

LITERARY TRANSLATIONS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NAPLES “L’ORIENTALE”

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Literary translation has been a central feature of my academic training. My *mwalimu* Elena Bertoncini Zúbková, founder of the Swahili Language and Literature chair at the University of Naples “L’Orientale” and untiring translator of Swahili literature into Slovak and Italian, often asked her students to translate Swahili prose or poetry, during her courses and, more extensively, in completing their degree theses.¹ I myself translated *Utengano* (‘Separation’, 1980) by Said Ahmed Mohamed, a work which was published some years later.²

This exercise was very useful not only to consolidate my language competence but also to experience, along with the aesthetic fruition of Swahili literature, the hard work involved in rendition and interpretation, which itself then drove me in my exploration of the textual and contextual meanderings of the given works. Since 2013, when I started teaching Swahili language and literature at the University of Naples “L’Orientale”, I have been trying to preserve this “tradition of translation” by encouraging my students to translate Swahili creative writings (although the university context has considerably changed³). I also strove to preserve this tradition by committing to a translation project on a continuous basis aimed at publishing Swahili literature for foreign readers.⁴ Here my first achievement was the Italian translation (with Roberto Gaudio) of selected poems by Abdilatif Abdalla and Euphrase Kezilahabi.⁵ Moreover, I am currently completing another work in collaboration with Irene Brunotti:⁶ the English translation of *Shuwari* (‘The Calm’), together with an extensive bilingual introduction.⁷ *Shuwari* is the latest poetic anthology (*diwani*) by Haji Gora Haji, an elderly, well-known poet from Tumbatu.

¹ Bertoncini Zúbková started teaching Swahili language and literature in 1968 and continued until 2009.

² Aiello, Flavia (transl.). 2005. *Separazione* (by S. A. Mohamed). Soveria Mannelli: Iride Edizioni.

³ Due mainly to three factors: firstly, the growing number of students of Swahili who are enrolled in political science programmes and generally not particularly interested in literature; secondly, the fact that BA students are no longer required to write a thesis; lastly, the possibility for MA students to study Swahili from a beginner’s level.

⁴ During my doctoral research and in the years immediately following, I only translated a limited number of Swahili poems and songs, some of which are included in articles which have appeared in *Swahili Forum*.

⁵ See my contribution in this volume on the translation of Abdilatif Abdalla’s poems.

⁶ Lecturer of Swahili Language at the University of Leipzig (and former student of Bertoncini Zúbková).

⁷ With the cooperation of Ahmed Mgeni from Zanzibar, author of Swahili short stories, literary critic and retired teacher of English, who kindly read our translations and gave us many precious pieces of advice. And further with the cooperation of Nathalie Arnold Koenings, an American anthropologist with great experience in Pemba, well acquainted with Swahili, writer, translator and presently lecturer of Fiction Writing at Hampshire College (USA), who was responsible for the English revision.

The list of translations presented here comprises Bertoncini Zubkova' literary translations, published in journals or as books, along with an updated record of unpublished Swahili-Italian translations by students of Swahili and stored at the University of Naples "L'Orientale".

Elena Bertoncini Zúbková's literary translations into Slovak and Italian:

