

UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI TORINO

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Dipartimento di Lingue e Letterature Straniere e Culture Moderne

Corso di Laurea Magistrale in Traduzione

**VOTAZIONE COMPLESSIVA: 25,5**

**TRADUZIONE:** Più che buona (10,5 punti). Buon orecchio per italiano e ritmo. Qualche sbavatura su ripetizioni e registro, ed una incomprensione del ST.

**COMMENTO:** discreto (9,5). La prima parte è un po' fuori tema; inoltre, si tratta di analisi poco collegate ai critici: in generale, andavano integrate in modo più fluido con l'Introduzione critica. Il Commento vero e proprio è a volte poco approfondito.

**INTRODUZIONE:** buona (2). Qualche nodo concettuale poco chiaro.

**BIBLIOGRAFIA:** buona (2), anche se un po' più scarna sulla teoria della traduzione.

**INGLESE:** discreto (0,5). Costruzioni un po' 'italiane', lessico e grammatica talvolta imprecisi.

**APPARATI:** OK (1), con qualche disomogeneità nelle Note.

**PAPER**

*English Literature*

SPLIT WORD

*Poems 1990 – 2005*

*By Moniza Alvi*

Translation of the poems *Souls* (2002): *Bat* page 183, *In Space*, *The Worst Thing*, *The Marriage* pages 185 – 186 – 187, *Beds*, *Family Reunions*, *Escape*, *The Directors* pages 189 – 190 – 191 – 192

**(Autore: omissis)**

Academic Year 2018/2019

Published in 2008, *Spilt Word* is a collection of poems extracted from Moniza Alvi's first three poetry collections *The Country at My Shoulder* (1993), *A Bowl of Warm Air* (1996), *Carrying My Wife* (2000) and from *Souls* (2002) and *How the Stone Found Its Voice* (2005) as well.

The aim of this paper is to provide the reader an overview of Alvi's life path, which enables her to write about her poetry. In particular, we will be focusing on how she conceives her identity, as split in two parts because of her dual background; moreover we will examine her conception of the body focusing on how it is related to its soul, we will eventually conclude by analysing eight poems of the collection *Souls*. In this collection Alvi gives voice to the souls: they inhabit our bodies and create a relationship with them. The souls perform in moments of everyday life and unfold in abstract concepts. Sometimes they are unruly, sometimes they are quite and calm, but they are always around us.

**Commentato [a1]:** Descrizione strana, come costruzione frase

**Commentato [a2]:** Punteggiatura inappropriata (anche dopo)

## 1. Alvi's identity related to her poetry

In order to better understand Alvi's identity, it is crucial to make a theoretical preliminary assumption on what is post-colonial *diaspora* and what is the link between the latter and Moniza Alvi. Firstly, this term comes from the Greek and its original meaning is "dispersion". The term refers to the condition of a population being fragmented in other parts of the world due to force majeure; so, from a nation's community it arises ethnic minorities. However, the latter still feel the need to come back to their homeland. The concept of *diaspora* is strictly related to the one of migration. They both have in common the urge of escaping the earth of origins in search of a place which they can call home, although many theorists meet peculiar differences that find discrepancies between both terms.<sup>1</sup> As mentioned above, the need to relive their native place is persistent in their mind and is interconnected with the act of keeping the collective memory alive through the transmission of the cultural heritage, which was exactly what Alvi's mother did during her daughter's growth.

Moreover, Alvi's mother also provided her books of poetry to read, leading Alvi to get fond of it already from a young age. Growing up she got into many poets which will inspire her poetry.

As she grew up in England, she has always felt English and despite her dual origins she didn't perceive she was living among people of different backgrounds. The fact she visited Pakistan in adulthood didn't influenced decisively and radically her personality and her writing, but enabled her to write poetry before discovering her Pakistani background. However, Alvi's first trip to Pakistan represented a meaningful step in her life; once there, she felt out of place with her relatives, because she had to deal with a different language and, therefore she felt

Commentato [a3]: grammar

Commentato [a4]: lessico

Commentato [a5]: lessico inappropriato > significato non sempre chiaro (anche più avanti)

Commentato [a6]: Nota: bisogna indicare la pagina precisa da cui si è preso il concetto (anche Note seguenti)

Commentato [a7]: possessivi

Commentato [a8]: paper accademici: evitare contrazioni

Commentato [a9]: grammar!

