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Self-translation - The Example of Aleksandar Hemon  
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## 1. Introduction

This thesis is an attempt to explore the phenomenon of self-translation as a potentially healing act of reappropriating and restructuring the fractured self, by situating it on continua such as original - translation and writer - self-translator, without undue speculation about the author's motivations. The aim of the paper is to determine the degree of divergences in self-translation, challenging the notion of originality, authorial intentionality and the way in which the author's literary idiolect spans different cultural/linguistic conceptual frameworks by being transposed across languages through style. The primary focus will be on Aleksandar Hemon's self-translations of several of his stories from English into Bosnian, more precisely his collection of short stories *Život i djelo Alphonsea Kaudersa*, published in Bosnian in 1997. The story "Lik i djelo Alphonsea Kaudersa" was originally written in Bosnian and it will also be used for a brief comparison of self-translation from and into the author's native language.

The first part of the thesis will attempt to situate self-translation in a wider context as a preliminary to a discussion of the contentious status of self-translation. Examples of self-translators' approach to language will be contrasted to show the existence of a wide spectrum of different language-self dynamics and locate Hemon's aesthetic within the long and diverse tradition of self-translation. Pertinent facets of Bhabha's concept of the *third space* (space in between cultures and languages) will be applied to the issue of self-translation, to establish the cultural dimension as the locus of the fracturing of the author's self.

The focus will then turn to the issue of the "original", the challenges self-translation poses to authorial intentionality, the mirror-reflection dynamic and the difficulty of locating the megatext. The discussion of the megatext as the *tertium comparationis* will take the form of an account of two opposing theories whose interweaving will be used to pinpoint Hemon's position on the author-translator continuum. The status of the original will also be discussed in terms of the dynamic relationship between the source and the target text, with reference to examples from Hemon's works. Some attention will be accorded to the third original emerging from an interaction of the two texts, available to, or rather constructed by, the bilingual reader.

The second part of the thesis will detail Hemon's style, his narrative techniques, structuring, use of language in the source and target texts, so as to be able to discern the

linguistic and stylistic manifestations of the fractured self. A variety of examples analysed on different compositional levels will be provided and used to determine whether and in what respects Hemon's authorial style differs from his translating style and if his translations exhibit cumulative shifts in tone or meaning in relation to the original.

### **1. Self-translation – historical overview**

In a volume tracing the history of self-translation, Julio-Cesar Santoyo asserted that self-translation is “another vast territory without history” (22). He proceeds to dismantle the claim that research into self-translation is relegated to occasional case studies simply because self-translation is a quaint and uncommon endeavor. Most works attempting a comprehensive study of self-translation start by asserting that they are making a foray into the largely uncharted territory of self-translation theory. The reasons Jan Walsh Hokenson gives for this in his historical overview of self-translation reflect the complexity of self-translation, compounded by issues of bilinguality, originality and the Romantic notion of genius and *natio* which, in Hokenson's words, makes the bilingual author a “citizen of no language or perhaps traitor to two” (Hokenson and Munson 3). This complex issue could not be approached with monolingual theories, which are not particularly useful in explaining twinned texts which as yet have no defined aesthetics or poetics (Hokenson and Munson 2).

Another reason for theorists' reluctance in dealing with self-translations, according to Hokenson and Munson, are historical circumstances and the position of bilingual writers. Scholars, acting as “keepers of the cannon” (1) ignored the bilingual work of authors such as Chaucer and Dante, touting monolingualism and stifling interculturality in language (2).

The medieval and Renaissance theories of language and creativity were rooted in “assumptions about the universality of the transcendent subject across languages” (3) and the notion of “the subject's anchorage in a supra-verbal dimension (Hokenson and Munson 13). Although translations in the Middle Ages were often a collaborative effort, an all pervasive cultural impulse towards unity congrued conveniently with the belief that the locus of meaning is not in the text, author or language and led to the Renaissance tendency to elide “the existence of collaborative translation by conceptualizing it in the singular” (Cordingley 2). This conflation of several translators into one monolithic figure led to the expectation of “fidelity” to the original and the demand that the author's style be matched in translation (Cordingley 2).

The history of self-translation can be traced against the history of translation by observing the motivations of bilinguals or self-translators and the way they fit into the wider paradigm of translation or writing. Doing so uncovers different reasons and motivations for self-translation, such as rebelling against certain religious principles (Sor Juana), coming to terms with exile (Hemon), or the desire to reach a wider audience (Tagore). It is also useful to trace the origin of currently held or controversial stands on (self-)translation which feature in modern translation theory.

In studying bilingual authors, or self-translators, one is likely to encounter demands for equal status of the translated and “original” text as early as the 14<sup>th</sup> century, when Nicole Oresme wrote his *De moneta*, a critical typology of monetary debasement, translated it himself, and insisted on the independence of the translated text (Hokenson and Munson 50). These demands may be rooted in the nature of the translations, i.e. they may stylistically or structurally diverge from the first text, and as such warrant an independent status. The translations of Charles de Orleans, a 15<sup>th</sup> century French poet can be used as an example of such a reworking of the text, as his “French tends towards abstraction and allegory, the English toward concreteness, colloquialisms, and dialogic questions,” (Hokenson and Munson 59). The Renaissance also saw the rise of vernacular languages, and the emergence of the belief in the “primacy of the vernacular” and the unique nature of every language (Hokenson and Munson 69) implied the impossibility of an adequate translation as every language “has its own qualities which another would not be able to express in natural language” (qtd in Hokenson and Munson 69).

Another thing of note regarding bilingual writers is the treatment of Carlo Goldoni as “l’homme incommode”, as he eventually became known in critical circles, after his Italian began to be perceived as deteriorating and being encroached upon by French, in an instance of “pathological language contamination” (Hokenson and Munson 129), resulting in a betrayal of both languages he wrote in, and consequently both nations. This feeling of betrayal is sometimes amplified and internalized, resulting in a rift, or an inability to write, which might be at the root of Hemon’s guilt at not sharing in the difficult times of his homeland, eventually resulting in an impulse to create in a foreign language.

The critics’ discomfort at Goldoni’s bilinguality is not unique to the early modern times. Hemon’s publisher in Sarajevo (Bosanska knjiga) intentionally neglected to state that Hemon’s

first published work was a translation from English, his adoptive language. One can only speculate on the reasons behind such a decision, but Hemon himself believes that it had to do with issues of nationality:

Consciously or unconsciously they were unable to accept the possibility of Bosnian literature in the English language. The problem of national literature is the same as that of nation: it excludes or kills those whose identities are not evident and which do not contribute to the firmness and clarity of the national being. (Culture vs. Genes)

The decision to publish translations of Hemon's short stories without explicitly stating that they are not "originals" can either stem from the belief that translations are originals in their own right, or, more likely and prevalently, the belief that the author is invested with a unique authority to reproduce his work in another language (whether such texts are seen as translations, or texts in their own right).

The inadequacy of structuralism in accommodating bilingualism was succeeded by a psychoanalytic approach which allowed for "personal discourses (and)... infinite capacities of "self-translation" in language" but still only in the native language, while not accommodating, and even eliding, bicultural authors (Hokenson and Munson 148). Translation was given a prominent place in Walter Benjamin's notion of "pure language" which cannot be written but emerges from the fragments of the two texts (Hokenson and Munson 149). Following in a similar vein, Fitch will later posit that once the second version is written, the first one is incomplete without it (Hokenson and Munson 194). Bilinguality was only recognized as being "a primary category of social existence" following the rise of postcolonial translation theories which endeavoured to explain the divided consciousness of the postcolonial subject (Hokenson and Munson 154). It took translating theorists even longer to recognize biculturality as a prerequisite for self-translators to transpose a text across cultures, a necessity made glaringly obvious by Beckett's "radically different tones" of twinned texts resulting from cultural transposition (Hokenson and Munson 196). While Hemon's self-translations are not radically different from his first versions, his particular kind of biculturality does influence his writing and translation and shape the interstitial space wherein he creates.

## 2. A note on methodology

A discussion on self-translated texts entails a comparative analysis of two language systems on several compositional levels. Such an analysis could mimic the reverse process of regaining the original from the foreign-language text; perhaps the prototype serving as *tertium comparationis* is located in what Babha calls interstitial spaces and can be reconstructed from the fragments of the two selves, fluid and unstable as it is. These interstitial spaces are fractures in the linguistic and cognitive expressions of the double self and are made more explicit in the process of spanning cultures through translation.

The linguistic analysis will, when necessary, use the framework and terminology used in applied linguistics and adapted by Joseph L. Malone specifically for the purpose of translation analyses. It will be complemented by attempts to describe how the author's externalization of his double self by means of translation, to cater to the needs of monolingual audiences, results in differences in intertextuality, ordering of fragments and tone.

The multi-compositional linguistic apparatus provided by Malone is comprehensive enough to even account for inherent differences between languages. Therefore, caution was exercised in choosing trajections, since some of the more obvious differences between the two texts are manifestations of plerematic differences inherent to the two languages in which the texts were composed. The focus of the analysis of Hemon's self-translations was the semantic structural level with an occasional observation about pertinent changes on the syntactic level (e.g. shifting focus through changing the subject).

