Rainier Grutman

Introduction:

From Italian Insights to Self-Translation Studies

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Most of the papers gathered in this volume were originally presented, often in a shorter version and sometimes even in a different language, at the conference, *Tradurre se stessi / Translating Oneself*, held at Rome's Tor Vergata University on December 15-16, 2016. By organizing this conference, the members of the METE (Mediatori e Traduttori Europei) research group at Tor Vergata's Faculty of Arts (Macroarea di Lettere e Filosofia) join a growing body of scholars interested in the topic of writers whose writing across languages not only led them to build a bilingual oeuvre, but who actually made the effort and took the time to translate (some of) their own work in another language. Both this process and its outcome (i.e. the ensuing translations) are commonly referred to as 'self-translation'.

Self-translating writers can be found on every inhabited continent, with some regions of the world standing out, *e.g.* post-Franco Spain, the republics of the erstwhile Soviet Union, or the political unit known as the 'Indian subcontinent' (which also includes Pakistan and Bangladesh). The practice is quite popular as well among writers who either belong to immigrant communities or hail from the scattered remains of Europe's colonial empires, or both, such as the Bengali women studied here by Elisabetta Marino. These individuals have in common a dynamic situation of in-betweenness, which at the same time forces and allows them to straddle, renegotiate and reinvent linguistic and cultural borders.

1. The study of self-translation in France, Spain and Italy

This being said, it would be short-sighted to assume that self-translation is a new kid on the block, or chiefly concerns today's minority, immigrant, and postcolonial writing. Looking back in time, we see an equally impressive line-up. The late Middle Ages and the Renaissance, in particular, were fertile breeding grounds for self-translators. From the Trecento to the dawn of the 17th century, dozens if not hundreds of them actively participated in the vast transfer of knowledge known as *translatio studii*. This operation notoriously hinged on translation: Latin (and, to a lesser extent, Greek) texts had to be made available in Europe's recently established vernaculars. Over time, gravitational forces would attract bilingual writers to some of those very vernaculars, which had in the interval been empowered as national languages: Tuscan (at the expense of Venetian) in the Italian peninsula, Castilian (at the expense of Catalan) in the Spanish realm, Northern French (at the expense of Occitanian) in the kingdom of France.

It happens to be in these countries that research on self-translation first went beyond individual articles or monographs and took on institutional forms, such as conferences, research groups (*e.g.* the now-defunct AUTOTRAD, created by Francesc Parcerisas and Helena Tanqueiro at Barcelona's Autonomous University in 2002), or special issues of journals. This should come as no surprise: interest in self-translation seems to be directly proportionate to the previous existence of studies on literary bilingualism and diglossia, and more generally to an overall awareness of language variation and linguistic differences. A brief comparison of the current development of "self-translation studies" – to use the expression coined by Simona Anselmi (2012: 11) – in each of the aforementioned countries, suggests this is indeed the case.

France is no doubt the country where the powers that be were most 'successful' at weeding out what was pejoratively referred to in French as "patois", and at erasing linguistic difference in general. Consequently, French academics have paid little attention to bilingual writing and self-translation, supposedly because it was deemed less relevant for French literature. Michaël Oustinoff's book with that very title (*Bilinguisme d'écriture et auto-traduction*), grown out of a doctoral dissertation in English Studies defended at the University of Paris 3 – Sorbonne Nouvelle in 1997, remained the proverbial "hirondelle qui ne fait pas le printemps." Perhaps his focus on 'foreigners' did not help matters: Samuel Beckett, Vladimir Nabokov, Julien Green, Joseph Conrad and Oscar Wilde, though all iconic bilinguals, were still viewed as brilliant exceptions to the unwritten rule of monolingualism in literature. More systematic research, including on French avatars of self-translation, would take place later, and far away from Paris, in the country's Southern region known as the Midi, with its long tradition of diglossia studies and its close ties with the Catalan school of sociolinguistics (Christian Lagarde). In more recent years, the topic has caught the attention of comparative literature scholars working in the North: Christine Lombez (at Nantes) and Jean-Yves Masson (at Paris 4 – Sorbonne) are taking a closer look at the politics and poetics of 20th-century Provençal self-translators. The belatedness of French scholarship is all the more striking when one factors in that (at least) up to the middle of the 20th-century, French was the target language par excellence for self-translators (as exemplified by Italian writers like Goldoni, Ungaretti, Marinetti, Calvino, or indeed by Beckett himself, who chose French over German), an honour that has since been bestowed on English.

