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The role of the translator in children's literature: translation and analysis of Sara Zarr's "A Song Called Home"

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Introduction

Translating for children may even be more difficult than translating for adults. This is the response that many translators of children's literature would give when asked about their job. Yet we might ask why this is so? The key to achieving a good outcome is to keep in mind that children's literature is directed toward its own readers, and therefore translators need to remember that the final readers are fresh, young and still in their childhood phase. They have to imagine the story through children's eyes and perspectives, making not only the story appealing, but also the book as a whole. Children are still learning to read properly, and more importantly they are still understanding how the world around them works. Translators need to make sure that their work does not interfere, but rather helps in the development of the child's growth. This might cause problems with some words and idiomatic expressions, since an adult translator might take these for granted, but in fact the readers do not have the knowledge for their comprehension. Language is not the only challenging thing to translate, but concepts and characters can also be difficult for a child to grasp, even if the story comes from a neighboring country.

Children's literature can be considered one of the most important parts of a child's life: for example, a child may form his/her behavior according to that of the protagonist, and will most likely remember these stories for all of his/her life.

The aim of my dissertation is to analyze the challenges that I encountered when translating a book for children and young adults, keeping in mind what the limits for a young reader are. I will offer an explanation of what children's literature is, and I will also give an historical background of it. Moreover, I will focus on the process of translating and where its difficulties lie, especially in the children's literature industry. I will show and explain some of the difficulties that a translator has to overcome in order to translate a text appropriately and effectively

The book I decided to work on is Sara Zarr's *A Song Called Home,* published in 2022 by HarperCollins. The book narrates the story of a young girl, Lou, who has to move with her family to the suburbs and leave everything she has in the city, including her best friend, her old house and her father, an alcoholic who does not visit his daughters anymore. Her mother, her sister Casey and she move in with their new step-

father, Steve, who they believe to be evil even if he seems to care about them. The two young sisters are afraid that the "true Steve" will show up soon and Lou always think about her father, who was left alone in the city. However, as time passes, Lou learns about herself and what family truly means.

The chapters I have taken into consideration were the 9th and the 29th , since in my opinion they were the most challenging and interesting ones. When I was translating them, they gave me the opportunity to challenge myself and I could see what the job of the translator consists of.

In the first chapter, I will present a historical background of children's literature, with a focus on its spread over the decades around the world and the issues concerning its labeling. I will show many translators' opinions and studies, which show how to produce an effective translation and what strategies should be adapted in order to obtain an appropriate translated work.

In the second chapter, I will present my translation from English to Italian, concerning the chapters mentioned above, that are the 9th and the 29th ones of Sara Zarr's book. This was essential in order to analyze, in the last chapter, the challenges I encountered, comparing the source text to the Italian translation, with a focus on the presence of different cultures.

CHAPTER 1

THEORY OF TRANSLATION AND THE ROLE OF THE TRANSLATOR

In this chapter I will give a brief explanation of what children's literature is and the opinions that some authors and critics have on the topic. I will point out the difficulty of attributing a single definition to the term itself and why many authors decide not to label books. Critics of children's literature do not share the same opinion on many aspects of the field, but when it comes to translation strategies they can find a common point. Taking into consideration different sources and translators' opinions, I decided to report some of the most well-known and appreciated ideas. Translation Studies is a recent topic, but translation strategies have always been an issue since the first translated texts appeared. I will then move on to listing the best-known strategies for translating, also for children, and I will underline how important the translator presence is in children's books. At the end of the chapter, I will give a brief historical overview of the spread of children's literature around the world.

1.1 How literal can a literal translation be?

It should go without saying that not every author and every translator of different countries adopts the same strategies and criteria in their work. Newmark (1987:45) states that the central problem of translating has always been whether to translate literally or freely. One can decide to translate word-for-word, so translating cultural words literally as they are written in the original text, even if this method leads to a later review in order to blend everything together; or one can decide to adapt the text. Considering this, a question might arise spontaneously: *what is an effective translation?* Valarini (2005:18) claims that not all words with the same meaning are perceived in the same way in every language. When translating from one language to another, even if with a general meaning they mean the same thing and they are understood by almost everyone, the concept and the associations that the readers experience are quite different.

The purpose of any translation should be the so called "equivalent effect", which means to produce the same effect on the readership of the translation as was obtained on

the readership of the original text. This is difficult to produce, sometimes even impossible, the more cultural the text is, unless the reader is very familiar with the target culture (Newmark 1987:48-49). Close to this, there is equivalence: among equivalence theorists, it is considered as "the relationship between a source text (ST) and a target text (TT) that allows the TT to be considered as a translation of the ST in the first place" (Baker 2001:77). Among the different equivalence typologies, one can find the referential or denotative when it refers to the same thing in the real world; the connotative when it triggers the same or similar associations in the native speakers' minds; the pragmatic or dynamic when the words have the same effects on the readers (Koller 1989:102); (Nida 1964). Pym (1995:166) also considers equivalence as a "fact of reception", and he adds that the TT is expected to stand in some kind of equivalent relation to their STs. Vinay and Darbelnet (1995:90) state that it occurs when there are two texts that use completely different structural methods. An example of equivalence can be the reaction of a person who accidentally hits their finger: if they were French, their cry of pain would be transcribed as "Aïe!", but if they were English this would be interpreted as "Ouch!".

1.2 The spread of children's literature in the world

In the last few decades, children's literature has changed, concerning its commercialization and globalization (O'Sullivan 2009:149-152). The problem is that the leading book market, the United States', is dominated by media conglomerates whose publishes many books. A consequence is that, the mass marketplace will select which books will survive, and this will push children's books at the bottom, causing them to become less a cultural and intellectual object and instead more an entertainment for mass appeal. These multimedia giants influence also the distribution of the books: there no longer are borders that hamper culture and language exchange, and this brings out the importance of an explanatory sense towards children that, as natural, will not understand social differences or injustices.

Due to this international exchange of texts, a subject that helped a lot in understanding cultures "from the inside" is *comparative literature:* when talking about contemporary comparative literature, "it is an essential method of approaching literature

[…] that foregrounds the role of the reader but which is always mindful of the historical context in which the act of writing and the act of reading take place" (Bassnett 2011:7).

This discipline was first used only among European literatures, but when it started to apply also to other part of the world, translation became necessary. For a long time, translations were seen as an evil, mainly from the point of view of accuracy, even if they were not taken as a whole with the text and its background. The translators themselves, who interpret the "sacred text", were treated with distrust and disrespect because they can actually disfigure the original text. Until very recently students were dissuaded from trying to work or do anything with translation, whether they would produce one or simply study its impact in the receiving culture(s). Still nowadays, academics are not offered employment or promotion on their works.

As André Lefevere (1995) states, at the moment a new relationship between translation and comparative literature is possible. In order to have so, critics find essential to follow three distinctions. The first one, is between translating and translation: indeed, comparative literature only studies the translation when it is done, at the end. It deals with the finished product of the activity of translating, whereas translating can be defined as the process of translation. The second one, is the distinction between normative and descriptive. Rather than being limited to "rules" in order to produce "good" translations, a recent German thinking on translation, called *translational practice*, people have to keep in mind that translators, whether they want or not, will influence the work of their rewritings. The third distinction is between analysis and production. Although translation studies does not actually teach how to translate, that does not mean that it should not encourage the production of translation or the respectability of them. To produce a translated text is a two-person job: on one side, translations are produced by those who have studied a given text for years – academics, on the other side there are the ones who have not studied it, but want to translate it because they think it is important for the development of literature – writers. These two types of translating activity differ, but this does not mean that one is somehow superior to the other.

1.3 The aim of children's literature

The key to understanding and translating children's literature is that it is directed toward its own readers. While Göte Klinberg, a Swedish pedagogue and specialist in children's literature, argues that it is produced specifically for children, the Swedish author Lennart Hellsing adds that it also includes the literature written by the children themselves (Oittinen 2000). The term *children's literature* can mean anything that a child finds interesting and entertaining, anything that they hear from television shows, radio presentations or they read in newspapers and other books. The blueprints of children's books are quite often humor, lightness and shortness: children tend to prefer shorter stories full of dialogues and complications rather than long description and pessimism. The topics of this literature are often light-hearted and joyful: according to Oittinen (2000:51), authors themselves try to use simple words that should be remembered and used by children. Compared to adult's literature, early childhood readings are dotted with colorful images that affects children's imagination.

According to Lathey (2016:2) and many other theorists, in children's books there is an adult-child duality, and is the paradox that mainly adults write, publish and edit children's books. He points out that this adult presence affects every level of the writing process. Oittinen (2000) also finds this asymmetry a feature of children's literature, since between adult authors and children readers the knowledge and life experiences are widely different. Indeed, for a single text could exist two different levels of it, one directed to the child and the other directed to the adult. As Nodelman (2008:13) states, children's books usually contain simple sentences and are full of colorful images, but if one focused on them, they can sometimes find that these pictures are not very easy to understand for a children. This may be done voluntarily, so in that way it requires the help of an adult to explain them. Shavit (1986:15) explains that the ambiguous nature of the text is intended to satisfy its official – the children – and unofficial readers – the adults. This ambiguity enables authors of children's books to use the label *fairy tales* as texts for children, using them as the main consumers, but also at the same time allow adults to enjoy the text too, by using irony and satire that is understandable mainly from them.

Young readers may focus on the nonsense and comedic features of the story; they care whether they like the colors in it or if the images chosen appeal them. On the other hand grown-ups have a more logical and critical eye, they pay attention to the topic chosen and if it suits their values; that is why adults usually decide not to read certain children books even if the child finds them engaging (Oittinen 2000:51). When it comes to books for preschoolers that are meant to be read out loud, translators encounter many challenges in working with pictures and words at the same time (Baker 2001:30-31). The adult reading aloud becomes a sort of performer to the child, and therefore is involved not only in the activity of reading but also in entertaining the listener. In this regard, Spitz (1999) states that children's books are similar to scripts and musical scores, for that reason the translator, whose only concern are words, has to keep in mind that the words to be translated are meant to be read aloud as if it was a theatre script.

1.4 The label "for children"

There is an ongoing discussion today as to whether authors have to specify if their books are for children or not (Gubar 2011:209). Many argue that by doing this, they could exclude possible readers and limit people's imagination by drawing the line. Others, such as Oittinen (2000) and Gubar (2011) affirm that some of the best known books intended for children, such as *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, are instead also read by adults, and therefore putting a label on books could lead to misunderstandings. Another problem could arise when defining what is a *book for children:* some authors, as mentioned above, intend all types of written stories directed towards a specific audience, who are children, while others reject the idea of writing for a particular age group.

As Gubar (2011) points out, it is impossible to give a clear definition of *children's literature,* both as regards the term and the concept. The possessive "children's" wrongly implies that these kinds of texts are only directed towards young readers, meaning that they read them all by themselves. In fact, most of the time it is the adult that buys the book and then reads it out aloud to the child, so they also should be the target of children's books. Regarding the issue of this concept, she cites what Rudyard Kipling said, that is that no one has the role and the power to define whether

that text is for children or not (Gubar 2011:210), affirming that there is no such thing as children's literature since they are not a separate identity from people. Moreover, the most important thing that causes this is that children are not a homogenous group with the same interests and characteristics, so no one can define and address what a child will find appealing in a book since what can please one child could not please another one.

1.5 The role of the translator in children's literature

Oittinen (2000:26) believes that "to communicate with a child reader is to enter into an imaginary dialogue with sharper and fresher readers than adults", and therefore translators should attempt to re-experience the phase of childhood. They have to think and imagine their story through children's eyes and perspectives. As mentioned above, their job is to direct their books towards young readers and make them appealing for young readers. Children's authors should not only care about what the story is about or what are the main characters do, but they should also worry about the cover page and its colors, since it is the first thing that the young audience see.

