

JOYCE LUSSU'S 'AFRICA, OUT OF PORTUGAL': TRANSLATING JOSÉ CRAVEIRINHA, KAOBERDIANO DAMBARÀ, MARCELINO DOS SANTOS, AGOSTINHO NETO, AND ALEXANDER O'NEILL IN ITALIAN



CLAUDIA CAPANCIONI

Abstract: Joyce Lussu (1912–1998) was a prolific writer and translator whose publications include poetic, literary, autobiographical, political and historical texts. This essay aims to establish the significance of studying Joyce Lussu in Translation Studies as a “cultural mediator” of what she defines as “effective poetry”, that is, poetry which bears witness to ethnic identities that “exist in [people’s] conscience but not on a map” (Lussu 1988: 106), to situations in which people are subjected to poverty, ignorance, or colonialism. From the 1960s, she rendered, for the first time into Italian, African, Albanian, African-American, Inuit, Kurdish and Vietnamese poets, such as Agostinho Neto, José Craveirinha, Nazim Hikmet and Ho Chi Minh. This essay demonstrates Lussu’s influential legacy as a translator of poets who were politically involved in making history by outlining the distinctively significant relationship she had with the Portuguese language and the effective role she played in supporting the liberation movements of African countries which were then Portugal’s overseas provinces, in particular Mozambique and Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde. Lussu translated poems by Neto, Craveirinha, Kaoberdiano Dambarà, Marcelino dos Santos, Alexander O’Neill, Virgílio de Lemos, and Rui

Resumo: Joyce Lussu (1912–1998) foi uma escritora e tradutora prolífica cujas publicações incluem textos poéticos, literários, autobiográficos, políticos e históricos. Este ensaio busca estabelecer a significância de se estudar Joyce Lussu, no contexto dos Estudos da Tradução, enquanto “mediadora cultural” do que ela denomina “poesia efetiva”, ou seja, de uma poesia que dá testemunho de identidades étnicas que “existem na consciência [das pessoas] mas não em um mapa” (Lussu 1988: 106), de situações em que seres humanos são sujeitos à pobreza, à ignorância, ou ao colonialismo. A partir dos anos 60, verteu pela primeira vez ao italiano poetas africanos, albaneses, afro-americanos, inuites, curdos e vietnamitas, tais como Agostinho Neto, José Craveirinha, Nazim Hikmet e Ho Chi Minh. Este ensaio demonstra o influente legado de Lussu enquanto tradutora de poetas engajados politicamente que objetivaram fazer história, ao esboçar a relação peculiarmente significativa que teve com a língua portuguesa e o papel efetivo que exerceu no apoio a movimentos de libertação de países africanos que, à época, eram províncias de além-mar portuguesas, em particular Moçambique e Angola, Guiné-Bissau e Cabo Verde. Lussu traduziu poemas de Neto, Craveirinha, Kaoberdiano Dambarà, Marcelino dos Santos, Alexander

Nogar. This essay focuses on *Tradurre poesia* (1967, *Translating Poetry*), an anthology that includes, together with the poems, her autobiographical account of the extraordinary journeys she embarked on to share with the aforementioned poets experiences of personal poetic communications. A visible translator, Lussu recognises translation is mediating and communicating. She asserts translating as a creative and political act which can challenge the *status quo*.

Keywords: anti-fascism; cultural mediation; liberation movements; poetic communications; postcolonial translation

O'Neill, Virgilio de Lemos e Rui Nogar. Este ensaio detém-se sobre o livro *Tradurre poesia* (1967, *Translating Poetry*), uma antologia que inclui, junto aos poemas, o relato autobiográfico de Lussu a respeito das extraordinárias jornadas em que embarcou a fim de partilhar experiências de comunicação poética pessoal com os poetas citados. Uma tradutora visível, Lussu reconhece que a tradução é mediação e comunicação. Defende ser o traduzir um ato criativo e político capaz de desafiar o *status quo*.

Palavras-chave: antifascismo; mediação cultural; movimentos de libertação; comunicação poética; tradução pós-colonial

Joyce Lussu (née Gioconda Salvadori, 1912–1998) was an antifascist and anti-colonialist, a prolific Italian writer and translator whose publications include poetic, fictional, philosophical, autobiographical, political and historical texts. The richness of her life experiences, the originality of her thoughts and interdisciplinary variety of her publications alone ask for academic attention, but Lussu's literary and political contribution to the twentieth century has been overlooked.¹ She heralded political, literary and translating interests that broke rules of canons and traditions in order to live in the present and which, while they were dismissed as atypical in her life, are ever more relevant to today's multicultural and multilingual global society. This essay aims to establish the significance of studying Joyce Lussu in Translation Studies as a cultural mediator. She translated what she described as "effective poetry",² that is the work of poets who bear historical and social witness by interpreting situations of people's subjugation to ignorance, poverty and colonialism; poets who voice ethnic identities which "exist in [people's] consciences but not on a map" (1988: 106).³ Starting in the 1960s, Lussu rendered, for the first time into Italian, African, Albanian, African-American, Inuit, Kurdish, Turkish and Vietnamese poets, such as José Craveirinha, Nazim Hikmet, Agostinho Neto, and Ho Chi Minh.⁴