The phenomenon has attracted a lot more attention in Spain, for reasons linked both to the mushrooming of Translation Departments at Spanish universities since the 1990s, and to a kind

of 'boom' the practice of self-translation has been enjoying among bilingual writers themselves, chiefly in Catalonia, Galicia and the Basque Country (*cf.* Santoyo, 2005; Gallén, Lafarga, Pegenaute, 2010; Dasilva, Tanqueiro, 2011; Ramis, 2014; Manterola Agirrezabalaga, 2014). Even some conferences held outside of the Iberian peninsula (in Perpignan[1], France, in 2011, and Cork[2], Ireland, in 2013) were organized by specialists of Spain's minority languages and literatures. In addition to a large number of dissertations and an even larger number of individual articles, Spanish students of self-translation can be credited with some important early collective efforts, resulting most notably in special issues of two Barcelona-based periodical publications, *i.e.* the literary review, *Quimera* (in 2002), and the translation journal, *Quaderns* (in 2009).

In Italy, interest has been less pronounced among translation scholars – for the time being at least, and with the very important exception of Simona Anselmi (2012) – than in departments of (mostly modern) literature[3]. The latter have been most eager to host conferences: Chieti-Pescara[4] in 2010, Bologna[5] in 2011, Udine in 2012[6] (and already in 2010, when commemorating the Italian-Canadian self-translator, Dôre Michelut/Dorina Michelutti[7]), Rome in 2016 (and again in 2018), Milan in 2017.

Two decades ago, in 1998, the city of Florence organised a workshop on the topic as it pertained to migrant and postcolonial experiences. The outcome can be read in a special issue of *Semicerchio* (20-21, 2001), the poetry journal edited by Francesco Stella, with the telling title, *La lingua assente: Autotraduzione e interculturalità nella poesia europea*. Since then, several issues of academic journals have examined the link between self-translation and migrant writing (*Oltreoceano*, Udine, 5, 2011, ed. Alessandra Ferraro), the French-speaking world (*Interfrancophonies*, Bologna, 6, 2015, ed. Paola Puccini) and the many forms of life-writing (*Ticontre: Teoria Testo Traduzione*, Trento, 7, 2017, ed. Giorgia Falceri, Eva Gentes, and Elizabete Manterola).

When one considers Italy's historically varied and diverse languagescape, this hardly comes as a surprise. A linguistic atlas of the 'boot' would show, on the one hand, a host of

[1] Proceedings in Lagarde, Tanqueiro, 2012.
[2] Proceedings in Castro, Mainer, Page, 2017.
[3] See Nannavecchia (2014) for a more detailed mapping of both self-translation criticism at Italian universities and of self-translators most often studied by Italian scholars.
[4] Proceedings in Rubio Arquez, D'Antuono, 2012.
[5] Proceedings in Ceccherelli, Imposti, Perotto, 2013.
[6] Proceedings in Ferraro, Grutman, 2016.
[7] http://canadian-writers.athabascau.ca/english/writers/dmichelut/dmichelut.php

varieties that branched off from Latin (leaving in the middle the vexed question of whether they are mere 'dialects' of Italian or should be considered bona fide languages, as is generally admitted for Logudorese Sardinian or Friulian), and on the other, local varieties of German or French spoken but by minorities in and around the Alps. When studying Italian writers, one is bound to come across instances of bilingual writing, dual publishing, and self-translation.

