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*Translating Young Adult Literature:
translation proposal of Colleen Hoover's "Without Merit"*

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INTRODUCTION

Within the fascinating field of literature, the genre of Young Adult Literature (YAL) is considered the bridge between childhood and adulthood. It offers adolescents a space where they can grow and cultivate their own identities, while at the same time, it aims to guide them, helping them to face the emotional and social changes they may be experiencing. The field of literary translation is characterized by continuous changes and rapid transformations, which result in several challenges that are related especially to YAL as it is considered a relatively recent phenomenon. The process of translating YAL involves not only the mere rendering of words but also it requires a careful understanding of the unique nature of this genre. As a matter of fact, translators are required to carefully consider its authenticity in terms of language, cultural references, and the distinctive and lively ways adopted by teenagers to communicate with each other and with adults. The goal is to find a balance between all these elements to preserve them successfully.

Therefore, the primary objective of this dissertation is to explore the challenges faced by translators in translating and conveying YAL to a new audience. Furthermore, to produce a quality translation, it is crucial for translators to take into consideration not only the peculiarities of the language and expressions used in YAL but also the sociocultural and extralinguistic aspects involved during the translation process. One of the goals of this dissertation is to explore different approaches to this practice and discuss possible solutions provided by academics and experts on the topic, including strategies that translators could consider adopting when dealing with difficult tasks. In this regard, in this final dissertation, I decided to propose a translation from English into Italian of two chapters of Colleen Hoover's novel "Without Merit", aiming to apply theoretical notions to a tangible context to provide a complete explanation of the subject matter through examples of practical application.

This dissertation is made up of four chapters, whose focus will be illustrated in the following paragraphs, alongside an introduction and a conclusion. The first chapter will be dedicated to an overall introduction to the genre of Young Adult Literature, serving as the groundwork for the development of the dissertation. The chapter will open with an attempt to establish a clear definition of the concept of young adulthood, with a particular

emphasis on determining the age range that characterizes the readership of this genre. The chapter then will continue by focusing on the evolution of YAL, presenting an historical outline of the genre informed mainly by Michael Cart's insightful considerations. Finally, the concluding section of the chapter will delve into the salient features of this literary genre, focusing on highlighting its common themes, such as mental health, self-discovery, and family relations, and its unique language, known as youth language.

The second chapter will outline the main practices and challenges that translators face during the process of translating YA fiction. Initially, the chapter's objective is to explore different definitions of the translation practice to better understand the translator's task. In this regard, the chapter will follow with an overview of the translator's role, explaining the possible obstacles in successfully conveying the meaning of the source text. Then, the final section will discuss possible strategies proposed by academics and experts on the topic, for instance Sienkiewicz, Shavit, and Baker, providing translators with effective solutions to render the distinctive language used by young adults.

The third chapter will offer a concise biographical introduction to the author Colleen Hoover, as well as an overview of her novel "Without Merit", which serves as a case study for this dissertation. The novel will be analyzed mainly in terms of its plot and the central themes it delves into. The chapter will conclude with my translation proposal of chapters 5 and 17 of the novel, showing both the source text and the target text.

The fourth and final chapter will be dedicated to an analysis and commentary on the solutions adopted during the translation process. As regards translation theory, some translation approaches will be further discussed, for instance Newmark's semantic translation, as well as Eco's idea of translation as a process of negotiation. The chapter is divided into different subsections, each dealing with the main obstacles encountered in rendering the ST into the Italian language and for contemporary Italian-speaking young adults. The chapter will start with some general considerations regarding the translation of YAL and then will follow with practical examples that are meant to combine theory and practice.

CHAPTER 1

Exploring the world of Young Adult Literature

The chapter is devoted to introducing and defining Young Adult Literature (hereinafter, YAL). In the initial part, I will aim to clarify the concept of young adulthood and Young Adult Fiction, and subsequently, I will highlight salient features of the genre in relation to its themes conveyed and language used.