1978. *Matka naša, Afrika. Výber zo swahilskej poézie*. ('Our mother, Africa. Anthology of Swahili poetry'; in Slovak). Bratislava: Slovenský Spisovateľ.
1979. Samuel Kahiga. Esther. Odchod na úsvite. *Revue svetovej literatúry* 4 (79): 40-52.
1981. Saad Yahya. Hyena. (Translation of the short story *Shumri*, from the anthology *Pepeta*; in Slovak). *Revue svetovej literatúry* 5,81: 170-176.
1984. Mohamed Suleiman Mohamed. Jediný deň slobody. Mesto. (Translation of the short stories *Uhuru wa siku moja* and *Mji*, from *Kicheko cha ushindi*; in Slovak). *Revue svetovej literatúry* 1,84: 65-74.
1984. Muhammed Said Abdulla. Moja manželka. (Translation of the short story *Mke wangu*, from *Kinywa jumba la maneno*; in Slovak). *Revue svetovej literatúry* 5,84: 164-169.
1985. Gabriel Ruhumbika. Il riso dalla barba. (Translation of the short story *Wali wa ndevu*, from *Parapanda: Wali wa ndevu na hadithi nyingine*). *Periferia* 8,24: 59-67.
1985. Mohamed Suleiman. La preghiera di Mzee Hamadi. (Translation of the short story *Dua la Mzee Hamadi*, from *Kinywa jumba la maneno*). *Nigrizia* 12: 45-47.
1986. Ahmed Mgeni. Una vicina degna di fiducia. Due amici. (Translation of the short stories *Jirani mwaminifu* and *Marafiki wawili*, from *Hapa na pale* by S. A. Mohamed and A. Mgeni). *Periferia* 9,27: 78-84.
1986. Poesie scelte da *Sofferenza*. (Selected poems from *Kichomi*). *Nuovi Orizzonti* 1,1: 11-22.
1986. *Swahilské poviedky*. (Swahili short stories in Slovak). Bratislava: Slovenský Spisovateľ.
1987. Poesie scelte di M. Mulokozi, tradotte dal swahili. (Selected poems by M. Mulokozi, translated from Swahili). *Plural* 1,1: 111-123.
1987. *Sofferenza*. Poesie scelte di E. Kezilahabi. (Selected poems by E. Kezilahabi from *Kichomi*). Napoli: Supplemento di *Plural*.
1987. Farouk Topan. *Chi ha provato il paradiso. Commedia in tre atti*. (Translation of the comedy *Aliyeonja pepo*). *Nuovi Orizzonti* 1,2: 27-61.
1988. Mohamed S. Mohamed. La libertà di un giorno. (Translation of the short story *Uhuru wa siku moja*). *Plural* 2,3-4: 55-67.
1989. Mugyabuso Mulokozi. Un canto dimenticato. (Translation of the poem *Wimbo uliosahaulika*, from *Malenga wa Bara* by M. Mulokozi and K. K. Kahigi). *Linea d'ombra* 7,40: 94-97.

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1991. Said A. Mohamed. Tondo Yaki. (Translation of the homonymous poem). *Plural* 4,9: 47-52.
1993. Mohamed S. Mohamed. La libertà di un giorno. (Translation of the short story *Uhuru wa siku moja*). *Racconti dall'Africa*, ed. by Cristiana Pugliese. Milano: Mondadori. Pp.189-200.
1997. Mohamed S. Mohamed. La libertà di un giorno. (Translation of the short story *Uhuru wa siku moja*). *La vita e la sanguisuga. Raccolta di otto novelle plurali*, ed. by Enrico D'Angelo. Catanzaro: Abramo. Pp. 91-100.
2004. Euphrase Kezilahabi: Dieci poesie scelte da *Sofferenza*. (Euphrase Kezilahabi: Ten selected poems from *Kichomi*). *Smerilliana* 4: 193-223.
2008. Euphrase Kezilahabi. Letteratura. (Translation of the poem *Fasihi*, from *Kichomi*). *Smerilliana* 9: 15-16.
2009. Mugyabuso Mulokozi. La polenta e le uova. (Translation of the poem *Sima na Mayai*, from *Kunga za ushairi na diwani yetu*, by M. Mulokozi and K. K. Kahigi). *Smerilliana* 10: 153-172.
2011. Farouk Topan. *Chi ha provato il paradiso*. (Translation of the comedy *Aliyeonja pepo*). San Benedetto del Tronto: Nuovi Orizzonti Editore.
2013. Mugyabuso Mulokozi. *Polenta e uova*. (Translation of the poem *Sima na Mayai*, from *Kunga za ushairi na diwani yetu*, by M. Mulokozi and K. K. Kahigi). Martinsicuro: Di Felice Edizioni.
2013. Mohamed S. Mohamed. *La libertà di un giorno*. (Translation of the short story *Uhuru wa siku moja*). Martinsicuro: Di Felice Edizioni.
2015. M. S. Abdulla. Pohrebisko dávnych ľudí. (Translation of an excerpt from *Mzimu wa watu wa kale*; in Slovak). *Plav* 11: 21-29.
2017. Euphrase Kezilahabi. Ztráta prostoru (six poems by Kezilahabi in Slovak). *Plav* 13: 11-18.

