants, in order to share future and destiny.<sup>19</sup>

This research is constantly intersected with reflections on otherness and on the materiality of the body and its multiple connections with the outside world, which are both mobilised by the progressive acquisition of the exophonic language and the consequent rhetoricisation of the diction.

The second pillar in Hajdari's poetics is a focus on mobility, expressed on multiple levels of his versification practice. We can trace this in the exploration of diverse literary genres and in their frequent intermingling, but also in the intratextual dynamics of stylistic and linguistic hybridisation. Alessandra Mattei has adeptly linked this feature to Hajdari's composite and transnational intellectual background, which she suggests generates an extremely mobile transmediterranean word.<sup>20</sup> This aspect is mirrored in the linguistic, formal, and metrical-rhythmical aspects in his oeuvre.

Linguistically speaking, dynamics of hybridisation are extensively active on two levels. As mentioned above, the exophonic experience in Hajdari's work does not entail an abandonment of the mother tongue (which remains openly as a counterpoint and a generative actor in the shaping of the exophonic verse) but rather generates the need for a parallel and 'double' writing in his two languages («scrivo questi versi in italiano / e mi tormento in albanese» PS 132, 18-19). The majority of his collections are consequently published with the Albanian version on the left hand page and the Italian version on the right hand page.

17 LUIGI MANZI, *La notte straniera di Gëzim Hajdari. La luna e la melagrana*, in GAZZONI, *Poesia dell'esilio*, cit., pp. 317-321, p. 317.

18 The sylloge was published in *7 Poeti Del Premio Montale*, Milano, All'insegna del pesce d'oro, 1991.

19 GËZIM HAJDARI and ANITA PINZI, *An Ode to Exile. Interview to Gëzim Hajdari*, in «Warscapes» (2013), <http://warscapes.com/conversations/ode-exile>.

20 MATTEI, 2014. *La besa violata: eresia e vivificazione nell'opera di Gëzim Hajdari*, cit., pp. 56, 60-61, 71.



Linguistic choices for exophonic authors represent a critical node. Many studies have outlined the significance of linguistic configurations in postcolonial literature in Italian (to which the works of authors of Albanian origin belong) and their importance as acts of talking back.<sup>21</sup> Simone Brioni in particular has conducted an effective investigation of linguistic strategies in Somali-Italian literature which proficiently weaves the Deleuzian notion of minor literature with translation theory, discussing the role of exophonic authors at the intersection with that of translators, and identifying a number of strategies of linguistic interaction in selected postcolonial texts, strategies which includes parallel texts.<sup>22</sup> This postcolonial discourse can be complemented by an investigation of Hajdari's case oriented towards the specific terrain where his double language flourishes, that is, poetic expression.

An initial trajectory for the expansion of this investigation is provided by literary theory, and in particular by Henri Meschonnic's theorisations on rhythm and poetic translation. Meschonnic defines rhythm as a mobile and anti-semiological notion which is responsible for the configuration of sense in the poetic discourse.<sup>23</sup> Poetic translation is consequently defined as the passage of rhythm from one language to another, through a decentring and subsequent reconfiguring of the movement of a specific subjectivity in a historicised discourse. This process most often takes the form of an in-depth encounter, a syntonic vibration of two distinct subjects in two parallel discourses and histories. For exophonic poets, dissimilarly to translators, the decentring and reconfiguring of rhythm will occur within the same subjectivity: a subjectivity in movement, able to encompass and profoundly hybridise the discourses involved.<sup>24</sup> Hajdari's linguistic positioning can be thus read as an embodiment and development of Meschonnic's theorised rhythmical encounter. It identifies a space where the poetic word arises as an effect of the continuous repositioning of the subject in a hybrid and double-folded history-discourse. This process precedes the actual semantic and rhythmical agglomeration of sense on the page, and determines the instinctive surfacing of a double word. This critical linguistic reduplication is in fact described by the poet himself as a spontaneous and natural rhythmical arising of a two-faced lexicon:

Scrivo parallelamente in tutte e due le lingue, quindi in albanese e in italiano  
e viceversa. Non si tratta di bilinguismo ma di una lingua doppia.<sup>25</sup>

21 See SANDRA PONZANESI, *Paradoxes of Postcolonial Culture. Contemporary Women Writers of the Indian and Afro-Italian Diaspora*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 2004, pp. 167-184; SIMONE BRIONI, *The Somali within. Questions of Language, Resistance and Identity in "minor" Italian Writings*, Cambridge, Legenda, 2015, pp. 18-59; for the notion of talking back see GRAZIELLA PARATI, *Migration Italy: The Art of Talking Back in a Destination Culture*, Buffalo, University of Toronto Press, 2005, pp. 23-53.

22 See BRIONI, *The Somali within*, cit., pp. 21-28; the notion of minor literature is theorised in GILLES DELEUZE and GUATTARI FÉLIX, *Kafka: Pour Une Littérature Mineure*, Paris, Éditions de Minuit, 1975.

23 See HENRI MESCHONNIC, *Poétique du traduire*, Paris, Verdier, 1999, p. 99. See also HENRI MESCHONNIC, *Critique du rythme. Anthropologie historique du langage*, Lagrasse, Verdier, 1982.

24 The notion of hybridity as employed in this study is grounded in HOMI BHABHA, *The Location of Culture*, London, Routledge, 1994.

25 GËZIM HAJDARI and GIULIA INVERARD, *Il poeta epico delle montagne maledette. Intervista a Gëzim Hajdari*, in «Comunicare Letterature Lingue», VII (2007), p. 302.



The relationship between the two languages in Hajdari's poetics is thus strictly non-hierarchical, and within a postcolonial perspective it provides a compelling example of the rhythmical erasure of power imbalances, a strategy of talking back which reflects an inwardly fluid subjectivity. This relationship is underlined by a strong alignment of compositional balances of poems in the two languages, involving macro-textual morphology, stanza divisions and overall balances between words and white spaces on the page. Actual signs of exchange between and hybridisation of the two languages must be traced on a further micro-textual level. Hajdari's verse often allows space for the emergence of multilingual inserts and neologisms forged on calques from Albanian. Amongst them is the famous *peligòrga*, which Hajdari introduces to translate the Albanian word *peligoryë*, the name of a solitary bird with green feathers native to the northern region of Darsia (where the poet was born and raised), a creature that will become one of the focal points of the mythical and epic reconstruction of the poet's origins. These zones of linguistic contact and hybridisation tend to increase in number as Hajdari's Italian diction matures, in parallel with the development of his gnoseological investigation into movement, exile and human nature, and as we will see, they reach a peak in the final sections of PS. In parallel, Italian words progressively enter the Albanian versions of the poems, confirming the reciprocity of the author's double linguistic operation.