¹ The most interesting contributions to the study of Lussu available in Italian at present are: an issue of the quarterly journal *Quaderni del Circolo Rosselli* (The Rosselli Circle's Notebooks) entitled, *Joyce Lussu: il più rigoroso amore* (Joyce Lussu: The Most Severe Love, 2002) edited by the "Circolo Fratelli Rosselli Fondazione" (Foundation of the Rosselli Brothers Circle), and the conference proceedings of *Joyce Lussu: una donna nella storia* (Joyce Lussu: a woman making history) edited by Luisa Maria Plaisant and published in 2003.

² *poesia effettiva*. Most of Lussu's work has not yet been published in English so, unless stated differently, all the translations in this essay are mine.

³ *che esiste solo nelle loro conscienze, ma su nessuna carta geografica*.

⁴ See in 1961 *Nazim Hikmet. La conga con Fidel*, Milan: Edizioni Avanti and *Nazim Hikmet. In quest'anno 1941*, Milan: Edizioni Avanti; 1963. *Canti esquimesi*, Milan: Edizioni Avanti!; *Ho-*

In the year in which we commemorate her one hundredth birthday, this essay wants to ascertain Lussu's influential legacy as a translator of poets who were, like her, politically involved in making history, by outlining the distinctively significant relationship she had with the Portuguese language and the effective role she played in "the African liberation struggles, primarily of Portuguese colonies" (Albano in Plaisant 2003: 127), such as Mozambique and Angola. Like Octavio Paz, she valued translation as "the principal means we have of understanding the world we live in" (Paz in Bassnett and Trivedi 1999: 2), and trusted in its power of challenging the *status quo* to assert equality, justice and democracy. Lussu translated José Craveirinha, Kaoberdiano Dambarà, Marcelino dos Santos, Agostinho Neto, and Alexander O'Neill into Italian in order to support their fight for freedom. In 1962, she published *Agostinho Neto. Con gli occhi asciutti; Alexandre O'Neil. Portogallo, mio rimorso* and *José Craveirinha. Cantico a un dio di catrame* followed in 1966. This essay, although informed by these collections, pays more attention to *Tradurre poesia* (1967, *Translating Poetry*), a wider anthology in which she also includes poems by Kaoberdiano Dambarà, Marcelino dos Santos, Virgilio de Lemos and Rui Nogar. This is, in Nives Fedrigotti's words, "an extraordinary volume [...], maybe the most beautiful book by Joyce, certainly her luckiest and most popular" (Fedrigotti in Consigli 2002: 112).

In the poem entitled "*Un giornalista mi ha chiesto*" ("A Journalist Asked Me"), Lussu argues with an unnamed interlocutor, identified as a friend, that she is a successful woman even if her books are not best sellers, she is not invited to attend television programmes or to write articles for famous weekly magazines, and feminist groups "have always looked down on" her (1998a: l. 20).⁵ She defends her success by means of linguistic evidence based on the etymology of the word "success" [*successo*]. Recalling the linguistic root that the Latin noun *successus* shares with the Latin infinitive *succedere*, she conjugates "to succeed" in the past, present and future tense and displaces the signifier "success" from its more popular semantic field to offer different signifieds, which highlight the importance of the past in relation to the future:

Success is a curbstone
a milestone
that signposts the path trodden.
However, how much more beautiful is the way that is left to travel,
the way to go along, the bridge
to cross
towards an unforeseeable horizon
and a surprising tomorrow
that you too have created ... (l. 28-36)⁶

Chi-Min. Diario dal carcere, Rome: ITER; 1968. *Tre poeti dell'Albania di oggi: Migjeni Siligi Kadare*, Rome: Lerici; 1977. *La Poesia degli albanesi*, Turin: ERI; 1992. *Nazim Hikmet. Paesaggi umani*, Rome: Fahrenheit 451; 1993. *Nazim Hikmet. Poesie d'amore*, Milan: Mondadori.

⁵ *ti hanno sempre snobbata.*

⁶ *Il successo è un paracarro/ una pietra miliare/ che segna il cammino già fatto./ Ma quanto più bello il cammino ancora da fare/ la strada da percorrere, il ponte/ da traversare/ verso l'imprevedibile orizzonte/ e la sorpresa del domani/ che hai costruito anche tu ...*

Lussu is a woman of success who is not interested in the present as the celebration of her achievements but as a possibility for future projects and expectations. She does not celebrate past achievements but is passionate about the fluidity and prospects of the verb *succedere*, that is, to follow or come after, to take place or come into being subsequently. Success is being part of this fluidity by actively creating a legacy for future generations. This essay celebrates Lussu as a successful translator who claims the beauty of future possibilities built on linguistic bridges reaching “unforeseeable” (l. 33) horizons.