Commentato [a10]: Frase non molto chiara

<sup>1</sup> Di Maio A., Perle per il mondo: origine ed evoluzione della diaspora postcoloniale, in S. Bassi, & A. Sirotti, *Gli studi postcoloniali: un'introduzione*, Florence : Le Lettere, 2010, pp. 79-100

she belonged to the English culture. Her sense of community to a country in which she grew up in and the consciousness she belonged to another – in which probably she never lived enough to feel she belonged to it too – has triggered in herself a feeling of being lost and uncertain about her identity; for her entire life she has been struggling to find a place she could call home, although, she's always known she doesn't belong to the new cultures she embraced.<sup>2</sup>

This duality, this feeling half-Pakistani, sometimes becomes the main theme of her poems, which is evident, for example, in the verses of her collection *The Country at My Shoulder*. The poems reflect how troubled and divided between different identities her personal identity is and how she feels uncomfortable with it. It happens that Alvi faces the issue of her identity through images, which could probably mean she is looking for the *third space*<sup>3</sup>, a space in which Alvi's origins clash together; she is looking for the hybrid of her origins which represents an important presence she has to deal with. Building one's own identity is in fact crucial for both migrant and diasporic communities; particularly, it happens to be problematic regarding the second migratory waves generation – it refers to the first generation's children, who enter in contact with their cultural heritage thanks to their parents' belonging.

Both communities experience the condition of hybridity, which is related to the assumption of the existing “*in-between*”<sup>4</sup> theorized by H. Bhabha: a space where cultural differences get close.

Alvi used metaphors to describe her mixed-origins, sometimes also through something that is inside of her body, something which is physically part of her. In those poems, for example, we are also given the idea of how Alvi perceives her personal identity as double, as constantly shifting, unstable and performative,

Commentato [a11]: Italianismo, linguaggio poco da paper

Commentato [a12]: Images > third space: nesso poco chiaro

Commentato [a13]: Confusione nei tempi verbali

<sup>2</sup> R.A. Shehata, “Moniza Alvi and Representations of the Body”, in *Contemporary Women's Writing* 11: 2, 2017, p. 168-175

<sup>3</sup> Cimitile A.M., “Attraversamenti”: il linguaggio della teoria postcoloniale, in S. Bassi, & A. Sirotti, *Gli studi postcoloniali: un'introduzione*, Florence : Le Lettere, 2010, p. 52

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p.52

which indicates something that changes according to the way you behave, decision you make, constantly liable to change.

Commentato [a14]: grammar

Alvi helped herself conceive the body thanks to the Western accounts of the latter, more specifically two theories came to hand: one given by Nietzsche, Kaftka, Foucault and Deleuze, which sees the body as a surface to be inscribed on by society's customs and values; the second one, championed by psychoanalysis and phenomenology, perceives the body as a "lived experience"<sup>5</sup>, for example by living every single relation engaged with the outer world.<sup>6</sup>

Commentato [a15]: frase poco chiara

According to phenomenological accounts, women's life experiences, such as pregnancy and menstruation, reveal the female body. Alvi conceives the period of her menstruation as a very arduous experience to go thorough, as she feels her personal sphere acting differently. This is due to her dual cultural background. As for this, in one of her poems, she tells the reader about the menstruation experienced by an Indian woman, during which she describes her feelings towards this biological process (she felt overwhelmed by this unexpected event occurring inside her body). The latter made her ponder how she encountered it as an Indian or an English young woman. Once she is experiencing her period, she feels confused, blurred. From the blurring it arises in her mind the idea of the menstruation as a process related to the ethnic identity.<sup>7</sup>

Commentato [a16]: lessico

As Alvi tries to wonder whether she was experiencing her first menstruation like an English or Indian woman, a feeling of "blurriness"<sup>8</sup> struck her, leading Alvi unable to resolve the question. Despite that, the author alters this delicate biological process into something that could possibly help her with reflecting on her identity.