Another thing that translators have to take into consideration is that there is this dual audience in children's literature: the child and the adult. In children's literature, adaptation is directed not only to the child, but also to the adult. It is often manipulated. Critics stress that translators of children's books should behave in the same way when working for children as they do for an adult audience. They have to keep the same level of accuracy and not distort children's texts. For this reason, many authors decide to translate their books themselves since in that way there will not be any doubts that the texts are understood in a proper way (Oittinen 2000:58). While some authors call the translators as "an invisible person" (Venuti 1995), that should not adapt, interpret or domesticate the text but only repeat it, other affirm that it is difficult for another human being to think, write and understand in the same exact way as another, therefore it is possible that some elements of the original texts will change in the translated version.

The translator's presence has been a much discussed topic since Lawrence Venuti addressed this figure as "invisible" (1995). He stresses the role of these people, who often are just seen as a means to an end and not as real people. While he only focuses his attention on this issue identified in domesticated texts, O'Sullivan (2003) adds that this problem can be also found in nonstandard and foreignized works. A

narrative text is transmitted from the author to the reader, that is to say from the person that physically wrote or created that text to the one that owns it and reads it (O'Sullivan 2003:199). Since this exchange does not happen directly, he refers to them as *implied author* and *implied reader.* An adult implied author creates an implied reader based on her/his culture, interests and capabilities. In children's literature, this author is the bridge that connects the adult and the child. When the translator is included in this pattern, the passages that ends with the reader are multiple: the real author does not address the real reader as s/he does in the original text, but the role is taken by the translator who first becomes the reader of the source text and then the implied translator for the real reader of the translation. Since this person is an adult, he/she is not an addressee of most children's books, but instead s/he has the role of transferring the author's communication to the child reader. The figure of the translator is essential in making the target audience understand the language, codes and references, and it is important to keep in mind that he/she does not create a new message. Having said so, it is inevitable that the translator builds up a new relationship between the translated text and the target audience (O'Sullivan 2003).

As concerns the translator's voice, according to O'Sullivan (2003:202), it can be identified on two levels at least. The first one is when s/he decides to add information to the paratextual text, such as prefaces or footnotes. This is a clear sign of the translator's presence (O'Sullivan 2003:202). O'Sullivan (2003:202) cites as an example the German translation of Barbara Park's *My Mother Got Married (and other disasters)* (1989), where the translator explained what the *Thanksgiving day* is. This would not have been necessary for the original source because the Americans clearly know what this day is and what it celebrates. The second level is more discursive and is known as *the voice of the narrator of the translation* (O'Sullivan 2003:202). It is unrecognized by translation studies or narratology and is considered as a narration itself. In this type of voice the translator adds elements, such as adjectives and exclamation marks, which describe the character and the situation from his/her points of view. S/he addresses the implied reader directly and makes what s/he has to say more explicit. In order to do so, the translator has to keep a reader mindset and acknowledge that not every reader may not grasp the irony of the author.

1.6 Translation strategies

Translation theorists have proposed a variety of translation strategies: even if they classify them with different names, their procedures are similar. If taking into consideration the ones proposed by Davies (2003:65-100), her list consists of seven strategies: preservation, addition, omission, globalization, localization, transformation and creation. *Preservation* occurs when the term is transferred directly into the target text without further explanation. For example, this can occur when the translator keeps an American name in an Italian book, without translating it or giving some explanation. *Addition* is when the translator keeps the original term but gives also information about it. In this case, the translator needs to be familiar with the target's background and s/he usually adds information in footnotes. For example, Davies (2003:77) indicates that the translators of the Harry Potter books into Chinese tend to explain "English terms" in footnotes. *Omission* is the opposite strategy: the translator decides to "omit a problematic CSI altogether, so that no trace of it is found in the translation" (Davies 2003:79): this occurs, for example, when a character speaks in a dialect in the source text, and therefore the target audience will not be able to understand the culture-specific term. Another strategy is *globalization*, that is a form of domestication, and is when the original term is translated with a more generic one. For example, when there is a particular breed of a cat, a "Siamese cat", this may be translated simply as "a cat". The opposite of globalization is *localization*, when the reference is fixed in the culture of the target audience. To make it better to understand, she gives an example using Virgilijus Cepaitis' translation of *Winnie-the-Pooh,* where "Christopher Robin" is translated as "Kristoferis Robinas" in Lithuanian. The sixth strategy is *transformation*, and it involves an alteration of the original. For example, Davies takes as an example the different titles of the first Harry Potter book in the United Kingdom and United States. J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* was transformed into Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone for the American publication (Davies 2003:86-87). The last strategy is called *creation*: it is rarely used and it means a completely creation of a new term which is not there in the original source. For example, a translator can omit puns or alliterations in one place and put them elsewhere.

Most translation specialists agree that the translation of proper names tends to differ in adult and children's books because the latter mentioned are seen as a special

audience that needs familiar cultural items (Davies 2003:34). Names of fictional characters may carry semantic content, associations or reflect cultural aspects (Lathey 2016:45). It has to be said that, even if adaption is very useful concerning the reception of texts in different cultures, but to exaggerate in being creative could lead to betray the text from the original one. In addition to that, it would be difficult for the translator to do so, since they would not only be a master of languages but also very capable of how the language works. For this reasons, only a few writers/translators are able to fully adapt entire texts into another culture. Adaptation is a method that has always been used in translation; it even existed at the times of Cicero and Horace (Baker 2001:3). Despite this, many historians and scholars of translation see this phenomenon as a negative tool, and consider it as a falsification of the text. Literature is adapted in many ways, not only with other books but also when books become films. There is not a single reason why adaptation is made, and the adaptor can be the translator, the film director or the author her/himself (Baker 2001:5-6). The best-known definition of the term is that of Vinay and Darbelnet (1958), "it is a procedure used by the linguistic whenever the context of the original texts does not exist in the culture of the target text", and therefore the translator has to "re-create" the meaning of it. Translators have to create a new situation that can be considered as being equivalent. It affects not only the syntactic structure, but also the ideas and how they are represented within the paragraph (Vinay; Darbelnet 1995).

An important parameter Valarini (2005) finds helpful when translating is *triangulation.* When translating, it is common to encounter a difficult passage where the translator cannot find the right word, so they just remain there until they find what they were searching for. The solution could come from a common root in a word or simply a common cultural trait. This might happen with a non-translatable pun, which cannot be taken away from the text because it is essential for understanding a passage in the text. She was able to find a solution only after weeks of thought, not by using a literal translation of the word but associating two words that had the same perception of the original word. In her book, she also cites Mason's explanation on the topic (1952:29): he made the example of the translators of *Asterix*, who were unable to translate specific puns in the text, and therefore they decided to insert new ones of equivalent impact rather than equivalent meaning. Baker (2018:78) adds by doing so, it will enhance the

readability of translations and by getting this level right means that your target text will feel less "foreign", and may even pass for an original.

George Steiner (Oittinen 2000) finds adaption of literature a positive thing and considers it as one of the ways to keeps the classics alive and "to renovate the past". Of the same opinion is Lennart Hellsing, who adds that many of the classic stories would have died a long time ago, and that many classics only exist thanks to adaptations made for children or movies. The two French scholars Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet listed the different methods and procedures in just seven, starting from the simplest to the hardest one. Among them, one can find: *borrowing,* which is used when the translator has to overcome a lacuna by borrowing foreign terms; *literal translation,* which is the most commonly used when translating two languages that come from the same family, such as French and Italian, it consists of translating grammatically and idiomatically the source text. As mentioned above, they also discussed equivalence as a procedure of translating two different structured texts, and adaptation as a way to express something that is unknown to the target culture (1995:85-91). According to Taylor (1998), the process to obtain a good translated text consists of many steps and many tries, and he calls it "the rolling process". Rolling is a technique which simulates the process by which the translator turns over different solutions in his mind, writing them down and then deleting them again. In his opinion, this is a great technique to remind new translator, but also the expert ones, not to settle too soon for the easy solution.

Venuti (1998) develops the distinction between the term *domesticating* and *foreignizing:* these are the two extremes of how a translator positions a translated text in the target language. In a domesticating translation, the main aim is to prioritize "fluency and naturalness", and the style should be as indistinguishable as possible from the TL text. A domesticating translator alters cultural markers to bring the text closer to the target culture (Venuti 2008). On the other hand, in a foreignizing translation, the translator intentionally disrupts the linguistic expectations of the target language in order to to mark the "otherness" of the translated text. A foreignizing translator leaves cultural terms and names untranslated even if they might be new to the readers (Venuti 2008). Jaleniauskienė (2009) also lists these two strategies that translators usually use. In her view, while the latter aims at preserving the cultural elements and it can be

considered as a literal translation, the former brings the text closer to the readers by adapting or even by leaving out many details that would not be understood by the target audience. Tymoczko (1999) states that translators can "bring the text to the audience" when adapting the names or "bring the audience to the text" when leaving the names unchanged.

According to Delabastita (1994), a frequent problem in translation occurs when there is the presence of wordplay and puns, and he admits that they are problematic both for the translator and the scholar. The reason for this lies in the fact that often, the structural characteristics of the target language fails to reproduce a counterpart in the semantic and pragmatic effects of source-text wordplay. This issue has tended to provoke two standard responses: first, one finds a theoretical argument between those who claim that no real translation of wordplay is possible and those who argue the contrary; second, others affirm how the translation of wordplay should be done in order to avoid theoretical obstacles, or at least mitigate their consequences.

1.7 Specific challenges in children's literature translation

When translating children's books, as with books for adults, there are two main trends: source oriented translation and target oriented translation (Aida 2015:16). The first procedure assures the originality of the source text, preserving its language and culture, by being faithful to the meaning. The latter favors the merging of the original text with the target culture, bringing the translation closer to the reader, similar to domestication. While the study of children's literature is well established, the translation studies of this genre are yet to be fixed in a theorical way (Aida 2015:17).

According to Lathey (2016:18), the translator may face many challenges when translating for children, and therefore s/he has to imagine telling the story to an audience of children. A challenge that s/he may encounter is the "child narrator", where s/he has to recreate the illusion of a child speaking to his or her peers. Lathey (2016:20) considers this   as an essential skill since the child narrator is largely used in contemporary children' literature. Translated texts have often been changed due to the fear of proposing difficult names, new foods or different cultural practices to children (Lathey 2016:37). Readers, especially British people, expect to read a book that has been adapted to the target culture (Chambers 2001:113). Lathey cites Klingberg (1986)

as one of the first scholars to address the issue of cultural mediation in relation to child readers: according to Lathey (2016:38), opinion on the cultural adaptation and mediation of children's texts remains divided; for example Klingberg rejects adaptation and admits that in children's books it should be kept to a minimum. Another issue that translators may encounter in children's books are the picture. This aspect require not only the translator's language skills, but also their understanding of the illustrator's art. In this regard, Oittinen (2000) adds that to translate illustrated pictures requires a specialization in translation studies combined with art appreciation.

1.7.1 Translating proper names in children's literature

The translation of proper names is one of the most challenging activities every translator faces. Indeed, proper names usually indicate sex, age, geographical belonging and specific meaning, and therefore they cannot be easily found in dictionaries and simply translated, but they need special attention (Jaleniauskienė 2009:31). By the word "proper names" one can indicate names of people, animals, companies, geographical places and festivals. In real life, a name can tell many things, for example whether the referent is a female or male person or their geographical origin (surnames like Rossi, Smith). Sometimes proper names indicate "racial, ethnic, national and religious identity" (Tymoczko 1999:260), and thus they cannot be easily translated because they reflect a culture that might not be understood by another one. Especially in children's books, proper names do not only reinforce the character but often also say something about the character himself/herself. Fernandes points out that, in literary works, they are used to give a sense in the storytime's evolution (Fernandes 2006). When it comes to translated literature, proper names tell us that it is not the original text and they reveal the existence of other cultures, which children may not be aware of.

Chapter 2

Translation of Sara Zarr's *A Song Called Home*

In this second chapter I am going to translate two chapters from the book that I have chosen, Sara Zarr's *A Song Called Home.* I decided to translate the chapters 9 and 29 in particular, since they were the most challenging ones. They gave me the opportunity to challenge myself and my English skills, and see a little bit what the job of the translator consists of.