It is Lussu’s work as a poet and a translator that is still available in publishing catalogues in the twenty first century. Her collection of poems by the Turkish poet Hikmet (1902-1963) entitled *Poesie d’amore* (Love Poems, 1963) continues to be her most popular publication.⁷ She has, however, mostly been remembered because of her political commitment to the Italian and international society. Born into an openly antifascist family, since 1932 she was actively involved in the political scene as an antifascist militant (*Giustizia e Libertà*) [Justice and Freedom], a Resistance fighter, and then an active political campaigner, a founding member of the Italian feminist movement *Unione Donne Italiane* [U.D.I., Union of Italian Women] and a member of peace and environmental movements, such as the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, to which she adhered in 1965. Her literary career began in 1939 with a collection of poems, *Liriche* [Lyrics], edited by Benedetto Croce,⁸ who praised her understanding of human sorrow and her denial of desperation or prostration. In specifying that most of her poems were composed in Africa – Lussu lived in Kenya and Tanganyika between 1934 and 1938 – he points out how she “does not wander into the curiosity and superficiality of the exotic or picturesque. [The] villages, scenes and figures have been internalised, melted with her soul to represent her feelings” (Croce 1939: 153). This sensibility for the sounds, colours and people of Africa, the understanding of human struggles and firm belief in the future are features that her poetry shares with her poetic translations. After the Second World War, she published *Fronti e frontiere* [1944; *Freedom Has No Frontier*, 1969],⁹ an account of four years of her life, from her return to Europe from Africa, in 1938, to the liberation of Rome by Allied Forces. She participated in the defeat of Fascism, as a member of the Italian Resistance movements and was awarded the silver medal for military valour and the rank of captain for her heroic actions. The *Times Literary Supplement* defines *Fronti e frontiere* as a “saga of clandestine life told in the most unassuming, easy style” in which antifascist activism appears “the most natural thing in the world” (Anon 1967: 794). Her recognition and success arrived in the 1960s and 1970s, when she dedicated

⁷ This collection was brought back into the spotlight by the cinematic success of *Le Fate Ignoranti* (Ignorant Fairies, 2001, released with the title *His Secret Life* in the USA) by the Turkish director Ferzan Opzetek, in 2002. Lussu’s name is never cited in the film, but her book is a transitional object that connects people beyond cultural, social, and sexual differences. *Poesie d’amore* is included in the Arnoldo Mondadori Editori popular edition called Oscar Mondadori in the series *Classici Moderni* (Modern Classics); Newton Compton Editori published *Nazim Hikmet: poesie* in the popular edition called *Grandi Tascabili Economici Newton*.

⁸ Lussu. 1939. *Liriche*, Naples: Riccardo Ricciardi Editore.

⁹ Laterza published a revised edition in 1967. A third one appeared in 1969 by Mursia. This edition was translated into English by William Clowes and published under the title *Freedom Has No Frontier* by Joseph in London in 1969. At present, this is the only work entirely published in an English translation.

herself to translation. As Chiara Cretella states, her “translations of Hikmet [were] a major success in Italy” and gave her “a final seal which made her known to the general public” (Cretella 2008: 116).

Lussu only translated poetry and her projects were pioneering for the Italian literary scene as well as for the international field of Translation Studies because she developed an “unusual” method of translation (Lussu 1992: 5) which, in her autobiography, *Portrait (cose viste e vissute)* (1988), she describes as follows:

in order to translate [the revolutionary poets of the Third World] it was not the academic philology which was needed but a full immersion in their historical background and their contemporary revolutionary movement. [For her it] was necessary to look for them, work directly with them, share their life underground or their guerrilla warfare, if these were the conditions of their life and culture¹⁰ (Lussu 1988: 94).

Thus, her method “imposed [her] need to work together with the poet” (Lussu 1992: 6).¹¹ This is her reason for preferring translating the work of contemporary poets who were alive and therefore reachable and able to collaborate with her. The daughter of a second generation Anglo-Italian family, Lussu grew up in the multilingual and multicultural Swiss community of anti-fascist exiles:

English was her second mother tongue, she learnt German so well at Heidelberg University that she could write poems in it, [...]; she lived the years of her antifascist clandestinity with Emilio Lussu,¹² in France, speaking like a proper Parisian, and in Lisbon where she graduated in [philology] (Fedrigotti in Consigli 2002: 111).¹³

This summary portrays Lussu as a polyglot, but she also used the aforementioned languages as mediating tools to translate poetry belonging to non-European cultures. She was an “atypical translator” (Lussu 1998: 97) whose semantic transpositions were not based on linguistic correctness but on sharing experiences of personal poetic communication with other poets through the modern European languages she spoke fluently, especially French and Portuguese. This strategy created the need for her, as a translator, to share her discovery of literary, cultural and historical contexts which were not familiar to an average Italian reader. And Lussu had to mediate the worlds of the poets too. She did so by stating her subjective input into the new texts not only as a translator but also as a biographer and narrator of the journeys she embarks on to fulfil her poetic projects. She was a visible translator who located her voice in prefaces, introductions and travel stories which frame the translated poems. In providing

¹⁰ *per tradurli, non occorre la filologia accademica, ma era necessario immergersi nella matrice storica e nel movimento contemporaneo della loro rivoluzione. Per cui, bisognava cercarli, lavorare con loro direttamente, condividere la loro clandestinità o la loro guerriglia, se queste erano le loro condizioni di vita e di cultura.*

¹¹ *mi obbligavano a lavorare insieme al poeta.*

¹² Joyce Salvadori married Emilio Lussu (1890–1975), an active politician and partisan, who, after the war, became an MP and minister. They had one son, Giovanni (b. 1941).