While it is evident that the commensurability of the two texts cannot be explored without a coherent approach, the differences in self-translators' perception of their individual translating process and the dynamic between the two languages contribute to the difficulty of applying a consistent methodology to analyzing their translations. Raymond Federman, French-American writer and self-translator, describes his bilingualism not as a binary, but as a dynamic interrelation between languages:

I do not seem to feel (that) there is a space between the two languages in me that keeps them apart. On the contrary, for me French and English always seem to overlap, to want to merge, to want to come together, to want to embrace one

another, to mesh one into the other. Or if you prefer, they want to spoil and corrupt one another. (federman.com)

Other self-translators feel the incursion of one language into the other as invasive, which opens the question of the circumstances under which their second language was acquired. Discussing the personal context in which the self-translator acquired her/his second language helps in situating the phenomenon of self-translation on the historical continuum of authorship and originality.

All of the aforementioned issues are taken into account by Klimkiewicz's approach to analyzing self-translations. She suggests four perspectives to be considered when discussing and analyzing self-translations: text-oriented, author-oriented, reader-oriented and process-oriented perspectives (Cordingley 190). While the following analysis of Hemon's attempt at self-translation is far from comprehensive, it will include aspects of all four perspectives, albeit applied to a very limited corpus, in an attempt to piece together a relatively detailed account of his style as a self-translator, shed light on his decision to forego self translation, and situate him on the author-translator continuum.

The focus of the reader-oriented perspective is the addressee, which makes this approach particularly useful in studying the meaning the reader constructs while reading from a bicultural and/or bilingual space, an activity which proves even more fruitful when performed in relation to self-translated texts.

The author-oriented approach will be used to compare and contrast Hemon to other self-translators in terms of circumstances of geographical displacement (diaspora), motivations to (not) translate one's own work, the healing process as a prerequisite to artistic production, the fractured identity as an undercurrent of produced texts which often manifests as an autobiographical element in the characterization and themes, and the way in which self-translation challenges the *original – translation* binary.

Taking a text-oriented approach to studying self-translation provides insight into twinned texts, the similarities and discrepancies between them, the differences in style when translating to and from one's native/foreign language, as well as the differences between writing and translating style, all of which provides grounds for a discussion of self-translation as reworking.

The process-oriented approach takes into account the way in which all of the aforementioned affects and shapes the mechanics of self-translation, providing a glimpse into



how the bilingual (or multilingual) mind of the self-translator creates and navigates the dynamic intercultural space. Since it is difficult and, above all, unproductive and potentially misleading, to speculate on one such process, Hemon's own statements will be used in conjunction with his texts, in an attempt to shed light on the mechanics of the creative process.

### **3. Hemon – tracing bilinguality**

Hemon's background is important for affirming his authority and legitimacy as a bilingual author, thus providing grounds for a comparative analysis of his work against the work of other, more notable, prolific, and habitual self-translators, as well as shedding light on his decision to leave his works in the hands of other translators.

In an essay he penned for *New Yorker* in 2011, under the title *Mapping Home*, Hemon describes the consequences and extent of the challenges posed by geographical and linguistic displacement. In 1963, Hemon's parents moved from Belgrade to Sarajevo, where Hemon was born, one year later. He lived in Sarajevo until, at the age of 27, he decided to take part in a cultural exchange programme run by the United States Information Agency. He arrived in Chicago on March 14, 1992 and, contrary to what he had planned, he remained there through the duration of the war in Bosnia. In his essay he describes the anguish, guilt and fear he felt, living in Chicago while war raged in his home town. In the essay, as in many interviews, he speaks extensively of the feeling of displacement and the struggle to transpose his identity from his former life into the new one:

Converting Chicago into my mental space, developing a new personal urban infrastructure, become psychiatrically urgent, metaphysically essential. (...) I wanted from Chicago what I had got from Sarajevo: a geography of the soul.  
(Hemon, *Mapping Home*)

By equating destroyed buildings with corpses he makes clear in his essay the extent of his ontological connection with his home, and the fracturing and polarization of his identity in the new, now paradoxical space: "Everything around me was both familiar to the point of pain and entirely uncanny and distant." (*Mapping Home*). The feeling was paralyzing on the linguistic, creative level; he had no stories to tell, no language to tell them in: "(...) there was no writing

coming from me. Deeply displaced, I could write neither in Bosnian nor in English.” (Mapping Home)

In time, with the commencement of healing came writing. The first story he wrote in English was *The Sorge Spy Ring*, (Knight) which was later published in 2000 as a collection of short stories and a novella - “The Question of Bruno”. In 1997, Bosanska knjiga published “Život i djelo Alphonsea Kaudersa”, which, although published after the Question of Bruno, contained translations of the stories originally written in English. The only exception is the titular story *The Life and Work of Alphonse Kauders (Lik i djelo Alphonsea Kaudersa)*, which was originally written in Bosnian and translated into English. According to Hemon, the publisher refused to include, in the notes on the author, the fact that almost all of the stories were translations from English (Culture versus Genes). Six of the seven stories published in translation in 1997 were included in *The Question of Bruno: Lik i djelo Alphonsea Kaudersa (The Life and Work of Alphonse Kauders)*, *Sorgeov špijunski krug (The Sorge Spy Ring)*, *Montaža atrakcija (A Coin)*, *Mljet (Island)*, *Harmonika (The Accordion)*, *Imitacija života (Imitation of Life)*. The short story *Roesenbrinckov čitalac* was not included in the English edition, and two were added; the novella *Blind Jozef Pronek and Dead Souls*, and the short story *Exchange of Pleasant Words*.

As time passed, Chicago’s map was “superimposed” on the map of Sarajevo as it once was, forming what Hemon called a “complicated internal landscape, a space where I could wander and feel at home, and in which stories could be generated” (Mapping Home). In his own words, he was, once again, *placed*.

While Hemon did not intend for his first published work to be an autobiography, he includes pieces of himself in the characters he writes about, fragments of the self – a staple expression of post-colonial criticism which tackles the layered identity of the diasporic mind, applicable in the case of many self-translators, including Hemon. The tendency to simplify his memories in translation which, pushed to its final boundaries morphs into more substantial elision of sentences and passages is an example of the way he reconstructs his memories and identity through the act of translation, sometimes going so far as to change not only the descriptions of perceptions and emotions, but tangible things (e.g. changing *eggs* into sausages (*kobasice*)). This fits into Paul John Eakin’s view of memory as a constructivist process where “our representations of reality – literary, psychological, neurological – are dynamic and constructed rather than static and mimetic in nature (qtd. in Maynes 39). The construction of

memories spans languages; when asked if he dreams in English, Hemon confirms that he does, adding that English has seeped into his subconsciousness and penetrated it so deeply, acquiring transformative power, even retroactively – it changes and (linguistically) appropriates memories that did not happen in English. (Knight) The healing process of the bilingual writer, which underlies and enables such a seamless intertwining of two languages and identities is a common theme in self-translation.

### 3.1 The Self in Re-translation

There are two seemingly opposite streams of thought regarding the (de)construction of the self in self-translation. Some self-translators, like Mary Besemeres and Eva Hoffman, feel the second language as an acute loss, lamenting the sense of displacement, the bereavement and self-consciousness of their self in an Other's<sup>1</sup> narrative space. (Evangelista 180) Others, like Paul Ricoeur, see the process as enriching and doubling, and the new self as an improved composite of identities:

The idealist romantic self, the sovereign master of itself and all that surveys, is replaced by an engaged self which only finds itself after it has traversed the field of foreignness and returned to itself again, this time altered and enlarged, “othered.” (qtd. in Evangelista 178)

Hemon might be said to fall between these two currents. For Hemon, giving free expression to this new double self seems to be the preferred way of writing. The first manifestation of the new self is in English. The othered self speaks a foreign language, narrates within the discursive space of another culture, linguistically expressing the splintering of the self in that in-between space. This process is not easy even for authors who embrace it; in the process of immersion in another culture the self is filtered through, changed very invasively and fundamentally, as Hemon explains:

I had this ontological crisis because it seemed to me that there was always a gap between what I wanted to say and what I was saying. I was misrepresenting

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<sup>1</sup> The Other referred to here is not Said's Other, but rather the post-modernist Other whose alterity is celebrated and focused within the self, the Other participating in creativity through a “refashioning of the old and the unanticipated advent of the new (...)” which is “premised on a *relation*. To be other is necessarily to be other to. (...) Otherness, that is, is produced in an active or event-like relation – we might call it a *relating*; the other as other to is always and constitutively on the point of turning from the unknown into the known, from the other into the same (Attridge 22)

myself, watching myself attaining a different shape in other people's eyes (and ears). It scared me at first, but then I found it liberating. (Baker, "Aleksandar Hemon")

This misrepresentation takes place in a space imbued with tension between the author's identity and the cultural limitations of the linguistic apparatus provided to him by the foreign language:

The non-synchronous temporality of global and national cultures opens up a cultural space – a third space<sup>2</sup> – where the negotiation of incommensurable differences created a tension peculiar to borderline existences. (Bhabha 218)

In the case of self-translators, the negotiation Bhabha writes of entails manipulating one's own text, (usually) in a foreign language, in an attempt to find the new self. If Bhabha's concept of hybrid hyphenations, denoting different identities that neither co-exist separately nor are fused in an organic whole (Lopez 28) is applied to self-translators, then it might be possible to claim that the self-translation represents both the essence of the old self and its refracted representations. Bhabha notes that the "incommensurable elements" or "stubborn chunks" which remain after the ontological crisis induced by the cultural clash within the author are "the basis of cultural identification" (Bhabha 219). Therefore, they are culturally encoded and if preserved after the crisis should be accessible to the self-translator. Having gone through some aspects of acculturation which entail filtering of the self, self-translators may control this refraction in the second instance of translating, this time into their native language, and can retrieve some of the megatext– the result of the new, double, othered self being re-appropriated and articulated in the native language.

