SELF-TRANSLATION AS PROBLEM FOR ITALIAN-CANADIAN AUTHORS

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There is often the sense of self-betrayal when bilingual authors self-translate their literary works. In this paper in Comparative Literature the author examines the works of Italian-Canadian authors, in particular Maria Ardizzi, Antonio D'Alfonso, Arianna Dagnino, Licia Canton, Filippo Salvatore, Gianna Patriarca and Alexandre Amprimoz, in terms of their practice of self-translation and the problems that they encounter and try to overcome.

Auto-traduzione: problemi rilevati in autori italo-canadesi
Sovente quando gli autori bilingui si auto-traducono emerge un ineluttabile senso di tradimento del sé. Adottando un approccio comparativo, questo saggio esamina le opere auto-tradotte di scrittori italo-canadesi quali Maria Ardizzi, Antonio D'Alfonso, Arianna Dagnino, Licia Canton, Filippo Salvatore, Gianna Patriarca e Alexandre Amprimoz al fine di individuare i problemi che incontrano nella loro pratica autotraduttiva e le strategie che vengono adottate per risolverli.

Difficulties in Self-Translation

Arianna Dagnino identified one of the problems with self-translation when she examined her own practice in translating her Italian novel, *Fossili* into English as *The Afrikaner*. She expressed it as a sense of literary betrayal, and self-betrayal as she transferred the text from one language into another ("Dialogically assisted self-translation in the 'translab'": 97). This gives the old Italian adage, "traduttore, traditore", a new meaning.

In this essay I will examine the work of several Italian-Canadian writers in terms of their practice of self-translation and the problems that they encounter and try to overcome. These authors are: Maria Ardizzi, Antonio D'Alfonso, Arianna Dagnino, Licia Canton, Filippo Salvatore, Gianna Patriarca and Alexandre Amprimoz.

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Historically writers have often had problems with translations of their work by others. There is the famous example of Galileo Galilei who published all his early work in Latin, the language of science at the time, but became dissatisfied with the repeated misunderstandings and controversy. He made *Sidereus Nuncius* (1610), his observations on the moon and planets through his telescope, his last book in Latin. From that point on he became his own translator publishing his major works in clear Italian and meant for a wider audience.

The different literary styles of languages are one of the major problems translators confront. Maria Ardizzi has published four Italian novels in Canada. In her early novels, *Made in Italy* and *Il Sapore agro della mia terra*, Ardizzi uses an Italian that is influenced by English plain style rather than the more complex sentence structure of literary Italian. The main character in *Made in Italy* is an old woman, Nora Moretti who speaks frankly to her husband who returned to Italy to die: «Sei tornato a morire qui… L'avresti mai creduto? Io non potrò tornare a morire qui invece… e non perché non voglia. Semplicemente perché tra me e questi luoghi s'è spezzato il filo. Riconosco i luoghi, ma i luoghi non riconoscono me…» (125).

This plain style is suited to an English-Canadian work to such a degree that we can argue that Ardizzi is writing Canadian literature in Italian. This raises an interesting literary phenomenon in language exchange. Ardizzi is approaching a form of self-translation by consciously adopting English plain style in her Italian. As the Italian quotation above suggests Ardizzi feels no sense of self-betrayal by rejecting Italian culture and style.

For an example of Italian writing style I will quote one sentence by journalist Paolo Rumiz who has published more than thirty books, many about his travels in Europe and beyond.

> Quella distesa incantata e invisibile dal basso, chiamata Pian Grande, dove l'unico modo di camminare in quel mese d'aprile era andare scalzi per meglio sentire la voce della Terra, quella prateria già serpeggiante di vita che a maggio avrebbe conosciuto la più celebrate fioritura d'Europa – il giallo, il viola, il rosso e l'azzurro delle lenticchie, dei papaveri e degli iris – era il centro della linea di faglia che aveva scosso l'Appennino e allo stesso tempo il centro perfetto della Penisola che stava in mezzo al Mediterraneo (7).