A Song Called Home is a novel for young adults that follows the story of Lou, the child protagonist, as her mom remarries a man from outside of the city they were living in. Lou and her sister Casey have to move to the suburbs to live with Steve, the new step-father, leaving behind their old lives. For Lou and Casey this is hard and they do not trust Steve's kindness, fearing that the "real Steve" will show up soon. As the time passes, Lou learns about herself and what family truly means.

Chapter 9	Capitolo 9
They were Marcus and Shannon Merritt-Mendoza.	Erano Marcus e Shannon Merritt-Mendoza.
Between the wedding and reception, they came over to Lou and Casey and Daniel and introduced themselves while people were mingling and hugging around them.	Tra il matrimonio e il ricevimento, si avvicinarono a Lou e Casey e Daniel per presentarsi, mentre le persone cantavano e si abbracciavano intorno a loro.
"We're Steve's neighbors," Shannon said. "We've been hearing a lot about you guys from Steve and your mom. We're excited you're coming to the block."	"Siamo i vicini di Steve" affermò Shannon. "Lui e vostra mamma ci hanno parlato molto di voi. Siamo entusiasti che veniate a vivere in quartiere."
They knew Mom? Lou looked to Casey to see what to think. Could they be trusted? They were friends of Steve's, after all. Casey looked uncertain, and her	Conoscevano la mamma? Lou guardò Casey per vedere cosa pensare. Potevano fidarsi di loro? Dopotutto, erano amici di Steve. Casey sembrava incerta sul da farsi, e riprese la mano di Daniel nella

hand went to Daniel's again, as if for protection.

Then Marcus said the thing no one had said to them all day: "It must be hard for you two. So many changes," He said it right to Lou and had a listening expression on his face, eyebrows up, head tilted.

"Yeah," she answered, and noticed casey let go of Daniel's hand. "It is kind of hard."

"We don't want to move," Casey said bluntly.

We. The new *we* of only the two of them.

"I don't blame you," Marcus said.

"Pacifica takes a little getting used to," Shannon added.

"We've moved out there about four years ago and we still miss living right in the city."

"You lived in the city?" Casey asked. "Where?"

"West Portal most recently. Before that, Glen Park. Before that…" She looked to Marcus. "Where we were before Glen Park, babe?"

"Ninth and Irving!" He said it like, *How could you forget?*

"I love that neighborhood," Casey said.

Lou watched them talk. Casey was so grown up, speaking as if she was the same age as them. When did Casey ever

sua come per proteggersi.

Poi Marcus disse la cosa che nessuno aveva detto loro in tutto il giorno: "Dev'essere dura per voi due. Tutti questi cambiamenti." Si rivolse direttamente a Lou, con un'espressione d'ascolto in viso mentre teneva le sopracciglia alzate e la testa inclinata.

"Si" gli rispose, e notò che Casey lasciò la mano di Daniel. "lo è abbastanza."

"Noi non vogliamo trasferirci" disse apertamente Casey.

Noi. Il nuovo *noi* formato solamente da loro due.

"Non vi do torto" disse Marcus.

"Ci vuole un po' per abituarsi a Pacifica" aggiunse Shannon. "Ci trasferimmo qui circa quattro anni fa e ancora oggi ci manca vivere in piena città."

"Vivevate in città?" domandò Casey. "Dove?"

"Nel quartiere di West Portal negli ultimi tempi. Prima ancora, in quello di Glen Park. E ancora prima…" guardò Marcus. "Dove abitavamo prima di Glen Park, caro?"

"Nelle strade Irving e Ninth!" lo disse come per dire, *come puoi dimenticarlo?*

"Adoro quel quartiere" disse Casey.

Lou li guardò parlare. Casey era talmente matura che sembrava quasi avesse la loro stessa età. Quando mai era andata, Casey,

go to Irving Street? It was all the way on the other side of the park.

Shannon looked down at her and smiled. "There's good stuff in the 'burbs, too."

Casey laughed through her nose. "Like what?" She weaved her fingers through Daniel's again.

Then Steve was standing there, interrupting them with a clap on Marcus' shoulder.

"Hey," Marcus said, turning to Steve. "Congratulations, man. So happy for you." They shook hands and slapped each other's shoulders some more.

"The music was beautiful. Perfect. Thank you so much."

"Our pleasure."

"Did you ask them about babysitting yet?" Steve asked.

Babysitting? Lou thought. She and Casey were way too old for a babysitter!

Shannon leaned toward Lou and Casey. "We have three kids. Small ones. Steve said you guys might be available to make a little money here and there, but no pressure. Personally, I hated babysitting when I was your age, so I get if you don't want to."

"I don't hate it," Casey said. And she specifically didn't hate making money, Lou knew.

"How about you?" Shannon asked Lou.

sulla Irving Street? Era dalla parte opposta del parco.

Shannon abbassò lo sguardo e le sorrise. "Ci sono cose belle anche in periferia."

Casey ridacchiò. "Cosa, per esempio?" E intrecciò di nuovo le dita con quelle di Daniel.

Poi arrivò Steve e li interruppe dando una pacca sulla spalla di Marcus.

"Hey" disse Marcus girandosi verso Steve. "Congratulazioni amico. Sono molto contento per te." Si strinsero la mano e si dettero altre pacche sulla spalla.

"La musica era stupenda. Perfetta. Vi ringrazio tantissimo."

"Ne siamo contenti."

"Gli hai già chiesto per fare da babysitter?" domandò Steve.

Babysitter? Pensò Lou. Lei e Casey erano troppo grandi per avere una babysitter!

Shannon si chinò verso Lou e Casey. "Abbiamo tre bambini piccoli. Steve ci ha detto che potreste essere disponibili a fare un po' di soldini ogni tanto, ma senza fretta. Io stessa odiavo fare da babysitter quando avevo la vostra età, quindi vi capirei nel caso non voleste."

"Non odio farlo" affermò Casey. E soprattutto non odiava fare soldi, questo lo sapeva Lou.

Oh, they wanted *her* to babysit? "I haven't done that much of it…" She helped in the church nursery sometimes. She could change diapers and hold a crying baby, play make-believe games with toddlers.

Marcus said, "We were thinking of both of you together. With three kids, as many hans as possible is the name of the game."

"*Anyway,*" Shannon said, "don't worry about it right now. We didn't come talk to you just to rope you into watching our kids. I wasn't even going to ask until you're all moved in and settled."

But Steve opened his big mouth, Lou thought. *He interrupts. He barges in. He helps himself to your conversations and your life.*

Speaking of Steve's big mouth, he now cupped his hands around it and yelled at everyone that it was time to go down to the basement and "get your grub on." Lou caught Casey's eye and they snickered.

"We'll see you down there," Marcus said, and he took Shannon's hand.

After that, there were only a few people left in the sanctuary. Pastor Richards was picking up programs that had been left behind. Sharl Yang had loops of microphone cords hanging over her

"Te invece?" chiese Shannon a Lou.

Ah, volevano che *lei* facesse da babysitter? "Non ho molta esperienza…" Ogni tanto aiutava l'asilo della chiesa. Sapeva come cambiare i pannolini e come prendere in braccio un bambino che piangeva, sapeva fare i giochi di fantasia con i più piccoli.

Marcus disse "Pensavamo a voi due insieme. Con tre bambini, l'importante è avere più aiutanti possibili."

"*Comunque,*" disse Shannon, "non pensateci per ora. Non siamo venuti solamente per convincervi a badare ai nostri figli. Non l'avrei nemmeno chiesto fino a quando non vi foste trasferite e sistemate."

Ma Steve ha aperto la sua boccaccia, pensò Lou. *Lui interrompe. Si intromette. Entra nelle tue conversazioni e nella tua vita.*

Parlando della boccaccia di Steve, quest'ultimo chiuse le mani attorno ad essa urlando a tutti che era arrivato il momento di scendere nel seminterrato e iniziare a mangiare. Lou individuò lo sguardo di Casey e ridacchiarono.

"Ci vediamo di sotto" disse Marcus, e prese la mano di Shannon.

Dopo ciò, nel santuario rimasero solamente poche persone. Il pastore Richards stava raccogliendo i volantini

shoulders while Daniel helped her put the sound equipment away. Mom had already gone downstairs.

Steve stepped between Lou and Casey and put his arms around them, squeezed them both to his sides. "Casey. Louisa. I'm so happy right now," he said in a low voice. "I feel like I've been waiting my whole life to have a real family."

Lou checked Casey's face. It was steely, but Lou felt a little hitch in her feelings. Steve sounded honest right then, like he was saying something true and personal. He'd had a mom and a dad and a brother, but they weren't here now and maybe there was something about them that hadn't ever felt like a real family.

"Come on, Lou," Casey said. "Let's get some food."

She grabbed Lou's arm and pulled her away, picking up her messenger bag from where she's left it in a back pew.

When they were going down the carpeted stairs, she said, "I'm going to change into jeans and stuff. Then I want to eat, then I want to get out of here. Me and Daniel are going to go hang out in the park. Want to come?"

che erano stati dimenticati. Sharl Yang aveva il filo del microfono che pendeva dalla sua spalla mentre Daniel la aiutava a sistemare l'impianto audio. Mamma era già scesa di sotto.

Steve si mise tra Lou e Casey e circondò loro le spalle, stringendole a sé. "Casey, Louisa. Sono così felice." affermò a bassa voce. "Mi sembra come se stessi aspettando questo momento da tutta la vita, l'avere una vera famiglia."

Lou controllò la faccia di Casey. Era senza espressione, ma Lou sentì un piccolo groviglio tra i suoi sentimenti. Steve sembrava onesto per ora, come se stesse dicendo qualcosa di vero e personale. Lui aveva una mamma e un papà e un fratello, ma loro non erano là al momento e forse in loro c'era qualcosa che non li faceva sentire come una vera famiglia.

"Andiamo Lou" disse Casey. "Prendiamo del cibo."

Afferrò il braccio di Lou spingendola via, prese la sua borsa a tracolla da dietro una panca.

Mentre scendevano le scale ricoperte di moquette, lei disse "Mi vado a cambiare con dei jeans e altro. Poi voglio mangiare e andarmene di qui. Io e Daniel andremo al parco e staremo là un po'. Vuoi venire?"

"How are you going to get to Steve's later?"

"We'll be back in time to get a ride. You know how receptions are. They'll be here for hours."

Lou didn't have clothes to change into, and sometimes when Casey invited her to do stuff with her and Daniel it was only to be nice. What they really wanted was to be alone, and Lou would find herself sitting on a swing or hanging from the monkey bars with no one to talk to or play with while Casey and Daniel huddled close on a bench, kissing and whispering and in a world Lou wasn't a part of, their own *we*.

"I'll probably stay here."

Casey stopped on the stairs and scrunched her nose.

"Really?"

"Yeah?" Was it the wrong choice?

"Okay," Casey said with a shrug. "Up to you." She trotted the rest of the way down the stairs and disappeared into the restroom.

Lou continued, cautiously, into the fellowship hall.

Music played on wireless speakers someone had brought, and wedding guests were lined up in front of chafing dishes and bowls and casseroles. Mom's friends – the same ones who has

"Come farete a tornare da Steve dopo?"

"Saremo qui in tempo per farcela. Lo sai come funzionano i ricevimenti. Andranno avanti per ore."

Lou non aveva altri vestiti per cambiarsi, e a volte Casey la invitava con lei e Daniel solo per gentilezza. Quello che volevano davvero era rimanere soli, e Lou si sarebbe ritrovata da sola seduta su un'altalena o appesa alla scala orizzontale senza nessuno con cui parlare o giocare, mentre Casey e Daniel si rannicchiavano su una panchina, baciandosi e sussurrandosi cose, immersi nel loro *noi* di cui Lou non faceva parte.

"Penso che rimarrò qui."

Casey si fermò sulle scale arricciando il naso.

"Davvero?"

"Si?" Che fosse la scelta sbagliata?

"Okay" disse Casey con una scrollata di spalle. "Decidi tu." Trotterellò giù per i restanti scalini e sparì nel bagno.