In Hemon's case, the process took three years. Hemon is unperturbed by fragmentation, undaunted by the incursion of other selfhoods into his own which enables him to negotiate his in-betweenness<sup>3</sup> if not with ease then with confidence and a sense of purpose. His works are

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<sup>2</sup> Bhabha defines the Third space as a "contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation (where) all cultural statements and systems are constructed, (which) constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricised and read anew." (Bhabha 37). While the complexity of Bhabha's third space is beyond the scope of the work, the term is used to denote the space where Hemon rediscovered his creativity and ability to write; a locus of reconciliation of his two identities.

<sup>3</sup> Bhabha's in-between spaces are "the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular of communal – that initiate new signs of identity and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself. (Bhabha 1-2). More simply, in-betweenness or liminality can be defined as the "process of breaking boundaries, of disidentifying with one phase of life and beginning the transformation to another phase" (Haney 96)

symbolic (standing in the footsteps of Franz Ferdinand), structural (parallel narrative in footnotes, fragmented stories, two points of view, narrative voice changing without overt indication (A Coin), and linguistic expressions (“I’m confined within the wrong language.” (Hemon 124)) of the dethroning of what he calls the “monolithic self” (Baker “Aleksandar Hemon”).

#### 4. Locating the megatext

The vein of thinking which originated with the rise of the vernacular during the Renaissance, exemplified by Linda Collinge’s claim that languages have their own “genies” reaches its apotheosis in Christopher Whyte’s essay *Against Self-Translation*. Not only do languages shape the unconscious, they can constitute the actual content of the work, which would make self-translation a process of “voiding (...) the content” (Whyte 68).

If the self-translator’s knowledge of what he wanted to do interferes with his perception of what he actually wrote, then his reading of the text that Collinge speaks of, as well as the subsequent translation, will naturally not reflect the primary “original” content. Further complicating the debate is the claim that writing and translating are influenced not only by a language’s genie, but also by the writer’s unconscious which intervenes in both writing and translating, and in not being voluntary takes away some of the self-translator’s agency. However, if “what [the author] wanted to say” (Whyte 72) is what Collinge calls the megatext, then the self-translation may be another version of the megatext, accessed through a different language.

Linda Collinge posits that the unconscious is this megatext; therefore, this is where the writer’s “bilingual style or literary idiolect” is located (Hokenson, Munson 196). Hemon himself claims that his style, although it conveys a sense of defamiliarisation, is not shaped by the fact that he is writing in his non-native language: “I do it in Bosnian just as much, if not more, because it’s part of my sensibility, because I respond to the sensuality of adjectives” (Rohter, “Twice Told Tales”). This supports Genette’s claim that the writer’s style is “transposed from version to version, even within one language, with augmentation and reduction, achieving different linguistic embodiments while remaining distinctive (...) (Hokenson and Munson 195)”. It is also in line with the Romantic era school of thought which posited the “encomium of the native tongue as the egoic essence of subjectivity” and the natio as the “primary habitus of the

subjective being” (Hokenson and Munson 142-145). The bilingual immigrant self-translator is thus doubly displaced; his subjective being uprooted and his egoic essence elusive when approached through a foreign language. There are, however, self-translators who challenge this notion, such as Stefan George, in whose work “the constituent literary elements of the translation efface the very singularities of the first text, in a steady thinning and banalization in the second medium” (Hokenson and Munson 172).

According to Collinge, the forefronting of only one subtext of the work is precisely what the translator must not do: “le traducteur ne doit pas mettre au jour les structures du texte, ni enlever les ambiguïtés” (Collinge 18) (the translator must not expose the structures of the text, nor may he/she eliminate the ambiguities). Applied to self-translation, the loss of meaning is exacerbated by being not only a transgression but one that is completely legitimized by the writer’s authority and thus more dangerous in not offering the reader recourse in thinking that it is a unintentional mistake; it irrevocably narrows the interstitial space between two texts, and attenuates the hypertext. Whyte claims that self-translations risk “limiting and distorting” the readers’ reception of the work precisely because they are “inevitably, interpretations which reproduce only one of the many resonances of the text, effectively telling us what it means, with an authority we are powerless to controvert, because their source is the author” (Whyte 70).

The demand to maintain all the ambiguities is problematic, not only for translators but for self-translators as well, because the difficulty in doing so is not posed by any possible misinterpretation of the text, but by the fact that no two words from different languages will “cover an identical sematic area and possess exactly the same range of connotations” (Hokenson and Munson 194).

Hemon’s position is a compromise between Collinge’s and Whyte’s attitudes towards translation. Hemon feels that his self is splintered (a splintering which is not caused merely by language): Myself is a compound self and definitely unstable (...) Literature is what keeps me together. (Collum McCann “Aleksandar Hemon”) This ability of the writing process to function as connective tissue may support the existence of the megatext, located in the interliminal spaces between two languages. It may also lend credence to the claim that the megatext in the case of self-translation is not a pre-conceived pattern, but emerges in the healing process of translation. Since Hemon’s identity is compound, then any megatext he creates is already in itself the result of different cultural forces he is exposed to. In the light of this, his adherence to a very close

translation does not constitute a betrayal of the “right”, given to authors and commonly denied to translators, of re-working his writing. The “sense of alterity” (Hokenson and Munson 202) in his case is not created by enculturation, which would demand interventions in the text on different levels; it is created through the structure of narration, splintered discourse in the process of what Genette would call “transtylistation” (Hokenson and Munson 195) and which is evident in instances of reduction or amplification.

Reduction and amplification in translation are the result of the writer’s reading of their own text: “le traducteur réifie sa lecture sous une forme quasi-identique à celle du texte de départ” (Collinge 17) (the translator reifies his/her reading into a form that is nearly identical to that of the initial text). This reading, performed by the translator, is subsequently reified in a version which Collinge calls quasi-identique, implying that it is necessarily a reinterpretation, or a reworking. Much like the “original”, it is a manifestation of the megatext, or as Hokenson and Munson suggest, infra-text that is in fact the “Benjaminian tertium comparationis” (199).

### **5. Translating style – Hemon’s bilingual self**

At first glance, it can be noted that Hemon’s translations into Bosnian do not include any radical changes or substantial reworkings of the original. Part of the explanation behind Hemon’s decision to produce what is close to a literal translation are his technique and style of writing. While some self-translators, such as Ungaretti, Green and most notably and radically, Beckett, strove towards a minimalist expression, “stylistic depletion and fragmentation”, others like Hemon and Nabokov tried to reify the megatext through what Munson and Hokenson call a Joycean “modernist luxuriance” (191). Hemon criticizes laconic styles of writing, the “unfortunate tendency towards Hemingway-style minimalism. You remove all the adjectives. I don’t believe in that. I believe in Nabokov’s way. You pile them up until the object is formed completely” (Borger). If all the objects are satisfactorily described down to their essence, that admittedly does not leave much room for reworkings while translating into a different language. From a stylistic point of view, it also explains part of the reason Hemon translated only one of his books, while his subsequent works were translated by others. There are, however, differences between Hemon’s versions of the two texts which are noticeable on several compositional levels, influence the reader’s interpretation of the two texts and reveal Hemon’s approach to bridging the gap between two cultures.

Hemon's own description of his style as "piling up adjectives" can be connected with the way some self-translators perceive their non-native language. Hemon's aesthetic has undoubtedly been influenced by Nabokov, whose novel *Lolita* he used while learning English (Flynn). The portal into his new language was a book by another self-translator writing in his non-native language. He was, however, compared to Nabokov and Joseph Conrad in terms of style, not only the feat of having reached admirable, even writerly, proficiency. Without going so far as to imply linguistic determinism, some self-translators ascribe part of the stylistic characteristics of their writing to the fact that they are manipulating the Other's discursive space through what Irene Ulman described as "self-conscious use of language" (qtd. in Cordingley 180). Eva Hoffman uses the word *river* to prove that by changing signifiers the signified is lost, pushed beyond the reach of the foreign speaker. In her native language 'river' is "a vital sound, energized with the essence of riverhood" while in English the word is simply "cold" (qtd. in Cordingley 180).

Hemon speaks of the splintered self, an acute sense of the world surrounding him, but does not ascribe the difficulties in finding the appropriate semantic expression to any kind of loss. Still, his writing does show that his tendency to describe is more prominent in English (for instance, in *The Life and Work of Alphonse Kauders*, where the Bosnian version contains the single word 'tuga', the English version elaborates with 'sheer, heart-rending sorrow'). (Hemon 24) The displacement and uprootedness are evident in both the content and style of Hemon's work. While he is reluctant to characterize his style as influenced by the foreignness of English, his writing does vividly portray the rift in the othered self, through the use of unusual syntagms hinting at an acute perception, disassociating the signifier and the signified and searching for new connections in a sort of "shape-changing" (Hokenson and Munson 145) process such as in the almost anti-synesthetic "motionless sound".

