

**Interview with world famous novelist Antonia Arslan
Annex to “Translations from Armenian into Italian, 1991 to date”- a study by
the Next Page Foundation in the framework of the Book Platform project,
conducted by Sona Haroutyunian, 2012**



1. Please speak about the role your translations played in the divulgation of Varujan’s poetry to an Italian readership.

Poetry functions in an immediate and unexpected way. I discovered Daniel Varujan, his strength and his grace, when reading some of his poems in Italian and the entire *The Song of Bread* in French, translated by Vahe Godel. So it was that I concentrated on the text of his last work, which completely fascinated me. I already had a lot of experience translating poetry—from French, English and German—but my work with Varujan was a great adventure, also because of my collaboration with two young and enthusiastic scholars, Chiara Haiganush Meghian and Alfred Hemmat Siraky. The Italian edition of *The Song of Bread* became the seventh one, and it enjoyed much success within the Italian secondary schools. I further translated other pieces of Varujan’s poetry; I published twenty of them in the volume *Seas of Wheat* and the others in magazines. I also want to remind us that he was a great poet, one of the major ones since the beginning of the 1900s, equal to no one, but less known because he wrote in a minority language.

2. Please speak about your idea of publishing with “Tabula Gratulatoria,” others can take as an example.

When—after the success of the translation of Varujan’s *The Song of Bread*—we thought about publishing a series of Armenian topics, I proposed to my editor Angelo Guerini a solution that turned out to be perfect. It comes from the “Tabula Gratulatoria” of the academic system, which is only used by the so-called *Festschriften*, that is, the books published at the end of a university professor’s career by his or her friends and students. Each subscriber (meaning the person who reserves a copy of the book while in the process of publishing) pays a bit more than the actual cost of the volume and in exchange his or her name appears on the list on the back of the book. Like this the editor can at least cover the basic costs of printing. We’ve done this for anyone who was interested in the Armenians and their culture. The names of the financial

contributors are published in the back of the book, which they receive in a bound edition.

3. How would you describe the Armenian translations of your best sellers, *Skylark Farm (La Masseria della alodole)* translated into 20 languages and *The Road to Smyrna (La Strada di Smirne)*?

The Armenian translations of my novels *Skylark Farm* and *The Road to Smyrna* are the works of Sona Haroutyunian, who rendered my prose with great scrupulousness, care, professionalism, and with an authentic passion. It was an enthusiastic project! Her translations were praised by the readers, as well as by refined experts in both languages. Her Armenian rendition of my writing is rich and precise.

4. In the recent years you've played a leading role in raising the interest in Armenian culture, history and literature in Italian society, especially with your Armenian genocide narrative bestsellers and your numerous conferences. What will you suggest to the Italian publishers about publishing Armenian literature?

Abroad, the world of Armenian culture is receiving a lot of attention; it's a growing interest. In Italy's case, many medieval texts from the Golden Age of the Armenian civilization are by now available in excellent editions. Having to make a suggestion to Italian publishers, I consider it appropriate at this juncture to have the novels and poems of the modern and contemporary eras (the 1800s and 1900s) translated into Italian to paint a more complete picture of a cosmopolitan culture, which had extraordinarily interesting developments in more recent centuries in places as diverse as Venice, Tbilisi and Istanbul.