¹³ *l'inglese era la sua seconda lingua materna, il tedesco l'avevo appreso all'università di Heidelberg, tanto da poterlo usare per comporre alcune poesie, [...]; aveva vissuto gli anni della clandestinità antifascista, con Emilio Lussu, in Francia, conversando come una vera parigina, e a Lisbona dove s'era laureata in [filologia].*

the poets' biographies as an introduction to the collections, she also narrates the choices and travel experiences which are at the basis of her process of translation.

For Lussu, translating poetry is not "the most intimate act of reading" (Spivak 2000: 400), but a public act which is revealed by narrating how she came to meet the poet. More generally put, in her opinion, translation is mediating and communicating. Translation is recognised as a creative act; it is, in Haroldo de Campo's words, "a dialogue [and] the translator is an all-powerful reader and a free agent as a writer" (Paz in Bassnett and Trivedi 1999: 5). Lussu transforms the translator into a narrator who does not aim at being the author of the text but aims at transmitting a story. She affirms the value of a translator who does not speak the poet's native language and whose semantic transpositions are not based on linguistic correctness but on dialogue, poetic communication and sharing personal experiences. Lussu's decision is still at the basis of controversial debates surrounding her translations. They cannot be defined as "*belles infidèles*" as such, because they do not produce texts whose contents are not faithful as such or have been revised. She does not insert her voice in the translated text. She asserts her identity by placing the original author's text in her own framing narrative in which she claims responsibility for interpretation. She does not recreate the metre, but transposes images and stories in free verse "without filtering [them] through [her] Western culture" (Lussu in Ballestra 1996: 227).¹⁴ She explains that, for example, when Hikmet could not find the words in French, he described concepts, poetic images and emotions by means of "paraphrases, circumlocutions, expressions in other languages, analogies, or references" (Lussu 1992: 9).¹⁵ Lussu then creates similar images into Italian. It is the poetic communication that matters in her understanding of translation as a means of cultural mediation. Translation is for her a collaborative mediation in which communication is more important than authorship.

Lussu's translations of poems by Craveirinha, Dambarà, dos Santos, Neto, and O'Neill do not fully exemplify her controversial, unorthodox method of translation, but are the result of her infallible commitment to the fight for independence of Mozambique, Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde, countries which were, when she began her project, Portugal's overseas provinces. During her clandestine Resistance years, she lived in Lisbon and took "advantage of learning the language and registering at the university" (1998: 62),¹⁶ where she studied Portuguese literature and philology. Her connection to these poets was not only created by a belief in the fight for independence and freedom against imposed regimes but also by personal experience: she lived amongst Lisbon's multicultural community and experienced the censoring methods of the PIDE police personally. In her opinion, those poets who opposed Salazar's regime were antifascist and, therefore, like her in the Second World War, partisans; she saw them as fellows in a brand of political activism she committed her whole life to. In the spring of 1961 a friend told her about Neto, "an Angolan poet buried alive in Aljube prison in Lisbon"¹⁷, and she "decided to investigate"¹⁸ (1993:

¹⁴ *senza averli filtrati con la mia cultura di occidentale.*

¹⁵ *parafrasi e circonlocuzioni, con espressioni in altre lingue o analogie o riferimenti.*

¹⁶ *Ne avevo approfittato per imparare la lingua e iscrivermi all'università.*

¹⁷ *un poeta angolano sepolto vivo nel carcere di Aljube a Lisbona.*

¹⁸ *decisi di indagare.*

5) this case with the confidence of a tested strategy: in 1958, when she translated Hikmet's poems for the first time, Lussu had embarked into an intensive experience which included helping his wife and son to escape house arrest and reach freedom successfully. Thus, armed with a publishing contract to translate Neto's poems into Italian and a letter of solidarity signed by Gianluca Vigorelli on behalf of the European Union of Writers,¹⁹ she travelled to Lisbon with the intention to visit him in prison.