Hemon's approach to writing, which he himself succinctly defines: "I move in the direction of complication." (Simon) is only one end of the self-translating spectrum. The diversity of translating styles and practices which fall under the designation of self-translation (such as Beckett's *Bing/Ping* (Fitch 70) as opposed to Hemon's translations) challenges the concept of authorial intentionality and complicates the debate on whether self-translation is a form of translation or rewriting.



This is why quantifying elements of writing style as distinct from elements of translating style can be a daunting task. However, Hemon is self-professedly generally prone to describing by “piling up” adjectives, so the process by which a self-translator tries to reach meaning through language which is either descriptive, or redolent of defamiliarisation, can overlap with his own style and artistic process (hence his assertion that he does the same in Bosnian, which is not always supported by evidence yielded by a comparative analysis of his work).

### 5.1 Omission

While Hemon’s interventions are rarely substantial enough to warrant the term “reworking”, the omissions that do at times appear cause changes in tone and ambiguate the text noticeably, especially for the bilingual reader, which can be seen in the following example:

*Example 1*

<p>“[žene] većinom služe kao povod za krvave tuče između Manijaka i Ubica [ili, opet, kao predmet zajedničkog izživljavanja]<sub>A</sub>” (10)</p>	<p>“Chiefly, [women] serve as an excuse for bloody fights between the Maniacs and the Killers <sub>-A.</sub>” (27)</p>
--	--

In the English version there is no mention of women being abused and having no agency to speak of. The notion of abuse is amplified for the bilingual reader who not only notices the discrepancy but may now pose questions regarding the representation of abuse in literature, the differences in perceptions and treatment of abuse in different cultures. The removal of the gendered dimension of mindless violence constitutes not only a linguistic omission, but an attenuation of the image and softening of tone. The reader is given a comment, not an answer or an explanation, and this suspension is emblematic of the dynamic, fluid self externalized in translation. The megatext or infratext is revealed in the interaction between the two texts. The presence of a meaning in the original may become obvious only when contrasted with an absence in the second text, displaying the tensions and sometimes diametrically opposite forces inherent in the self-translator’s bicultural self, which inevitably act upon both texts. Hokenson and Munson apply Genette’s hypotext and hypertext to the original – translation dynamic. Following that analogy through reveals the interaction of the two works which results in a third

original – meaning created by the bilingual reader. Just as the “subject makes himself or herself in the process of enunciating self in discourse with other subjects” (Hokenson and Munson 148), so the original and the translation create a new discourse.

An analysis of the nature, motivation and frequency of omissions of words, fragments, sentences or paragraphs indicated that Hemon most frequently leaves out adjectival premodifiers:

*Example 2*

<p>The buildings looked like weak, ludicrous matchboxes, compared to the progressing<sub>A</sub> monster blowing them, with its gaze, into flaming dust<sub>A</sub> and smithereens<sub>B</sub>. (217)</p>	<p>Zgrade su izgledale kao slabašne, smiješne kutije za šibice, u poređenju sa <sub>-A</sub> čudovištem koje ih je svojim pogledom raznosilo u <sub>-A</sub> paramparčad<sub>B</sub>. (101)</p>
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The visual image is somewhat dampened by the omission of “flaming dust”, while the omission of the pre-modifier “progressing” detracts from the sense of movement of an increasingly menacing and deteriorating situation.

*Example 3*

<p>I ran towards the train station, bumping into a woman – her hands full of bags loaded with lean<sub>A</sub> green onions and chubby<sub>B</sub> peppers – who didn’t seem to be disturbed in the least by the flags. (230-231)</p>	<p>Otrčao sam do željezničke stanice, usput naletjevši na ženu – s cekerima punim <sub>-A</sub> mladog luka i <sub>-B</sub> paprika – koja nije izgledala nimalo uznemirena zastavama. (110)</p>
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The absence of the two premodifiers in the first text strips the image of the contrast between the “lean” onions and “chubby” peppers, removing also the anthropomorphic layer created by vegetables being described in terms of physical features most frequently attributed to humans. There are other instances of anthropomorphic descriptions in English not being rendered into Bosnian:

*Example 4*

It had awkward <sub>A</sub> plywood armrests and stubborn <sub>B</sub> , eternally creaking, springs. (217)	Fotelja je imala <sub>A</sub> rukohvate od šperploče i tvrde <sub>B</sub> , uvijek škripuće, opruge. (101)
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While the springs in the English version are described as stubborn, and therefore attributed with a uniquely human trait, the Bosnian version simply describes them as hard. The adjectival premodifier “awkward” was completely omitted, detracting from the image and rendering the target text macroscopic in comparison with the source text, which seems to be a salient feature of Hemon’s self-translating style.

Hemon’s omissions do not stop at pre-modifiers, he goes further, leaving out sentence fragments and entire sentences.

*Example 5*

Sorge would follow us everywhere. [He'd sit in front of the cinema exit doors, as we exalted over the adventures of Shaft or Agent X. He'd doze under one of the park benches, as we oscillated on the swings] <sub>A</sub> . When it was time to go home, we'd have to keep him busy, if we wanted to sneak out on him, with bones and eggs <sub>A</sub> . (228)	Sorge nas je svuda pratio <sub>A</sub> i kad bi bilo vrijeme da idemo kući, morali bismo ga zabaviti, ako smo htjeli da mu se iskrademo, kostima i kobasicama <sub>A-B</sub> . (109)
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*Example 6*

He was stinky <sub>A</sub> and filthy and was [populated by a colony of fleas] <sub>A</sub> amplified, so, one day, after a sudden <sub>C</sub> rain had washed him <sub>D</sub> , I stole some money from my mother’s wallet and bought a can of bug-spray – [with a picture of a cockroach writhing in unspeakable horror under the triangular shadow, spreading from the picture of the bug-spray can.] <sub>E</sub> So we sprayed Sorge. (228)	Bio je <sub>A</sub> prljav i [imao je buhe] <sub>A</sub> , pa sam, jednog dana, nakon što ga je <sub>C</sub> kiša dobro <sub>D</sub> oprala, ukrao para iz majčinog novčanika i kupio sprej za insekte <sub>E</sub> i poprskao Sorgea. (109)
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*Example 7*

When Vampire let him go, Sorge dutifully <sub>A</sub> licked his face and sauntered away [and lay down under the slide] <sub>B</sub> . (228)	Kad ga je Vampir pustio, Sorge mu je <sub>A</sub> olizao lice i otkaskao <sub>B</sub> . (109)
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*Example 8*

I'd know I could never go back and prevent losing a precious moment, and a warm wave of painful sorrow would keep spreading through my body, [until it would moisten and blur my gaze] <sub>A</sub> . (229)	Znao bih da se ne mogu vratiti da ne mogu spriječiti gubitak dragocjenih trenutaka, i onda bi se topao talas bolne tuge raširio mojim tijelom <sub>A</sub> . (109)
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*Example 9*

Why were their names important? <sub>A</sub> What did they do? Where were they? Were they alive? <sub>B</sub> (226)	<sub>A</sub> Šta oni rade? Gdje su oni sada? <sub>B</sub> (108)
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*Example 10*

When I was returning home from school, it was raining. The sneaker was still there, [and a rainbowy rivulet, descending from one of the oil puddles, went cautiously around it] <sub>A</sub> .(225)	Kad sam se iz škole vraćao kući, padala je kiša i patika je još uvijek ležala tamo <sub>A</sub> . (107)
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Hemon's omission of sentence fragments attenuate the image, or eliminate it completely:

*Example 11*

I sat there, [uncomfortable, with burning armpits] <sub>A</sub> , for some time, listening to them morosely retelling stories about her life: how she made the best potato soup ever; how she wanted to listen to the weather forecast the Monday <sub>B</sub> <small>amp.</small> she died, [and that week was to be sunny and delightful] <sub>C</sub> ; how she fell asleep	Sjedio sam tamo <sub>A</sub> neko vrijeme, slušajući ih kako otužno prepričavaju priče o njenom životu: kako niko na svijetu nije pravio bolju krompir-čorbu; kako se zanimala za vremensku prognozu na dan <sub>B</sub> svoje smrti <sub>C</sub> ; kako je, umorna <sub>D</sub> , zaspala u tramvaju i onda je satima kružila po gradu, dok nije, <b>bunovna</b> <sub>D</sub> , izašla na pogrešnoj stanici. (104)
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on a streetcar and went around the city with it for hours, finally getting off at the wrong stop, [not knowing where she ended up] <sub>D amp.</sub> . (221)	
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*Example 12*

Then I gobbled my turbid drink and left, [sheepishly saying “Goodbye” to everyone] <sub>A</sub> , [which no one really noticed, except for a young woman who carried a plateful of chicken thighs, and who, in passing, pinched my ruddy cheek with her greasy fingers] <sub>C</sub> . (221)	Nakon što su na trenutak začutili, ja sam u jednom gutljaju popio svoj mutni napitak i, [ne znajući šta da kažem] <sub>B</sub> , otišao kući . <sub>C</sub> . (104)
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Omissions are usually cited as the most egregious examples of unsuccessful translations which veer into territory that can more appropriately be termed reworking, insofar as they assume what is conventionally thought of as the authorial role. A well known example of translations much-reviled by some critics, although praised publicly by the author, are Helen Tracy Lowe-Porter's translations of Thomas Mann's work. Her translations are deemed by some to be plagued by “gratuitous” violations of the “author's intentions” and a reprehensible disregard of his carefully crafted prose, committed by “making countless omissions from, and a fair number of unwanted additions to, what he wrote, and by mistranslating words, phrases or whole sentences with (apparently) great abandon” (Buck 903).