Lou continuò, facendo attenzione, ed entrò nella sala comune.

La musica risuonava da alcuni altoparlanti senza fili che qualcuno aveva portato, e gli invitati al matrimonio erano in fila davanti a scaldavivande, ciotole e casseruole. Gli amici di mamma – gli stessi che avevano aiutato a decorare il santuario – avevano preparato anche tutto

decorated the sanctuary – had also made all the food. There was glazed ham, cheesy potatoes, macaroni salad, green salad, white rolls. Also a platter of lumpia and fried ice, and Beth's family had brought a pink box of Chinese almond cookies. Instead of a towering layer cake, there was a white sheet cake from the Safeway bakery.

"Things are a little different for a second wedding," Mom had said last month, when she was going over her plans. "I want it to feel more like a church potluck than a wedding."

It did feel like that, and even though Lou hated the whole idea of the wedding and what it meant, at least there was the comfort of the church fellowship hall and the folding tables, the spread of familiar food and the same paper napkins they used every Sunday at coffee hour.

She looked around for Beth and couldn't find her or any of the Tsais. She looked again, slower this time, making sure to see each person at every small, round table. They weren't there.

"Ooh, who made lumpia?" Casey asked, hovering over the table next to Lou in her jeans and a lime green sweater – her current favorite thrift-shop find – and her

il cibo.

C'era il prosciutto glassato al forno, le patate al formaggio, la pasta fredda, l'insalata, e pane al latte. Anche un piatto di involtini primavera e riso fritto, tipici della cucina filippina. Inoltre la famiglia di Beth aveva portato una confezione rosa di biscotti cinesi alle mandorle. Anziché una torta a piani, ce n'era una color bianco lenzuolo della pasticceria Safeway.

"Le cose sono leggermente diverse in un secondo matrimonio" aveva detto mamma il mese scorso, mentre ricontrollava i suoi piani. "Voglio che assomigli più ad un rinfresco, dove tutti portano qualcosa fatto da loro, rispetto ad un matrimonio."

E lo sembrò davvero, e nonostante Lou odiasse l'intera idea del matrimonio e cosa questo comportasse, almeno c'era la consolazione della sala comune e dei tavoli pieghevoli, il cibo familiare e gli stessi tovaglioli di carta che usavano ogni domenica al rinfresco.

Si guardò intorno per cercare Beth e non riuscì a vedere né lei e nessuno della sua famiglia. Provò a guardare ancora, più lentamente questa volta, facendo attenzione a ciascuna persona seduta ad ogni tavolino rotondo. Loro non c'erano.

"Ooh, chi ha fatto gli involtini

blue scarf twisted around her neck. She took two lumpia and scooped rice next to them, and rounded out her meal with macaroni salad and a roll balanced on top.

Lou was slower to decide which food in what order and how much to put on her plate. Church potlucks were comforting but also tricky because not everyone is a good cook. And she didn't like too many things touching. She only liked potatoes if they weren't undercooked. She only like macaroni salad if it didn't have anything weird like olives or bell peppers. She only liked green salad if there was ranch. After examining everything carefully, she took lumpia , rice, ham, and two almond cookies and arranged it all so each thing had its own quadrant.

She scanned the room one more time for Beth.

An arm waved her over; it was Shannon Merritt-Mendoza's. She sat at a table with only Marcus. Lou walked with her plate. "Hi again," Shannon said, pulling out a chair. "We don't really know anyone here except Steve. And now you!

primavera?" domandò Casey, sbilanciandosi sopra al tavolo vicino a Lou, con addosso i suoi jeans, un maglione di colore verde acceso – la sua nuova scoperta preferita al negozio dell'usato – e la sua sciarpa blu avvolta attorno al collo. Prese due involtini, del riso e completò il piatto con della pasta e una pagnotta di pane.

Lou era più lenta a decidere quale cibo prendere, in che ordine e quanto metterne sul suo piatto. I banchetti della chiesa erano piacevoli ma anche rischiosi perché non tutti erano bravi cuochi. E non le piaceva che troppe cose si toccassero. Le piacevano le patate solo se non erano poco cotte. Le piaceva la pasta fredda solo se non aveva niente di strano, come olive e peperoni. Le piaceva l'insalata solo se era accompagnata dalla salsa. Dopo aver esaminato tutto attentamente, prese gli involtini primavera, il riso, il prosciutto e due biscotti alle mandorle e li dispose sul piatto in modo tale che ogni cosa avesse il suo posto.

Ispezionò la stanza un'altra volta alla ricerca di Beth.

Un braccio si agitò per salutarla: era quello di Shannon Merritt-Mendoza. Si sedette al tavolo dove c'era solamente Marcus. Lou camminò con il suo piatto. "Ciao di nuovo" disse Shannon

Want to sit with us? If you need to be with your family, that's okay, but you looked kind of lost over there."

Lou sat, glanced over her shoulder. "I was looking for my friend Beth, but I think she left."

"Give me your honest review of the lumpia," Marcus said. "It's my mom's recipe and I haven't made it in years." His sleeves were rolled up now and she could see his tattoos: a cross with a snake around it on one arm, and an arrow wrapped in roses on the other.

"Is your mom Filipino?" she asked him.

He laughed. "Yeah, she is. So's my dad."

She felt herself blush, like she's asked a stupid question and he and Shannon would probably joke about it later.

"Sorry," she muttered down at her plate.

"Oh, hey," he said, tilting his head so he could see her face. "I wasn't laughing at you. I like that you're double-checking my lumpia cred."

"Go ahead," Shannon said, "try it."

She bit into the crisp fried roll, and the savory filling hit her senses with layers of spices and vegetables and meat.

"It's good," she said before she's chewed

spostando una sedia. "Non conosciamo nessuno qui a parte Steve. E ora anche te! Vuoi sederti con noi? Se hai bisogno di rimanere con la tua famiglia va benissimo, ma sembravi un po' persa laggiù."

Lou si sedette, dando un'occhiata alle sue spalle. "Stavo cercando la mia amica Beth, ma penso che se ne sia andata."

"Dammi la tua opinione sincera sugli involtini primavera," disse Marcus. "È la ricetta di mia madre e non li faccio da anni." Le sue maniche erano arrotolate adesso, e Lou poteva vedere i suoi tatuaggi: su un braccio aveva una croce con attorno un serpente, e una freccia avvolta da alcune rose sull'altro.

"Tua mamma è filippina?" gli chiese.

Lui rise. "Si, e anche mio padre."

Lei si sentì avvampare, come se gli avesse fatto una domanda talmente sciocca che più tardi lui e Shannon ci avrebbero scherzato sopra.

"Scusa" mormorò con la testa abbassata sul piatto.

"Oh, hey," disse lui, inclinando la testa in modo tale da vederla. "Non stavo ridendo di te. Mi piace che stai verificando la mia credibilità sugli involtini."

"Vai" disse Shannon, "provali."

Lei morse l'involtino croccante, e il ripieno salato le colpì i sensi con strati di

it all, then covered her mouth and said "Sorry" for talking with her mouth full, and then "Sorry" again because she did it again!

"Don't worry," Shannon said. "Manners are just loose suggestions. They've mostly gone out the window at our house."

They ate for a while, and Shannon talked a bit about her kids, who were being watched by grandparents today. As she did, Lou studied her mouth. She had on red lipstick. It wasn't shiny and it stayed perfectly in place while she talked and ate. Mom sometimes got lipstick on her teeth or outside the lines and seemed like she could never pick quite the right color. Shannon raised her eyebrows and Lou felt suddenly shy, aware she's been staring and that Shannon knew it, too. She made her eyes go anywhere else. Marcus's guitar leaned against one of the other chairs at their table.

"I play guitar," she blurted.

"Oh yeah?" Marcus said. "We should jam some time."

"Well…I mean, I *have* a guitar. I just got it for my birthday. I don't know how to play yet."

"Marcus can teach you some chords," Shannon said. She looked at Marcus and

spezie e verdure e carne.

"È buono" disse prima di masticarlo completamente, poi si coprì la bocca e disse "Scusate" per parlare con la bocca piena, e poi ancora "Scusate" per averlo rifatto!

"Non preoccuparti" disse Shannon. "Le buone maniere sono solo blandi consigli. Sono passate di moda a casa nostra."

Mangiarono per un po' di tempo, e Shannon parlò dei suoi figli, che erano dai nonni quel giorno. Nel mentre che lei parlava, Lou studiò la sua bocca. Aveva il rossetto rosso. Non era luccicante e rimaneva perfettamente al suo posto mentre mangiava e parlava.

A mamma ogni tanto finiva sui denti o sbordava dalle labbra, e sembrava come se non fosse mai in grado di scegliere il colore giusto.

Shannon sollevò le sopracciglia e Lou si sentì immediatamente timida, consapevole che Shannon l'aveva sorpresa a fissarla. Distolse lo sguardo. La chitarra di Marcus era appoggiata ad una delle altre sedie del loro tavolo.

"Io suono la chitarra." sbottò.

"Ah sì?" disse Marcus. "Dovremmo suonare insieme qualche volta."

"Beh… Cioè, ho una chitarra. L'ho appena ricevuta per il mio compleanno. Non so ancora suonarla."

he said, "Absolutely." He finished chewing and wiped his mouth to say more, when Low saw, over his shoulder, an uninvited wedding guest walk into the fellowship hall.
Dad.

Chapter 29

Mom took Monday off and drove Lu to school half an hour early; they had an appointment with Lu's new teacher.
They checked in at the office and met the principle. The school felt small and bright compared to the big, old beige-ness of her city school – each classroom door painted a bright color, the linoleum clean and shiny.
"I think you'll like Mr. Wealer," Mom said. "When I spoke with him on the phone it sounded like he gives a lot of thought to how to help new students adjust." She looked at her phone, where she kept notes to herself. "You're room should be at the end of the hall…"
Lu's fingertips buzzed from the inside, even though the surface of her skin was getting tough from guitar.
Sometimes when she got nervous, she felt it in her hands and arms and fingers. They got hot and tingly and achy all at

"Marcus può insegnarti a suonare qualche accordo" affermò Shannon. Guardò Marcus che rispose "Assolutamente". Finì di masticare e si pulì la bocca per aggiungerle qualcosa, quando Lou vide, aldilà della sua spalla, un ospite indesiderato entrare nella sala.
Papà.

Capitolo 29

Mamma si prese il lunedì libero e accompagnò Lu a scuola circa una mezz'oretta prima; avevano appuntamento con il nuovo maestro di Lu.
Si presentarono all'ingresso e incontrarono il preside. La scuola sembrava piccola e luminosa paragonata alla grande scuola beige in città – ogni porta delle classi era dipinta con un colore acceso e il pavimento pulito e splendente.
"Penso che ti piacerà il maestro Wealer" disse la mamma. "Quando gli ho parlato al telefono, sembrava che gli importasse davvero di trovare un modo per integrare i nuovi studenti." Guardò il telefono dove si teneva scritte delle note. "La tua stanza dovrebbe essere alla fine del corridoio…"
I polpastrelli di Lu formicolavano, anche se la superfice della sua pelle di stava ispessendo a causa della chitarra.

once.

A yellow door, the color of their old kitchen table, opened at the end of the hallway.

"There he is," Mom said, relieved.

A man with dark brown skin, a bald head, and a short graying beard weaved at them. He had a green sweater-vest over a white shirt, jeans, and sneakers. Lu weaved back.

When they got to the classroom, Mr. Wealer extended his hand. "Hi Louisa," he said.

She shook his hand. "Hi. It's Lu. L-U. No O."

"Sorry," Mom said. "I know her forms said Louisa."

"No problem. I'll make a note of it. Also, we have a class photo wall where you can put your preferred name, your pronouns, some of your favorite things. Should we take your picture right now?"

"Ok." She smoothed her hair down while Mr. Wealer got an instant camera out of his desk. She'd always wanted one of those, and wondered if he ever let the students use it.

A volte quando era nervosa, sentiva questa sensazione nelle mani e nelle braccia e nelle dita. Diventavano calde e formicolanti e indolenzite nello stesso momento.