Meeting with the imprisoned leader of the movement for the liberation of Angola (MPLA) remained an unaccomplished mission, but Lussu still made her request effective. By presenting herself as a scholar in her fifties who was "a little foolish" but passionate about literature and ignorant of the political aspects of life (1988: 98),²⁰ she succeeded in being received by PIDE's *comandante*, Homero de Oliveira Matos, as "Agostinho Neto's Italian translator" (1998:70). He accepted to give the publishing contract to Neto, little knowing that she was busy "summoning up editors and intellectual from all over Europe"²¹ (Fedrigotti in Consigli 2002: 112) to put pressure on Portugal in order to secure Neto's safety. More importantly, she returned to Italy with a signed contract and poems Neto's wife gave her:

I found other ways to communicate with the prisoner through his wife, Portuguese and very white, who had the authorisation to visit him occasionally. She memorised a few questions I wanted to ask him and came back with answers and found unpublished poems, and told me about her life.²² (1998: 71)

Like Munnever Hikmet, Maria Eugénia Neto became an accomplice of Lussu's translation projects. She also approached Craveirinha's wife in Maputo but without success because she "could not talk about her husband" (1998: 87),²³ or show his verses. She directed her to his brother instead, who was a PIDE officer and therefore also unhelpful. But Lussu's understanding of African revolutionary poets who voiced their people's claims for independence was never only limited to their poets' families; it was always widened and deepened through their literary and political circles and revolutionary comrades even if it meant visiting the guerrilla-controlled areas in Guinea-Bissau and Angola. In Lisbon, she met with the writers and poets who constantly entered and left Aljube prison because of their opposition to Salazar's government, for example, with O'Neill who guided her "in a journey inside the Portuguese reality" (1998: 67).²⁴ Fifteen days after her return to Italy in 1962, Neto was transferred from prison to house arrest and Lussu went back to Lisbon and worked with him in his "flat in a very old building, at 1 São João da Praça' Lane" (1998: 71).²⁵

¹⁹ Lussu published her first anthology of Neto's poems under the title, *Con gli occhi asciutti* (with dry eyes) in 1962 with Il Saggiatore publishing house.

²⁰ *una letterata un pò citrulla*

²¹ *chiamando a raccolta editori e intellettuali di mezza Europa*

²² *Trovai altre vie per comunicare con il prigioniero, tramite sua moglie, portoghese bianchissima, che aveva il permesso di visitarlo ogni tanto. Imparò a memoria alcune domande che avevo da porgli, mi riportò le risposte mi trovò delle poesie inedite; e mi raccontò della sua vita.*

²³ *non poteva parlare del marito, né mostrarmi i suoi versi*

²⁴ *nel viaggio dentro la realtà portoghese*

²⁵ *appartamento in un vecchissimo edificio, al numero 1 della piazza Saõ João da Praça. Although the original mentions a piazza, it refers to a 'lane', thus the amendment to the translation into English.*

Neto spoke French correctly, as well as Portuguese, and knew English and Spanish well. Maria Eugénia and Agostinho's world seemed to me oddly familiar. Still today a part of me is Angolan, as if some of my ancestors were to be buried underneath baobab and casuarinas trees instead of the pine and olive trees of the Mediterranean.²⁶ (Lussu 1993: 21)

She introduced his poetry for the first time into Italian announcing the collection entitled from a line that appears in two of Neto's poems '*Conscienzialização*' and '*Criar*', *Con gli occhi asciutti* (1963, With dry eyes) as "the work of the poet-medical doctor-patriot from Angola" (1988: 106).²⁷ As the quotations show, she underlined the similarity of the human experience of a world which might have appeared at a first glance so different geographically and turns that into an image of natural connection through pictures of familiar and exotic trees that share the fact of being trees in the same way in which the Neto's anti-colonial activism has echoes of Lussu's antifascist personal present and past. As Croce had pointed out in 1939, she has a talent in internalising Africa to represent her personal experiences. The process of translation is not limited to the linguistic transpositions from a language to another; in Lussu's case it is determined by a common denominator: "[w]ith Neto, we had in common concepts of historical interpretation and culture, and political aspirations. Through his poems, I seemed to know him better than a relative" (Lussu 1993: 21-22).²⁸ In identifying the familiar aspects in Neto's difficult circumstances, Lussu encourages the reader to find in his poems a means of knowing the anti-colonial poet intimately, and, through him, his people's colonial conditions. She was aware of the importance of her contract with a prominent publisher not only in giving Neto's poetry a means to penetrate "the historical and political deafness of the Eurocentric culture" (Lussu 1993: 20),²⁹ but also in assuring he was not suppressed by the PIDE. As she expected, it contributed to his liberation.

Lussu was expelled from Portugal in 1965, but by then Neto had escaped from Portugal and reached Kinshasa with his family, so she followed him and visited the MPLA head office. The collaboration with Neto was a first step into a more involving commitment for Lussu, who decided to pursue her exploration of the African liberation movements and their poets by trying to meet – unsuccessfully – Craveirinha in prison, visiting Jaime Sigauke and Marcelino dos Santos in Tanzania, and Amílcar Cabral in Guinea-Bissau, living with them in the liberated areas and crossing the border between occupied and non-occupied land with the members of FRELIMO and PAIGC.³⁰ These liberation movements needed international exposure and Lussu could help them: she was always present at the most relevant events to write about them, exposing the circumstances to international peace movements. For example, she was in Algiers in 1963 and Dar es Salaam in 1965. In Italy she founded an association in sup-