2. Goldoni, Pirandello, Fenoglio, Gadda: the many faces of Italian self-translation

Not surprisingly, then, Italian scholars are well represented in early literature on the topic[8], long before "self-translation" was deemed an object of enquiry, that is. In what follows, I will try to show that much of that work – quite a bit of it still relevant today – was done in the 1970s (Giacomelli, 1970; Maraschio, 1972; Corti, 1974; Salibra, 1977), the 1960s (Nardi, 1960; Cronia, 1963; Missoni, 1967) and even the 1950s. That decade saw some of Italy's finest Romance philologists, Alberto Varvaro (1957) and Gianfranco Folena (1958), address respectively Luigi Pirandello's and Carlo Goldoni's "linguistic experiences" (to borrow the title from Folena's essay). Goldoni grew up in Venice (then still an independent Republic) in the first part of the 18th century, Pirandello in late 19th-century Sicily. Each was a major figure in the history of Italian literature and as such, wrote in the 'father tongue' handed by tradition from Dante, Petrarca, and Boccaccio. Each, however, chose to reserve a spot, not only in their heart but also in their oeuvre, for their *madrelingua*: Venetian for Goldoni and Sicilian (or, more specifically, *Agrigentino*) for Pirandello. Each explored the possibilities thereby created, amongst other things through translation of the self (*lato sensu*) and self-translation[9] (*stricto sensu*). Interestingly, both men also knew non-Italic languages: Pirandello wrote his thesis in German and Goldoni switched to French during his Paris exile. He would subsequently translate one of his French comedies (*Le Bourru bienfaisant*) into Italian (*Il Burbero di buon cuore*), bringing it back into the fold as it were.

A similar detour via a foreign language is documented in another early study, where Maria Corti (1974) shows the importance of what she baptized the *Ur-Partigiano Johnny*, an early draft of Beppe Fenoglio's most famous novel, in a kind of pastiche English. This 'no man's language',

[8] As documented for instance in Eva Gentes' regularly updated on-line bibliography at https://self-translation.blogspot.com/.

[9] Unlike Wilson (2011: 124 n. 4), I do consider it worthwhile to distinguish between a broader "process of translating oneself or one's own culture in writing", and a more specific "self-reflexive and inter-lingual creative process."

in turn, served as a stepping stone for a new kind of Italian, imbued and resonating with English, created by Fenoglio when rewriting his text. It is worth pointing out that in the title of her 1974 essay, Corti did not hesitate to call this process "self-translation" (*autotraduzione*).

As mentioned before, these decades-old publications are still relevant today for students of self-translation. So are the writers under study: when viewed together, Goldoni, Pirandello and Fenoglio give a fairly good idea of the variety of self-translational scenario's in Italy, a richness which begs to be explored more fully. A closer look at these three writers may help explain what I mean.

Beppe Fenoglio's *Partigiano Johnny*, as we know it today, was never finished by its author but rather reconstructed by means of complex philological procedures. While written in Italian, the English of its previous incarnations did not disappear entirely. The 'final' text still contains a fair number of English words and expressions, which I would be tempted to describe as unfinished self-translations. They pop up from the very beginning, as of the second sentence in fact, and without being "flagged[10]" (as sociolinguists say): "un intero reggimento davanti a due autoblindo tedesche not entirely manned, la deportazione in Germania in vagoni piombati avevano tutti convinto, familiari ed hangers-on, che Johnny non sarebbe mai tornato" (Fenoglio, 2014: 5, *sic*). Nor is the use of English restricted to realities (*realia*) linked to the advancement of U.S. troops and American presence in general: deep into the novel, we read that "Johnny fell in abstraction" (Fenoglio, 2014: 262), an awkward construction that suggests Femoglio is not simply inserting English into Italian. Considering that the process of rewriting through translation was interrupted, it seems entirely conceivable – but I will let the experts decide – that some original English expressions were left alongside their Italian equivalent in *Il Partigiano Johnny*. This, in turn, opens up at least the possibility of "intratextual self-translations", where "discourse unfolds in two languages, one translated from the other" (Santoyo, 2013: 31). What puts texts such as these apart from the much more commonly studied type of self-translation (which could be labelled "inter-textual" or, more aptly, "bi-textual") is that no second, independent, text results from the operation. Nor are original and self-translation presented side by side. Rather, there is only one text in two languages, each repeating and echoing each other, instead of completing