Una porta gialla, il colore del loro vecchio tavolo da cucina, si aprì alla fine del corridoio.

"Eccolo" disse la mamma, sollevata.

Un uomo dalla pelle marrone scuro, con la testa pelata, e una corta barba brizzolata le salutò. Indossava un gilet verde in maglia sopra a una maglietta bianca, dei jeans e le scarpe da ginnastica. Lu ricambiò il saluto.

Quando arrivarono nella classe, il maestro Wealer le tese la mano. "Ciao Louisa" disse.

Lei gliela strinse. "Ciao. Sono Lu. L-U. Senza la O."

"Scusi" disse mamma. "Lo so che i moduli dicevano Louisa."

"Nessun problema. Me lo segno. Inoltre, qui abbiamo una parete con delle foto dove puoi mettere il nome che preferisci, i tuoi pronomi, alcune delle tue cose preferite. Vuoi che scattiamo ora la foto?"

"Va bene." Si lisciò i capelli nel frattempo che il maestro Wealer prendeva una macchinetta istantanea dalla sua scrivania. Ne aveva sempre

"Smile," he said. "If you want."

She did, and he handed her the photo that had popped out of the camera. While Mr. Wealer talked to mom, Lou watched her picture emerge, pale and ghostly at first, then turning darker and more solid. Her eyes got squinty when she smiled. It made her look so happy! Was this what she looked like to other people?

He gave them a tour of the room: long tables with cubbies and chairs just like at Lu's old school, a reading corner with a classroom library, and a shelf with some musical instruments.

"I play guitar."

"Oh, yeah? That's great."

"I mean, I'm learning. I'm not very good."

"Let's sit down." He indicated one of the tables. "We had a class meeting on Friday and everyone's expecting you. We talked about how it's hard to start a new school in the middle of the year. Past the middle, really. And I've got two classroom ambassadors coming in a few minutes for you to meet. You'll sit at the same table, and they'll take you to lunch and basically make sure you start to get comfortable here."

"That's great," Mom said. "She's not too

voluta una, e si domandò se lui la lasciasse usare agli studenti.

"Sorridi" disse. "Se vuoi."

Lei lo fece, e lui le dette la foto che spuntò dalla macchinetta. Mentre il maestro Wealer parlava alla mamma, Lu guardò la foto comparire, pallida e spettrale all'inizio, e che poi diventò più scura e prese forma. I suoi occhi diventavano storti quando sorrideva. La facevano sembrare così felice! Era così che le altre persone la vedevano?

Lui le mostrò la stanza: lunghi tavoli con armadietti e sedie come nella vecchia scuola di Lu, un angolo lettura con una libreria della classe, e uno scaffale con alcuni strumenti musicali.

"Io suono la chitarra."

"Davvero? È fantastico."

"Voglio dire, sto imparando. Non sono molto brava."

"Sediamoci." Lui indicò uno dei tavoli. "Abbiamo avuto una riunione di classe venerdì e tutti ti stanno aspettando. Abbiamo parlato di quanto sia difficile iniziare in una nuova scuola nel mezzo dell'anno scolastico. Oltre la metà, in realtà. E ho due rappresentanti di classe che arriveranno tra qualche minuto per incontrarti. Vi siederete allo stesso tavolo, e loro ti porteranno a pranzo e si assicureranno che ti integrerai."

shy. A little reserved, maybe. And she's been at the same school since kindergarten so I guess it's hard to know how this will go."

Lu stared at Mom and frowned.

"What, Belle?"

Mr. Wealer stood up. "Our ambassadors should be turning up in a sec. I think we've got this," he said to mom.

Then he looked at Lu. "What do you think, Lu?"

"Yeah. Mom you'd better get home to take Casey."

"Right, I haven't forgotten."

"I'm okay."

Mom nodded, then put her hand on Lu's head and kissed her check. "Have a great day, sweetheart."

As mom went out, two kids were coming in. One had long blond hair in two braids. She was taller and bigger than Lu and when she smiled you could see she had braces on her teeth. The other had shaggy brown hair and a long tie-dye T-shirt over jeans, and a slip-on white Converse.

"Lu with just a *U*, this is Kyra and Jase. Why don't you three got to know each other a little while I set up for the day."

"I like your hair," Kyra said quickly.

"Me too," Jase said.

"I like yours," Lu said to them both.

"È perfetto" affermò la mamma. "Lei non è tanto timida. Un po' riservata forse, e ha frequentato la stessa scuola dall'asilo quindi immagino sia un po' difficile sapere come andrà."

Lu fissò la mamma e corrugò la fronte.

"Cosa, Belle?"

Il maestro Wealer si alzò. "I nostri rappresentanti dovrebbero essere qui a momenti. Penso che ce la faremo" gli disse alla mamma.

Poi guardò Lu. "Cosa ne pensi, Lu?"

"Va bene. Mamma ti conviene andare a casa a prendere Casey."

"Giusto. Non me ne sono dimenticata."

"Io sto bene."

Mamma annuì, poi mise la mano sulla testa di Lu e le baciò la guancia. "Passa una splendida giornata, tesoro."

Mentre la mamma usciva, due bambini entrarono. Una aveva lunghi capelli biondi raccolti in due trecce. Era alta e più grande di Lu e aveva un sorriso che ti permetteva di vederle l'apparecchio sui denti. L'altro aveva i capelli castani arruffati e una lunga maglietta tie-dye sopra a dei jeans e dei mocassini bianchi della Converse.

"Lu con solamente la U, questi sono Kyra e Jase. Perché voi tre non iniziate a conoscervi un po' mentre io preparo per la giornata."

"Follow me!" Kyra said, and started to walk the perimeter of the classroom.

Jase and Lu followed while Kyra pointed out everything in the room, some of which Mr. Wealer had already told her about and some he hadn't. "Reading corner. You can check out books from the class library here," she said, tapping a clipboard that sat on one of the shelves. "Over here is the penalty box." She pointed to the table against the wall with just one chair at it. "If you break a classroom rule and you've already had a warning, you have to come sit over here and work quietly. I've been in it twice."

"I've never been in it," Jase added. "This year."

"You're not supposed to touch the instruments unless we're doing music," Kyra said, indicating the shelf of tambourines, small drums, and a couple of ukuleles.

"Mr. Wealer said that you moved here from the city?" Jase said. "Why? I would never move out of the city."

"I – we didn't – " Lu stumbled over her words. It wasn't like she'd had a choice. "My mom got married. Remarried. My stepdad lives here."

Jase made a face. "I do *not* like my stepdad."

"Mine is okay."

"Mi piacciono i tuoi capelli" disse frettolosamente Kyra.

"Anche a me" concordò Jase.

"A me piacciono i vostri" disse Lu ad entrambe.

"Seguimi!" disse Kyra, e iniziò a camminare lungo il perimetro della classe.

Jase e Lu seguirono Kyra mentre indicava ogni cosa nella stanza, alcune delle quali il maestro Wealer già le aveva spiegato e altre che invece non conosceva. "Angolo lettura. Qui puoi controllare i libri della classe" lei disse, picchiettando una cartellina adagiata sugli scaffali. "Qui abbiamo la zona punizione." Indicò un tavolo a ridosso del muro con solamente una sedia. "Se non rispetti una regola della classe e hai già ricevuto un avvertimento, devi venire a sederti qui e lavorare in silenzio. Sono stata qui due volte."

"Io non ci sono mai stato" aggiunse Jase. "Quest'anno."

"Non dovresti toccare gli strumenti musicali a meno che non stiamo facendo musica" disse Kyra, indicando lo scaffale con il tamburello, piccoli tamburi e un paio di ukulele.

"Il maestro Wealer ha detto che ti sei trasferita dalla città?" disse Jase. "Perché? Io non andrei mai via dalla

"Water fountain," Kyra said, pointing. "You don't have to ask for permission but don't get up and use if it someone is in the middle of talking. Out of respect." Kyra glanced at Lu and said quietly, "My parents are divorced, too, but there's no steps. I live with my mom."

"Here's the photo wall," Jase said, and gently slapped the big piece of butcher paper that acted as a background for all the pictures. Jase pointed to the photo in Lu's hand. "Just peel off the back and stick it on."

Mr. Wealer chimed in from behind his desk. "There's space for you right near the middle."

Lu peeled the backing off her photo and pressed it against. Seeing her own face among the others already helped her feel a part of the class.

"What color marker do you want?" Kyra asked. "To write your name and stuff?"

"Um…purple?"

While Kyra got the marker, Lu scanned the wall to see what other kids had written. She quickly found Kyra's photo

città."

"Io – noi non – " Lu incappò sulle parole da dire. Non è che avesse avuto scelta. "Mia mamma si è sposata. Risposata. Il mio patrigno abita qui."

Jase fece una smorfia. "A me *non* piace il mio patrigno."

"Il mio è apposto."

"Fontanella d'acqua" disse Kyra, indicandola. "Non devi chiedere il permesso ma non alzarti per usarla se qualcuno sta parlando. Non è educato." Kyra rivolse un'occhiata a Lu e con calma aggiunse, "Anche i miei genitori sono divorziati, ma non ci sono compagni. Vivo con mia mamma."

"Qui c'è la parete delle foto" disse Jase, e colpì gentilmente il cartoncino che faceva da sfondo a tutte le foto. Jase indicò la foto nelle mani di Lu. "Basta solo che togli la pellicola e la attacchi."

Lu tolse la pellicola dietro alla foto e la premette sul cartoncino. Vedere la sua faccia insieme a quella degli altri la aiutò a sentirsi parte della classe.

"Di che colore vuoi il pennarello?" domandò Kyra. "Per scrivere il tuo nome e le altre cose?"

"Mh… viola?"

Mentre Kyra prendeva il pennarello, Lu ispezionò il muro per vedere cosa gli altri bambini avevano scritto. Trovò subito la

– she was the only one in two braids – and read: *Kyra. (KEE-ra) She/her. Favorites: Siberian tiger, Muppets, cheese.*

Jase's said: *Jase. They/them. Favorites: all pachyderms, some Star Wars, French fries.*

Kyra put the purple marker in Lu's hand. She wrote: *Lu. She/her.* She would have rather had time to think about her favorites instead of writing them with Kyra and Jase watching over her shoulder, but she heard the sounds of other students coming down the hall and wanted to have a version of herself all done and on board when they got there. *Favorites: cats, sad books, peanut butter.*

"Do you have cats?" Jase asked.

"No. My sister is allergic."

Kyra showed her their table, and that's when other students started coming in. Lu slipped inside her bubble. Sounds faded. She saw herself at the table and felt small next to Kyra, and even smaller as more people came in.

Kyra broke into Lu's bubble by leaning over to say, "Remind me to tell you later about the school talent show."

Mom picked up her after school, only because it was the first day. Starting tomorrow, she would walk.

Lu buckled herself into the passenger

foto di Kyra – era l'unica con le trecce – e lesse: *Kyra. (KI-ra). Lei. Mi piacciono: tigre siberiana, i Muppet, formaggio.*

Quella di Jase diceva: *Jase. L*i. Mi piacciono: tutti i pachidermi, alcuni Star Wars, patatine fritte.*

Kyra mise il pennarello viola nelle mani di Lu. Lei scrisse: *Lu. Lei.* Avrebbe preferito avere un po' di tempo per pensare a cosa le piaceva anziché scriverli con Kyra e Jase che la guardavano, ma sentì gli altri studenti arrivare dal corridoio e lei voleva essere in ordine nel momento in cui sarebbero arrivati. *Mi piacciono: gatti, libri tristi, burro d'arachidi.*

"Hai un gatto?" domandò Jase.

"No, mia sorella è allergica."

Kyra le mostrò il suo banco, e in quel momento gli altri studenti iniziarono ad entrare. Lu si chiuse nella sua bolla. I suoni ovattati. Si vide al banco e si sentì piccola vicino a Kyra, e ancora più piccola man mano che altre persone entrarono.