²⁶ *Neto parlava correttamente, oltre al portoghese, il francese, e conosceva bene l'inglese e lo spagnolo. Il mondo di Maria Eugenia e di Agostinho mi appariva stranamente familiare. Ancora oggi una parte di me è angolana, come se qualcuno dei miei antenati fosse seppellito sotto i baobab e le casuarine anziché sotto i pini e gli olivi del Mediterraneo.*

²⁷ *opere del poeta-medico-patriota dell'Angola*

²⁸ *Con Neto, avevamo in comune l'interpretazione storica, il concetto di cultura, le aspirazioni politiche. Attraverso le sue poesie, mi pareva di conoscerlo meglio di un parente.*

²⁹ *la sordità storica e politica della cultura eurocentrica.*

³⁰ The friendship with Neto was of special importance to Lussu and carried on after the independence of Angola and his appointment as the first president in 1975.

port of the African liberation movements called Armal, in 1966. She helped in organising an audience for Neto, Cabral and dos Santos with Pope Paul VI in 1970, and the international Solidarity Conference in Reggio Emilia, Italy, in 1972. It is also important to highlight that “[b]etween 1969 and 1971, [she] succeeded in publishing with a variety of editors and numerous books, from *Storia dell’Angola* (1968, History of Angola) to literacy text. [With her support], [i]mportant films were produced, [as well as] articles, reportages and other books” (Albano in Plaisant 2003: 129).³¹

Although Lussu published individual collections of Craveirinha, Neto and O’Neill, this essay wants to focus now on the section “Africa, out of Portugal”, included in *Tradurre poesia*, because this has been the widest range of poetry that bears testimony to the colonial experience in occupied Africa in the Italian language for more than four decades. Still in publication, this anthology opens an historical door “[into] the agony of [those] who [had] not yet the fortune to see [their] own oeuvre – no matter how valid – written in [their] own language and read by [their] own people” (Neto in Lussu 1998: 73).³² It remains a relevant means of understanding today’s silenced pacifist, human rights and environmental activists, and, therefore, also an outstanding illustration of her “unusual” translating method. The introduction to this section narrates Lussu’s many adventures this essay has been examining but it also has room for careful explanations of concepts such as *saudade*, and the clear distinction between *moçambicanidade* and *négritude*. Her description of the human conditions for the *assimilados* and *contratados* in Salazar’s overseas provinces is remarkably uncompromised: in her opinion, the poets she worked with are resistance fighters, anti-colonial partisans who committed their work and life to the welfare of their people. As Albano rightly affirms, her direct experience of life in the Portuguese overseas provinces and in the guerrilla zones, and her ability “to move in that difficult situation with a decisive truthfulness, enabled her to opt for decisions that resulted absolutely correct later on” (Albano in Plaisant 2003: 128).³³

The longest in *Tradurre poesia*, this introduction reflects Lussu’s serious commitment to these poets’ political fights as well as her belief in translation as a collaborative process. She recognises translating as a polyphonic creative process in which the author, the translator and their shared travelling experiences are involved. The journey leading to the encounter with the poets, which precedes the translating process, claims equal importance as the selected poems; by combining poetry and travel writing, Lussu represents human relationships necessary to the literary output but commonly silenced by the poetic work itself. The landscape is central to her narrative too: she describes her walks through the streets of Lisbon, Kinshasa and Maputo and her marches through the forest in Guinea-Bissau. They enhance a sense of progressive movement which contrasts with difficulties which could cause desperation and prostration: both Ne-

³¹ *Fra il 1969-1971 Joyce Lussu riuscì a far pubblicare presso vari editori numerosi libri, da una Storia dell’Angola a manuali di alfabetizzazione ed altro. Uscirono films di un certo valore, articoli, reportages, altri libri.*

³² *l’angoscia di chi non ha ancora la fortuna di vedere la propria opera – non importante quanto valida – scritta nella propria lingua e letta dal proprio popolo.*

³³ *seppe muoversi in quel difficile frangente, con una naturalezza decisa che le consentì di optare per scelte rivelatesi poi assolutamente esatte.*

to's and Craveirinha's homes are minimal, poor and their wives and children live in constant danger, but Lussu describes them through images of domestic composure and dignity characterised by homely details such as "little porcelain vases with a few flowers and lace doilies" (Lussu 1998:72),³⁴ and the vibrant colour of "the little red curtains and two red stools" (Lussu 1998: 89).³⁵ It is the silence of the shanty towns that attracts her interest because of their "unnatural" silence produced by the many busy people walking barefoot. The villages in the forests are busy too, engaged in political and educational activities. If present, teaching spaces and books are always mentioned. In both the urban and the rural landscape, it is the human presence that matters: she is constantly in contact with the people inhabiting the space through dialogues, storytelling and dancing.