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<sup>5</sup> R.A. Shehata, "Moniza Alvi and Representations of the Body", in *Contemporary Women's Writing* 11: 2, 2017, p. 171

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 171

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 172

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 172

However, menstruation does not seem to be the only process that triggers Alvi's state of "blurriness" towards her "embodied self". Her first pregnancy also mirrors this blurred sense of identity, during which she faces many changes in her body, a separation from herself followed by the start of the coexistence with another human being. But the more her body undergoes these alterations, the more Alvi feels a sense of alienation and the body becomes a place of reflection. Reflection that concerns her blurred and changing identity. Because of this insecurity toward her own sense of identity, Alvi is worried about the fact she could extend this same feeling to her unborn child. This is due to her belief that the embodiment is produced by a situation that allows a person to develop a peculiar point of view toward the world, and this point of view relates to this sense of insecurity of her identity.<sup>9</sup>

All these processes she went through have fuelled her steadily doubt about her identity, which are related to another very significant conception conceived by Alvi during her internal journey: the soul. A strong and inherent relation between body and soul seems to be crucial for Alvi in order to create a real persona.

According with the author, a body without a soul is a body living without its own ethereal part, and a soul without the body is unable to exist. More importantly, the absence of both does not allow being a true identity.

Alvi's strong belief of seeing the body and the soul as a whole is addressed in her fourth collection entitled *Souls*.<sup>10</sup>

Commentato [a17]: idem

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<sup>9</sup> R.A. Shehata, "Moniza Alvi and Representations of the Body", in *Contemporary Women's Writing* 11: 2, 2017, p. 168-175

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 174-175

## 2. Translation of the poems

### Bat

Like a bat it hangs, and keeps on hanging.

Hibernating – or in need of help?

The soul is a vulnerable species –  
and some get very worn, as bats  
might have worn teeth.

The soul, hanging on out there,  
On a wall, longing  
To fit into the palm of a hand.

### Pipistrello

Appesa come un pipistrello, così  
rimane.

In letargo – o in cerca di aiuto?

L'anima è una specie vulnerabile –  
e alcune si consumano oltremisura,  
come forse accade ai denti dei  
pipistrelli.

L'anima, appesa là fuori,  
Su un muro, desiderosa  
Di adattarsi al palmo di una mano.

Commentato [a18]: ripetizione?

## In Space

When souls go into orbit  
they find the food impossible –

bite-sized cubes, zero-gravity meals  
and everything heat-treated  
to prevent decay. Scissors  
for snipping the tops off food bags –  
the souls float straight through them.

They evade it all  
and make for deeper space,  
vow to consume nothing  
but songs without words.

They mock us gently –  
our brief space flights,  
the music we try to clothe  
with fresh and bone.

## Nello Spazio

Quando le anime entrano in orbita  
il cibo diventa per loro impossibile –

bocconcini a cubetti, pasti a gravità  
zero e tutto termico trattato  
per non decomporsi. Forbici  
per aprire i sacchetti di cibo –  
le anime fluttuano oltrepassandole.

Eludono tutto ciò  
per uno spazio più profondo,  
promesse a consumare nient'altro  
che canzoni senza parole.

Ci deridono con gentilezza –  
i nostri brevi voli nello spazio,  
la musica che cerchiamo di rivestire  
con carne ed ossa.

Commentato [a20]: Cambia significato > attraversandole

Commentato [a19]: refuso



### **The Worst Thing**

The worst thing for souls  
is forgetting how to fly.

No chance to start  
on Prospero's island.

They'll almost grieve,  
then lie in wait

for the moment of their  
liberation –

when even the most inept  
will soar so high and fast

no sharp-eared god  
can hear them coming.

### **La Cosa Peggior**

La cosa peggiore per le anime  
è dimenticarsi come si vola.

Senza possibilità di essere  
protagoniste sull'isola di Prospero.

Mostreranno quasi sofferenza,  
poi resteranno in attesa

del momento della loro  
liberazione –

quando persino la più inetta  
salirà così in alto e in fretta

nessun dio dall'udito raffinato  
le sentirà arrivare.

## The Marriage

They get used to crowds,  
huge, seething crowds,  
surging down the streets  
and cross the fields,  
filling the crevices.

No space between the blades of grass.  
Not just crowds of themselves,  
the multiplicity of souls –  
but throngs of hopes and desires,

fateful endeavours,  
joys, perplexities,  
do's and don'ts.

The souls marry the crowds.  
There's no ceremony,  
though sometimes there's music,  
muffled, cacophonous –  
and the bells of lost churches

ring out under the sea.