A further area of transmediterranean interactions can be traced within the extensive process of metrical and rhythmical hybridisation. Hajdari tends, in fact, to transfer the semantic weight of prevailing metres of the Albanian popular and oral epic tradition (the heptasyllable and the octosyllable, primarily organised into quatrains) into his Italian diction, and to construct on the foundation of these metres the rhythmical pillars of his exophonic verse, especially during the central phase of his poetics. Moreover, a foregrounding accentual sensitivity that traverses all stages of his versification in Italian could be interpreted as a further sign of prosodic resistance of the mother tongue within his exophonic diction. PS represents the main synthesis of all of the above elements, and allows us to analyse the qualities of Hajdari's formal and semantic operations within an extensive and crucial timeframe.

## 2.2 SELF-ANTHOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS: *POESIE SCELTE* (1990-2007)

Structurally speaking, PS is organised into nine sections that are eponymous of nine previously published collections: *Erbamara*, *Antologia della pioggia*, *Ombra di cane*, *Sassi contro vento*, *Corpo presente*, *Stigmate*, *Spine nere*, *Maldiluna*, and *Peligòrga*.<sup>26</sup> The collection is the result of almost twenty years of poetic activity, and displays Hajdari's major poetic works within this timeframe, with the sole exception of *Poema dell'esilio*. Hajdari rearranges the sections in PS by the absolute composition date of the corresponding collections. The first two sections, EM and AP, include a selection from two juvenile works written in Albanian and then self-translated and published in Italy for the first time a number of years after his migration, and most importantly some time after the

<sup>26</sup> Henceforth the sections of PS will be abbreviated as follows: *Erbamara* EM, *Antologia della pioggia* AP, *Ombra di cane* OC, *Sassi contro vento* SC, *Corpo presente* CP, *Stigmate* STG, *Spine nere* SN, *Maldiluna* MD, *Peligòrga* PG.

composition and publication of his first exophonic collections (here anthologised in the ensuing OC, SC and CP). This aspect should be kept in mind when discussing semantic features intersecting with exophonic practice in PS. EM and AP reflect the early Hajdari on an imaginative level, but in terms of his versification practice in the second language, they in fact arise from a significantly more mature phase. They are also the sole example of self-translations in PS, with all other sections deriving from collections that flourished in the double language.

In PS, Hajdari significantly reduces the number of texts in each section with respect to the original collections, and introduces few new compositions.<sup>27</sup> Omissions and variants, including a comprehensive restoration of punctuation marks and a number of significant formal reformulations, seem on the whole to point towards Hajdari increasing and highlighting the formal and semantic correspondences between the various phases of his poetry; yet the inner values and individual meanings of the original collections are preserved through careful attention to the sections' internal balances.

Overall, PS can be considered the main synthesis and result of the author's circular work towards his corpus of texts. The persistent desire of disseminating strong iterative motifs, is here highlighted by the self-anthological dimension. All these elements confirm that the author conceives of his oeuvre as a whole and uninterrupted epic tale:

il disvelarsi definitivo di una forma lunga, un lungo poema che ricapitola tutta una poetica della relazione e la prepara a nuovi sviluppi 'con l'incessante lavoro di ricomposizione dei modi inventivi'.<sup>28</sup>

The system of intertextual and intratextual iterations includes extensive use of figures of repetition, with and without *variatio*, as well as decisive metrical, rhythmical and figurative reprises. On a semantic level, Hajdari insists on diverse incarnations of a fixed set of symbols, largely inherited from the Albanian popular and oral epic tradition, appropriated and resemanticised in his hybrid and double poetic grammar. These symbols also allow the poet to reconnect with the origin of matter and to identify poetic writing as a primaeval eternalising gesture, with words acting as material and plastic signs that are able to cross space and time, to critically hybridise diatopic and diachronic coordinates, and to find within these multiple intersections a resulting existential and universal horizon:

Il sasso, l'acqua, la sabbia, il Tempo, il fuoco, la neve, fulmini, i tuoni, i lampi, l'Ombra, la pioggia, il vento, la terra, le spine, le stigmate, l'oracolo... sono degli elementi semplici ma esistenziali che nel tempo medesimo evocano simboli emblematici primordiali dell'infanzia del mondo. [...] Un buon poeta scrive per l'eternità.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> The poet introduces seven unpublished texts in PS (two in EM and five in OC).

<sup>28</sup> ANDREA GAZZONI, *Nel tempo, in relazione, per frammenti. Leggere due decenni attraverso Gëzim Hajdari, in Leggere il testo e il mondo. Vent'anni Di Scritture Della Migrazione in Italia*, ed. by FULVIO PEZZAROSSA and ILARIA ROSSINI, Bologna, Clueb, 2011, pp. 119-218, p. 217.

<sup>29</sup> DAVIDE BREGOLA, *Il catalogo delle voci: colloqui con poeti migranti*, Isernia, Cosmo Iannone, 2005, p. 55.

Overall, PS displays the dialectic relationship of the subject with its surrounding space and nature, areas that are progressively populated by a series of human and non-human interlocutors. The poet's voice alludes explicitly to a mission: the celebration of movement as the ultimate meaning of the human experience. The spiritual, theoretical and physical experience of displacement leads the poet to rethink the body and its material values, to reframe the relationship between subject and outer world, and to open new transnational and transmediterranean hybrid spaces. All these elements serve as a prelude to an eventually revealed faith in communality and solidarity between humans, all sharing an intimately displaced nature:

My advice to a young poet? Live in exile. *Truth is always exiled*, as Baal Shem Tov used to say. Live as an outsider! No other advice. Life itself will make a poet out of you, not any writing course. Good poetry is an act of life and of ethics. A great life means great poetry, crossing borders and holding out through the ages; a small life means small poetry. Real poets must push themselves beyond their own poetry, risking everything to become spokespersons for their people and their time.<sup>30</sup>