Kyra, chinandosi, entrò nella sua bolla per dirle "Ricordami di parlarti dello spettacolo della scuola."

La mamma la andò a prendere dopo scuola, solo perché era il primo giorno. Da domani avrebbe camminato.

Lu sprofondò nel sedile del passeggero.

seat.

"Well?" Mom asked, smiling.

"It was good."

"That's all?"

Good was good. Nothing bad happened, and Kyra and Jase were nice, and some other kids ate with them at lunch, too. Kyra had asked Lu if she wanted to do something for the talent show with her, and Lu had said maybe while thinking *probably not.* At recess she learned a new jump-rope game. There was a girl in the class she could she could already tell was the mean one. Her name was Wren and she told Kyra her braids were "really crooked, you should look in a mirror." They *were* kind of crooked, but Kyra explained to Lu that she'd done it herself and braiding your own hair was hard.

"They're not *that* crooked," Lu had assured her.

All that was inside the word "good" when she said it to mom. She didn't need to tell all the details.

Mom touched Lu's hair now. "Did you make friends?"

Lu pulled her head back. "Mom…"

"All right, all right." The car inched forward in the pickup line. "Should we go get Casey? We'll be a little early, but if I drop you at home first, we might be late."

"Allora?" chiese la mamma sorridente.

"È andata bene."

"Tutto qui?"

Bene era bene. Non è successo nulla di brutto, e Kyra e Jase erano carini, e anche altri bambini mangiarono con loro a pranzo. Kyra domandò a Lu se avesse voluto fare qualcosa insieme a lei per lo spettacolo, e Lu le rispose "forse" anche se pensava *probabilmente no.* A ricreazione imparò un nuovo gioco nel salto della corda. C'era una bambina nella classe che poteva già capire fosse quella cattiva. Si chiamava Wren e disse a Kyra che le sue trecce erano "davvero storte, dovresti guardarti allo specchio." Si, erano piuttosto storte, ma Kyra spiegò a Lu che se le era fatte da sola e acconciarsi i capelli da sola era difficile.

"Non sono *così* storte" le assicurò Lu.

Tutto ciò rientrava nella parola "bene" quando lo disse alla mamma. Non serviva che le raccontasse ogni dettaglio.

Mamma toccò i capelli di Lu. "Ti sei fatta degli amici?"

Lu tirò indietro la testa. "Mamma…"

"Okay, okay." La macchina avanzò di qualche centimetro nella fila per prendere i propri figli. "Dovremmo andare a prendere Casey? Arriveremo leggermente in anticipo, ma se ti scaricassi a casa poi faremo tardi."

"Don't be late." Casey wouldn't like that, not today.

They moved forward another few inches. "Well I had a good day. I finally got to spend some good time in the yard with some weeding. The I fell asleep in one of the lawn chairs. It was delicious, being alone. I realized it's been a long time since I had that much time totally to myself."

Finally, they made it out to the main street. The high school wasn't too far away, and soon they were in another pickup line.

"Oh, boy," Mom sighed. "This is worse than city traffic."

She turned on the radio and found a news station. Then she said "Oh boy" again at some news and changed it to the Christian station. A man was giving a sermon about "fruit of the spirit." Like love, joy, peace and patience.

Then the radio preacher said, *"Gentleness. Now gentleness is important, especially for all you gals out there,"* and Mom said "Oh boy" one more time and changed to the classical music station.

The sermon on the radio made Lu think of what Pastor Richards said yesterday. "Mom, do you think I'm a dirty sponge?"

"Non fare tardi." A Casey non sarebbe piaciuto, non oggi.

Avanzarono di qualche altro centimetro. "Comunque, *io* ho trascorso una bella giornata. Finalmente ho potuto passare un po' di buon tempo in giardino facendo giardinaggio. Poi mi sono addormentata su una delle sedie a sdraio. È stato magnifico, stare da sola. Mi sono resa conto che è passato tanto tempo dall'ultima volta."

Finalmente, riuscirono ad entrare nella strada principale. La scuola superiore non distava molto, e presto sarebbero state in un'altra fila per il ritiro.

"Oh cielo," sospirò mamma. "Questo è peggio rispetto al traffico della città."

Accese la radio e trovò un notiziario. Poi disse "Oh cielo" un'altra volta per qualche notizia e cambiò sulla frequenza cristiana. Un uomo stava facendo una predica riguardo al "Frutto dello Spirito Santo", come amore, gioia, pace e pazienza.

Poi il predicatore della radio disse "Gentilezza. In questo momento la gentilezza è importante, specialmente per tutti voi là fuori." E poi la mamma disse "Oh cielo" di nuovo e cambiò sulla frequenza della musica classica.

Il sermone alla radio fece riflettere Lu riguardo a cosa il pastore Richards disse

"What?"

"Like when life squeezes me, does dirty water come out? Like Pastor Richards was talking about?"

She felt mom glance at her. "No, Belle, I don't think that."

They crept forward. "Even if I do bad things?"

Lu spotted Casey sitting on the curb a few cars up, legs out, arms folded, phone in one hand and her earbuds in, scrolling. Lu felt unusually happy to see her. She rolled down the window and waved her hand, shouting, "Casey!" to try to get her attention.

A couple of kids turned and looked, and then Casey noticed them and jogged over to the car.

"Honey, Pastor Richards was using a metaphor, and not a great one."

"Hi!" Lu said as Casey climbed into the back.

After Casey had closed the door, she pulled and earbud out and asked, "Why did you *yell* like that?"

"Sorry. I wanted to make sure you saw us."

"And heard you, apparently:"

"How was it?" mom asked.

"Fine."

il giorno prima. "Mamma, pensi che io sia una spugna sporca?"

"Cosa?"

"Per dire, quando la vita mi strizza, esce dello sporco da me? Come quello che diceva il pastore Richards."

Sentì lo sguardo della mamma su di lei. "No, Belle, non lo penso."

Avanzarono. "Anche se faccio cose brutte?"

Lu individuò Casey seduta sul marciapiede un po' più avanti, le gambe distese e le cuffiette indossate, mentre faceva scorrere il dito sul suo telefono. Lu si sentì stranamente felice di vederla. Abbassò il finestrino e alzò il braccio per farsi vedere, gridando "Casey!".

Un paio di ragazzi si girarono a guardare, Casey li vide e camminò verso la macchina.

"Tesoro, il pastore Richards stava utilizzando una metafora, e neanche una tanto bella."

"Ciao!" disse Lu nel mentre che Casey salì sui sedili posteriori.

Dopo che Casey chiuse la porta, si tolse una cuffietta e domandò "Perché hai dovuto *urlare* così?"

"Scusa. Volevo essere sicura che ci vedessi."

"E sentirvi, a quanto pare."

"Com'è andata?" domandò la mamma.

Mom didn't say *That's all?* this time, and Casey put her earbud back in.

"Belle, I don't want you thinking you're dirty inside if you do bad things. You're-"

"What are you guys talking about?"

"Nothing," Lu said.

They inched and inched, and mom said in a low voice, "You're good, Belle."

When they got out of the pickup line mom asked if they wanted to get drive-through fries and shakes.

"Really?" Lu said. "Yeah!"

Mom smiled. "Great!"

"I just want to go home," Casey said. Whenever she had her earbuds in, she could decide what to hear and pretend not to hear.

"We're going to the drive-through. It will be fast and we'll go home and I want to hear about your days."

"They gave me *so* much homework."

"It won't take long," Mom said. "Ten minutes isn't going to make or break you."

"I don't-"

"Case."

"Fine."

Lu snuck a peek at Casey in the side mirror. Her head was bent low over her phone. Lu wanted to know about her day, too.

"Bene."

La mamma non disse *Tutto qua?* questa volta, e Casey si rimise la cuffietta.

"Belle, non voglio che tu pensi di essere sporca dentro se fai brutte cose. Tu sei-"

"Di cosa state parlando?"

"Niente" disse Lu.

Avanzarono molto lentamente, e mamma disse, a bassa voce, "Sei buona, Belle."

Quando uscirono dalla fila, mamma chiese se volessero prendere delle patatine e dei frullati al drive-in.

"Davvero?" disse Lu. "Si!"

Mamma sorrise. "Perfetto!"

"Io voglio solamente andare a casa." Affermò Casey. Ogni volta che indossava le cuffiette, poteva decidere cosa ascoltare e fare finta di non sentire.

"Andiamo al drive-in. Faremo presto e torneremo a casa e vorrò sentire cosa mi raccontate sulle vostre giornate."

"Mi hanno dato così tanti compiti."

"Non ci metteremo molto" disse la mamma. "Dieci minuti non faranno la differenza."

"Non-"

"Case."

"Okay."

Lu diede una sbirciata a Casey dallo specchietto laterale. La sua testa era chinata sul telefonino. Lu avrebbe voluto sapere anche lei della sua giornata.

When they pulled into the drive-through, mom asked what kind of shakes they wanted.

"Vanilla," Lu said.

"Casey?"

No response.

"Great," Mom said, "I'll get you strawberry."

Casey hated strawberry and mom knew it. She said, "Mom!"

"Oh, so you *can* hear."

Mom ordered two chocolate shakes and one vanilla, and two large fries to share. She passed Casey's chocolate shake back to her. When Casey took it, she said, almost too quiet to hear, "Thanks."

By the time they got back to Steve's house, Casey was crying.

Quando entrarono nel drive-in, mamma chiese che tipo di frullati volessero.

"Vaniglia" rispose Lu.

"Casey?"

Nessuna risposta.

"Bene" disse la mamma. "Ti prenderò quello alla fragola."

Casey odiava la fragola e la mamma lo sapeva. Lei disse "Mamma!"

"Ah, allora sei in grado di sentire."

La mamma ordinò due frullati al cioccolato e uno alla vaniglia, e due patatine grandi da condividere. Passò il frullato al cioccolato a Casey. Quando questa lo prese, talmente piano da sentire disse "Grazie."

Nel momento in cui tornarono a casa di Steve, Casey stava piangendo.

CHAPTER 3

ANALYSIS OF THE TRANSLATION

In this last chapter I will go through the translation that I produced in the second chapter, that is Sara Zarr's *A Song called Home*, and in particular I will compare the original English text (ST) to my Italian translation (TT). It was important for me when translating the text as a whole to focus on the cultural differences between American and Italian culture, with some mention of Filipino culture. In order to do so, I used many well-known strategies among translators that I described in the first chapter of my dissertation, which helped me to translate, for example, names of food and also inclusive pronouns, which in Italian culture have only become widely known and used in recent times.

3.1 Translating names

ST	TT
They were <u>Marcus</u> and <u>Shannon</u> Merritt-Mendoza. Between the wedding and reception, they came over to <u>Lou</u> and <u>Casey</u> and <u>Daniel</u> and introduced themselves while people were mingling and hugging around them. "We're <u>Steve</u>'s neighbors," <u>Shannon</u> said	Erano Marcus e Shannon Merritt-Mendoza. Tra il matrimonio e il ricevimento, si avvicinarono a Lou, Casey e Daniel per presentarsi, mentre le persone cantavano e si abbracciavano intorno a loro. "Siamo i vicini di Steve" affermò Shannon.

One of the first challenges that I encountered when translating, and that was present on almost all the book's pages, was the proper names of characters. In the book there are different English/American names, among which one can find *Casey, Steve, Marcus, Kyra* and *Shannon,* but the most interesting one to me was *Lou,* the abbreviation for *Louisa.* I chose not to translate proper names firstly because there was not always an equivalent in Italian, and therefore it would have caused confusion to leave some names unchanged and have the others in Italian. Secondly, I did so because they fit the characters well and changing them would have caused as a consequence the

loss of meaning. I also opted for not translating them because since this is a book directed to young adults, and not small children, and so they are more aware of geography and other countries, and therefore they might be more curious about the unknown than a smaller child might be. Instead they might choose a book coming from another country simply because they want to "explore" the world with a foreign novel. This choice can be summarized as a foreignization strategy, since I, as translator of this chapters, I decided to break the conventions of the target language, exposing them to the original source and therefore the original term, in order to preserve its meaning.