1.1 An introduction to Young Adult Literature

1.2 Navigating the age range of YAL

Drawing on previous work by Nilsen and Donelson (2009), it may be possible to highlight three different definitions of “young adult”. The two authors state that by young adult literature they “mean anything that readers between the approximate age of twelve and eighteen choose to read either for leisure or to fill school assignments” (Nilsen and Donelson 2009:3). On the other hand, the Educational Resources Information Clearinghouse (ERIC) provides a contrasting description, for it “defines young adults as those between the age of eighteen and twenty-two”. Furthermore, The National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP), administered by the Educational Testing Service, “refers to young adults, ages 21 to 25”. Although contrasting, these definitions share one central aspect, which is that of defining literature hinging only on its target readership, particularly in terms of age. In this way, it is easy to cursorily categorize this literary genre simply by considering the audience age span for whom it is intended. The resulting consequence is the inevitable confusion that arises over the definition of YAL, which is further validated by the American Library Association (ALA) in their definition young adults, namely individuals between 12 and 18 years of age. However, reporting Cart (2001), author and expert in children's and young adult literature, one could say that:

[...] how we defined “young adult” (as in “young adult literature”) began to evolve. Suddenly the traditional 12–18 range was no longer broad enough, for if “young adults” were getting younger, they were also getting older. Since the mid-’90s, the upper parameter of “young adult” has been pushed beyond the traditional cutoff age of 18 and now includes readers as old as 25. (Cart, 2001:95)

According to statistics, the teen population in the USA experienced a significant increase from 1993, becoming one of the fastest-growing segments of the population (Cart, 2001:95). However, defining a young adult remains a contentious issue, as various opinions have emerged on the subject. In addition, it is essential to recognize that readership, as a dynamic entity, evolves over time. Thus, it can be inferred that classifying Young Adult Literature (YAL) cannot be based on chronological age alone. Instead, all the factors must be taken into account, such as maturity, which is often premature, subjective and shaped not only by one's education but also by one's cultural and social surroundings. Moreover, scientific research by Arain et al. (2013) has shown that adolescent brain development is incomplete until approximately the age of 25 years. Bearing this in mind, and for the purpose of this dissertation, young adults will be identified as individuals between the ages of 12 and 25.

1.3 The evolution of YAL: an historical overview

Cart (2016) traces the history of YAL back to the 1940s, a time when the genre experienced peaks and troughs. In 1942, Maureen Daly's *Seventeenth Summer* was published and is considered by some the first YA novel (Cart, 2016). That same year, the USA began recognizing the teenage years as a separate part of the life cycle, bringing about a shift in attitude. In 1951 another central novel was released, J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*, though not under the label of YA. In fact, during this period, novels that are now considered YA were labeled as "junior novels". Crowe (1998), when writing for *The English Journal*, suggests that the distrust of this literature is worsened by the various and sometimes vague terms used to categorize books for young readers, e.g., *children's literature*, *juvenile literature*, *middle-grade literature*, and *adolescent literature*. Instead of solving the problems, these ambiguous terms have only added to the confusion over the definition of YAL (Crowe, 1998). As a matter of fact, still nowadays teachers and parents believe YAL to be "little more than cheap, pulp novels – the kind of stuff that English teachers ought to teach their students to avoid" (Crowe 1998:120).