Self-translators may be spared such condemnation, depending on the perceived successfulness of their translation, which supersedes even their own opinion of their skill as self-translators. In his self-translations, Beckett “consistently produced the same English-French differential” (Hokenson and Munson 193), which the critics apparently valued over, for instance, Rabindranath Tagore's self-translations. Since the self-translator is the author, the process of translation is not only the representation of the text, but of the author's identity as well. Following this line of thinking would lead to the conclusion that Tagore compromised himself by misrepresenting his poetry in what critics have called “a severe case of self-bowdlerization” (qtd in Hokenson and Munson 169-170), speculating that his reason for adopting “staid, even stale

Edwardian verse” in translation may have been a concerted attempt at adapting and popularising his poetry for Western audiences (Hokenson and Munson 169).

However, the “scant relation” of Tagore’s translation to the original (Hokenson and Munson 170) can be used in substantiating the claim that the translation has a value in itself, making it a distinct piece of writing – another original. In her essay discussing the status of self-translation as re-writing and arguing the superfluity of the term “self-translation”, Susan Bassnett claims that it would be more productive to consider it “an interlingual experiment that not only fed back into his Bengali work but also gave him access to the world stage” (Cordingley 22).

Hemon’s decision to write in English may have been informed by his desire to reach wider audiences, but his omissions do not seem to be motivated by cultural considerations:

*Example 13*

<p>I would imagine a round-faced, bearded man speaking<sub>A</sub> in Moscow, [smacking his lips after every successful sentence;]<sub>A</sub> a pale, blonde woman warbling from Monaco; an angry, teeth-clenched man in Lagos. (219)</p>	<p>Zamislio bih bradato, oblo lice čovjeka <sub>-A</sub> u Moskvi <sub>-A</sub>; blijedu, plavokosu ženu u Monacu; ljutog čovjeka, koji škrguće zubima, u Lagosu. (103)</p>
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There is a noticeable attenuation of the image through omitting verbs denoting sounds (*speaking*, *smacking his lips* and *warbling* were all omitted from the translation). However, the solecistic phrase “teeth-clenched man” is diffused into “koji škrguće zubima”, and amplified through the introduction of sound where in the original clenched teeth were only a physical obstacle to speech.

*Example 14*

<p>I could hear the grey sternness of the Potsdam voice: cubic, symmetrical buildings with [wide, spacious]<sub>A</sub> streets where people looked minuscule and stifled, [and policemen stood at corners with leashed German shepherds.]<sub>C</sub> (220)</p>	<p>Mogao sam čuti sivu strogost potsdamskog glasa: čoškaste, simetrične zgrade na besputnim<sub>B</sub> ulicama, na kojima su ljudi izgledali maleni i pridavljeni <sub>-C</sub>. (103)</p>
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The translation into Bosnian not only replaces two adjectives with one, but also creates a paradox which was not present in the original. “Wide, spacious” streets prompt the reader to visualize the streets as vast and in stark physical contrast with the diminutive, repressed people, thus implying their insignificance. Although the translation offers a less visual contrast, it does not vitiate the striking difference between the street and the people. This is only partly due to the fact the author retained the descriptions of people as small and smothered. The adjective “besputne” forefronts the aspect of time, as it denies the possibility of progressing through travelling, and enhances the helplessness of people; there is either no road to travel, or the road does not lead anywhere. The omission of a sentence fragment contributes to dispersing the foreboding and menace of “policemen (...) with leashed German shepherds” in the original text.

Instances of omission illustrate the difference between the self-translator's writing and translating style. Although Hemon stated that he does not “believe in” Hemingwayesque laconism, removing adjectives is precisely what he does in his self-translation. The following examples contain instances of omission, substitution, diffusion and condensation.

*Example 15*

<p>I remember full well crouching<sub>A</sub> behind a grey armchair, [in the corner of our living room]<sub>C</sub>, hiding from the images of a creature that had three legs, a long snakish neck and a fist-like head, its furious<sub>D</sub> only eye sending lethal rays scorching<sub>E</sub> terrified people and destroying<sub>F</sub> buildings. (217)</p>	<p>Vrlo dobro pamtim sebe kako klečim<sub>B</sub> iza sive fotelje, -<sub>C</sub> skrivajući se od slike bića koje ima tri noge, dugačak, zmijast vrast i šakastu glavu iz koje -<sub>D</sub> jedino oko odašilje smrtonosne zrake na -<sub>F</sub> zgrade i -<sub>E</sub> prestravljene ljude. (101)</p>
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Crouching was translated with less than its most straightforward counterpart, although this decision does not seem to have any consequences, other than affecting a slight change in the image. Other interventions, however, do contribute to an abatement of the intensity of the narrator's childhood memory. The adverbial modifier “in the corner of our living room” is entirely absent from the translation, detracting from the detailed image presented in the English

version. *Scorching* and *destroying*, which intensify the extent of the destruction wreaked by the creature are absorbed in the very neutral *slati*.

Omission can also offer a sense of relief or respite in the interliminal space between the two versions. In another example of a unique third original created by juxtaposing the two versions, the bilingual reader will notice that the increasingly threatening menace and the loss of self implied in the sounds being enveloped by darkness – the foreign and unknown, remains in the first version and is not transposed into the translation:

*Example 16*

<p>(...) listening to the encroaching<sub>A</sub> hum of darkness and my own wheezing [slowly disappearing in it]<sub>B</sub>. (218-219)</p>	<p>(...) slušajući <sub>-A</sub> šum tame i svoje bolesno dahtanje <sub>-B</sub>. (102)</p>
--	---

In Bosnian, the hum and the wheezing coexist, neither being overpowered by the other. In the English version, the darkness is distinctly menacing, with a deep sound and threatening movement. The humming darkness draws the wheezing into its synaesthesia by enveloping it. The sensory modalities are reversed; darkness, a visual phenomenon is experienced auditorily, while humming, an auditory phenomenon, is experienced visually.

While not always as noticeable or meaningful as the omission of *encroaching*, examples of omitted adjectives are plentiful:

*Example 17*

<p>We built Sorge a house out of a sturdy<sub>A</sub> cardboard box. (229)</p>	<p>Izgradili smo Sorgeu kućicu od <sub>-A</sub> kartonske kutije. (109)</p>
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*Example 18*

<p>My mother would pull down the green<sub>A</sub> shades and I would sometimes disregard the TV and, benumbed by a persistent<sub>B</sub> fever, do nothing but watch a sunbeam, which would manage to squeeze in between the two shades, and move across the room, pointing, like a</p>	<p>Moja mati bi spustila <sub>-A</sub> roletne, a ja, ponekad, ne mareći za televizor, otupljen <sub>-B</sub> groznicom, ne bih radio ništa nego posmatrao sunčev zrak, koji bi se nekako provukao između dvije roletne, kako se premješta preko sobe, upirući, kao slijepčeva palica, u nesvjesne stvari. (102)</p>
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blind man's cane, at things unawares. (217-218)	
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*Example 19*

Then it would go over the laden <sub>A</sub> bookshelf, over the stiff <sub>B</sub> spines of my father's Russian maths books, unperturbed by their intricate titles, and it would finally stop at the right end, and, depending on the season, insist on a spine-torn Beekeeping Encyclopaedia, or never read, [orderly lined-up, pristine] <sub>C</sub> selected works of Joseph Conrad. (218)	Onda bi išao preko <sub>A</sub> police sa knjigama, preko <sub>B</sub> kičmi matematičkih knjiga na ruskom - vlasništvo moga oca - nezainteresovan za njihove misteriozne naslove, na kraju bi stao na desnoj strani police i, u zavisnosti od godišnjeg doba, upirao u raskupusanu <sub>C</sub> “Pčelarsku enciklopediju” ili nikad pročitana <sub>C</sub> “Izabrana djela Josepha Conrada.” (102)
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Changes which are admittedly much more subtle but likely to cumulatively cause a shift in character portrayal, tone or meaning of the text include shifts in the point of view:

*Example 20*

“(…) [izvode bijesne gliste] <sub>A</sub> revolucije (…)” (9)	“(…) irksome <sub>B</sub> revolution (…)” (26)
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In terms of translating choices regarding culturally specific vocabulary, the English translation is a diffusion of the idiomatic expression in Bosnian, focusing only on one aspect of the idiom. There is also a perceptible change in focus; in the Bosnian version the emphasis is on the folly of the people and the futility of their endeavours. In the English version, the focus is on Kauders, as his opinion of these revolutions is highlighted. He dominates the discourse so that those revolutionaries are not mocked as in the Bosnian version, but merely implied, to the point of being almost entirely excluded from the dominant discourse. His dominance is more forcefully asserted in the English text not only by omission, but also substitution. Hemon chose to translate “okolnosti” as “proclivities”, granting Kauders more agency:

*Example 21*

Ove okolnosti <sub>A</sub> sretno su se sjedinile u	These proclivities <sub>B</sub> were happily united in his
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njegovoj legendarnoj <sub>A</sub> opsjednutosti šumskim požarima. (8)	notorious <sub>SAB</sub> obsession with forest fires (...). (25)
---	--

Kauders in translation is not a victim of circumstances, but of his own nature which he indulges and gives full reign to. It is he who exerts influence over the outside world, his personality is not malleable and subject to external influences, it is a force in its own right. The choice of “notorious” instead of “legendary” as the most obvious equivalent of “legendarno” further contributes to mythologising Kauders' character. Substitution of adjectival premodifiers is not the only way in which the focus of the sentence can be shifted. In the following example, in an instance of reordering, the author changes the subject of the second sentence, shifting the focus and placing it more heavily on Kauders.