[10] "Flagged switches are marked at the discourse level by repetition, metalinguistic commentary, and other means of drawing attention to the switch" (Poplack, 2004: 593). In written discourse, italicizing the 'foreign' words is the preferred method for flagging a switch between languages. Fenoglio's text, by contrast, is remarkably devoid of such italics.

each other. The examples given by Julio-César Santoyo (2011) are for the most part poems but short prose passages could qualify as well, such as the "traduzioni in praesentia" identified by Clà Riatsch (1995: 308) in an important essay on Carlo Emilio Gadda's practice of adding metalinguistic glosses in his short stories (*L'Adalgisa*, 1944) and novels, most famously *La cognizione del dolore* (posth. 1963).

Going back to Goldoni and Pirandello, the two other writers studied in early work on self-translation, they allow us to make another important distinction, between what one could call *transalpine* and *cisalpine self-translators*, *i.e.* bilingual authors whose writing practice crosses the Alps (like Goldoni), and in doing so, involves 'international' languages, vs. those who (like Pirandello) self-translate within the framework of national diglossia. Each illustrates two fundamentally different language dynamics that give rise to different categories of self-translators. Elsewhere, I labelled them 'migratory' and 'sedentary' (Grutman, 2015), using terms originally coined for different birds species, in order to highlight the at once straightforward and complicated relationship between language and space in 'exogenous' vs. 'endogenous' forms of bilingualism.

Exogenous bilingualism refers to the learning and use of another language outside of the original speech community, while changing countries or at least crossing a linguistic border. 'Migratory' self-translators, then, work between languages separated by space, a distance that facilitates the creation of double texts, of twins mirroring each other's image, in particular when the languages involved are of equal or at least comparable cultural standing, as is the case for Stefan George, Georges-Arthur Goldschmidt, Julien Green and Samuel Beckett (studied here by Alessandra D'Atena, Olaf Müller, Simona Munari and Rossana Sebellin). The same cannot be said of the equally large category of 'sedentary' self-translators, whose work combines languages that share the same (geographical if not always social) space. Born and raised in "endogeneously" bilingual (or, more exactly, diglossic) communities, they did not come across other languages far away from home but could hear and learn them without leaving their front doorstep, so to speak. They did, however, have to contend with the messy political stuff that societal bilingualism tends to involve as a result of the power differential often ensuing from prolonged language contact. Such was (and is) the case for the large contingent of 'always already' bilingual Basque self-translators described in these pages by Elizabete Manterola Agirrezabalaga, but also for Spain's other linguistic minorities.

In Italy as well, since the advent of television (De Mauro, 2014: 95-96), local dialects and regional languages have coexisted with official Italian in everyday life. This rather peaceful (in comparison with the Spanish situation, that is) cohabitation is reflected in a large number of poetry collections juxtaposing dialect originals and Italian self-translations. *L'Autotraduzione nei poeti dialettali* (Cozzoli, 2003) remains an understudied object, unfortunately, even though Andrea Zanzotto (from the Veneto region) and Franco Loi (from Genova) have become household names among Italian poetry aficionados. Paying more attention to the endolinguistic dimension of self-translation might even allow scholars of Italian literature to revisit the most canonical of works: it seems worthwhile, for instance, to re-examine in that light the avatars of Alessandro Manzoni's *Betrothed* (*I Promessi Sposi*), not as steps in a rewriting process but as a self-translation from Milanese to Florentine variaties of Italian.