It is possible, within PS, to formally map the qualities of Hajdari's exophonic path, which begins with a dry diction (especially in OC, SC and CP, reflecting the first phase of the exophonic experience) that is then progressively extended and rhetoricised. As scholars have noted, while the intention towards the epic is constantly and implicitly active in his verse, it emerges formally in a progressive manner as his exophonic diction matures, in parallel with his increasingly frequent forays into the Albanian popular epic tradition, which dominate the final sections.<sup>31</sup> In the latter poems, this process occurs in parallel with the fragmentation of the central subject in a number of utterances, converting monologic articulations into highly polyphonic ones.<sup>32</sup>

Finally, the self-anthology is characterised by a foregrounding linguistic element. As mentioned above, Hajdari usually publishes his poetry in bilingual editions. PS, however, is presented as a monolingual Italian edition, while the Albanian texts are collected in another volume that was published concurrently, *Poezi të zgjedhura (1990-2007)*.<sup>33</sup> The poet thus chose to present his first self-anthology in the two languages in separate books.

Overall, PS is a work of synthesis and of semantic and formal uniformity, but it is also a characterisation of and a comparison between the diverse sylloges, delineating their internal values and autonomous significance as well as their inner intertextual connections and iterative qualities. The following sections will focus on three key words, all

30 GËZIM HAJDARI and CRISTINA VITI, *An Interview with Gëzim Hajdari*, in «Words Without Borders» (2016), <https://www.wordswithoutborders.org/dispatches/article/an-interview-with-gezim-hajdari-cristina-viti>.

31 See ANDREA GAZZONI, *L'intentio epica dell'esilio: Gëzim Hajdari*, in GAZZONI, *Poesia dell'esilio*, cit., pp. 140-170.

32 Sara Di Gianvito would read this as a step towards the epic mode, which will prevail in Hajdari's ensuing drama *Nûr* (GËZIM HAJDARI, *Nûr. Eresia e besa*, Roma, Ensemble, 2012; see DI GIANVITO, *In balia delle dimore ignote: la poesia di Gëzim Hajdari*, cit., pp. 47-63).

33 GËZIM HAJDARI, *Poezi të zgjedhura: 1990-2007*, Nardò, Besa, 2007.

to be individuated in the intersection between sensual and melancholic imagery: otherness, a trope in all of Hajdari's works, which is herein explored as it appears in the early phases of his poetry (and the first sections of PS); body, a key notion that traverses the various phases of Hajdari's poetry and is crucial in the middle phase of his exophonic practice; and eros, an element that travels the breadth of PS as a *fil rouge*, assuming different connotations in relation to the development of Hajdari's physical, linguistic and poetic de-territorialisation.

### 3 OTHERNESS

The first configuration of sensuality in Hajdari's poetry is aimed inwards, and is characterised by an investigation of the subject's constant perceptions of alterity. As extensively explored in literature, a network of crucial connections exists between displacement and representation of otherness in the works of exiled authors.<sup>34</sup> Yet to relate the perception and expression of otherness exclusively to Hajdari's experience of displacement would be an oversimplification in the context of his philosophical and literary journey. In Hajdari's work, in fact, exile is an ontological category which precedes his displacement, and such is the sensual perception of otherness that stems from it.

The construction of this category from the time of his juvenile works may be read either as a reaction to the violence and political corruption that surrounded the poet, or as a clash between his extreme receptivity (in terms of readings and encounters) and the overwhelming closeness of the surrounding society.<sup>35</sup> More directly, the category of exile engages with Hajdari's familiarity with mystical thought (and Sufism in particular):

[...] I owe much to the epic tradition of Albania, as well as to the Arab mystics. As I have said, my paternal grandfather belonged to a tradition derived from the mystical brotherhood of the Bektashi, spanning Islam and Christianity and in dialogue with both. In my youth I immersed myself in the poetry of mystics such as Saadi, Khayyam, Ferdowsi, and Rumi.<sup>36</sup>

From these influences, Hajdari elaborates upon and then inscribes in his verse the crucial belief that the soul, by its very nature, is exiled in the material world.<sup>37</sup> Exile is therefore a condition occasioned by human nature itself, and otherness thus a common ground in human experience.

Inner perceptions and sensual expressions of otherness thus emerge as a trope as early as the pre-exilic compositions collected in EM and AP. These compositions, originally written before Hajdari's displacement and the development of his double language, are formally grounded in the Albanian versification system. The quatrain of lines of short

34 On the intersection of exile and literary writing see at least EDWARD W. SAID, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, Cambridge (MA), Harvard University Press, 2000 and JULIA KRISTEVA, *Strangers to Ourselves*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1991.

35 For a broader description of Hajdari's transmediterranean and transcultural background see MATTEI, 2014. *La besa violata: eresia e vivificazione nell'opera di Gëzim Hajdari*, cit., especially pp. 56-57 and 89-90.

36 HAJDARI and VITI, *An Interview with Gëzim Hajdari*, cit.

37 See GAZZONI, *Poesia dell'esilio*, cit., pp. 38-41.

and medium length is the dominant pattern. Sorrow and pain emerge but are contained within quite balanced patterns, wherein regularity is pursued through repetition and musical-rhythmical correspondences. Here, the sensual imagery serves primarily to highlight the relationship between the subject and the natural world, thus opening spaces of interaction and giving some first allusions to identification:

Sogno la morte ogni volta  
che torna la primavera.  
I gemiti si perdono piano piano  
nella nudità della pioggia.  
PS[EM]1, 5-8

Come un segno lugubre  
il richiamo della volpe nel buio.  
PS[EM]3, 11-12

Sdraiato sulla terra umida  
assaporo l'erbamara dei prati.  
Negli abissi dei cieli impazziti  
si perde il mio sguardo.  
PS[EM]7, 13-14

\*

Mi troveranno nei campi trebbiati  
senza respiro tra le labbra,  
sdraiato sulla paglia che adoravo  
con i colombi che beccano accanto.  
PS[EM]2, 1-4

Mai baciato una fanciulla  
nella mia gioventù di allora.  
Abbracciavo alberi  
in assenza di loro.  
PS[EM]8, 1-4

Non piangere,  
è il pettirosso che corre  
sul ghiaccio del ruscello.  
PS[EM]14, 1-3

nel giardino dei melograni, dove partoriva la cagna,  
non ho messo più piede.  
PS[EM]19, 7-8