*Example 22*

I što sam duže živ, sve mi je jasnije. [Sudnji dan je bio prije nego što sam ja bio živ.] <sub>AB</sub> (11)	And, as I live, it is becoming all too clear to me. [I was born after Judgement Day] <sub>BA</sub> . (29)
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## 5.2 Amplification

Amplification is defined as obtaining when “the target text picks up an element B<sub>t</sub>, in addition to a counterpart A<sub>t</sub> of some source element A<sub>s</sub>” (Malone 17).

*Example 23*

“(…) ona je, opijena Fuhrerovom muškošću, poslala dijete u konc-logor -A.” (9)	“(…) she, intoxicated by the fuhrer’s virility, sent the child to a concentration camp, [forcing herself to believe it was only for the summer] <sub>A</sub> .” (25)
--	--

The English narrator asserts himself more forcefully by intimating Eva Braun’s motivations to the reader. Passing judgment on Eva Braun’s decision to send her child to a concentration camp is left at the reader’s discretion in the Bosnian version, while the English reader is afforded a glimpse into her mind, which represents an instance of the translator foreclosing the interliminal spaces between the two texts by providing more detail. One of the

few instances of narration in this story which does not simply gloss over women is the less than flattering speculation on the motivation of Eva Braun, posing as a purported glance into her mind by an omniscient narrator. Being “intoxicated”, her judgment is clearly impaired and her agency overpowered by a male. This single intrusion of the omniscient narrator calls attention to a higher-level feature of the text - its encyclopaedic structure. The narrator establishing himself as the supreme authority while offering other, frequently outlandish claims, speaks to the humour and irony the work is laced with.

*Example 24*

“(…) pošto je podmetnuo par <sub>A</sub> šumskih požara - <sub>B</sub> (…)” (9)	“(…) having set seven <sub>A</sub> amp. forest fires [in a single week] <sub>B</sub> (…)” (26)
---	--

Unlike the syntactic differences in sentence type which do not significantly change the tone or shift the emphasis, the amplification on the semantic level does have several implications. The additional information of the English version portrays the magnitude of Kauders’ pyromania (with the added effect of alliteration whose smooth flow may imply his lack of impulse control). The Bosnian version offers less precise information when observed on its own, and downplays Kauders’ pyromania when compared to the translation, so that, observed from the bilingual reader’s vantage point, Kauders’ character is much more fluid and unstable than in either single version. However, amplification on one compositional level does not always ambiguate the characters and plot; it can cause diffusion or reduction on a higher level, as in the following sentence:

*Example 25*

“(…) da zavodi <sub>AB</sub> Evu Braun i red i disciplinu.” (9)	“(…) establishing <sub>A</sub> new order and discipline and seducing <sub>B</sub> Eva Braun.” (25)
---	--

In the Bosnian version the author took advantage of a homonym to portray Kauders as having the same, relentless approach to seduction and establishing order. The English version reconstructs the semantic field but much of the humour and emphasis on the dehumanising effect is lost, since

in the minds of most readers the passion of love and seduction is in stark contrast with discipline and order. By undoing the zeugma “zavodi Evu Braun i red i disciplinu” through amplification (diffusion of the meaning of the single verb “zavoditi” into “establish” and “seduce”) the author “renders the target text microscopic as compared with the source” (Malone 214).

Other examples of amplification include the addition of pre-modifiers, which is characteristic of Hemon’s writing style, and seems to be a feature of his translating style only when translating into English. Examples of amplification are more frequent in the one story he wrote in Bosnian and translated into English, the *Life and Work of Alphonse Kauders*, than they are in his translations into Bosnian, starting with adjectival amplification (Example 26) and culminating in introducing new sentences offering additional insight (Example 29):

*Example 26*

Alphonse Kauders se fanatično bavio pčelarstvom, tokom čitavog svog života vodio je oštru <sub>A</sub> borbu protiv parazitskih gnjida koje nemilosrdno eksploatišu pčele, a poznate su pod imenom varoe. (11)	Alphonse Kauders was a fanatic bee-keeper. In the course of his life, he led [fierce and merciless] <sub>A amp.</sub> battles against parasitic lice that ruthlessly exploit bees, and are known as 'varoa'. (28)
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*Example 27*

Izvalio <sub>A</sub> sam dva prednja zuba - <sub>C</sub> . (11)	I sacrificed <sub>A amp.</sub> my two front teeth [for my passion] <sub>C</sub> . (29)
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*Example 28*

Staljin je zabranio da se takva pisma šalju sovjetskom poštom "zato što među onima koji otvaraju <sub>A</sub> pisma ima mnogo pitomih <sub>A</sub> , porodičnih ljudi", pa je Alphonse Kauders slao pisma po - <sub>C</sub> kuririma. (12)	Stalin forbade such letters to be sent by Soviet mail, because 'among those who [open and read] <sub>AB</sub> letters there are many [tame, timid] <sub>AB</sub> family people', so then Alphonse Kauders sent his letters through reliable <sub>C</sub> couriers. (30)
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*Example 29*

-	Alphonse Kauders, in the course of time, put a revolver on Gavriilo Princip's temple, for he had burned a bee with his cigarette. (31)
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### 5.3 Compensatory amplification

Compensatory amplification is not unique to self-translators, nor is it always considered to be reworking. It is used by translators to bridge cultural gaps in the space between the source and target texts, rather than to introduce new parts to the story. The example of the most glaring amplification in Hemon's translation of the short story *Život i djelo Alphonsea Kaudersa*, however, is more akin to a glossary or history lesson, than to unobtrusive compensatory amplification. The glossary is consistent with the encyclopedic structure of the story, although not present in the source text. The motivation of the author for introducing the notes is unclear, although he was seemingly influenced by extralinguistic considerations, as the notes do not constitute glossing of linguistic expressions, or even elucidations; but are rather intended as an expansion or a historical backdrop of the text. Even for readers who are not approaching the text from a bilingual space, the notes are potentially confusing:

I'm not sure what to make of these notes. Are they supposed to represent some kind of ironic statement about the story? Is the author of the notes Hemon? Is the author of the notes someone else (in the sense of the original story, say an absent narrator?) The strange thing for me was how the notes (which take up almost 4 pages) seem to be really outside the formal construction of the story. (Farrell)

In his translation of *Lik i djelo Alphonsea Kaudersa* into English, Hemon added explanatory "Notes" in the form of a glossary. When translating into Bosnian, Hemon's style is not similar to that of other translators which tend to extricate and transpose meaning by explaining a concept, rather than finding a convenient equivalent in the foreign language, affirming the essentially open-ended nature of the process of translating:

The relative looseness in the target organisation is often symptomatic of what might be called open-endedness of translational choices. That is, when translators lack a prefabricated target element and hence must devise nonce trajectional plans

while in the very act of translating, all else being equal they will tend to synthesize a response in the form of a combination of target elements, a procedure tending to produce verbosity. (Malone 200)

Much like in the *Life and Work of Alphonse Kauders*, where the preposterousness of the statements erode the reader’s trust, which is usually inherent to the encyclopaedic format, the first person narration and references to the narrator's own life challenge the historicity of this addition to the target text. The ambiguating of the voices can be intentional, and it mimics the ambiguity of a mind re-shaping a discourse while using a foreign conceptual framework.

### 5.4 Substitution

Joseph L. Malone defines substitution as a trajection which “obtains when a source text element  $A_s$  is rendered by a target element deemed as being other than the most straightforward counterpart available” (67).