## Il Matrimonio

Si abituano alle folle,  
enormi, irrequiete folle,  
che crescono lungo la strada,  
e attraversano i campi,  
riempiendo gli anfratti.

Nessun spazio tra i fili d'erba.

Non solo folle di sé stesse,  
la molteplicità delle anime –  
ma innumerevoli speranze e desideri,

fatidici sforzi,  
gioie, perplessità,  
cosa fare e non fare.

Le anime sposano le folle.  
Non vi è cerimonia,  
sebbene talvolta vi sia musica,  
smorzata, cacofonica –  
e le campane di chiese smarrite

riecheggiano sotto il mare.

Commentato [a21]: grammatica

## Beds

They can't decide whether finally  
They are more, or less alone,

and can't help longing  
for a real, solid bed,

pine, or four-poster, to share  
with one other soul –

not the thousands  
who'd attempt to drift in.

What do the souls do in bed?  
Not touching exactly,

but a warm overlapping.  
In the morning they descend

the stairs, separate from the world  
but only slightly

like a girl who has just  
washed her hair, and they

assure themselves that after all  
they are a marvellous invention.

## Letti

Non sanno decidere se alla fine  
sono più, o meno sole,

E non possono fare a meno di  
desiderare un vero, letto massiccio,

di pino, o a baldacchino, da  
condividere con un'altra anima –

non le migliaia  
che hanno tentato di entrarvi.

Cosa fanno le anime a letto?  
non si toccano proprio,

ma si sovrappongono con calore.  
Al mattino scendono

le scale, separati dal mondo  
ma solo un po'

come una ragazza che si è appena  
lavata i capelli, e

assicurano a sé stesse che dopotutto  
sono un'invenzione meravigliosa.

Commentato [a22]: N

Commentato [a23]: e

## Family Reunions

Just when they think they've made it  
– the shock  
of numberless, faceless relatives  
filling up infinity.

Awkward meeting.  
Parties with invisible food and drink.  
Embarrassed shiftings  
take the place of dancing.

Family reunions are overwhelming  
for the souls.  
The semi-familiar billions.  
No getaway car.

Nowhere else to go.

## Riunioni Familiari

Proprio quando pensano di avercela  
fatta – lo shock  
di innumerevoli, anonimi familiari  
riempie l'infinito.

Incontri imbarazzanti.  
Feste con cibo e bevande invisibili.  
Imbarazzanti spostamenti  
sostituiscono la danza.

Le riunioni familiari sono  
opprimenti per le anime.  
I miliardi semi-familiari.  
Nessuna auto per la fuga.

Non vi è altro posto dove andare.

## Escape

The souls are playing truant,  
escaping the strain of us,  
finding places to hide –

in lifts and murky stairwells,  
under bridges. Up there  
With the pigeons, they glance

down and marvel at  
how hard we try to tell one  
soul from another, the boxes

we force them in, the countries  
we try to pin on them.  
But they won't have it.

However hard we press down  
on the lid, out they come,  
out of the box.

## Fuga

Le anime a noi si sottraggono,  
rifuggono alle nostre pressioni  
trovando posti in cui celarsi –

negli ascensori e nei vani bui delle  
scale, sotto i ponti. Lassù  
con i piccioni, guardano

in giù e si meravigliano  
come sia difficile per noi distinguere  
un'anima dall'altra, le scatole

in cui le teniamo, i paesi  
che cerchiamo di addossare loro.  
Ma non ci stanno.

Per quanto premiamo  
sul coperchio, vengono fuori,  
fuori dalla scatola.

Commentato [a24]: qui alza un po' il registro del ST

Commentato [a25]: idem

## The Directors

They're busiest at night,  
fiddling with the roots of our hair,  
stroking the back of our eyes,  
setting in motion the nightly film.

As the dream gathers its singular  
momentum, the souls burrow  
into our bones, circle  
just above our heads...

The one night the dream slips  
away from them, fizzles out.  
So what can they do when  
we've skidded into their past?

The directors of nothing.  
Did we give up on them,  
or them on us?

## I registi

Di notte sono più indaffarate,  
giocherellano con le radici dei nostri  
capelli, accarezzano il retro dei nostri  
occhi, avviando il film serale.