This is the second paragraph from the first page of his book, *Il filo infinito: Viaggio alle radici d'Europa* (2019). The entire paragraph is one sentence and would be difficult or impossible to translate into English as one sentence. Unlike French and Italian, English nouns do not have a gender. Therefore it is necessary to use shorter sentences than those often found in Romance languages. This has influenced English plain style from the time of Shakespeare when

English Renaissance writers experimented with the more ornate writing styles they found in Italian and French writing, but eventually chose the English plain style as more suitable for the English language, a hybrid language with old Germanic roots.

The practice of self-translation leads some authors to introspective analysis of the process. Antonio D'Alfonso explores his languages through the essay collection, *In Italics: The Defense of Ethnicity* (1996) and his French translation, *En Italiques* (2000).

Arianna Dagnino conducts detailed self-analysis in "Dialogically assisted self-translation in the 'translab': A case study in the Italian-English language combination" (2018) and Licia Canton explains the personal conditions for self-translation in "Se traduire au quotidien" (2015) and in English, "Writing Canadian Narratives with Italian Accents: *The Pink House and Other Stories*" (2019).

In the above-cited essay on the collaborative nature of self-translation, Arianna Dagnino explains her first experience with a professional translation of her Italian novel *Fossili* (2010) into English: «It was undoubtedly a good translation, and professionally done; however, I must admit I was far from satisfied with it. To me the text sounded hollow – almost soulless. My voice, the rhythm of my literary voice, was not there» ("Dialogically assisted self-translation in the 'translab'": 85). The chapters in English were rejected by three publishers so the author abandoned the idea at that time and focussed on her PhD work at the University of South Australia. By 2015 Dagnino was in Canada teaching at the University of British Columbia and turned to her novel once more: «This time, however, I decided I would translate it myself. I would try to find my voice in another language, infusing my work with the right rhythm and poetic tone. It took me almost two years to complete the self-translation…» ("Dialogically assisted self-translation in the 'translab'": 85).

Dagnino soon became aware of the differences between her Italian style and the needs of the English style. By its nature Italian can be a wordy language which is difficult to reduce to English plain style. From her Italian perspective the author wanted to keep as much as possible the sensory aspect, the physicality, the sentimental and poetic qualities of her original text. The English text needed to be detached, restrained and succinct. The French call this problem *les belles infidèles*, the need to make changes in the target language in order to suit the tastes of the given audience. The new title was now *The Afrikaner*; the English translation of the Italian title is 'fossils' which would have suggested a text on anthropology rather than a novel. In my reading of *The Afrikaner* I found that it was a successful work of self-translation. The author was able to keep the sensual and rich description of the desert landscape: «The territory

has spectacular red sand dunes, with solitary black-maned lions roaming the open pans. Occasionally, mighty baobabs rise amidst arid plains… Some of those giants are more than a thousand years old» (92).

The book begins with a glossary of the one hundred Afrikaans words used in the text. In the novel these Afrikaans terms are often in italics, nevertheless they seem to fit easily into the flow of the English, possibly because of the common Germanic roots of many words. I wonder how well Afrikaans words fit into the flow of written Italian. I suggest that because of the African setting and the hybrid quality of English, the novel is a better work in English than in Italian. This quality becomes evident upon close reading and the feeling that it could not exist in any other language. The collaborative process of self-translation that Dagnino used led her to make many changes to the original text, as she was rewriting it in English ("Dialogically assisted self-translation in the 'translab'": 90). From her Italian perspective Dagnino may still feel a sense of betrayal of her original Italian text; however, she also realized that self-translation can be a collaborative process, a creative combination leading to a sense of cultural roundedness and artistic integrity (97).

A Canadian writer who lives in Paris, Nancy Huston, makes it part of her writing practice to compose her novels in French and later to rewrite them into English. The results are mixed: her French novels often win awards while her English novels are frequently not well received by critics and readers. Her self-analysis of self-translation is found in her book, *Nord Perdu* (1999), which she translated as *Losing North* (2002). In *Writing it Twice*, Sara Kippur laments that: «of the ways that self-translation articulates, itself both as a literary practice and as a scholarly field, from a position of instability» (14).