Alphonse Kauders je posjedovao spiskove svih nimfomanki <sub>A</sub> u Moskvi, Berlinu, Marseju, Beogradu, Tokiju i Minhenu. (8)	Alphonse Kauders owned lists of all the [highly promiscuous] <sub>AB</sub> women in Moscow, Berlin, Marseilles, Belgrade and Munich. (24)
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“Promiscuity”, as a behavioural pattern, rather than a diagnosis, places the onus on women by fore-fronting the volitional aspect of hypersexuality. While the pseudo-scientific term nymphomaniac is not void of implicit evocations of socially unacceptable behaviour, calling the women “highly promiscuous” entails a stronger value judgment. Much like in the previously discussed example of women being abused, called “predmet izivljavanja” and devoid of any agency, here too the Bosnian version implies that their behaviour is governed by their inherent nymphomania, while the English version grants them agency through the implication of volition. There are several more glaring examples of substitution where the author completely changed objects or descriptions rather than translate them:

#### *Example 30*

So we ran, Vampire and I, to our respective homes and brought back the needed	I tako smo otrčali, Vampir i ja, našim kućama i donijeli hrane: kuhana jaja, kobasice <sub>B</sub> , flašu
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nourishment: boiled eggs, [chicken heads] <sub>A</sub> , a bottle of milk and, also, one of the beaten enamelled pots that Vampire's mother (he said) used to use to make potato soup. (Hemon 225)	mlijeka i, povrh toga, jednu od izlupanih šerpi u kojima je Vampirova majka (tvrdio je on) nekad kuhala krompir-čorbu. (Hemon 107)
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*Example 31*

When it was time to go home, we'd have to keep him busy, if we wanted to sneak out on him, with bones and eggs <sub>A</sub> . (Hemon 228)	(...) i kad bi bilo vrijeme da idemo kući, morali bismo ga zabaviti, ako smo htjeli da mu se iskrademo, kostima i kobasicama <sub>B</sub> . (Hemon 109)
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*Example 32*

The beam would start on the left side of the painting and go over the stunned <sub>A</sub> cluster of dun and grey birch trees, as if counting them, turning them ochre for a [long moment] <sub>B</sub> . (Hemon 218)	Zrak bi krenuo s lijeve strane slike i prešao preko <sub>A</sub> grozda sivosmeđih, pjegavih breza, kao da ih broji, bojeći ih u žutosmeđe na [kratak trenutak] <sub>C</sub> . (Hemon 102)
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*Example 33*

Except, near a gutter, close to the pavement, among balls of dirt and black motor-oil puddles, there was a sneaker, bright blue, with the sole face up and a piece of pinkish <sub>A</sub> chewing gum stuck to the heel. (Hemon 225)	Osim što je, pored slivnika, blizu ivičnjaka, među grudvama prljavštine i crnim lokvama motornog ulja, ležala patika, svijetloplava, sa donom okrenutim prema gore i blijedozelenom <sub>B</sub> žvakom zalijepljenom za petu. (Hemon 107)
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## 6. Poliphony - reconciling identities

In the words of Anthony Cordingley, self-translation could be considered as “the ideal telos of modern translation theory, with its teleological reading of translation as the quest to attain oneness with the original and its author”. (2-3) While self-translators appear to embody the apogee of the endeavor to invest the translation with the same sense of authority as the

“original”, several difficulties which arise in the process and which have been pointed out by self-translators, speak to the inadequacy of such a simplistic reconciliation of the perceived author-translator binary. In “A Coin” Hemon himself questions the truthfulness of the written word by positing that it is undermined by time: “Whatever I write, I feel it to be untrue, because it’ll be untrue in a day or two, if not in a moment or two. Whatever I say I am lying or will be lying (...)” (Hemon 127).

The idea that inexorable external forces such as time compromise, undermine or change the meaning, suggests that for some authors “oneness with the original” through the process of self-translation is entirely unattainable. Not only is the final meaning vulnerable to change after it has been committed to paper, it is being changed in the very process of creation, which divests the author of at least some of his authority, as he relinquishes some control over his work not only to time and each reader's unique negotiation of meaning, but also to the liminal space between the "intended" meaning and produced meaning, both in a flux between two languages.

The short story *A coin* is polyphonous or dialogic, with intertwined narratives, and exemplifies the struggle to attain oneness. Both narratives are in first person, one epistolary, the other a structured, articulated glimpse into the consciousness of the reader of the letters. The Bosnian version makes no discernible distinction between the two narratives, while the English version differentiates them typographically – the letters are italicized. By making the polyphony more obvious the author emphasizes the differences between the two narrators’ consciousness. In the Bosnian version the differences are still present but no effort was exerted to make them immediately apparent to the reader, possibly because the narrators’ different genders are obvious in Bosnian in the first person narration. The amplificational gain of [ $\pm$  gender] is a result of the formal linguistic differences between the two languages; however, the italicized letters also serve to emphasise the temporal distance between the two narrators, which influences both of them. As a result of the differences in the text noticeable to the bilingual reader, the third original is in a flux, with one original drawing clear lines between the narratives, and the other blurring them, which epitomizes the position of the self-translator who writes in a foreign language and translates into their native language, with their self now being in a constant flux located between the two. Texts written by bilingual authors often externalise the landscape of the internal bicultural space in an exploration of bilingual identity:



Indeed, the subject of the self-translated text is hybridity itself. Typical literary scenarios include: wanderers and their confrontations with the limits of language(s), characters who are faced with their doubles, identities which morph with the use of different languages (...). (Cordingley 3)

The writer of the letters in Hemon's short story *A Coin* is not only in a hostile and physically threatening situation, she is also threatened by language: "Ne mogu ustati, jer ne znam tačno gdje je izvor nelagode. I onda shvatim – jezik. Ja sam zatočena u pogrešnom jeziku." (Hemon 73). The idea of being trapped in the wrong language is retained in the translation, making "wrong" double voiced in that it labels both the foreign and the native language as a hindrance to her consciousness reflected in actual physical movement. The consciousness of the second narrator is also compromised by the different temporal planes the two exist on. He questions the truth and validity of his letters, because in the time span between being written and reaching their destination "they're already obsolete, they're rendering someone other than myself, someone saner – a stranger not only to her but indeed to myself." (Hemon 127). The narrator goes so far as to renounce his authorial role: "When I'm writing those letters I have to accept my helplessness, I have to admit that someone else is writing them, using my body, my Pelikan fountain pen, my cramped right hand." (Hemon 127). A self-translator's fluid identity complicates the debate on the status of translation as an original, in terms of authorial intentionality, if what is conventionally considered the original is not owned by the writer.

The narrator's acute awareness of split consciousness and his concern with misrepresenting himself echo Hemon's sentiments about his inability to articulate his self in either Bosnian or English in his early days as an émigré: "Činilo se da sam bio u stanju da proizvodim samo nenamjerne (a bogami i namjerne) laži. Niko drugim riječima nije zaista znao ko sam zapravo ja." (radiosarajevo) Producing *only* lies, whether on purpose or not, implies a lack of any manifestation of true identity, and the inability to externalise thoughts in a type of self-affirming process wherein identity is created in interaction with others signals an epistemic crisis. The author does, however, retain a degree of control, as producing *intentional* lies implies volition and a partly self-generated identity.

The narrator or author is “signified upon” by a foreign language, vacillating between self-fashioning and self-cancellation<sup>4</sup>, while his attempt at reconstructing his identity is forestalled or compromised by his inability to navigate the linguistic system of another culture. Much like bilingualism and self-translation have been described in terms of illness or an affliction, this process of constructing identity is framed as pointed aggression, where the “alien (...) is marked for attack” and the resulting hybrid identity “contains within itself the signs of its own subversion or loss” (Greenblatt 9).

It is a painful process of healing which mends the “discontinuity of personality” (Miletić 32). Hemon often spoke of this discontinuity by pointing out the dissonance between what he wanted to say and what he actually said, a gap which he bridged by becoming proficient in English and allowing it to appropriate his memories in a “process of reassessment and rewriting” (Miletić 32). The process, however, need not result in healing or exert any transformative influence on the identity to succeed in reconciling the dichotomy between identities. While Nancy Huston, much like Beckett, finds self-translation a difficult and painful process, at the end of it she feels healed:

When it’s done, when it’s actually finished, when after all that work the book has finally taken shape and has managed to exist in the other language, then I feel good, then I feel better, then I feel healed – because it’s the same book, telling the same stories, eliciting the same emotions, playing the same music; then I’m elated, then I’m delighted, as if this somehow proved that I’m not a schizophrenic, not crazy, because I’m ultimately the same person in both languages. (57)

Huston’s description of translated meaning as the “same music” evokes the elusive intricateness and complexity of self-translation as recreating the work in another language. However, the “oneness” she feels she has achieved is not universal to all self-translators and it is not what Hemon experienced as part of his creative process.

His assertion that his work seems “more true” in English than when he himself translates it into Bosnian challenges the view of self-translation a universal ideal. The original and the

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<sup>4</sup> Self-fashioning is a term introduced by Stephen Greenblatt, which denotes the process that occurs “at the point of encounter between authority and an alien (...) what is produced in this encounter partakes of both the authority and the alien that is marked for attack, and hence (...) any achieved identity always contains within itself the signs of its own subversion or loss.” (9) Self-cancellation is “the profound desire to escape from the identity so created.” (13)

translation are in a dynamic relation as the self-translator's "stereolinguistic optics puts any one of her or his languages/cultures into relief with respect to the other" (Hokenson and Munson 3). Therefore, the original does not have one static, monolithic meaning, and since the translations affirm the hybridity of the process that created them, it divests them neither of authority nor of originality.

## 7. Masocriticism in self-translation

Hemon has more than once explained his decision to write in English not as a choice, but a necessity which arose from his inability to express his self in his native language. His experience, like those of other self-translators, such as Nancy Huston, is linked with trauma:

“rat—koji je bio tamo, dok sam ja bio ovdje—je bio presjekao direktnu vezu sa mojim maternjim jezikom i ljudima koji su ga upotrebljavali svakodnevno se suočavajući sa situacijom koja je meni bila poznata samo iz vijesti. Iako sam pokušavao pisati na našem jeziku, uključujući i nekoliko tekstova za Dane na samom početku rata, nije nikako išlo, pošto sam osjećao da pišem laži i gluposti. Šta sam ja pametno i pošteno mogao iz Amerike reći nekome kome se pod opsadom, a i šire, neprestano radi o glavi?” (radiosarajevo.ba)

Elisabeth Klosty Beaujour identifies the source of this discomfort in “emotional interference” (Cordingley 84) which manifests itself in a feeling of illegitimacy, such as the one behind Hemon's assertion that his lack of shared experience with fellow countrymen precluded him from writing in his native language. Hemon considers the trauma of emigrating to have acted as a catalyst which enabled him to write in English. Both Hemon and Beaujour chose the semantic field of illness to describe this phenomenon, with Beaujour describing the process as a progression of a physical illness (Cordingley 84) and Hemon calling himself “pathologically bilingual”. Beckett often described self-translation as torture (qtd in Day 62), while Federman calls his bilingualism “schizophrenic” (federman.com). Such descriptions portray bilingualism and the process of self-translation as analogic to physical and mental illness. Such semantic choices imply an involuntary and undesirable state resulting from a pervasive feeling of a consciousness not bifurcated in a slow peaceful process of language learning, but riven by linguistic trauma.