Mentre il sogno raccoglie il suo  
momento singolare, le anime si  
rifugiano nelle nostre ossa, roteando  
appena sopra le nostre teste...

Poi una notte il sogno scivola  
via lontano da loro, si affievolisce.  
Dunque cosa possono fare una volta  
che scivoliamo nel loro passato?

I registi di nulla.  
Ci siamo arresi a loro,  
o loro a noi?

Commentato [a26]: non suona un po' pesante, questo possessivo ripetuto?

Commentato [a27]: Slancio (false friend)

### 3. Personal analysis of the poems

#### Bat

From the semantic point of view, Alvi might have given a precarious image to the souls, because the latter is not physically in a body. The author compares the bat – which is mainly connoted by his way of living hang – to the soul that finds itself in the same condition of the bat before entering into a body. Indeed, according to the author, the soul is described as a “vulnerable species” precisely because it cannot live alone. Some souls even consume themselves and it is possible to relate this image to the permanent dualism in Alvi’s life, which led her to feel a strong sense of blurring. It arises from the poem the soul’s desire to be accepted, welcomed by the body. This is a very important point for the author, who considers this alliance to be essential in order to create a real unified self.

Commentato [a28]: grammar

#### In Space

One of the main evident and emerging element of the poem is a personification of the soul, seen as an astronaut during a space exploration. The author describes a change that can be deduced from the words “zero-gravity”, “heat-treated” that refer to the part of the poem about food – it changes from the earth to the space – of which souls cannot eat. Not only they cannot eat, but also the descriptive image of the souls who pass through the scissors, indicates that the latter can travel in an even more distant dimension. The human being cannot reach this dimension, he cannot be physically present, so the souls find themselves out of the human beings’ bodies and they cannot give voice to their songs. Despite that, the souls taunt the human being who is only able to briefly reach the space both for time and distance. Alvi compares these short trips in space to a music that the human being wants to embody at any cost; thanks to this image it seems that the only

person able to travel to space is the human kind , but is not true; indeed, the souls have the possibility to reach even more remote spaces.

### **The Worst Thing**

The poem refers to William Shakespeare's play "The Tempest". After many vicissitudes, Prospero, the protagonist, uses his magic to control the other characters on the island, therefore even the souls are unable to play their role.

There is no possibility for the souls to intertwine with the corporeal identity. The island may represent Alvi's cultural dualism (English and Pakistani), where the souls and the body coexist. The body is rooted into the island, but it is impossible for the souls to enter in. This is the reason of their sufferance.

The souls are willing to find their freedom, which could be possibly interpreted as their need to find a body to fit in. Once release is found, no souls will encounter other obstacles.

### **The Marriage**

In this poem the author uses a parallelism to describe the subtle difference between the concept of soul and the "crowds" of souls; indeed, it doesn't seem like the author wanted to attribute a one and only connotation to the first term, instead, it would be a more articulate concept enabled by the image of the "crowds". The latter also consists of countless conflicting moods, for instance, "fateful endeavours" and "do's and don'ts". Once again, this concept may recall the author's own dualism, for example when Alvi first went to Pakistan to come in contact with her origin, "she felt alien from her relatives [...]"<sup>11</sup>, but at the

Commentato [a29]: grammar

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<sup>11</sup> R.A. Shehata, "Moniza Alvi and Representations of the Body", in *Contemporary Women's Writing* 11: 2, 2017, p. 169



same time she felt she “has never felt so English as on her return trip to Pakistan”<sup>12</sup>.

There is no physical union, but they simply become a unique entity.

## **Beds**

The souls feel alone, eager to enter a body with whom to share. The author description of the bed gives the idea of a body as a safe place, inside which the soul seeks refuge and company. Various souls had tried to enter in, but only one could share this refuge with the body. In the night, the souls lay down on the bed, they don't touch each other but one can feel the presence of the other. The day after, they “descend the stairs separate from the rest of the world”<sup>13</sup>, just like the English and the Indian soul are for the author, who is constantly looking for the unification between her oriental and occidental background. Despite the fact the souls live in a split word – like the hair strands of the girl used as a metaphor by the author – they remain souls and as such, represent an essential aspect in order to reach a true self.

## **Family Reunions**

The author's words allude to her sensations and emotions she lived once she first arrived in Pakistan. Namely, the poem might describe a progression of state of minds during the first encounter with her relatives, all unknown to her.