The poems too emphasise human relationships in "Africa, out of Portugal". This is the longest thematic section; it includes four poems by O'Neill and Dambarà respectively, two by dos Santos, de Lemos and Nogar, seven by Neto and eight by Craveirinha. In the case of O'Neill, Neto and Craveirinha, the poems are selected from the monographic collections published earlier (*Agostinho Neto. Con gli occhi asciutti; Alexandre O'Neil. Portogallo, mio rimorso; Cantico a un dio di catrame, di José Craveirinha*) but appear here without their original parallel text. These poems are connected by a linguistic thread, of course: they are all originally in Portuguese because "of the obscurantist pressure of a narrow-minded Europeanism" (Neto in Lussu 1998:73). Conversely, Lussu's translations are faithful to the African native languages of the poets: whilst she translates the Portuguese into Italian, she prefers to add endnotes which explain the meanings of the words in Kimbundu, or Guinea-Bissau's Creole. She is particularly interested in the latter, as a unique example of a Creole language in the African overseas provinces of Portugal, which fused "Portuguese of the sixteenth century and local languages and had developed through the centuries in an autonomous form" (Lussu 1998: 93).³⁶ Like Luise von Flotow, Lussu believes "translation is about difference [a]nd it often accentuates difference" (Flotow 1997: 99), and this difference is visually present in her Italian translations, in the words that convey the flora and fauna specific to the poets' African countries, people's names, titles and greetings, and the sounds of their languages. The country of origin of each individual poet is specified underneath his name on the page where his poems begin.

"Africa, out of Portugal" begins with O'Neill's analysis of the relationship between the colonised and the coloniser in "*Portugal*" and finishes with Dambarà's "The Rooster of Cape Verde" and its decisively postcolonial rooster, Lém Ferreira, who deconstructs a popular symbol of Portugal to strike back and cry out: "It is the black [rooster] that now talks!" (l. 28). Moving from more formal poetic stanzas to songs of the revolutions, Lussu's translations aim to reflect a first person's direct participation in the fight for postcolonial independence, such as Craveirinha's "*Quero Ser Tambor*" and Neto's "*No Cárcere*" and "*Consciencialização*", as well as the community's experience captured by de Lemos' "Poem of the involuntary warrior" and "Poem of the *Scianganá* Warrior

³⁴ *vasetti di porcellana con qualche fiore e centrini di merletto.*

³⁵ *tendine rosse e due sgabelli rossi.*

³⁶ *di portoghese del Cinquecento e di lingue locali, e sviluppatasi attraverso i secoli in forma autonoma.*

in Me".³⁷ In O'Neill's "*Portugal*" the individual "regret" (l. 35) becomes the regret "of all of us" (l. 36). There are poems which aim to capture the sounds and rhythms of songs and oral stories Lussu learnt, sang and danced to in Africa, especially of those partisan songs "that accompany the present-day fight [...], by breaking with the archaic past and the colonial oppression" (Lussu 1998: 100)³⁸, such as Craveirinha's "Old Song" and "*Cântico a um deus de alcatrão*"³⁹, Neto's "*Fogo e ritmo*" and Dambarà's "*Batuko*". These poems provide explanations, invitations and an opportunity to live in the present. The exchanges between the poetic voice and the community turn into poetic conversations in which the Italian readers are also addressed directly and encouraged to take part.

Belonging and the interweaving of present, past and future are lines of interest in Lussu's own poetry and in "Africa, out of Portugal". As one would expect, these are also worth exploring, starting with poems which reflect on familial legacy. In "*To My Father*", Craveirinha explains his multicultural identity to his Portuguese father by indentifying the presence of both images of the Algarve and Mozambique in his memories but also affirming his inability to love both places: he can "only love/ this very beautiful and fertile nation in the world/ where my mother was born/ gave birth to me and died" (l. 28-31). Mozambique is personified in a mother in Craveirinha's "*Sangue da minha mãe*", while "*Mamana Sachina*" voices the grief and despair of mothers and grandmothers who see the youth working so hard without an opportunity to achieve their potential, or express their talents. Neto's "*Un Aniversario*" celebrates the anniversary of his historical degree in medicine by listing his family's sacrifices which are at the basis of his academic success. The family celebrates with the community "the glory of having a son with a degree in medicine!" (l. 9). Belonging to a family is often associated with belonging to the community in a relationship which underlines the poet's responsibility towards them both. The poet represents a future for both the family and the community and the future tense captures their hopes of a new country and a new life to be built together. In Craveirinha's "*Poema do futuro cidadão*", the poet affirms his belonging to "a nation that does not exist yet" (l. 2) as "a citizen of a nation/ that does not exist yet" (l. 16-17) "but whose heart declares solemnly/ I come from a country that does not exist yet" (l. 11-12). Many of the selected poems envisage a relationship between the older, the present and future generations as central to their dreams of independence. Nogar's "*Elegy to Mrs Isabella*", Craveirinha's "*João Mussumbuluco*" and "*Sangue da minha mãe*" are examples of poems praising people's sacrifices for a future that is worth waiting for, to use Neto's words, "with dry eyes". This is a community that embraces ethnic differences and sings about them lyrically; that resists the tears of desperation and prostration. Fortunately, these poets' dreams of independence came true and, like Lussu, some of them participated as politicians in creating their new independent countries. However, the lack of full stop at the end of "Poema do futuro cidadão" is a reminder for the poet, the community, and the reader, that the commitment to building a just world never stops. As Lussu states in "*Un giornalista mi ha chiesto*", beauty is in the future, in "the way that is left to travel,

³⁷ 'Poema del guerriero involontario'; 'Poema del guerriero sciangana ch'è in me'.