Seduto sui gradini petrosi di casa,  
insieme al mio cane,  
attendo.  
PS[AP]23, 2-4

Il mio migliore amico è un asino,  
un animale buono e *serio*.  
Quando siamo tristi e amareggiati  
ci guardiamo l'un l'altro negli occhi  
per consolarci.  
PS[AP]26, II, 1-5

\*

Come una pelle nera  
la notte balcanica.  
PS[EM]5, 3-4

stasera voglio che la terra beva  
il mio sangue rosso  
PS[EM]17, 5-6

Sul corpo crescerà  
un nuovo biancospino.  
PS[EM]18, 13-14

E tu, amore mio, non mi riconoscerai,  
perché sono diventato verde e suono,  
PS[AP]32, 10-12; 20-21

A metà strada ti sto aspettando  
con il mio cuore nel palmo  
avvolto con una foglia di gelso.  
PS[AP]35, 13-15

\*

Luna,  
è fuggita anche questa stagione  
senza un bacio  
nella notte bianca.  
PS[EM]12, 1-4

These two sections introduce sensual connections that mostly involve the non-human. The elements that surround the subject are highly tactile, characterised by a physical weight and often invested with a synesthetic power: rain is naked (PS[EM]1), steps are

stony (PS[AP]23), night is like a dark skin (PS[EM]5). Texts embody different levels of interpenetration between human and non-human, which are well represented by the first three suites of verses above: from a sensual communication through words, sounds and gazes (PS[EM]1, 3, 7), to a suggested pact between beings (PS[EM]2, 8, 14, 19; PS[AP]23, 26), to finally a complete fusion with the elements which is grounded in transhuman contact (PS[EM]5, 17, 18; PS[AP]32, 35). Darsian idyllic natural sceneries – a positive counterpoint to the hostile and corrupt country of Albania – and their populations of birds, plants, clouds, waters and sounds offer consolation and companionship to the subject. Yet, on a broader scale, the poems still embody a constant intuition of not belonging, «un senso di perdita - in patria - della propria patria».<sup>38</sup> The subject is trapped in a permanent state of isolation, and his non-human interlocutors mimetically accompany his pain. Although an initial allusion to a feminine interlocutor (who enters the scene in a significant way in later texts) is traceable in AP in particular (PS[AP]32; 35), the relationship with the human-*other* is still read in terms of a sharp absence, and is not configured as a projection or a form of seminal dialogue (PS [EM]12).

The erotic imagery also begins to aggregate on a symbolic level, through objects that mediate between subject and desire, and that will contribute to the aestheticising of this desire in later works. Conventional allusions to the moon are quite frequent (here displayed in PS[EM]12). An insistent allusion to the *melograno* emerges in parallel (PS[EM]19), signifying a core element of Hajdari's lexical-semantic erotic grammar, later extensively associated with blood and the sexual sphere. Symbols filter through the ensuing phases of Hajdari's poetry, and their presence intensifies in the latter epic and mythical phase (from STG onwards). This system of iterations, with different inflections and nuances, has the effect of increasing the polysemy of key words and, in many cases, shedding light on their erotic qualities retrospectively.

Transitioning now to the first exophonic collection (namely OC and SC), the sensual reading of the outer world and the semantic-lexical process of approximation to the erotic sphere is suddenly interrupted. For the first time, the poet faces physical displacement and the exophonic condition. The perception of otherness is radicalised. The verse is dominated by absence and deathly premonitions, and a permanent pain that is connected to a constant dissatisfied physical desire. All of these factors make the encounter with the human-*other* impossible, and complicate the dialogue with the non-human. The sensual imagery here is therefore to be read in a negative manner, and the downward spiral towards internalisation increases. Displacement is also inscribed in a dramatic change in style. The verses are now broken and traumatised, and the quatrain – still present mostly in the form a rhythmical memory – is sliced apart and deconstructed. Brevity is the foregrounding figure.<sup>39</sup>

Fuori della finestra  
la pioggia, come un vetro opaco

<sup>38</sup> DI GIANVITO, *In balia delle dimore ignote: la poesia di Gëzim Hajdari*, cit., p. 12.

<sup>39</sup> One of the most influential models for these kinds of compositions is Ungaretti, who is read extensively by Hajdari (see *ibid.*, p. 101 and SILVIA VAJNA DE PAVA, *La peligörça canta in italiano. La poesia di Gëzim Hajdari e i suoi apporti interculturali*, in GAZZONI, *Poesia dell'esilio*, cit., pp. 189-210, pp. 190-191).



taglia i giorni della mia vita,  
mi bagna la ragione.  
PS[OC]38

Come sono tristi  
queste città  
con l'uomo morto dentro.  
PS[OC]40

Dov'è la tua santità Roma,  
dov'è il tuo mare?  
Anche i fiumi sono scomparsi,  
il dolore si sente solo nell'acqua  
delle fontane.  
PS[OC]49, 1-5

Io parto verso il vuoto  
a gridare del sangue versato  
su questo territorio sterile.  
PS[SC]54, 7-9

\*

Ieri sera nessuno ha bussato alla mia porta  
sul Corso della Repubblica, 170  
nessuno mi ha fatto gli auguri  
per l'anno nuovo.  
PS[OC]41, 4-7

Nessuna donna  
chiama il mio nome  
in questo Paese.  
PS[OC]42

Sempre più soli in Occidente,  
io  
e il mio corpo.  
PS[OC]43

Sei andata via,  
sotto la pioggia d'autunno,  
verso il mare  
PS[OC]50, 1-3

Vedo la tua ombra sulle pietre,  
 ma non ti trovo.  
 È inverno, si chiude il giorno.  
 PS[SC]57, 4-6

The sensual communion with the non-human is obfuscated, and the poems lose referentiality, especially in terms of the subject's positioning in respect to the surrounding places and elements. As the first selection of texts displays, the outer world is now indeterminate and impossible to name, and landscapes are observed through the filter of a blurred lens, which prevents the non-human, and nature in particular, from sharing a now radical condition of otherness with the subject (PS[OC] 38; 40; 49; PS[SC]54). Birds, trees and the elements lose their names and their benevolent actions, and may on the contrary contribute to the subject's isolation.<sup>40</sup> In parallel, a sharp perception of absence dominates the verses (PS[OC]41, 42, 43, 50; PS[SC]57).