Yet, in 1996 "ALAN (Assembly on Literature for Adolescents of the National Council of Teachers of English) held its annual conference on the theme *Exploding the Canon*, an exploration on the new viability of using young adult books in the classrooms. Its context was the firm believe that the term 'young adult literature' was not, as some had argued,

an oxymoron, but, rather, the name of a body of literature that could be taught and explicated as seriously as the constituents of the traditional literary canon” (Cart, 2016). It might be argued that the convention marked the beginning of an attitudinal change toward introducing books for young adults in schools, after realizing the potential growth that this literature would bring into the lives of adolescents. The 1940s and 1950s can be considered decades that focus on the genre of romance fiction, which was, however, rejected later in the 1960s, as the genre shifted to a “newly hard-edged, realistic fiction [that] hit the ground running and a new genre, young adult literature, sprang into being [...]” (Cart, 2016). Reality became a distinctive feature of YA literature, that can be found, for instance, in S. E. Hinton’s work. Susan Eloise Hinton became in 1988 the first recipient of the Margaret A. Edwards Award (formerly called Young Adult Service Award YASD/ SLJ Author Achievement Award) for her novel *The Outsiders*, published in 1967. It is regarded as a fundamental book that laid the groundwork for future literary development of the Young Adult literary genre. To further emphasize the value of her work, Crowe (1998:122) conceives “literature for young adults all genres of literature published since 1967 that are written for and marketed to young readers”, referring to that very year for Hinton’s groundbreaking book. Indeed,

[...] no one person could have brought about all the changes that came to young adult literature in the late 1960s and early 1970s, but S. E. Hinton was at the right place at the right time to give the whole field a nudge that changed “the rules” about what was expected and what was possible in books published for teenagers. (Nilsen & Donelson, 2009:8)

The decade of the 1970s became known as the first Golden Age of young adult literature, especially for “the publication of one of the most important and influential novels in the history of young adult literature, Robert Cormier’s *The Chocolate War*” in 1974” (Cart, 2016). The success of the paperback romance is another standpoint in YAL history, which initiated a different kind of paperback series consisting of horror novels later in the decade. Then, at the beginning of the 1990s a series of factors contributed to a crisis that was felt throughout the entire genre. However, by the middle of the decade, “young adult literature had made a miraculous recovery to become one of the most vital and innovative areas of publishing”, and the idea of recognizing the emergence of a new generation of

consumers led to the creation of separate, stand-alone YA departments (Cart, 2016:3). At the time, there were many academics actively supporting the YA genre by publishing seminal articles and magazines, finally leading to a so-called renaissance of young adult literature by the end of 1996 (Cart, 2016:4). The 1990s “marked the onset of a second golden age of young adult literature, one that continues today” (Cart, 2016:5). Finally, what is interesting to highlight is that both the *Harry Potter* series and the *Twilight* saga played an important role in forging the image of YAL since, even in different ways and in different fields, they “visited revolutionary changes on YA[L]” (Cart, 2016:8).

To sum up, the history of Young Adult Literature is described as dynamic. It originated in the 1940s and it continues to evolve in the modern days. It is a genre that has experienced highs and lows throughout the decades, as well as shifts in attitude and changes in focus. While there has been some skepticism about YAL in the past, the recognition of its potential growth and literary value has led to its widespread integration in high schools and classrooms (Cart, 2016:3). It is vital to bear in mind two key aspects, namely the appearance of a new generation of readers and the success of influential works like *Harry Potter* and *Twilight*. They have contributed to a second golden age of Young Adult Literature, which continues to this day. It remains a genre that has been proven to be innovative and capable of captivating readers of all ages.

1.4 Exploring the key elements of YAL

YA fiction is positioned within a literary marketplace that has thrived remarkably over the past few decades, becoming increasingly common and greatly appreciated not only by a teenage readership but also by adults. The reason behind its popularity is the interesting and universal range of topics covered by the authors, which can fascinate different generations of readers, despite their age. At this point, to provide a clear overview of this literary genre, within the specific context of this dissertation that focuses on exploring the main practices and challenges of translating YA books, I will now direct my attention towards a selection of pivotal elements in this literature, in terms of themes and narrative, style and structure employed. I will specifically concentrate on the themes of mental health, family dynamics, self-discovery, and romance as they are all in the foreground of the novel analyzed.