As if "interlingual" and "intralingual" translations were not enough, the Italian harvest is even more plentiful when one adds Roman Jakobson's third dimension, *i.e.* "intersemiotic translation", meaning "an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems" (Jakobson, 1959: 233; rpt. in Venuti, 2000: 114). Luigi Pirandello's habit of turning short stories into plays would qualify him as an intersemiotic self-translator, insofar as plays can indeed be considered multimedia events combining both acoustic (spoken text, music, sound effects…) and visual signs (decors, costumes, make-up, gestures and movements), some verbal and some not. Emanuele Licastro (1974: 181) lists no less than fourteen – even allowing for a maximum of seventeen – plays that Pirandello derived directly from one or more of his *novelle*. Things can get even more complicated, however. When comparing *Il berretto a sonagli* (1919) with its two sources of inspiration, the 1912 short stories, *Certi obblighi* and *La verità*, Licastro (1974: 17-35) fails to mention that the play in question was actually a self-translation of *'A birritta cu' i ciancianeddi*, first written in Sicilian (for Angelo Musco) and performed in that version at Rome's Teatro Nazionale, on 27 June 1917. Needless to say, instances such as these, where a writer changes languages when and in addition to changing genres, are all the more fascinating to study.

No map of Italian self-translation would be complete without a look at the Renaissance, so important in the cultural history of the peninsula and so crucial for a broader appreciation of self-translation (*cf.* Hokenson, Munson, 2007: 19-77, as well as several essays in Rubio Arquez, D'Antuono, 2012 and Le Blanc, Simonutti, 2015: 205-272). It is therefore only fitting that among

the earliest efforts to describe the phenomenon – albeit it still in terms of bilingualism rather than translation – one should find Nicoletta Maraschio's 1972 articles on the twin versions of Leon Battista Alberti's *Della pittura/De Pictura* (1435-1441).

3. Initial insights

A last group of relevant essays published in Italian in the 1960s and 1970s focusses on foreign writers who either wrote some of their work directly in Italian – a line of enquiry later pursued by philologists at Padova (Folena, 1983: 359-469, Brugnolo, 2009, 2014) – or rewrote it in that adoptive language. Such was the case of 19th-century Ragusan poet and playwright, Ivo Vojnović (whose "autoversioni" are studied by Cronia, 1963 and Missoni, 1967), as well as the Rumanian poets, Gheorghe Asachi and Ion Heliade Radulescu. A closer look at their Italian poems produced the very first article where a real attempt is made to define and understand "self-translation as a particular type of translation", as per the title used by Alexandru Niculescu (1973: 305), then active in Bucarest but who would go on to teach at the University of Udine. Writing in Italian, Niculescu uses the word "autotraduzione", which he defines as "la traduzione fatta dall'autore stesso" (*ibid*.), referencing an unpublished talk given in 1972 by Gianfranco Folena at the Circolo linguistico–filologico di Padova ("Goldoni traduttore di se stesso" – which coincidentally prefigures the Italian title of the conference at Rome-Tor Vergata: *Tradurre se stessi*).

Though the scope of his article was limited to writers who self-translate in an acquired language (whereas other translingual writers translate "back" as it were, into their mother tongue and yet others have two native languages), Niculescu's conclusions bear quoting at length, as he makes several points that will often recur in more recent writing on self-translation and, in particular, on individual self-translators (though his pioneering article is hardly ever referenced):

> […] l'AT si distingue come un tipo particolare di traduzione. Fatta da una L1, che è la lingua materna, in una L2 che è una lingua straniera ben conosciuta dall'autore, oppure da una L2 nella L1, l'AT è sempre un problema di doppia appartenenza culturale: l'autore mira a partecipare a due culture, a due letterature. In funzione di questo *sdoppiamento* di un'opera poetica, l'autore-traduttore si permette modifiche e cambiamenti che in una traduzione di traduttore non sarebbero ammessi: egli cancella, sostituisce e aumenta il testo originale. L'AT incide su tutta la struttura del poema e può avere come risultato un altro testo poetico, con un'altra validità poetica. Non si può, purtroppo, dire che una AT