Self-Translation in Montreal

For Italian-Canadian authors living in Montreal, the activity of self-translation is not limited to a writing practice but can become an everyday necessity as they navigate the languages of French, English and Italian. Licia Canton explains her daily reality in these terms: «Je change de chapeau souvent et je passé d'une langue à l'autre aussi souvent. Par le fait meme que j'habite l'ile de Montréal, Quebec, où le bilinguisme et le multiliguisme se manifestent au quotidian, il est inevitable que je pratique l'autotraduction à l'oral come à l'écrit» (87).

Almost by accident Antonio D'Alfonso has ventured into the minefield of self-translation as a tool to explore and experiment with his own writing practice. D'Alfonso is a bilingual artist who also lives in the multilingual city of Montreal and so is constantly dealing with both English and French and trans-

lating back and forth on a daily basis. However for D'Alfonso, his linguistic condition is more complicated than two languages. Even the term 'bilingual' is not sufficient since D'Alfonso speaks and writes in three languages: English, French and Italian. However, he identifies most closely with the term 'bilingual poet' since his greatest success has come from his poetry, especially his French poetry for which he has won many literary awards. In his own writing he has experimented by composing first in one language such as French and then translating into another. He has also written in Italian and in his parents' Molisan dialect, Guglionesano, and then translated into English or French or both to see how this affects the text he is working on at the time. In his book, *The Other Shore* he explains that his writing is always translation from one language to another:

> Already a transformation occurs:
> from Guglionesano, I must translate
> into Italian. When I write I translate.
> Sometimes no translation occurs. The
> words or phrases come directly into
> English or French. A linkage of differences (109).

To the double perspective of English and French D'Alfonso adds the third one of Italian; not just the Italian of the immigrant, but the Italian with 1,000 years of culture from the Mediterranean. We see this in his polemical poems such as "Where Do I begin?" and "To Maintain Your Identity", and also "The Loss of a Culture" (*Other Shore*: 58-60). In one poem he asks, «The Italian culture: what does it mean to be Italian today if you live outside Italy?» (*Other Shore*: 75) As part of this identity search there are many Italian sentences, phrases and words in *The Other Shore* (1986). In contrast there are very few Italian words in D'Alfonso's earlier books, *Black Tongue* (1983) and *Queror* (1979).

To try to understand the problems of identity and the roles that languages and self-translation play, D'Alfonso has also experimented with poetic forms such as prose-poems and poetic novels. Poetic experiments make translation even more difficult than it already is. D'Alfonso also translated poet Pasquale Verdicchio into French and some Quebec poets into Italian. He originally wrote *Avril ou l'anti-passion* (1990) in French and then re-wrote this novel in English as *Fabrizio's Passion* (1995), which was subsequently translated into Italian by Antonello Lombardi thus giving the novel a different orientation from an Italian perspective.

We also see this rich diversity in his polemical essay collection *In Italics* (1996). The different essays express opinions on a variety of issues that affect

Canadian authors and publishers: cultural appropriation, minority identity, English language writing in Quebec and translation. During his time in Montreal, as a writer, editor and professional translator in the 1980s D'Alfonso epitomized the minority artist in Quebec caught in the maze of French nationalist and federalist politics and culture. The political dimension in this volume is so all-pervasive that we begin to take it for granted, like the intrigue in a spy novel. It seems that writing in French is sometimes not enough to be accepted in Quebec. And, like Nancy Huston, he asks, «Is writing in English sufficient to be accepted in the rest of Canada?» (D'Alfonso. "A Lierary Culture…": 61). This political reading is the subtext in his essay "A Literary Culture in Search of a Tradition", where he examines the work of other Quebec writers of Italian background: Fulvio Caccia, Marco Micone, Mary Melfi and Filippo Salvatore.