Considering the general reputation, professors Koss and Teale (2009:567) suggest that “YA books have been identified as “problem novels” – novels with social issues that affect teens [...]”. As a matter of fact, authors frequently delve into the theme of mental health within their novels. There might be a social reason behind the determination to convey this kind of topic. To clarify the previous statement, addressing mental illnesses in books written for young adults can be beneficial, since it may offer emotional and psychological support for those who may be dealing with similar struggles in their everyday lives. It represents a valuable vehicle for a navigation of the difficulties young people may go through when affected by any type of mental health issue, especially anxiety and depression. Moreover, from a sociological perspective, it is an opportunity to offer “a glimpse of the othering that occurs when society fears thoughts and actions outside the defined bounds of normalcy, driving sufferers to hide their differences for fear of isolation, bullying, and powerlessness.”, as Wickham (2018:1) states when talking about a contemporary YA title, *Challenger Deep* by Neal Shusterman.

Another recurring theme is self-discovery. The label “coming-of-age” is frequently adopted when referring to these novels, meaning that the attention is on “a significant event in a teenager’s life that transform[s] one from childhood/adolescence to adulthood” (Koss & Teale, 2009:567). For a long time, YA fiction has been considered the bridge used to fill the gap between adolescence and adulthood, which is why most of the time the stories narrate young adults’ journey through life events or existential challenges. The journey, full of pitfalls and obstacles, acts as a springboard for young readers, leading them to figure out who they are and what they are supposed to be doing. It is in her paper on graphic novels that Forni (2021:129) focused on this concept, explaining that reading about fictional characters may not only be “a chance for entertainment, but also a means of indirect training and reflection”. Young adults can explore the complexity that characterizes their evolving identities, together with getting to know themselves.

Another important feature of this literature is represented by family dynamics. In relation to this, YA authors give insights into what it means to grow up in a family and what the consequences may be, based on the existing relationships between the young protagonists and the family surrounding them. To be more precise, “the four types of parental presences represented are: a healthy parental presence, lack of parental presence, a broke

parental presence, and substitute parental presence”. In fact, regardless of the form, young adults need a parental presence to help them tackle everyday struggles with helpful life lessons, guiding them and even shaping not only their character but also their personality (Giamalva, 2015).

Finally, I will mention the topic of romance and the idea of adolescents becoming interested in the opposite, or even the same, gender. It is another opportunity to display the intricacies of romantic relationships, for instance, their first love or a one-sided love story, together with the feelings and emotions that spring from these circumstances. Moreover, contemporary romance continues to lead the other subgenres in terms of reader popularity (Cart, 2010). As a matter of fact, it even includes the emerging and so-called “chick lit” which, according to the Collins Dictionary, “is modern fiction about the lives and romantic problems of young women, usually written by women.”

With the main themes of YAL established, I will now shift the focus to its stylistic and linguistic features. The key characteristics of YAL may be listed as follows, as indicated by Bayona and Percara (2020:35):

1. A teenage (or young adult) protagonist.
2. A first-person perspective.
3. Adult characters in the background.
4. A limited number of characters.
5. A compressed time span and familiar setting.
6. Current slang.
7. Detailed description of appearance and dress.
8. Positive resolutions.
9. Few (if any) subplots.
10. An approximate length of 125 to 250 pages, though this last aspect is not necessarily the rule.

Before moving on, it is necessary to first address an essential question. What is the purpose for which YAL was created in the first place? The Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) “finds another of the chief values of young adult literature in its capacity to offer readers an opportunity to see themselves reflected in its pages” (Cart,

2008:1). It allows young readers to identify with the protagonists they read about and situate themselves within the stories. It has a significant impact on them, especially on those who feel like outcasts and marginalized in society or their friend group. This literature helps them feel seen, understood, and validated. In fact, when they read about other people from around the world living experiences similar to the ones they are dealing with, they feel a sense of belonging. The choice to use a first-person present tense narrative is relevant to the purpose of authors to offer young readers the chance to see themselves in a mirror and to create literature that “[...] does an extraordinary job of filling emotional gaps in the lives of today’s teens by giving them an opportunity to see that they’re not the only one”, states Cart in an interview (Suico, 2018). Moreover, Cox (2013 in Nelson 2016:6) notes that “first-person present tense narrative has become increasingly common in YA literature, which adds a sense of urgency and immediacy to the story”, creating an intimacy between the reader and the protagonist.