While natural elements lose their sensual qualities, language gains a physical weight on the page. The relation between signifier and signified is mobilised through the acquisition of a second language and the related and novel double flourishing of verse. This process has the effect of dramatically increasing the transitive relation between word and world, with the crucial abandonment of any rhetorical superstructure («Madre, / ho perso le metafore» PS[OC] 44). Words become agglomerations of raw sense; stones, for example, arise as a synthesis of a new translational imagination, and are employed first and foremost for their material and rhythmical qualities. At the same time, metalinguistic inserts increase in frequency, and are still pointed towards a foregrounding absence, a sensual loss.

Here, the verse is affected by an element of rupture and 'cruelty', which is in turn inscribed in formal, rhythmical and linguistic aspects and connected to the loss of a sensual communion with the outer world.<sup>41</sup> Otherness will act as a trope in future works, and melancholic imagery will be inflected in various nuances in parallel with the evolution of Hajdari's poetics. Yet the hiatus between the subject and his human and non-human interlocutors that is achieved in OC and SC will not be equalled.

#### 4 BODY

The path of sensual imagery develops with new inflections in the ensuing section, CP. Embodiments of absence progress through the recovery of previous tropes and through the introduction of new landmarks. As the title suggests, this section revolves around the semantic node of the body and firmly declares its immanency. As such, the instinctive

40 See *ibid.*, pp. 203-205. This is also noted in DI GIANVITO, *In balia delle dimore ignote: la poesia di Gëzim Hajdari*, cit., pp. 54-55.

41 On the cruelty of Hajdari's language in this phase see MANZI, *La notte straniera di Gëzim Hajdari. La luna e la melagrana*, cit. Manzi correctly identifies an absence of polysemy in Hajdari's use of language in this phase, a polysemy that will eventually be recuperated when his exophonic expression becomes more established.

reflection on exile as a condition entailed in human nature is driven to a further theoretical level. The body, and its tangible and plastic presence in space, is identified as the only acceptable homeland, as well as the only possible human horizon:

Oggi non si migra solo da un paese all'altro, ma anche da una lingua all'altra.  
Il bilinguismo mi ha insegnato che il mio corpo è la mia patria e il mio nome è la mia identità. Anzi, ogni giorno creo una nuova patria, in cui muoio e rinasco.<sup>42</sup>

CP represents the most materialistic phase in Hajdari's gnoseological exploration, and it displays a unique convergence of the themes of dwelling within and belonging to the materiality of the body. Uprooted and disappointed, the poet eventually finds a complete and self-sufficient form of being and belonging in corporeality. The body – extremely vulnerable yet extant, actual, true, impossible to be overlooked – remains a consistently tangible and visible point, in which the sense of the human condition eventually converges. Its immanence makes it become both an embodiment of resistance and an instrument of empowerment for the displaced subject. The trajectories of this progression emerge clearly in a preliminary mapping of the occurrences of the key word *corpo* in CP:

Scaviamo nei nostri corpi  
per nasconderci,  
insieme alle nuvole fredde  
della valle.  
PS[CP]66, 8-11

Mi circondi tra gli alberi  
con il tuo corpo,  
PS[CP]75, 1-2

Ci rifugiamo nei corpi leggeri  
avvolti dalla nebbia della valle  
che ancora (come l'erba) conservano  
l'equilibrio.  
PS[CP]102, 1-4

\*

Scende una neve lenta  
sui nostri corpi.  
PS[CP]69, 11-12

Parti verso un paese  
che non chiama il tuo nome,

<sup>42</sup> GËZIM HAJDARI and FRANCESCO ZURL, *Intervista*, in «Workout» (n.d.) (quoted in DI GIANVITO, *In balia delle dimore ignote: la poesia di Gëzim Hajdari*, cit., p. 38).

ma solo il tuo corpo.  
PS[CP]72, 1-3

Oltre il muro sento tacchi di donna,  
come se passassero per il mio corpo.  
PS[CP]98, 11-12

\*

Canto il mio corpo presente  
nato da questo freddo spazio  
che nulla promette.  
[...]  
Procedo nel verde consumato  
e non porto nulla oltre il mio corpo.  
PS[CP]63, 1-3; 17-18

Anche il mio corpo resterà solo  
con il tuo nome di carne e di buio,  
nelle mani fredde,  
PS[CP]80, 11-13

e hai pregato per me:  
corpo tremante  
PS[CP]90, 7-8

Altri corpi sono stati prima di noi  
in questo verde  
PS[CP]95, 16-17

The three suites of texts above exemplify how the body herein coincides with its essential materiality and may consequently embody a grounding space for excavating and finding modes of repair (PS[CP]66, 75, 102), a solitary place in which to survive storms, passages, and the loss of names (PS[CP]69, 72, 98), and yet ultimately a terrain of resistance, identification and communion (PS[CP] 63, 80, 90, 95). Intuitively, the central subject's radical retreat into the body should define a further sense of closure. On the contrary, however, CP can be read on many levels as a turning point in the direction of a new opening. Once his new homeland is discovered and declared, Hajdari's verse may begin to be unsealed anew. Forms that are still sharp and affected by the need for essentiality and precision begin to stretch both horizontally and vertically.

The progression into the exophonic practice is reflected in the commencement of rhetoricisation and the epicisation of the diction, even while the transitive pact between word and world is explicitly declared and maintained. Not only is the material per-

ception of words inscribed within the versification practice, but it also surfaces in the metalinguistic inserts, which are now more frequent:

Come in altri tempi  
ripeto parole di pietra  
PS[CP]64, 9-10

Voglio nascondere,  
sotto la sua pelle,  
le parole mai dette  
PS[CP]77, 9-11

Si muove una mano appena risvegliata  
al crepuscolo. Rompe il silenzio  
e intreccia le nostre lingue mute,  
a modo suo.  
PS[CP]84, 8-11

Le parole mai dette  
si nascondono ancora  
sotto un manto di neve.  
PS[CP]97, 4-6

The above examples demonstrate the ways in which, through diverse inflections of the metalinguistic discourse, Hajdari highlights the sensual qualities of language and the process of reification and materialisation of words that foregrounds his first exophonic phase, suggesting not only a sculptural and plastic force (PS[CP]64, 77, 84) but also an autonomy that is attributed to the language itself (PS[CP]97). This latter element is particularly relevant in the works of exophonic authors, where the idea of the animation of language can frequently function as a powerful trope.<sup>43</sup>

On a further semantic level, the declaration of the body's immanency and the dissolution of absence into the physical and material horizon of corporality - if they are interpreted as a form of resistance and empowerment - do not prevent the onset of a novel sensual dialogue with the outer world, but in fact enable it. Scenery is repopulated and for the first time grounded in the unicity of Ciociaria's landscape, which has returned to take on erotic connotations. In parallel, the presence of human interlocutors increases:

Dove si nasconde ciò che non trovo  
sulle tremule alghe  
o nei licheni bianchi?  
PS[CP]63, 14-16

<sup>43</sup> See in particular the exophonic poetic work *prugni* by the Austrian-Italian author Barbara Pumhösel (BARBARA PUMHÖSEL, *prugni*, Isernia, Cosmo Iannone, 2008).