According to Lathey (2016:45), the translation of proper names depends o the age-range of readers, their likely familiarity with the translations of names and the intention of the author, since as mentioned above, fictional characters' names carry semantic content.

ST	TT
Mom took Monday off and drove Lu, her new name, to school half an hour early; they had an appointment with Lu's new teacher.	Mamma si prese il lunedì libero e accompagnò Lu, come si faceva chiamare ora, a scuola circa una mezz'oretta prima; avevano appuntamento con il nuovo maestro di Lu.

In the 26th chapter, the protagonist decides to change her self-image, by changing her hairstyle and especially her name, since she thought it did not fit herself anymore. She went from being called *Lou,* as mentioned above, to her new name *Lu.* What pushed her to do so was the big change in her life, that was moving to the suburbs and starting a new school there, so she needed a fresh beginning.

When I came across this change, I did not know at first whether to keep her English name unchanged or not, but this made me decide to take the latter choice. It was easier to keep *Lou* and *Lu,* also because I could not find an Italian name that gave the same feelings to an Italian reader.

Today, children are exposed to foreign cultures since they are born. Indeed, the most well-known fairy tales have characters with foreign names: *Hansel and Gretel,*

Pinocchio, Rapunzel and Pocahontas. According to Chambers (2001), if the narrative is compelling, even the youngest reader will remember the patterns of unknown names.

3.2 Translating geographical references

ST	TT
"West Portal most recently. Before that, Glen Park. Before that…" She looked to Marcus. "Where we were before Glen Park, babe?" "Ninth and Irving!" He said it like, *how could you forget?*	"Nel quartiere di West Portugal negli ultimi tempi. Prima ancora, in quello di Glen Park. E ancora prima…" guardò Marcus. "Dove abitavamo prima di Glen Park, caro? "Nelle strade Irving e Ninth!" lo disse come per dire, *come puoi dimenticarlo?*

This passage was a little difficult to translate, not due to what translation strategy to apply, but since it concerns San Francisco's neighborhoods and streets, geographical areas that in Italian culture are unknown for most people, unless one has travelled there or is passionate about the city. When I encountered these geographical names, I started wondering whether to translate them literally or whether to add some references that might help the Italian readers. After a careful analysis, I decided to keep the names unchanged and add to the first two terms, *West Portal* and *Glen Park,* the word "quartiere", the equivalent of neighborhood in Italian. I chose to do so in order to make the target audience understand that these are residential areas where the Merritt-Mendoza family lived in the past. The same was applied to the two streets mentioned in the passage, *Ninth and Irving*: seeing them as they were written in the source text, an Italian reader might not have understood what the author was talking about, while by just adding the word "strada", the Italian translation of street/avenue, it is clearer. In my opinion, keeping just the geographical names as they were written in the book might have caused some confusion due to the unawareness of Italian readers concerning specific areas of San Francisco.

I can sum up by saying that for this passage I chose to apply the strategy of *addition,* that is when the translator keeps the original term unchanged but also gives information about it (Davies 2003:77).

3.3 Translating food references

ST	TT
There was <u>glazed ham</u>, <u>cheesy potatoes</u>, <u>macaroni salad</u>, <u>green salad</u>, <u>white rolls</u>. Also a <u>platter of lumpia and fried ice</u>, and Beth's family had brought a pink box of <u>Chinese almond cookies</u>. Instead of a <u>towering layer cake</u>, there was a <u>white sheet cake</u> from the Safeway bakery.	C'era il prosciutto glassato al forno, le patate al formaggio, la pasta fredda, l'insalata, e pane al latte. Anche un piatto di involtini primavera e riso fritto, tipici della cucina filippina. Inoltre la famiglia di Beth aveva portato una confezione rosa di biscotti cinesi alle mandorle. Anziché una torta a piani, ce n'era una color bianco lenzuolo della pasticceria Safeway.

Translating foodstuffs might be one of the hardest challenges for the translator when it comes to children's books: food is seen as magical and as an object of desire by young readers. The universality of certain dishes, such as American hamburgers, Italian pizzas and Japanese sushi, has led children to know a wider cuisine than in the past, but some references still require an equivalent or alternative that has the same impact (Lathey 2016:40).

Since I wanted to make it clear that in this book there is the presence of different cultures, the American and Filipino culture, and since I believe that young readers are more familiar with the varieties of food around the world, I decided not to find an equivalent for most of the typical dishes, also because they were pretty clear in Italian. Instead, as concerns the terms *involtini primavera* and *riso fritto,* two Asian dishes, I chose to apply the "addition strategy" and therefore add "tipici della cucina filippina" in order to give a clearer idea to the readers.

3.4 Chunking

ST	TT
The school felt small and bright compared to the big, <u>old beige-ness</u> of her city	La scuola sembrava piccola e luminosa paragonata alla grande scuola beige in città

school – each classroom door painted a bright color, the <u>linoleum</u> clean and shiny.	– ogni porta delle classi era dipinta con un colore acceso e il pavimento pulito e splendente.

The term *linoleum* refers to a resilient floor covering made from natural ingredients, and it is also known in the Italian floor market. Since *A Song Called Home* is a children's book, I opted for a more generic word rather than a specific translated one, because children might not be familiar with these details. Even if there might be an adult reading out loud or near the reader, who knows the term and might explain its meaning the child, in my opinion it would lose the magic of the reading. For this reason, I decided not to change the meaning of the term, but simply use a more generic one. This choice, in Translation Studies, can be called as *chunking* (Katan 2004), more specifically *chunking upwards,* that occurs when a term is replaced with a hypernym, as in this case.

3.5 Translating pronouns in Italian

ST	TT
She quickly found Kyra's photo – she was the only one in two braids – and read: *Kyra. (KEE-ra) She/her. Favorites: Siberian tiger, Muppets, cheese.* Jase's said: *Jase. They/them. Favorites: all pachyderms, some Star Wars, French fries.*	Trovò subito la foto di Kyra – era l'unica con le trecce – e lesse: *Kyra. (KI-ra). Lei. Mi piacciono: tigre siberiana, i Muppet, formaggio.* Quella di Jase diceva: *Jase. L*i. Mi piacciono: tutti i pachidermi, alcuni Star Wars, patatine fritte.*

In Italian culture, the two pronouns that people use to identify themselves, and that are largely used during one's school years, are *he* and *she*, meanwhile there does not exist a pronoun that refers to a neutral gender. The Italian language comes from Latin, where three genders exist: feminine, masculine and neuter. However, over the course of history this neutral pronoun has been lost in many Romance varieties, such as French, Spanish and Italian.

Recently, among social media platforms like Instagram and Twitter, and thanks to the American influence, users and creators have started to use gender pronouns in order to let people know how they identify themselves in everyday life. Not only in this context, but also in the business field: in e-mails and presentations it is more and more common to find, next to the signature of who is writing/speaking, their gender pronouns.

The problem I encountered when I came across these gender pronouns in the book, was how to translate them and how to make Italian readers understand them since they are not frequently used in Italian. Firstly, I decided to condense the pronouns *she/her* and *they/them* into only two Italian pronouns, *lei* and *l*i*. I personally do not believe that there might be problems in understanding it, since it is true that it is a book directed to young adults, but we should not underestimate their knowledge and their intelligence. The first one, *lei*, is easy to understand because it has always existed in Italian and it is used for feminine objects, animals and people. The second one, *l*i*, was more challenging to come up with. During my research, I read that Italian grammars have not found a single solution to translate and express gender fluid or non-binary gender. For this reason, the most widely used and accepted solutions are mainly three: the use of the pronoun *loro*, which in Italian refers to the third plural person; the use of the schwa (ə)/u and the use of the asterisk (*). The first one is still considered by many discriminating because it implies the use of a masculine plural pronoun, but on the other hand others add that it is effective in the spoken language. The second ones are used both in the written and spoken language for referring to lexical words, but in my case it would have been ineffective since I was translating a pronoun and not the gender of an adjective or a noun. The third and last one was for me the one that suited the best: it is used also when it comes adjectives and nouns, but it fit perfectly for a personal neuter pronoun.

During my work, I also wondered whether it would have been better not to include these pronouns and omit them. I chose not to do so firstly because it would have caused the loss of, I think, an important topic for the author; secondly because I am confident that young adults, especially the ones that are growing up today, need to be aware of such issues.

The "Accademia della Crusca", the most prestigious institution related to the Italian language, has spoken on this topic. Paolo D'Achille[1], an Italian linguist, has commented that since the "schwa" does not exist in Italian, there is no reason for using it in the current language. On the other hand, he has also admitted that it is fair to care about people's gender, but no one should force a language to adapt to an ideology. Other linguist experts of "Accademia della Crusca" affirm that in Italian there is not always a correspondence between grammatical gender and natural gender: there are words that coincide with the gender, such as *il maestro/la maestra*, *il cameriere/la cameriera,* but there are also others that show only the male gender or the female one, such as *guida, sentinella, spia.* They made an interesting point when citing the English scenario: indeed, to refer to a non-binary person in English one can use the "singular they", even if in their language they have a neutral pronoun, that is "it". As concerns the use of the "*", the institution partially accepts it even if it works only with the written language, while in the spoken one it does not have any effect. However, Alma Sabatini (1986), an Italian essayist, linguist, teacher and feminist activist, spoke about this gender issue. In her work, she made a list of all, or almost, the misogynist choices in the Italian language and she provided some alternatives: among them we can find the avoidance of the word "uomo"; the use of the neutral masculine (avoid "I Romani" but instead use "Il popolo romano"); avoid using the masculine form before the feminine one ("Fratelli e sorelle", "bambini e bambine"); avoid the use of articles before the nouns.

3.6 Translating terms of address

ST	TT
"I think you'll like <u>Mr</u>. Wealer," Mom said.	"Penso che ti piacerà il maestro Wealer"

This passage was not difficult to translate because I immediately found the right translation for the term *Mr.* What I would like to underline, is the difference of the term and its meaning between the source text and the target text. In English-speaking countries the personal pronoun *you* is used for both the second person singular and the

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[1] https://accademiadellacrusca.it/it/consulenza/un-asterisco-sul-genere/4018

second person plural in both formal and informal contexts. In order to display a certain level of formality, such as in a school environment, the titles Mr., Mrs., Miss and Ms. may be used. Meanwhile, in the Italian culture, teachers, especially in primary schools, as in this case, are called *maestro* or *maestra,* and thus there is a slightly difference between the two versions.

3.7 Translating childish language

ST	TT
Between the wedding and reception, they came over to <u>Lou and Casey and Daniel</u> and introduced themselves while people were mingling and hugging around them	Tra il matrimonio e il ricevimento, si avvicinarono a Lou e Casey e Daniel per presentarsi, mentre le persone cantavano e si abbracciavano intorno a loro.

One thing I noticed when reading the first pages of the book was the repetition of the conjunction *and.* What the author was trying to do was to remind the reader that the person who is speaking is a child, not the author herself. I would not consider this repetition as a problem of style, even if repetition is often avoided in written texts. It was also a good strategy as concerns the musicality of the book. Even if in an Italian text this might not please all the readers, since it could have been easily adjusted with the addition of a comma (Lou, Casey and Daniel), I wanted to underline that it is the language of a child, and therefore me, as a translator, do not want and do not should interfere with it. As Lathey (2016) says, when the narrator of a book is a child, the translator has the task to recreate the illusion that a child is speaking directly to his or her peers.

3.8 Translating specific terms related to church event

American culture concerning church and religions may be very different from the Italian context. In Italy, the church ceremony, especially the Catholic one, is considered more traditional and conservative, while in the US it is seen as more dynamic and as a moment to celebrate together with other worshippers. Since I am familiar with only the Catholic practice, it was rather challenging to understand and later translate some of the words used in the book during a wedding.

ST	TT
Things are a little different for a second wedding," Mom had said last month, when she was going over her plans. "I want it to feel more like a church <u>potluck</u> than a wedding."	Le cose sono leggermente diverse in un secondo matrimonio" aveva detto mamma il mese scorso, mentre ricontrollava i suoi piani. "Voglio che assomigli più ad un rinfresco, dove tutti portano qualcosa fatto da loro, rispetto ad un matrimonio."