Self-Translation as Dialogue

D'Alfonso has gradually adopted the strategy of self-translation as a means of exploring his own ambiguous linguistic condition in Quebec: a bilingual/trilingual writer and a fragmented identity. The translation of his work from French into English creates a constant displacement from one literary space to another. Self-translation blurs the traditional literary boundaries between the French traditions and the English. It also blurs the lines between the 'original' work and the 'translation' as a mere copy. D'Alfonso's *The Other Shore* was translated into *L'Autre ravage*. His lament in the opening note, «This book of broken verses, broken thoughts, about broken feelings. This, a notebook without a beginning, without an end, only a flowing towards being, a growing; contradictions and explanations» (*Other Shore*: 7) is echoed in the note to the French version: «Ce livre de vers brisés, de pensées brisés, a propose de sentiments brisés» (*L'Autre ravage*: 5). The verses and thoughts are fragmented into different languages in the poet's head. Is he also feeling a sense of self-betrayal as expressed by Dagnino?

From this we can surmise that when D'Alfonso composes he is working simultaneously in two languages or more. Because he is writing parts in French and other parts in English and then translating the English passages into French how do you determine the language of the original text? What does this practice mean for the author's own understanding of, and intentions for the text? Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of dialogism may be useful to explain the many levels of dialogic connections in the process of self-translation in the case of Antonio D'Alfonso's work.

Bakhtin explains that many literary texts are dialogic when the voice of the

author is in dialogue or in argument with another voice (or voices) in the text. He calls this the double-voiced word, a conceptual tool which we can use to explain dialogism in the self-translation process involving two languages; two voices in the same text or in two sister texts. Let us consider some brief examples of this in D'Alfonso's poems:

In *The Other Shore* he dedicated the poem, "Roma" to Mary di Michele:

> Roma. Rain. Roaming along
> Lungotevere. Past midnight.
> Under an umbrella too small for two (131).

The French version of these opening lines is different:

> Roma. Sous la pluie.
> Errand par le Lungotevere. Après minuit.
> Sous un parapluie trop petite pour deux (*L'Autre ravage*: 102).

The difference is the alliteration, "Roma. Rain. Roaming…" which is repeated four times in the English poem. Playing with the sound of Roma and roaming is not possible in French and so the sense of slow ponderous movement in the heavy rain late at night is not as well reproduced by the missing onomatopoeia. Here D'Alfonso is in a dialogue with Mary di Michele as they recall the rainy night in Rome. This dialogic dimension is maintained in the French, «Voulant tellement comprendre le passé qu'on nous a volé» (*L'Autre ravage*: 102).

Sometimes the two voices are in argument or in denial as D'Alfonso explains in a note at the end of his 2014 poem collection: «*The Irrelevant Man* is different from *Un ami, un nuage* (Le Noroit, 2013). One is not the translation of the other. Poems get written in various languages. I remember one being written in French first and a second in English and a third in Italian» (133). To my reading, though, they are sister texts.

This dialogism is particular to polyphonic texts and to self-translated texts which become sister texts engaged in a dialogue with the reader. The two texts are also engaged in a dialogue with each other as well as with other texts in the different languages of readers. The phenomenon becomes a multicultural self-dialogue spread over a number of texts by the same author, in this case Antonio D'Alfonso. These sister texts continue the dialogue-argument begun 28 years earlier with *The Other Shore* and with other texts such as Mary di Michele's "Rome Wasted in the Rain", a poem for Antonio D'Alfonso, from her collection *Immune to Gravity* (1986):

I find my way through this city
like a woman through the arms
of a married lover (117).

The poetry of Antonio D'Alfonso is a very good example of Bakthin's dialogism and demonstrates the many levels that can be found in self-translation. In her essay, "Dialogically assisted self-translation", Dagnino also uses Bakthin's theories to explore the collaborative approaches to translation.