Furthermore, the use of colloquial language and slang is also related to the idea of authenticity in the stories, as the aim is to reflect the way teenagers speak in their everyday lives. As regards writing styles, an interesting comparative study carried out by Koss and Teale (2009) shows that most of the YA titles examined “were written using a straightforward or blunt tone”. The finding may suggest that authors generally prefer to make use of a simple and clear writing style to offer accessible novels to young readers, which may serve as a means of conveying complex ideas and even abstract concepts in an unambiguous way. This is a consequence of the dazzling array of topics explored in YAL, the majority of which may be sensitive and difficult to address.

After having introduced Young Adult Literature, including a historical background, common themes, and prominent features, the second chapter of this dissertation will focus on navigating the main practices and challenges of translating YAL.

CHAPTER 2

Translating Young Adult Fiction: practices and challenges

The focus of the second chapter of this dissertation is that of discussing the main practices and challenges in translating YAL by considering different definitions of translation, alongside an overview of the translator's role.

2.1 Approaches to translating YAL

2.2 Understanding translation: examining multiple definitions and approaches

Translation is a phenomenon that has a huge impact on everyday life (Hatim & Munday, 2004:3). This practice, as a dynamic field of study, requires an understanding of the multiple definitions and approaches proposed by academics and practitioners so as to explore its complexities. Expanding on the notion of translation, the Collins English Dictionary defines it as “a piece of writing or speech that has been translated from a different language”. Although providing a starting point, this definition offers a limited perspective, failing to fully capture the multifaceted nature of translation.

Consequently, a number of scholars have addressed the following question: “What is translation?”. House (2014:1) provides a general definition of this practice, defining it as follows: “Translation can be defined as the result of a linguistic-textual operation in which a text in one language is re-produced in another language.”. Although this might offer an initial introduction to this procedure, a multitude of other conditioning and constraining factors should be considered (House, 2014:2). For instance, Catford (1965:20) explains that translation may be referred to as “the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another language (TL)”. To provide further clarity, it is important to note that the author uses the abbreviations SL and TL, which stand for Source Language and Target Language, respectively. The term “textual material” here focuses on the fact that “in normal conditions not the entirety of a SL text which is translated, that is, replaced by TL equivalents” (Catford, 1965:20). As a matter of fact, the author continues by pointing out that “at one or more levels of a language there may be simple replacement by non-equivalent TL material” (Catford, 1965:20), and thus “the central problem in translation practice is that of finding TL translation equivalents” (Catford, 1965:21).

Supporting Catford's perspective, Baker (2018:62) meticulously analyzes and comments on the importance of *meaning equivalence* in translation. She highlights the challenging choice translators often face between adhering to what is typical and maintaining accuracy. In a similar vein, based on previous research, Hatim and Munday (2004:34) emphasize the challenge in determining whether the meaning of the source text has been successfully transferred from the source text into the target text. This concern aligns with Larson's comprehensive definition of translation. Larson (1998:3) states that "translation consists of transferring the meaning of the source language into the receptor language" (Larson, 1998:3). Furthermore, the author explains that "this is done by going from the form of the first language to the form of the second language by way of semantic language". It emerges that the meaning of the source text is the key element, and that the translator must aim at accurately expressing it in the target text, which can be done by using semantic language and by fully considering the meanings of both languages involved in the translation process. In line with this perspective, Harliani (2019:123) highlights that the essence of translation is transferring the meaning.