The expectations gained following her parents tells concerning her oriental roots, make Alvi willing to get in contact with them. As early as her first trip to Pakistan, she feels estranged from the context due to the linguistic difference. The

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p.169.

<sup>13</sup> M. Alvi, *Split World: Poems 1990-2005*, Northumberland, Bloodaxe Books, 2008, p.189

adjectives that Alvi uses to describe the “family reunion” remark the sense of disorientation and oppression she felt, and the last verse is the evident example of that: the souls felt burdened by the multiplicity of strangers that surround her and she even decides to use the term “semi-familiar billions”. She cannot run away. There is no way to escape from this overwhelming bubble she feels she is into.

### **Escape**

The poem embodies the constant and interior cultural conflicts that Alvi is used to live. The author’s souls gave the idea of escaping, as it was for herself because she felt confused and she couldn’t identify herself with a precise culture.

The souls watch over us and observe our obsession with trying to find the one we belong to. Alvi is overwhelmed by the fear that she will not be able to find her real identity and she tries to imprison her soul even though the latter might not belong to the author.

### **The Directors**

The souls direct our subconscious in the form of a dream. Once the dream is on-going, it increases its intensity. This moment represented the opportunity for the souls to sneak into our bodies and become the directors of the film. Then, the dream dies down and there is a change in the action: we enter into the souls’ past as if the dream would not change but us humans do, as if we were getting older.

The souls are not the directors anymore. At the end, the author left the reader with a question which remarked the fact that there was no conclusion of the poem. She can’t decide whether is our surrender or theirs.

#### 4. Further consideration

As written on the *Split Word* collection, Maura Dooley refers to Alvi's poems as:

"vivid, witty and imbued with unexpected and delicious glimpses of surreal [...]"<sup>14</sup>.

Moniza Alvi's poetry is not linguistically complex, it is not hard to detect what her poems express. The most arduous task for the reader is to develop a personal idea about what these very simple images can be a symbol of, what are they supposed to communicate and to represent.

Translating Alvi's poems represented a plunge into the author's conception of her identity, created through metaphors, personifications and surreal images.

Generally, the approach adopted during the translation of the poems was based on the willing to remain faithful to the original English version. The purpose was to bring back the same meaning of the source text and, whenever possible, to recreate the same rhythm and image created by the vocabularies. Besides the interpretation of the poems given above, the first step while approaching the translation was to paraphrase the poems and the second was to literally translate the verses. The following step represents the creation of the target text, the real translation, which was done days later than the previous ones – sometimes it may be helpful for a translator to "leave his piece of paper on the table" for a while and take his time to elaborate what is written on it, to create his personal idea of it and to create a re-adapted version of the poem. This personal overview stands against the statement of Morini, who believes that this type of procedure could move the translator away from his original purpose.<sup>15</sup>

Commentato [a30]: titoli

Commentato [a31]: frase non chiara

Commentato [a32]: questo riguarda più l'analisi, che non il Commento alla Traduzione. Fuori tema?

Commentato [a33]: lessico

Commentato [a34]: struttura Note: non omogenea

<sup>14</sup> M. Alvi, *Split World: Poems 1990-2005*, Northumberland, Bloodaxe Books, 2008

<sup>15</sup> "In poesia più che il altri generi, e soprattutto nei componimenti brevi, i traduttori possono creare una versione grezza per poi limarla in fasi successive. Va tenuto però presente che questo genere di procedimento può portare a perdere di vista la naturalezza e gli scopi fissati all'inizio del lavoro", Morini M., *Tradurre l'inglese: Manuale pratico e teorico*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2016, p., 112

While dealing with them, some created doubts on which would have been the best choice of words, or simply what image to use or the suitable meaning to attribute, in order to recreate what Alvi wanted to communicate. The poems are the following: *Bat*, *The Worst Thing*, *Escape* and *The Directors*. Regarding *Bat*, on a semantic level, the hardest task was to deal with the verse “as bats might have worn teeth”. If you literally translate into Italian the English modal verb “might” and then read it in this poetic context it can sound harsh. It should be better to find a solution by writing, for example, a verse that contains the “uncertain possibility” expressed by the verb in order to reach a more readable version, as was decided in the Italian translation. Analysing *The Worst Thing* something unclear came up. The question point was: what does “Prospero’s island” mean and what was the link between this verse and rest of the poem? As a result of different assumptions, a possible answer was given and had to deal with the Shakespeare play the “*Tempest*”. This could be an example of how the translator can put his subjectivity dealing with interpretation, once he finds himself lost in front of a word or a concept.