Living Translation

In his seminal essay "Grounds for Translation", poet Doug Jones explains that all Canadian writers want to be heard, not just by their own language community but also by those from other languages and cultures. That is why we translate he argues (Jones 84). It is for the same reason, I believe, that D'Alfonso has translated the work of many other writers. He believes in the process of translating Canadian works from French into English and vice versa. He has backed this belief by getting books by Quebec authors translated into English and then publishing them through his former press, Guernica Editions. There are well over 100 titles of translated works in the Guernica catalogue of 2009.

In his often-quoted poem "Babel" D'Alfonso explores the confusion of growing up in the many languages of Montreal. Out of the cacophony of despair the poem ends with a glimmer of hope, a possible direction for the future:

Dio where shall I be demain
(trop vif) qué puedo saber yo
spero che la terra be mine (*Other Shore*: 57).

From this reading of Antonio D'Alfonso's bilingual writing we can see that self-translation in Quebec is part of everyday life.

This personal aspect of self-translation is also evident in the short stories of Licia Canton who writes primarily in English and translates into French, Italian and her native Veneto dialect. In her poems "Risposta agli antenati" and "Scrittore", we have the poems in dialect next to the standard Italian versions. In this experiment Canton writes "Scrittrice" from a woman's point of view with "Scrittore" from a man's point of view. Since the author grew up speaking the Veneto dialect at home with her parents, we get the impression that the poems in dialect are more personal than those in standard Italian even though many of the words are similar, «el Omo pi staordinario del mondo vien a leto con mi ae ventitré» (440). In "Bimba abbandonata", she recreates the last day a father

spends with his three-year old daughter before he leaves for Canada in 1966. Both in the dialect version and the Italian version there is a very personal memory behind the author's words. Again, the words in dialect seem to have more emotional resonance:

> Basta sigare, dai che
> fra poco 'ndemo anche
> noantre dove ch'el ze (444).

In *The Pink House* Canton published her meditative scene, "Refuge in the Vineyard" in English. The young mother juxtaposes her childhood memories of hiding in the family vineyard in order to find peace away from her noisy family with the more recent arguments with her father who has returned to Italy after many years in Canada. He wants her to come to visit him more often with the grandchildren. The English version includes many words and sentences in Italian which often repeat the English words. These Italian words seem to be emotional triggers that emphasize the tension between the young mother and her unhappy father.

> *"Non vieni mai,"* he complained. She was here now.
> *"Non porti mai I bambini,"* he grumbled. They were all here now (40).

The Italian version published in an Italian anthology includes only a few English words in the text. The original experience of childhood would not have had any English words. Only in the memory recreating that early experience do we get the bare suggestion of an English perspective. The force of the Italian words is allowed to play the major role, particularly in the short dialogue between mother and son. While hiding in the vineyard now as an adult, the mother reflects on the harsh words of her father who wants her to visit him in Italy more often. «Quest'anno gli aveva portato i bambini. E ancora si lamentava» (237). Her youngest son comes to find her in the vineyard. With only a few words, but more by his presence, he restores her sense of self-worth. «Questo ragazzino le dà tutto il necessario per rimanere» (340). We sense the intimacy of mother and child, the most profound of close relationships. This is in contrast to the two worlds that separate the mother and her father in Italy.

The Italian version is a realistic recreation of the experiences in Italy that has more impact than the original English text. In my reading, Canton could not have produced the Italian translation without first having experimented with the English text and from a Canadian point of view, of her own experiences in Italy. Life in Canada has given her and her son the distance to re-evaluate her early life in Italy. She questions her father's return to Italy after many years

in Canada. Can you ever really return home unchanged? I am not suggesting that this sketch is autobiographical, but rather that it is based on actual experiences re-imaged in the mind of the writer and in Italian. The multilingual context of life in Montreal is reflected in the use of different languages in stories such as "In the Stacks" in which two university students of Italian background speak to one another in French but also discuss personal language choices and different words. These are examples of the dialogic form identified by Bakhtin.