The term *potluck* is easily translatable into Italian with *rinfresco* or *banchetto,* and more specifically it means that when people come to the potluck, they each bring something to eat. Yet while the source text readers might understand its meaning since it is very common to find among church practices, the target text readers might require some thinking in order to do so. In Italy is rare to find church potlucks, but on the other hand, young adults might understand what the author is talking about because *rinfreschi* are well known and organized on different daily occasions.

ST	TT
…at least there was the comfort of the church <u>fellowship hall</u> and the folding tables, the spread of familiar food and the same paper napkins they used every Sunday at coffee hour.	…almeno c'era la consolazione della sala comune e dei tavoli pieghevoli, il cibo familiare e gli stessi tovagliolini di carta che usavano ogni domenica al rinfresco.

Another challenging word in terms of understanding was *fellowship hall,* translatable into Italian with *sala comune.* The noun *comune* can mean two different things in English: the *city hall*, even if in this case it would have not the same purpose as the English term, and *in common,* meaning that it is a place where people gather together for multiple reasons.

3.9 Concluding remarks

Before starting writing my dissertation and my last chapter, I was unaware of the many techniques that are helpful when translating English texts into Italian. I always thought

that it was not necessary to have strategies in order to do so, and that translation was something "natural" that the translator feels when doing his/her work. Even though what I just said is partially true, since the translator can use various strategies, and in the end s/he decides the most natural to him/her, s/he certainly needs a theoretical basis.

In the translation cases mentioned above, I decided to apply different strategies depending on the situation and on the outcome I wanted to have in the target text. A particular strategy that helped me many times when translating was *addition,* meaning that I left the term unchanged in the TT, by not changing it with a different word, but instead I chose to add a small explanation of the context and its meaning. Another one was the foreignization of proper names, since I decided not to find an equivalent in Italian but rather keeping the English names. It was also interesting to translate child language, since the protagonist is a small girl: it was challenging to translate some of her dialogues since I had to keep her childish and naïve perspective instead of writing as I would do. One thing that helped me a great deal in translating this feature was reading and applying Lathey's work *Translating for Children (2016),* where she gives many examples of various challenges and provides advice as to what to avoid and what to do on different occasions to translate effectively.

Above all, the most challenging section was the translation of gender pronouns. I consulted various academic sources in order to find the right equivalent in Italian, or at least the one closest to it, but since in the Italian language they are poorly understood it was complicated. After finding the one that could fit the best, I explained the different possibilities that are known among Italians, but that are not very commonly used for many reasons. I also cited the Accademia della Crusca's opinion on the topic, along with other linguists' views.

Conclusion

To conclude my dissertation, I would like to underline and remember the great work that translators do in order to bring us foreign books from all around the world. In my opinion, they are often underestimate and not thanked enough. Whatever their strategies or thoughts are, the most effectively translated stories are remembered and cared about by many children, and go on "living" for many decades. Nowadays, children and adults still read books written in the 1980's or 1990's, and even if this is made possible mostly by the great stories that the author writes, and how they keep entertaining readers, I would say that partially it is also thanks to translators. Indeed, many affirm that translators can be considered as co-authors of the text, since they interpret and translate it for a specific target culture.

Translators not only need to be capable of understanding the purpose of the book, its story and its features, but they also need to be familiar with the source text culture and the target text culture.

Even if this involves great skills and great identification with what the author's original idea was, the translator might follow some "standard" strategies most of the time, which will help in his/her work.

The overall aim of my dissertation was to understand what is behind a translated text, to see how and why a translator decides to adopt one term instead of another one. I also wanted to show that not every translator decides to use the same strategies or the same concepts in their work, and that there is a reason behind it. As I mentioned during my work, there are many strategies, some well-known and some less widely adopted, that translators chose to use, depending on which in their opinion fit the best.

I also wanted to produce a practical dissertation, not only by analyzing all the theoretical aspects and opinions, but also by applying what I read during my research. I decided to choose Sara Zarr's *A Song Called Home* because it had the perfect mix of a modern novel, with the presence of different cultures and also some aspects that one might consider "revolutionary", such as gender pronouns. It offered a great deal in improving my skills and challenging myself.

Thanks to the strategies and theories reported in the first chapter, I attempted to translate the two chapters of the book, from English into Italian effectively. Having a theoretical base thanks to my studies was definitely helpful in order to achieve a good outcome.

I would say that, having an interest in today's issues and a familiarity with American culture thanks to the Internet, helped me a great deal when translating, for example, gender pronouns. This is why I believe that every translator should not only focus on the theory strategies, but they should also learn about the changing world. They should be familiar with different cultures, different countries and traditions, and not stop at the theory.

In conclusion, when writing this dissertation I have realized that literature is still developing and being defined, along with the translator's job. The translator's role depends on his/her education, interests and subjectivity. This is something I find appealing, since every single translator is different from another one, and they all contribute in a "small" role in the child's growth, each in their own way.

Italian summary

All'interno della mia tesi ho deciso di tradurre due capitoli tratti dal libro *A Song Called Home* dell'autrice statunitense Sara Zarr. Si tratta di un storia per giovani ragazzi, scritta in maniera chiara e semplice, e che narra la storia di una bambina di nome Lou, la quale si trova costretta ad affrontare una serie di cambiamenti contro la sua volontà: la madre sposa un uomo, facendolo entrare a far parte del loro nucleo familiare, ma costui non viene accolto molto bene da Lou e sua sorella Casey, le quali temono si possa rivelare cattivo. Oltre a questo cambiamento all'interno della loro famiglia, le ragazze sono costrette a trasferirsi in periferia, nella casa del patrigno, dovendo quindi abbandonare amori, amicizie e, in particolare, il loro padre alcolista che non le ha più cercate dopo la separazione dalla moglie. Durante il racconto, la protagonista subisce un cambiamento involontario, dato dal nuovo look che decide di acquisire e anche dal cambiamento del proprio nome, per renderla più grande: Lu. Nella nuova scuola della bambina, essa fa amicizia con altri due compagni di classe, Kyra e Jase, che però le fanno continuamente ricordare di aver abbandonato la sua migliore amica in città. Nonostante ciò, riescono a creare un forte legame, in particolare Lou e Kyra, e insieme affrontano i cambiamenti nella nuova vita della bambina.

Il linguaggio della storia è molto basilare e comprensibile, dato che il racconto è indirizzato a bambini dagli 8 ai 12 anni, i quali hanno già acquisito le basi per leggere abbastanza adeguatamente.

Nel libro sono presenti molti elementi considerati tipici della cultura filippina, oltre che americana. La storia è ambientata a San Francisco, per cui sono notabili gli elementi americani, come per esempio la cerimonia del matrimonio tra la mamma di Lou e il patrigno Steve: questa cerimonia risulta assai diversa da quella tipicamente italiana, e questo è evincibile dal rinfresco che organizzano dopo la celebrazione, dove ogni partecipante porta qualcosa cucinato da se stesso. In Italia, un avvenimento del genere è molto raro da assistere, soprattutto durante le cerimonie religiose. Diversa è anche la struttura stessa della chiesa, dove i credenti si possono riunire e festeggiare i propri avvenimenti insieme alla comunità religiosa. Per quanto riguarda la cultura filippina, troviamo alcuni elementi tipici, come per esempio dei piatti offerti al banchetto della cerimonia, che sono gli involtini primavera, il riso fritto e i biscotti alle

mandorle. C'è un accenno anche alla cultura italiana, riconosciuta in tutto il mondo per il suo piatto tipico, ossia la pasta: nel libro difatti, si trova la "pasta salad", una variazione americana simile alla pasta fredda.

Molto interessante è l'aspetto dei pronomi di genere, aspetto che in Italia è poco diffuso ed è in fase di riconoscimento nell'ultimo periodo, in particolare tra i giovani attraverso le piattaforme social come Instagram, Facebook e TikTok. Nel libro vengono citati nel momento in cui, trovandosi nella classe della nuova scuola, Lou osserva il cartellone in cui ciascun bambino si presenta con un'immagine di se stesso, elencando le sue attività preferite, e appunto, i propri pronomi di genere. Per esempio, la nuova amichetta di Lou, Kyra, si è presentata con i pronomi *she/her,* che in italiano sono traducibili con *lei.* Quelli che mi hanno messo leggermente più in difficoltà, ma che al contempo mi hanno permesso di mettermi in gioco e sperimentare, sono stati quelli del bambino Jase, i quali ha adottato *they/them*: dopo varie ricerche e dopo aver consultato il sito ufficiale dell'Accademia della Crusca, istituzione italiana esperta di linguistica, sono giunta alla conclusione di tradurre il termine con *l*i.* Attualmente, nella lingua italiana, il genere neutro, o comunque il genere che fa riferimento alle persone non binarie, non esiste: l'Accademia della Crusca si è anche esposta sul quesito, affermando che nessuna della opzioni proposte è interamente corretta, ma che l'uso dell'asterisco potrebbe essere la soluzione che più si avvicina al suo intento: nonostante l'asterisco non abbia alcuna funzione nella lingua italiana, è invece presente nel linguaggio informatico, ed esso è preferibile all'uso della schwa e del pronome personale loro.

Per quanto riguarda la letteratura per bambini, gli studiosi ed esperti del settore non sono ancora giunti ad un incontro comune: molti affermano che, nonostante gli autori di libri per bambini indirizzino i loro racconti ai bambini stessi, non è possibile catalogarli in modo universale. Molti libri intesi per bambini, come *Alice nel paese delle meraviglie,* sono letti anche dagli adulti, e per questo etichettarli come tali creerebbe confusione. È quindi impossibile dare una chiara definizione di "letteratura per bambini", sia per quanto riguarda i contenuti, sia per il concetto in sé. Un punto a favore di questo è dato dal fatto che, quasi tutti i libri per bambini, vengono letti o con l'aiuto di un adulto, o ad alta voce interamente dagli adulti stessi, generando così un doppio pubblico. L'autore stesso, e successivamente anche il traduttore di questo genere di libri, deve ricordarsi di ciò, e fare in modo che innanzitutto il libro venga preso in

considerazione dall'adulto al momento dell'acquisto, e successivamente che venga apprezzato e ricordato dal bambino.

Il ruolo che il traduttore ha, nel portare il libro in altri paesi del mondo, è fondamentale per il successo del libro stesso: il traduttore deve essere in grado di comprendere non solo la storia narrata, ma anche l'insegnamento e la morale dietro ad essa. Dopo esserci riuscito, deve essere un esperto della lingua e cultura del pubblico di riferimento, e deve saper adottare le giuste strategie e tecniche per una buona riuscita del lavoro.

Deve immaginare di essere un bambino, cercando di tradurre la storia raccontandola attraverso gli occhi ingenui dei bambini stessi.

Per fare bene il suo lavoro, il traduttore potrebbe decidere di adottare diverse strategie, che negli anni sono state utili a diversi esperti linguistici. Queste strategie vanno ad aiutare nel cercare di rendere al meglio la storia narrata, sia per quanto riguarda la scelta di una determinata parola rispetto ad un'altra, sia per quanto riguarda l'aggiunta o l'eliminazione di frasi del testo originale.

All'interno della mia tesi, si possono trovare tre macro capitoli: nel primo capitolo, ho cercato di unire le diverse strategie che i traduttori nel mondo adottano nel loro lavoro; ho anche spiegato in breve la storia della letteratura per bambini e i problemi connessi ad essa. Nel secondo capitolo, il più pratico, ho tradotto due capitoli del libro prescelto, affiancandoli in due colonne spettrali in modo da dimostrare la traduzione dall'inglese all'italiano. Nell'ultimo capitolo, mi sono concentrata nell'esporre il perché di alcune scelte di traduzione effettuate nella seconda sezione, in particolar modo le più stimolanti, che mi hanno fatto riflettere sui limiti della lingua italiana in un mondo in continua evoluzione.

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