O luna rossa di sangue  
che cammini sui sassi:

c'è una pioggia che ti copre  
PS[CP]75, 9-11

E tu, pianura  
dammi la spiga d'oro,  
il sole tondo e maturo  
che tiene vivo il giorno.  
PS[CP]78

Tutti stiamo per andare via:  
i topi, la civetta, il merlo  
e io, extracomunitario anonimo,  
PS[CP]88, 12-14

Dalla finestra del pianterreno mi scrutano  
curiosi i gatti dell'immondizia,  
PS[CP]98, 7-8

Come un monaco mesto  
seppellisco nell'oscuro suolo  
i fiori caduti dal mandorlo.  
PS[CP]99, 11-13

Se i falchi cercano qualcuno  
sui campi e sui monti,  
quell'uomo sono io,  
inchiodato in Via del Cipresso,  
aspettando che la mia acqua sorga.  
PS[CP]101, 11-15

Sono campana di mare  
di silenzi e di voci  
chiuso nel Tempo.  
PS[CP]65, 1-3

\*

Accanto a me  
sei come una collina,  
campo di grano  
o bosco vergine

dove bussano  
la pioggia  
e il mondo.  
PS[CP]81, 7-13

Mi dici che ieri  
ti sei inginocchiata per terra,  
ah, la nostra terra  
delirio e polvere;  
PS[CP]90, 1-4

Ci separa la leggera estensione dei campi  
e l'altopiano di rondini libere.  
PS[CP]95, 1-2

The first block of examples above illustrates the trajectories through which the pact with the non-human - and with nature in particular - is herein reinforced, surfacing through the rediscovery of a horizon of belonging and the non-hierarchical movement of the body within the surrounding space, and passing through the reappropriation of the faculty of naming (PS[CP]65; (PS[CP]75, 88, 98, 99, 101). The process culminates in a significant emergence towards a full and novel transhuman convergence (PS[CP]65). *Civette, falchi, grilli, gatti, topi, mandorli* and *edera* are just some of the inhabitants of Hajdari's verse in this phase, and their presence disseminates new hints of sensuality. The appearance of human counterparts is notably more frequent when compared to OC and SC; yet, with the sole exception of the mother (PS[CP]90), human figures still tend to occupy a space of absence and detachment (PS[CP]81, 95).

While the reflection on exile and otherness gains focus and culminates in the sensual figuration of the body's immanence and related grammar, the body itself appears to open to a new reality. With the reflection still pointed inwards, the increased points of contact between human and non-human open the way to a new opportunity of interchange, which takes on more explicit dialogic or polyphonic intentions in ensuing sections. These intentions, in parallel with and as a consequence of this theoretical process, then begin to host figurations of erotic imagery in a more direct and regular way.

## 5 EROS

CP closes the first and more confessional phase of Hajdari's exophonic poetics, a phase that is entirely pointed towards the displaced and post-migratory condition, and characterised by a lack of rhetoricisation and of transitive relation between words and world. In later works, Hajdari's verse undergoes a process of progressive rhetoricisation and epicisation, which relies on a progressive and extensive recovery of the tropes of Albanian popular and oral epics and creates a new mediated relationship between signifier and signified.



This process occurs in phases, through three intermediate steps that are represented by the three ensuing sections of PS: STG, SN and MD. The first two *suites* represent an intense zone of contact between the semantic nodes of the first exophonic phase and later polyphonic and epic developments. Formally, they are both characterised by a binary development. On the one hand, they accommodate compositions that are still significantly connected to the essential modules of the first phase. On the other hand, they embrace formulaic and paced verses, which are strongly indebted to the tradition of rhapsodies and Albanian oral poetry, and act as a preparation for the later epic turn. MD, on the other hand, is a rather irrelative component within Hajdari's poetic path, mostly for its openly lyric timbre (announced immediately in the neologism within its title, forged on the melancholic image of the moon) and active on both a structural and figurative level. Here too, however, increasing formularity and polyphony are noticeable.

An exhaustive examination of the inner qualities of these crucial collections would be a lengthy task; what I am interested in mapping herein is the way in which these qualities mark a seminal mobilisation and progression of erotic imagery in Hajdari's verse. Once the poet has established the coordinates of his sense of otherness and reinforced a sensual dialectic with both the human and the non-human through his research on the body and its movement in space, he is finally able to multiply erotic figurations. This trajectory develops in parallel with the transition of the figures of desire from the terrain of impossibility and inexpressibility to that of possibility and reality. This erotic turn is highlighted through the increased explicit dialogic dynamics, involving the non-human and, most significantly, the human sphere:

Mia cara nell'oblio,  
è la tua voce che chiama: Gëzim, Gëzim, Gëzim  
nei miei incubi notturni?  
PS[STG]109, 13-15

Se tu non fossi dall'altra sponda,  
mi sarei impiccato  
PS[STG]126, 1-2

Mia vecchiarella,  
goccia ancora il tetto della casetta?

La nostalgia di te mi penetra nelle ossa  
come l'umidità della stanza sgombra.  
PS[SN]169, 1-4

\*

Minestrina calda – mio piatto quotidiano –  
stasera io ti canto,  
consacrato sia il tuo nome nella notte sorda  
lontano da letti morbidi e corpi di donna.