Canton has written the sketch, "In Front of the Bell Centre" in idiomatic Canadian English and later translated it into idiomatic Quebec French since the scene takes place in downtown Montreal. We can see the difficulty of this task by comparing the opening sentences in each version:

> "I'm here." Her face a bold mask. A cold stare that says "what do you want? Where do you want me to be?"
> Closer. I'd like you to be closer. That's what I'm thinking. That's what I'd like. I don't say it. I'm comforted to see that she is there (Bell Centre*:* 17).

> "Je suis là." Son visage est un masque. Un regard vide qui dit "qu'est-ce que tu veux? Où veux-tu que je suis?"
> Plus près. J'aimerais que tu sois plus près. C'est ce que je pense. C'est ce que j'aimerais. Je ne le dis pas. Je suis réconfortée de voir qu'elle est là.

We can see that the idiomatic English phases "a bold mask" and "a cold stare" cannot be literally translated into French and so some of the emotional impact of the opening images cannot be reproduced. Canton describes the difficulties in translating her poem "Chi non viene" dedicated to her blind Italian grandmother whom she visited often: «Ce poème, je l'ai écrit en dialecte en premier pour un publique vénitien de Montréal, puis en italien et en français. J'ai bien essayé de l'écrire en anglais mais je n'ai pas réussi» ("Se traduire": 90).

In her short story collection, *Almond Wine and Fertility* (2008) Canton has stories that narrate trips to Italy dealing with unusual encounters suggesting the different values between Italians and Italian-Canadians. In "Coincidence" a Canadian woman is in Rome participating in a conference and goes to meet an ex-lover who seems to think he still has some power over her after many years. And in "The Twenty-Four Hour Conversation" the Canadian woman visiting her old distant relative must confront his power and his old fashioned ideas about women. "The Courtyard" is set in an alienating Rome and is not a happy story. Does Licia Canton share the love-hate relationship with Italy that is evident in the work of many other Italian-Canadian writers? Mary di Michele

comes to mind with her poetic pronouncement, «Your North American education / has taught you how to kill your father / …in wanting a life / for yourself» (*Stranger in You*: 5-6).

In 2015 Licia Canton participated in an experiment in group translation involving her collection of short stories, *Almond Wine and Fertility*, at the University of Siena. Canton self-translated the title story and the other stories were translated by Italian graduate students and academics. The result was *Vino alla mandorla e fertilità*, edited by Laura Ferri and Moira Mini.

One of the other Montreal writers who has used self-translation is Filippo Salvatore. He began the practice while he was still a graduate student. His first book was a collection of Italian poems, *Tufo e gramigna* (1977) which he later rewrote in English as *Suns of Darkness* (1980), a bilingual collection. The most quoted part of this collection is a series of three poems all entitled "A Giovanni Caboto", and addressed to an historic statue of the navigator that stands in the middle of a park in downtown Montreal. Here the poet laments the condition of the immigrant:

> Ho scoperto invece occhiate sprezzanti,
> una natura ostile, un vuoto
> incolmabile nell' anima,
> ho scoperto cosa vuol dire essere emigrante (14).

In 1985 Salvatore published a French play, *La Fresque de Mussolini*, which was never performed and not translated into English. In 1994 he published *Tra Molise e Canada*, an Italian collection of essays on Italian-Canadian writers, primarily from Quebec. Most of this volume was translated into English as *Ancient Memories, Modern Identities: Italian Roots in Contemporary Canadian Authors* (1999). The translation is by Domenic Cusmano in close collaboration with the author, so it is not a self-translation. In 2019 Salvatore brought out a collection of Italian poems, *Nuova mente* which includes some of his previous works in English.

It is clear the Salvatore can write in all three languages, but he has limited his use of self-translation. Is it possible that for him English does not have the same emotional subtleties that he can command from Italian, his mother tongue? The evidence may suggest a possible answer; most of his publications are in Italian with only a few in French, and less in English. Is there also a fear of self-betrayal in the process of self-translation?