> riesce sempre ad imporsi in un altro contesto letterario con lo stesso valore della prima versione. Le competenze poetiche non sono uguali alle competenze linguistiche.
>
> Il *genus proximum* dell'AT è la traduzione interpretativa fatta da un grande autore: anche una personalità letteraria ha il diritto di *ricreare* un poema tradotto nella sua lingua (i casi di Charles Baudelaire, Ezra Pound, Diego Valeri, Tudor Arghezi, ecc.). La *differentia specifica* di fronte ad una AT consiste in ciò che un autore-traduttore si permette di fare perfino delle *aggiunte* al testo suo originale.
>
> Perciò consideriamo che l'AT non è un semplice caso di *versione* o di *rifacimento,* che dipende da cause esterne (codici socioculturali diversi), bensì un caso di sdoppiamento interno dell'autore, un caso di doppia cultura di un individuo. L'autore che traduce se stesso si trova, per sua propria volontà, all'impatto di due storie culturali e letterarie diverse. (Niculescu, 1973: 316)

The competence required from a self-translator is immediately defined in terms that go beyond the level of language: the exercise presupposes a significant degree of familiarity with the poetics of the target literary system. A lack thereof might explain why self-translations, though valid, fail to repeat the aesthetic success of their models (the example of Brodsky, reportedly on much more solid footing in Russian poetry than in its American equivalent, comes to mind). Niculescu also speaks of "double" belonging and "double" texts, introducing imagery that would prove very fruitful in Beckett criticism, for instance.

His article, finally, is an early example of what has become an overarching tendency in literary studies of self-translation (as opposed to studies of literary self-translation) that stress the 'competitive edge' self-translating writers have over 'standard' translators. Self-translation, Niculescu argues, is in the same league as "interpretive translation done by great writers", whose "literary personality" gives them "the right to *recreate*". It apparently does not befit writers worth their salt to content themselves with 'simply' translating. Instead, they presumably take greater liberties: "egli cancella, sostituisce e aumenta il testo originale." The last procedure, in particular, is seen by Niculescu as the defining feature (*differentia specifica*) of self-translation.

Claims such as these are common yet rarely based on actual comparative analyses of existing allographic translations. They often rest on an idealistic and even skewed view of what translation should be. Underlying many of these assumptions we find what Theo Hermans, in a different context, called "a transcendental and utopian conception of translation as reproducing the original, the whole original and nothing but the original" (1985: 9). Many writers and literary critics, seemingly neither burdened nor bothered by close to half a century of work carried in the

interdiscipline of Translation Studies, still conceive of translations along similarly platonic lines, using the above-mentioned standard (which very few, if any, actual translations live up to) as a *tertium comparationis*, as a yardstick even. When self-translations are evaluated against this *Idealtype* (in Max Weber's sense), their nature as exceptions is a foregone conclusion. Following the peculiar logic exhibited by this kind of scholarship, self-translations, precisely because they do not measure up to a largely imaginary standard of 'fidelity,' somehow end up belonging to another category, one that is not only different but also quite a bit more prestigious in literary circles: that of "rewriting".

In actual fact, things turn out to be less clear-cut. For each Eileen Chang, who has been said to expand on her work to the point of "undermining her own original formulations" (Li, 2006: 99) when crossing over from English into Mandarin Chinese (neither of which was her native language), and each Carme Riera (2002), who simply does not believe literature can be translated and is famous for rearranging her Catalan novels and short stories when turning them into Castilian Spanish, we can find counter-examples. Their liberty and authority as self-translators notwithstanding, neither Afrikaner André Brink (Ehrlich 2009) nor Brazilian João Ubaldo Ribeiro (Antunes 2009: 230-1) went beyond generally accepted procedures but instead have been shown to conform to widespread trends known as "universals of translation".