PS[STG]119, 1-4

Quella mela rossa  
dimenticata sui rami denudati dall'autunno,  
è il mio cuore appeso.  
PS[SN] 156

Quando germoglierà la primavera, vedrai,  
su di me crescerà la rosa canina  
e spine fresche di biancospino.  
PS[MD]180, 13-15

Ti avevo detto che il libro più bello  
l'avrei scritto con la punta del coltello,  
sulla mia pelle,  
PS[MD]181, 1-3

Ho bisogno della tua benedizione,  
le radici del biancospino mi trafiggono il cuore.  
PS[MD]191, 1-2

Come gli ultimi tuoni d'autunno  
sui campi trebbiati,  
sta svanendo anche la nostalgia di te.  
PS[MD]199, 1-3

\*

In qualsiasi lingua ti sogni sei la stessa: corpo e tempo,  
come una volta canti la tua infanzia: da collina a collina,  
lascia che ti percorra come un pastore di capre  
PS[STG]125, 11-13

Festeggio con davanti due bicchieri di vino,  
un bicchiere per me e l'altro per Lei che potrebbe venire,  
PS[STG]143, 1-2

il volto della vicina che mi sfiorava lo sguardo,  
(oh il suo ombelico, quel seno di pesca),  
PS[SN]145, 6-7

Gioivamo quando fioriva il mandorlo  
e cantava il merlo nel giardino di giuggiole.

PS[SN]149, 5-6

La luna cade sul tuo collo di cerbiatto e tu tremi,  
gli astri incendiano i miei occhi ed io resisto.  
Mi ancorò alle tue dita,  
come questo nespolo alla scarpata,  
PS[SN]152, 7-10

Anche tu, pino, che ti affacci alla mia finestra, sei in esilio  
[...]  
Solo tu sei testimone delle donne nude nel mio letto  
e dei miei amori clandestini.  
PS[SN] 155, 1; 5-6

La tua bocca, fiore di pesco,  
la tua fronte, altitudine di lune nuove.

Hai occhi di merlo.  
PS[SN]164, 5-7

Mio Dio come mi sentivo felice  
quando ti vedevo sorridente,  
mentre scendevi dal treno della regione,  
quel sabato di pettirossi e sole.  
PS[MD]175, 16-19

Ridevi e il sole illuminava  
i laghi freddi dei tuoi occhi,  
PS[MD]176, 7-8

Mi consolo di essere nella quiete della tua carne,  
tra l'acqua e il fuoco.

tu mi rammenti il richiamo del corvo nelle selve del New England  
e lo scricciolo della mia provincia agricola sull'altra costa.  
PS[MD]178, 1-2; 12-13

il tuo seno come due albicocche riempite di sole,  
la tua pelle sapore di miele.  
[...]  
vado per le tue cosce come per le valli dell'Ohio  
e dal tuo collo vedo il mare,  
dalle tue labbra bevo il mirtillo.

PS[MD]183, 5-6; 16-18

Dalle tue labbra fioriscono uccelli,  
nelle tue dita bruciano astri.

PS[MD]185, 8-9

Lasciami un po' di tempo  
per rompere il tuo fango e la mia follia  
come se fossero la tua verginità  
conservata sin dall'epoca degli antenati.

PS[MD]187, 1-4

Ho bevuto le tue labbra gonfie di passione,  
le tue notti e le tue albe,  
tutti i tuoi incendi ho bevuto.

PS[MD]204, 5-7

The first three texts can be related to one of the preferred feminine interlocutors of Hajdari's verse: the mother, the first incarnation of Hajdarian melancholy and a privileged projection of his theoretical, existential and aesthetic research on exile (PS[STG]109, 126, 169). The sensual connotations carried by the verses, which convey the sudden and painful detachment from the maternal arms, are explored, traversed, and disseminated throughout PS. At this stage, the dialogue with the maternal figure provides the poet with the first semantic-lexical instruments to approach the later engagement with feminine lovers, this time celebrated within an openly erotic horizon. Sensual love for feminine figures (surfacing in particular from SN onwards) is expressed through the dialogic form and scaffolded through a dense panorama of non-human, and chiefly natural, symbols, which participate in this sensuality (PS[STG]119; PS[SN] 156; PS[MD]180, 181, 191, 199). This dialogic and erotic turn is inscribed anew within the deepest levels of versification, and is traceable in the progressive dominance of allocutions, and in the increase of verbal and pronominal deixis, mostly deployed to address a *you* and, less frequently but still significantly, an *us*.

The examples in the third suite above map the dramatic multiplication of actual and direct contact with the lovers that occurs in particular from SN onwards (PS[SN]145,149, 152, 164; PS[MD]175, 176, 178, 183, 185, 187, 204). These love dialogues open a space of possibility within the sphere of physical and sensual desire, which is fully and lyrically explored in MD. It is here that the poet incurs a central eros that, while still melancholic, opens spaces of actual reciprocity and exchange for the first time.

In the space of these three sections, Hajdari thus enacts an almost complete conversion to an erotic, plural, collective and transmediterranean dimension, traceable in the transition from a central subject to several utterances, in the tension between the perception of otherness and the extensive dialogic openings with human and non-human interlocutors, in the alternation between lyrical or prosaic tones and epic-formulaic diction.

Iterations and contact between the sections develop uniformly, and illuminate symbols both present and past.

The shift towards a symbolic eroticism, a full polyphony, and a collective-universal dimension is performed in the ensuing and conclusive section, PG. This *suite* is drawn from a collection that could be framed as a reliving of the Albanian past within an exophonic present: «versi scritti ieri per oggi e oggi per ieri». <sup>44</sup> The polysemantic nature of the diction of PG allows for a re-reading of Hajdari's entire corpus in a new figurative and symbolic key, and it is therefore crucial to uncover the catalogue of allusions that the poet has covertly disseminated in the preceding phases. This section is thus significant per se; as the pinnacle of epicisation apropos of Hajdari's objective, and as a tool to unveil the profundity of memories and transmediterranean interconnections. Within a now-mythologised and eternalised Darsìa, Hajdari rewrites his story in light of the ensuing trauma of displacement and sheds light on the ultimate function of his hybrid and transmediterranean word. Located at the crossroads between the juvenile quatrains and the more mature narrative metres, the epic modules of PG contribute to the memorialisation of the poet's mission, a poet who is explicitly depicted as the witness and cantor of Albanian glories and tragedies and as a heroic figure. The mythic narration of his origins and of his first approaches to poetry stresses this celebratory intention while also defining Hajdari's mature mission: to redeem Albania's unfortunate past, to denounce and defeat oppression and censorship, and to celebrate an oppressed transnational community through reconnection with a mythical past.