Among Italian-Canadian writers Alexandre Amprimoz was prolific in the number of books he published in English and French including poetry and short stories. I have examined seven of his collections of French poems and seven of his English ones. The self-translation is not clearly evident since we

cannot compare a French poem with a given English one. Amprimoz returns to the same theme and the same subjects in the two languages, but he writes in two very different styles in each language. He was born in Rome and sometimes revisits that city in his verse. His English poem, "Roman Memory" first appeared in his collection, *Re and Other Poems* (1972), and later in his *Selected Poems* (1979).

If tomorrow you happen to see
a cortege where people move like ants
near il Verano
wear that colour for the coming day
because only black is true (*Selected Poems*: 33).

In his French collection, *Sur le damier des tombes* (1983), we find "Moment Romain",

Et dire que chaque souvenir
a creusé une ride
sur le front de l'absente (18).

The writing styles for his English and French poems are so different they seem to be written by two different people. His French poems can be more experimental with different line lengths from short haiku-style to longer poetic lines. His English poems tend to be more standard and often verge on poetic prose. This creates another problem with studies in self-translation: the adoption of different styles and different literary personas. However, this problem can still be considered using Bakhtin's dialogic theory. A final note: Amprimoz was a contributor to my first book, *Contrast: Comparative Essays on Italian-Canadian Writing* (1985).

Toronto author Gianna Patriarca has published six collections of poems and began to experiment with self-translation in her 2008 volume, *My Etruscan Face* which includes the poem, "Sono ciociara", written in the dialect of the Lazio region that some call ciociaro. Her English version on the next page only adds to the sad ending. Both versions are addressed to her university-educated Italian cousin:

i legge le parole che tu si scritt
e mi sent tant abbandunata
perchè sacce
ca tu si uluto bene
a na terra, a ne paese
si cunusciuto na storia

invence i me la
so inventata
e pure ste dialetto
mezz stuort e sturdit
me fa capì
la mia cundanna (*Etruscan Face*: 24).

i read the words you write and
feel abandoned one more time
because i know you loved a land a town
you have a history
i keep inventing mine
even this half drunk
and broken dialect
i write reminds me
how condemned i am (26).

Patriarca followed this by translating her first book, *Italian Women and Other Tragedies* (1994) into Italian, *Donne italiane ed altre tragedie* (2009) and there she added a new poem in her native dialect, "sta vita". It is addressed to her daughter and carries a similar emotional impact as her dialect poem quoted above, «figlia mia quante cose i te desse…» (76). In her 1999 book, *Ciao, Baby* she included a poem in standard Italian, "Figli canadesi", which begins, «chissà se qualche volta pensano a noi…» (84). Even though she writes most of her work in English, Patriarca feels the need to return to her native language in order to recapture the emotional source of her life experiences. There is no sense of self-betrayal here since the author is focused on exploring her several identities as a woman, a mother and a writer.

Much more work needs to be done on the translations and self-translation of Italian-Canadian authors. The multi-language works of Antonio D'Alfonso, Filippo Salvatore, Alexandre Amprimoz, Licia Canton, Gianna Patriarca and others are what have inspired me over the years to produce academic essays on the problems of language exchange. My first article, "Constantly Translating: The Challenge for Italian-Canadian Writers", appeared in the *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* in 1987. I returned to the topic in my essay, "Translation as Existence", in *Echo: Essays on Other Literatures* in 1994. I must also point out that the Sherbrooke School of Comparative Canadian Literature influenced much of my critical work and literary studies. Ronald Sutherland's books, *Second Image* (1971) and E.D. Blodgett's *Configuration: Essays on the Canadian Literatures* (1982) promoted a comparative approach to the study of Canadian writing. The rationale behind these theories was that English language writing in Canada could be better understood in comparison

and contrast to French language writing. Since the 1980s Italian-Canadian authors have richly contributed to this discourse on the linguistic diversity of Canadian writing.

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