

Tommaso Manfredini  
Columbia University  
tm2538@columbia.edu

## **Ketli? Kori? or Keli? A Literary Archaeology of an Asylum Narrative, Italy, 2019**

### **Abstract**

This paper focuses on the role of translation in the treatment of asylum claims in Italy during the last years of the country's "asylum crisis" (2018-2019). I look, in particular, at the process that transforms a narrative originating in a foreign language into an official document, redacted in Italian, on which the applicant's claim is eventually judged. I posit that the ideology of monolingualism that guides the practice of translation of asylum demands tends to domesticate the foreignness of the applicant's story and, in so doing, it creates spatial, temporal, and semantical issues that can taint its "truthfulness" and plausibility. By following one particular asylum request in two distinct moments of its path through the system, I also show how the lack of epistemological and legal infrastructure for a satisfactory recognition of the applicant's linguistic rights has direct consequences on the evaluation of their demand and, consequently, on their lives.

**Bio:** Tommaso Manfredini is a Lecturer in the Department of French and the Institute for Comparative Literature and Society at Columbia University. Working at the intersection of literature, experimental film and media, anthropology and legal theory, his current research studies the illegalization of mobility in the Central Mediterranean.