Familiarity with these universals, but also with the vagaries of translation throughout history, might explain why translation scholars are less likely to situate self-translation outside of the realm of translation. Only a few years after Niculescu gave the paper (in April 1972 at a prestigious conference in Trieste) that became the article we just looked at, Slovak theoretician, Anton Popovič published his definition of "*Authorized* Translation (*autotranslation*) : The translation of an original work into another language by the author himself." (Popovič, 1975: 19) The rest of Popovič's definition, though seldom quoted, is also worth reading:

> Due to its modeling relation to the original text, the autotranslation *cannot be regarded as a variant of the original text but as a true translation*. This follows from a change of the axiological as well as stylistic and linguistic field into which the original prototext [= source text] enters. (Popovič, 1975: 19; emphasis mine)

Popovič's situates the target text ("metatext" in his terminology, which has been circulated in Italy by Bruno Osimo and Daniela Laudani) against the background of the receiving culture

and its horizon of expectations. His was (and remains) a minority position, sharply at odds with the one taken by Niculescu and many students of literature, who tend to overestimate the creative aspect of authorial translations without always backing up this claim. Instead of providing comparative analyses, some even posit, as a matter of principle, their status as "non-translations", bolstered by the idea that self-translators, *qua* authors of the original, are bound to depart from standard practice because of the compounded effect of their authority and agency (Grutman, Van Bolderen, 2014). In extreme cases, one gets the impression self-translation is conceivable only on the condition that it ceases to be translation[11].

4. New Avenues

All this amounts to little more than a *petitio principii*, however. At first sight, it may seem logical to assume that self-translators "allow [themselves] bold shifts from the source texts" that normally "would not have passed as an adequate translation." But Menakhem Perry (1981: 181), whom I have just quoted, is quick to add that "one should check whether these shifts are really the consequence of the act of transferring from one literature to another, or whether they are changes that occurred in the poetics of the writer himself" during the interval between both versions. One could go further: when examining the liberties taken (or not) by a given self-translator, it would be fruitful to compare her with other writers of the same period and literary background, who translated from and into the same languages and had to work with similar constraints (in terms of genre, aesthetics, and so on – this is broadly what Popovič was referring to in 1975). Equally instructive – as I suggested a long time ago when reviewing Brian Fitch's pioneering book on Samuel Beckett (Grutman, 1991: 126) – are parallel studies of self-translations and other translations done by the same author, or, conversely, of translations of the same author but by other hands. Both avenues have been actively explored in recent research.

[11] At the 2018 convention of the Northeast Modern Language association (NeMLA) in Pittsburgh, participants could attend a roundtable with the provocative title, *Self-translation is Not Translation at All*. In his call for papers, Yves Cloarec questioned the very notion of "translation" as applied to bilingual writers : "Unlike the translator of someone else's work, a self-translator does not translate: she 'thinks' in both languages. Self-translation, then, may not be translation at all, but be merely the process of creating 'the same' literary work in a different language." The "self" gets redefined in the process as well : "a multilingual writer possesses as many 'identities' as the number of languages mastered. In this sense, the term 'Self-Translation' is doubly erroneous, as it is neither the text nor the self that is being translated; rather, what we call a self-translation is in fact an artistic creation by a transformed, 'different' self" (as per the call for papers posted on https://www.cfplist.com/CFP/12989, last consulted on Sep. 14, 2018). The convention program shows that some panellists (Mona Eikel-Pohen, Sultana Raza) presented their own writing, while others (Zhanna Yablokova, Piotr Gwiazda) discussed self-translations by well-known and well-studied authors such as Nabokov and Milosz.