Swahili-Italian translations by students of Swahili at the University of Naples “L’Orientale” (dates refer to the academic years in which the work was done):

- Hussein, Ebrahim. *Kinjeketile*, transl. by Gaia Maria Conti, 1981-82.
- Kezilahabi, Euphrase. *Rosa Mistika*, transl. by Rita Vassallo, 1986-87.
- Mukajanga, Kajubi. *Mpenzi*, transl. by Graziella Acquaviva, 1990-91.
- Oral stories from Tongoni (Tanzania): *Kanji danji, Mohamed bin Zuwera, Maskini, watoto wake saba na jini ya bahari, Mohamed akili nyingi, Kisiki kya mkunazi; Kigano cha Nuru Sanaa, Shehe*, transl. by Ciro Marzio, 1991-92.
- Mkangi, Katama. *Mafuta*, transl. by Marisa Barile, 1994-95.
- Mohamed, Mohamed Suleiman. *Kiu*, transl. by Paola Sacco, 1994-95.
- Balisidya, Ndyanao. *Shida*, transl. by Antonella Francone, 1996-97.
- Mohamed, Said Ahmed. *Utengano*, transl. by Flavia Aiello, 1996-97.
- Mohamed, Said Ahmed. *Tata za Asumini*, transl. by Irene Brunotti, 1997-98.
- Kezilahabi, Euphrase. *Kichwamaji*, transl. by Filomena Romano, 1998-99.
- Mohamed, Mohamed Suleiman. *Nyota ya Rehema*, transl. by Valentina Auricchio, 2001-02.
- Shafi, Shafi Adam. *Vuta n’kuvute*, transl. by Maria De Meo, 2001-02.
- Lihamba, Amandina. *Mkutano wa pili wa ndege* (transl. by Graziella Moffa, 2002-03).
- Ngare, Peter. *Kikulacho ki nguoni mwako*, transl. by Stefania Narducci, 2002-03.
- Mohamed, Said Ahmed. *Kisa katika nuru*, transl. by Pompea Nocera Aiello, 2003-04.
- Abdalla, Abdilatif. *Sauti ya Dhiki*, transl. by Andrea Saggiomo, 2003-04.
- Hussein, Ebrahim. *Mashetani*, transl. by Samuel Barubiriza, 2003-04.
- Mohamed, Said Ahmed. *Amezidi*, transl. by Emanuela Izzo, 2003-04.
- Kezilahabi, Euphrase. *Dunia uwanja wa fujo*, transl. by Corrado Cossetti, 2003-04.
- Kezilahabi, Euphrase. *Kaputula la Marx, Cha mnyonge utakipika hadharani, Ruhumbika, Gabriel. Wali wa ndevu, Mulokozi, Mugyabuso. Siri ya bwanyenye*, transl. by Chiara Mammarella, 2003-04.
- Mohamed, Said Ahmed. *Kivuli kinaishi*, transl. by Maria G. Di Molfetta, 2004-05.
- Oral stories from *Swahili tales as told by natives of Zanzibar* (1870) ed. by E. Steere: *Kititi na Fisi, na Simba, Mbwa na Paka, Kisa cha Sungura na Cheche, Simba na Kulungu, Sungura na Tembo*, transl. by Barbara Bifulco, 2004-05.
- Wa Mberia, Kithaka. *Kifo kisimani*, transl. by Grazia Vulcano, 2005-2006.

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- Mbatiah, Mwenda. *Upotevu*, transl. by Maria Elena Mennella, 2005-2006.
- Mulokozi, Mugyabuso. *Mukwawa wa Uhehe*, transl. by Kinira Monica Carbone, 2006-07.
- Mohamed, Said Ahmed. *Babu alipofufuka*, transl. by Maria G. Di Molfetta, 2004-05.
- Mohamed, Mohamed Suleiman. *Kutanabani*, transl. by Serena Talento, 2007-08.
- Mwachofi, Ari Katini. *Mama ee*, transl. by Emiliana Filosa, 2007-08.
- Yahya, Abdul Saleh & Mulwa. David. *Ukame*, transl. by Anna Carrocci, 2007-08.
- Banzi, Alex. *Titi la mkwe* (transl. by Maria Caradonna, 2007-08.
- Paukwa Theatre Association. *Ayubu*, transl. by Anna Carella, 2007-08.
- Medical Aid Foundation. *Kilio chetu*, transl. by Cristina Nicolini, 2014-15.
- Mohamed, Said Ahmed. *Tumba iliyovya*, transl. by Noemi Adrigheri, 2015-16.
- Mgeni, Ahmed. *Mzee Muhammedi kaingia mjini*, transl. by Pierpaolo Medusa, 2016-17.
- Kezilahabi, Euphrase. *Mayai waziri wa maradhi*, transl. by Emiliano Minerba, 2016-17.