Writers at this end of the self-translating spectrum, such as Beckett, whose translation process is “hard and dull” (Bair 540) at best and “exquisitely painful” (Day 62) at worst. While Hemon happily gave over the task of translating to others, having found English a more suitable medium for writing, Beckett insisted on engaging in a process that frustrated him. The process and result of self-translation are unsatisfactory for both authors, and the painfulness and dissatisfaction of what Beaujour calls “self-inflicted torture” (qtd in Classe 1251) situate it in the purview of masocriticism.

While Hemon may no longer feel a rift in his consciousness while writing, it is still present and reveals itself in the process of self-translation, which is necessarily performed from a liminal space. Commenting on his attempt at self-translation, Hemon stated that upon translating his own work into his native language he felt that his “(translations) were slightly off—they were much better, more “true” in English” (Berman). The inevitability of such difficulties is reflected in his use of water as a vehicle for the relentless incursion of the foreign language into previous experiences and the conceptual framework of the native language, changing the seascape of one's consciousness and displacing meaning by situating it in unfamiliar waters:

*Example 34*

<p>I think of all the things I could've told her or should've told her: how awkward and cumbersome I feel in English, sinking in syntax, my sentences flapping helplessly<sup>A</sup>, like a drowning child's arms (...). (Hemon 124)</p>	<p>Sjetim se svih stvari koje sam joj mogao ili morao reći: kako se neudobno i nezgrapno osjećam u engleskom jeziku, tonući u sintaksu, moje rečenice mlataraju riječima<sup>B</sup>, kao ruke djeteta koje se davi (...). (Hemon 73)</p>
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Not only is the narrator unable to manipulate language to his satisfaction, he fails to do so to his own, very grave and imminent detriment. Even without the adverbial modifier *helplessly* amplifying the lack of control over re-constructing one's identity, there is still a distinct sense of impending death caused by an inherent weakness which cannot be remedied (that of a child), without recourse to the stability of familiar land.

Miletić quotes Gaston Bachelard in saying that language is “of a liquid nature and the metaphors of water are essentially feminine and maternal” (24). Using water metaphors might be

interpreted as the narrator and Hemon being more acutely aware of language and trying to evoke the meaning words have for them in their maternal language. However, water here does not offer a maternal sense of comfort and safety. Water is the source of “helplessness” and “pain”, voiding the author’s identity by keeping her in a solipsistic bubble, unable to communicate her thoughts and assert her identity. Nevertheless, the painfulness of the process does not preclude it from being at least partly successful. In Hemon’s case, it was the submersion that resulted in the self-professed healing process, not only bridging the gap, but transplanting the locus of both processing experience and expressing subsequent thought in the foreign language. Foreignness not only paralyzes meaning, but stifles emotions:

*Example 35*

<p>I could tell when they were reading the news, because of the [flat dullness]<sub>AB</sub> of their voices; when they were praying, because of the submerged pain in the sounds they were making; when they were reading poetry, because of the [whining and undulating]<sub>AB</sub>. (Hemon 219-220)</p>	<p>Znao bih da čitaju vijesti, zbog njihovih pljosnatih<sub>A</sub> glasova; da se mole, zbog bola u njihovim glasovima; da čitaju poeziju, jer su zvučali kao da se [jadaju i jauču]<sub>AC</sub>. (Hemon 103)</p>
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In the English version, the pain is present but obscured by the unintelligibility of the language they were speaking. While in Bosnian the narrator refers to the speakers’ voices, in English the emphasis is placed on sounds as vessels of the perceived pain, shifting the locus of suffering, or at least the outward manifestation of suffering, to the sounds of the foreign language. The use of “submerged” also warrants further examination. In an article explaining his preferences regarding languages, Hemon wrote that “utopljenost u jezik” (Radiosarajevo) helped him bridge the gap he felt between his signified and the signifiers of others. He used water to describe language elsewhere as well, or more precisely, the inadequacy of language in containing and faithfully representing, not only thoughts but identity (*A coin*).

Much like meaning, memories and experiences are also vulnerable to time:

*Example 36*

<p>I'd wish to have not seen the movie, so I could see it again and go through the same unforgettable<sub>A</sub> deluge of sensations, but I'd immediately know I couldn't - for time always went only forward, as in films. (Hemon 229)</p>	<p>Poželio bih da nisam vidio film, kako bih ga mogao ponovo vidjeti i ponovo plivati kroz <sub>A</sub> bujicu doživljaja, ali odmah bi shvatio da je to nemoguće - jer vrijeme teče samo naprijed, kao u filmovima (...). (Hemon 109)</p>
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Again, water is used to embody the frantic intensity of sensations and emotions accompanying those memories. Both “deluge” and “bujica” imply a destructive power which the narrator, nevertheless, feels able to navigate. The omission of “same” and “unforgettable” in the translation underscores the transience of meaning and fluidity of time.

Memories, as part of the fabric of identity, are retroactively conquered by the foreign language: “Not only did I begin to think in English, I dreamt in English, and I even remembered in English. I remembered things that happened in Sarajevo as if they happened in English.” (Borger) The only thing able to fracture time, and reverse it in a manner, is the foreign language's retroactive appropriation of memories, crossing identity boundaries by seeping into the past and shaping it within its own conceptual framework.

## 8. Conclusion

This thesis suggested that self-translation functions as a way of re-appropriating the proto-original and navigating the interliminal spaces of biculturality through a type of discursive manipulation of the text, in an attempt to put together the various splinters of the self that have been refracted through the prism of a “foreign” language, finally shaping the new double self into a new, original whole.

This was attempted through a comparative analysis of the two versions, or rather the twinned texts whose interaction reveals the third original, emerging from the bilingual interstitial space. Several pertinent differences between the translating and writing style were noted. It is particularly interesting to note that Hemon's style of translation differs with regard to the language he is translating from/into. Omissions of adjectival premodifiers, sentence fragments, entire sentences or even paragraphs are not as common in his translation of *Život i djelo Alphonsa Kaudersa* as they are in, for instance, *Imitation of life*. On the contrary, when translating into English he seems to have the opposite impulse - reflected in amplification - more

in line with his writing style than translating style. It can be said that his process of creating in English, whether he is writing or translating, coincides more with his vision of himself as a writer who disambiguates by “piling up adjectives” and describing until the thought is revealed, than it does with his translating style in which omission seems to be main impulse. Although Hemon himself does not attribute any feature of his style to a sense of loss, his translations into English are often macroscopic in relation to the source text, and indicate a propensity towards simplification, and at times more significant change and substantial omission.

The interliminal space between the two versions can reinforce, modify or ambiguate an image. This dynamic space is a reflection of a bifurcated consciousness, wherein different or opposite images in the twinned texts or gaps in either of them can engender completely new ideas available to the bilingual reader. In Example 1, the interaction of the two versions creates an infratext available to the bilingual reader, for whom the omission amplifies the information present in the first version, while simultaneously raising a multitude of questions on the motivation of the author and the significance and meaning of the omitted information.

Changes that are consistent enough can sometimes affect a cumulative shift in tone, such as in “Život i djelo Alphonsea Kaudersa”, where the narrator asserted himself more forcefully with speculations on Eva Braun’s motivation for sending her child to a concentration camp, implying that her judgment was impaired by Kauders’ virility, thus portraying one of the few women in the narrative as overpowered by the main male figure, simultaneously affirming Kauders’ near-mythological status, and her undermined agency (Example 23). Similarly, Kauders was accorded more agency and was more noticeably mythologised through shifts in the point of view and particular semantic choices, so that he dominates the narrative in English more so than in the Bosnian version.

The bilingual space provides grounds for discussing the issue of memory seemingly being appropriated by the target language, which in Hemon’s case is his mother tongue and thus not “alien”, which complicates attempts to apply ready-made theories, such as self-fashioning and self-cancellation, to this particular self-translator. For instance, the bilingual reader is told that the gum is pink and green at the same time, prompting a reconsideration of the nature of memory – its stability and veracity, the cumulative effect of details on the tone, and contextualization as a shaping influence. Similarly, in the English version of the story the narrator leaves after

“sheepishly saying goodbye”, whereas in the translation the narrator implies that he said nothing (“ne znajući šta da kažem”).

Performing a more extensive analysis of the two versions (English and Bosnian) by using trajections as a conceptual framework would reveal a detailed similarity profile of the two texts, and contribute to a delineation of the author's/self-translator's writing style and his translating style, while also highlighting those aspects of the self-translation process that substantiate the claim that self-translation constitutes a reworking or that it is an original in its own right.



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