Eduardo Zuccato (2017) compared how Italy's "poeti neodialettali" translated foreign writers with the poetics underlying their self-translations. In the opening essay of this volume, Simona Anselmi illustrates the potential of both approaches. She first examines how Raymond Federman translated Beckett's short story, "Premier amour", as opposed to how Beckett himself proceeded. Then, she takes a closer look at how self-translators (Beckett, again, and South African Antjie Krog) went about translating work by other writers. Armed with the results of more such studies, we will be in a much better position to discern self-translational trends, be it in terms of countries or generations, of aesthetics (poetics) or genres.

The essays in this volume address some of the more pressing issues and open up some promising vistas. A first step would be to study the dynamic and shifting nature of the borders between translation, non-translation and self-translation. They are intuitively explored by bilingual writers (see my contribution on Jhumpa Lahiri's and Amara Lakhous' resistance to either the practice or the label of 'self-translation') but can be empirically examined and described by scholars.

The category of *genre*, both in terms of which literary genres are preferred by (either novice or seasoned) self-translators and of the ways in which the choice of a given genre facilitates (I hesitate to write 'dictates') certain types of translation, strikes me as another useful tool for the mapping of self-translation.

The link with various forms of life-writing (from autobiographies to language memoirs) is almost self-explanatory, as these genres allow writers to document their linguistic biographies and trajectories, as well as the attitudes they developed towards their languages in the course of their lifetime: "A writer's biography is in his twists of language," Joseph Brodsky (1986: 3) wrote at the outset of *Less than One*. Other famous examples include Vladimir Nabokov (*Speak, Memory* and its previous incarnations) and Ariel Dorfman (*Rumbo al sur, deseando el norte: un romance bilingüe*, and its American equivalent). In these pages, Olaf Müller draws our attention to Georges-Arthur Goldschmidt's German reworking of *La traversée des fleuves*, his French autobiography, while Simona Munari revisits the case of Julian/Julien Green, whose musings on language and translations betray his discomfort with the "disagreement", "discord" and "dissonance" (his words), not only between words and thought, but also between his two languages and what he felt to be their dissimilar world views (*Weltanschauungen*).

A second important genre is poetry. Given how time-consuming preparing a second version often is, it may not be a coincidence that so many self-translations concern poetic texts. Perhaps their brevity is a deciding factor, plus the fact that poetry (as opposed to the polyphonic and heteroglossic genre of the novel) need not be grounded in a socio-linguistic reality and even allows for the creation of an idiolect (as in the case of Stefan George, studied here by Alessandra D'Atena).

Dramatic works are a different story altogether: self-translating playwrights wishing to reach a new public by means of their new version will want to polish the language of their characters in order to meet audience expectations in matters of colloquial fluency. The (real or self-perceived) lack of such fluency pushed the Polish-American playwright, Janusz Głowacki, to enlist the services of native speaker and fellow-writer, Joan Torres, for the English versions of his plays. In his article, Alessandro Amenta highlights a third important aspect, namely the far from uncommon case of self-translations *à quatre mains* (for several typologies, see Dasilva, 2016; Sperti, 2016; Gentes, 2016: 213-240; Hersant, 2017).

Taking stock of the insights gained in the four decades that have passed since Niculescu's essay, and especially since the beginning of the 21st century, we can gather together the information provided by individual cases and turn our gaze towards the larger dynamics of self-translation. The time seems ripe to end the *splendid isolation* in which the "stars" of self-translation have often been studied. By saying this, I do not mean to diminish their value (I happen to teach and admire Beckett's work, for example), but only to remind us that their often exceptional status prevents them from facilitating a holistic understanding of self-translation *as such*. A portrait gallery, no matter how impressive, can only yield a partial and fragmented view (Grutman, 2013, 2016). More systematic work, examples of which can be found in the following pages, needs to be done if we want "self-translation studies" to develop into a field of enquiry relevant to both translation scholars and literary critics, which it most definitely deserves to become.

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