³⁸ *Che accompagna la lotta attuale, [...], che si afferma rompendo col passato arcaico e con la soggezione colonialista.*

³⁹ 'Vecchia canzone'.

towards an unforeseeable horizon/ and a surprising tomorrow/ that you too have created...” (l. 31, 34, 35-36). This is why her translations of Angolan, Mozambican, Guinea-Bissauan and Cape Verdean poets in the 1960s are still relevant today; they are means to the understanding of those communities who fight for independence, equality, human rights and justice at present. As she argues in the preface to *Tradurre poesia*, these poems are born out of “tangible [historical and political] situations [and therefore they are] real, necessary, alive” (Lussu 1998: 5).⁴⁰

This essay has demonstrated that the central thread in “Africa, out of Portugal” is determined by political values shared by Lussu and Craveirinha, Dambarà, dos Santos, Neto, and O’Neill. She weaves her subjective creative input into the new text by adding her travel narrative and stating her political perspective, as the translator’s personal connections are always central to her narrative. The poets she translated were committed to human equality and a just world. Fedrigotti’s image of Lussu as a ferrywoman who “ferries words and images across from one language’s bank to another” (Fedrigotti 2002: 111) rightly visualises her work as linguistic crossings which facilitate poetic communications. Extraordinary journeys were a primary step to her semantic transposing strategies which enhanced border-crossing qualities of cultural and linguistic bridges. She crossed politically recognised geographical borders to meet anti-colonial activists and transformed their poetry into a medium of cultural translation. At a time when these poetic expressions were neglected by the customary occidental literary traditions, she made them available to the Italian readership within an interpretative frame which was openly provided and politically defined. Her interest was in poetry as an expression of committed political activism and evidence of people’s history. In *L’acqua del 2000*, Lussu affirms that “[I]t is true that the personal is political, provided it is made political, that it is an experience shared with other experiences, energy that is added to future choices, for the benefit of the majority of people” (1977: 11).⁴¹ She believed in the private and personal as important aspects of the political, because they form the *stimuli* of any direct and creative activism. The personal “filter” is relevant to the whole of her writing, but it is particularly significant in her work as a translator because it has determined the “cultural and demonstrative [success of her projects in] breaking through the weak and hypocritical European conscience” (Albano in Plaisant 2003: 129).⁴² Her quest was not for “poets of ‘pure’ poetry, of the word without an addressee which pretended to be atemporal and eternal” but for poets who “to use Rimbaud’s words, ‘multipl[ied] progress’ and whose words were colloquial, of daily use, down to earth and projected towards the future” (Lussu 1992: 6).⁴³ Craveirinha, Dambarà, dos Santos, Neto, and O’Neill are such poets; they did not observe events but made them happen. As the translator, she defined her political perspective by placing their specific work in relation with past experiences, and possible future outcomes, within national and international contexts.

⁴⁰ *deriva da situazioni concrete, è cioè poesia reale, necessaria, viva.*

⁴¹ *È vero che il personale è politico, purché lo si renda tale, ossia esperienza in mezzo ad altre esperienze, energia che si aggiunge alle scelte per il futuro, all’interesse maggioritario.*

⁴² *portato culturale e dimostrativo, faceva breccia nella scarsa ed ipocrita coscienza europea.*

⁴³ *“moltiplicatori di progresso”, come dice Rimbaud, dalla parola discorsiva, quotidiana, concreta, proiettata nel futuro.*

A friend of Lussu, Fedrigotti revealed that she had confided a desire to be remembered after her death using the following lines from "Simplify me" (Fedrigotti in Consigli 2002: 116), an anonymous poem included in *Tradurre poesia*: "Remember me when I am dead/ when I am dead/ simplify me" (l. 1-3, and 28-30). She ardently desired to see the beginning of the twenty-first century but could not; thus, hundred years after her birth, this article remembers her by exemplifying her tangible legacy as an antifascist and anti-colonial activist, and a postcolonial translator. It celebrates her original translating methodology as unorthodox but significant. More importantly, it establishes Lussu as a translator of success, who claims the beauty of future possibilities built on linguistic bridges reaching unknown horizons; who succeeds in passing on difference in its multiplicity and polyphony through poetry by focusing on the collaborative dialogism between poet and translator. She introduced political and historical discourses addressing multilingual and multicultural concepts of identity which cannot be limited by politics, as well as the urgent need for people to be actively citizens of a postcolonial, global world. This is Lussu's enduring contribution into the twenty-first century and most significantly to Translation Studies.

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