Dealing with *Escape* it was necessary to make a comparison between the translation of the poem given in this paper and the one given by Paola Splendore in “Un mondo diviso” published in 2014, which is reported below:

Le anime ci disertano,  
per sottrarsi alla nostra pressione,  
e trovano posti dove nascondersi –

in ascensori e bui sottoscala,  
sotto i ponti. Lassù,  
con I piccioni, guardano

in basso e si stupiscono di quanto  
sia difficile per noi distinguere un’anima  
dall’altra, le scatole

in cui le rinchiudiamo, i paesi

Commentato [a35]: Morini e i verbi modali

Commentato [a36]: quindi, come ha tradotto?

che cerchiamo di attaccare loro addosso.  
Ma loro non ci stanno.

Per quanto noi spingiamo  
Sul coperchio, saltano fuori,  
fuori dalla scatola.

Approaching both texts it appears that the poems meet on a semantic level but move apart according to the choice of some terms. In the first tercet, for example, Splendore decided to remain close to the original text while in this paper translation it has been chosen to use verbs richer in connotation than those used by Splendore, such as the Italian verb “sottrarsi”, which means “to escape” and it deviates a little from the original verb “playing truant” (in *Escape*), which mean to be neglectful; or even “rifuggire” for “escaping” that means to be opposed to someone and avoid it. Also, in the first verse it has been decided in both translations to add the subject (“Le anime *ci* disertano”) with the aim of clarifying that it was referring to us humans.

Moreover, in the first verse of the second tercet Splendore decided to translate “stairwells” with “sottoscala”. The Cambridge Dictionary defines stairwell as “a long vertical passage through a building around which a set of stairs is built”<sup>16</sup> and the Italian word “sottoscala” means “under-stair cupboard”. Splendore has probably chose to use this term because it gives the idea of a space in the dark that recalls Alvi’s words “murky stairwells”, thereby diverging a bit from the original English words.

Regarding the significance, *The Director* represented a hard poem to deal with for one reason: the poem seems to follow a logical path until the last quatrain that ends with an unclear question, which does not seem to be linked to the previous part. However, the answer to the question has been helpful with trying to give an

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<sup>16</sup> <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/stairwell>, Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary e Thesaurus, Cambridge University Press 2020, Accessed on August 31, 2020

interpretation. Moreover, in this poem it appears that Alvi wanted to give a sense of musicality to her verses using words that recalls some actions, such as “fiddling”, “stroking”, “slips away”, “fizzles out” and it has been kept the same intention **also in the Italian target text.**

**Commentato [a37]:** Cioè come? Con quali parole? Il commento deve essere un po' più approfondito di così...

To conclude, the last step consisted in a review of those poems, a moment in which the translator is dedicated to the revision of the work done, going through all the passages that guided the translation from the source text to the target text.

## Conclusion

On one hand, working on *Souls* represented an immersion into a side of Moniza Alvi's poetry. The common thread that ties the eight poems happens to be the relationship between the souls and the body, but among the two the souls are immortals and so are the protagonists of the scene. Every poem differs from the other describing a specific situation in which the souls are involved. Alvi has been able to create both life's situations and fantasies, getting therefore close to a potential reader. After all, all us human live together with both parts and most of the time we feel more the soul than the body. The soul is beloved by Alvi and this represents a significant part of the constant questioning about her identity.

On the other hand, dealing with these poems have brought to light some aspect of the poetic translation never dealt with it before. Poems represents facts, images, feelings, and emotions peculiar to the poet and communicated through metaphoric expression or words linked to the author contents and as such they are not universal. Moreover, because a poet can decide to express his interiority through the rhythm of words, rhymes and the use of figures of speech, it is crucial to take into consideration the difficulty to recreate the same “scene” in another language. In this case, working with the Italian language has made it possible to recreate the same effect of the original poem thanks to its wide vocabulary full of

words which recall images and musicality. Alvi's finding about her identity assisted the translation and helped to dig up into both the author's and the translator's world.

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