For all these reasons, the eros of PG is a different eros: it is mediated, polyphonic, hybrid, intertextual and re-written. The apex of this process can be traced in the final long poem *Contadino della tua vigna*, which is structured as a two-voiced drama:

Fanciulla della Ciociaria,  
mia dolcezza, fiore selvatico delle colline di Saturno,  
sei una puledra focosa che corre per i campi trebbiati  
tirando calci al vento,  
piena di odori e fiumi femminili,  
profuma la tua pelle mora e inebria gli erranti.  
Appena ti sfioro, il tuo corpo freme,  
il tuo pube si apre come una rosa fresca,  
come la melagrana matura nella mia Darsìa  
che toccata dalle prime gocce delle piogge autunnali  
si spaccava e gocciava sul suolo assetato,  
conducimi nei tuoi inni, nelle tue curve ombrose.  
M'incanto nell'odorare la tua carne giovane e lussuriosa  
che eccita il mio giunco,  
il tuo seno polposo all'insù avanza  
verso i miei cieli nudi,  
io vengo da una regione di eros

44 From the author's introductory note to the first edition of *Peligòrga* (HAJDARI, *Peligòrga*, cit., p. 15).

è per questo che fremo di desiderio,  
 nel mio villaggio ero circondato in ogni istante da attimi d'amore:  
 fichi neri sui rami che si aprivano e gocciavano,  
 fiori di iris, dal colore della tua ferita, avvolgevano  
 la mia casetta giorno e notte,  
 albicocche dal sapore di miele che pervadeva la mia stanzetta  
 e il gelso rosso, le more, le visciole che provocavano le mie mani  
 e le mie labbra con il loro mosto,  
 come fosse il sangue della prima notte.

[...]

*sono ardente, attraversami con i tuoi xhin,*  
*con le tue Zanat*  
*con i tuoi oracoli,*  
*con le tue pietre*  
  
*seminami, fecondami,*  
*mordimi come mordevi le more,*  
*toccami come toccavi le visciole,*  
*succhiarmi come succhiavi la melagrana spaccata della tua collina,*  
*inondami della schiuma bianca del tuo fiume in piena,*  
*inonda la mia valle di papaveri rossi*  
*e fa che il tuo dio fertile si perda nella mia luna oscura!*

PS[PG]24I, I-26; 2I8-228

Here, the lover gains a contrapuntal voice. The two utterances are characterised by diverse rhythmical profiles, with internal cohesion created through sound iterations, repetitions and timbric correspondences such as the insistence on proparoxytones in the lover's discourse. Linguistically, the diction appears hybridised, and accommodates a range of transliterations and calques (here we have, for example, *Xhin*, alluding to mythological domestic predatory spirits, and *Zanat*, demigoddesses of the mountains, but the process is far more extensive).<sup>45</sup> Multilingual inserts and neologisms in Hajdari's works are not simply signs of formal hybridisation, but instead serve to mark the transition to the epic, and to announce an affiliation with the Albanian tradition.

Within the interweaving of tropes and iconic love figures in this composition, Laura Toppan rightfully observes extensive references to transnational erotic and love poetry far beyond the Albanian-Italian horizon: from Konstantinos Kavafis to Adunis, from Nâzim Hikmet to Amaruka, from Jacques Prevert to Pablo Neruda.<sup>46</sup> In light of this

45 Other transliterations in further compositions of PG include *besa* (promise that regulates social norms), *Kanun* (traditional Albanian oral legal code), *Bektashi* (mystical Albanian confraternity to which the poet's family traditionally belongs), *Kulak* (Russian word that alludes to landowners), *robinje* (prisoner of war).

46 LAURA TOPPAN, *La Peligòrga di Gëzim Hajdari: «regina degli esuli in fuga»*, in «Italies. Littérature - Civilisation - Société», III (2009), <http://journals.openedition.org/italies/2690>.

present discourse it is important to underline that PG marks the passage to a full germination of Hajdari's erotic imagery, and closes on a deeply intertextual figuration of universal fertility: «tutto converge nella parola amore».<sup>47</sup> This concluding image confirms the emergence of a word that is mobile: relived and new, past and present, transmediterranean, hybrid, collective and plural all at once.

## CONCLUSION

Gëzim Hajdari's poetics is first and foremost a poetics of exile. A perception of otherness traverses all his works including PS, which represents a reflection and synthesis of his literary and theoretical investigation. This perception is related, from the initial works (de-territorialized *in patria*), to the sensual sphere, and it is through this sphere that it then develops, acquiring further nuances and taking on new trajectories. The poet transitions from a sense of individual otherness, radicalised by the actual exile and condition of displacement, to a sense of faith in the body's immanence and self-sufficiency, and finally to a collective sensing of the body in the later works, which open dialogically and dramatically to erotic imagery. Language, and in particular the acquisition of a second language as an effect of displacement, has an impact on this transition: firstly mobilising the relationship between signifier and signified, and then allowing for a sensual and material perception of words, which gain a physical weight on the page. Double language and intertextuality also allow the poet to open wide zones of contact and non-hierarchical hybridisation, with the effect of pluralising verses and scaffolding the scattering of the central subject in a number of utterances. The rhetoricisation and progressive epicisation of the verse drives the embodiment of eros and melancholy in a terrain which is historical and mythical, and expands the diachronic and diatopic coordinates of Hajdari's action. All of the elements in this progression drive Hajdari's versification towards a constitutive and increasing fluidity and openness. The poet builds a mobile, hybrid, multiple and inclusive word which on the one hand embraces instances of de-territorialisation, and on the other inscribes them in a broad, shared and universal horizon. These characteristics allow his versification to consolidate a transitional space for poetic productions in the Italian language, a space that is able to acknowledge the centrality of movement and celebrate hybridity as a crucial component in literary expression, within and beyond italphone contexts. These elements lead to the identification of a new transformative body, which not only sings the world but *becomes* the world: «Dentro di me sono un po' nessuno / e un po' tutti, / ubriaco di mondi» (PS 140, II-13).

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## PAROLE CHIAVE

Exophony; migration; exile; translingualism; eros; melancholy; otherness; body.

## NOTIZIE DELL'AUTRICE

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