2.3 Translation and the art of mediating: understanding the translator's role

Before delving into the main challenges and strategies of translating YAL, it is essential to understand the role of translators. Translators act as cultural mediators, dealing with culture-specific items, idiomatic expressions, and cultural norms that can be found within a text. Their expertise in decoding and recoding these cultural elements enables to promote cultural appreciation, as well as ensuring accurate communication and fostering mutual understanding.

Harliani (2019:121) highlights that "language cannot be separated from its contents and paralinguistic elements because it has multi-functional". This means that every "piece of linguistic structure can represent various meanings, depending on the context, situation, participation, purpose and numerous cultural factors" (Harliani, 2019:121). As a matter of fact, culture may represent an obstacle in the translation process, and it may bring about problems related to non-equivalence at word level (Baker, 2018:16), meaning that the source language may contain words or expressions which may not be understood by TL

readership. In navigating these challenges, translators must draw upon their “skills in solving the problem or creating the aspect of naturalness in translation” (Baihaqi, 2018:9). Finally, yet importantly, for a successful translation, a translator must notice two important aspects, namely grammar and culture (Ismawati, 2013:56). In addition, according to Nida (1975:79-80 in Harliani, 2019) the translator not only “must know the author’s message” but also “must know how to convey the message”. As a matter of fact, understanding the message does not necessarily lead to an accurate translation. Harliani (2019:123) concludes that “to produce quality translations, translators must master TL”. To conclude, translators occupy a crucial position in the process of translation. Their primary objective is to effectively convey all the essential elements of the source text while ensuring a successful communication with the intended readership. This requires the exploration of the intricate cultural aspects in order to enable a meaningful cross-cultural communication.

2.4 Translating YAL: challenges and strategies

As mentioned above, translators play a vital role in mediating between the original author, the target audience, and the cultural and literary norms of the target language. It is important to consider several challenges when dealing with the translation of novels within the Young Adult Literature genre. These challenges are intricately linked to the distinctive language and cultural expressions found within this genre. Besides, as Noppers (2010:6) points out, “the translation of young adult literature is one of the least researched subjects in the field of literary translation”. Thus, one could argue that this is due to the fact that YAL in itself is a rather recent phenomenon.

To shed light on the challenges of translating YAL, it is crucial to delve into the distinctive language used by young adults, which has a significant impact on the translation of this genre. It is known mainly as *youth language*, but according to Noppers (2010:8) other terms are also applied such as *youth sociolect*, *youth slang*, and *street language*. Furthermore, the emergence of the concept of Young Adult Literature coincided with the development of youth language (Tempert, 2013:24), which thus can be considered as a relatively new concept. Nevertheless, youth language has been the subject of a number of studies since the 1980s that lead to its recognition as an important way for adolescents to

create their identities (Griguta, 2013:25). As a matter of fact, the main reason why young adults use it is “to exclude parents and authorities from informal conversations” but also because it is a way that allows them “to set themselves apart from their former phase in life as a child and their coming phase as adults” (Noppers, 2010:10-15).

Youth language is recognized through several characteristics identified by Van Collie (2012 in Griguta 2013:25). The author explains that youth language is flexible, playful, diverse, fast changing, influenced by a variety of factors, such as subculture, gender, social class ethnicity, etc. Furthermore, two main features of youth language must be taken into consideration, namely its dynamic nature and the fact that it may be considered a non-standard variety of language. Youth language is a dynamic character, “even more dynamic than standard language” (Tempert, 2013:20). As a matter of fact, it has the ability to change very quickly due to the fact that YAL is “sensitive to trends [...] in terms of cultural elements, such as clothing, films, books, and so on, but particularly when it comes to language” (Hunt, 1996 in Tempert, 2013:30). As a consequence, “language can date a young adult book quicker than any other aspect of the book” (Tempert, 2013:30). This is a challenge that stems from the high circulation rate of youth language, which, as mentioned previously, is ever-changing. For this reason, one could argue that “the translation of youth language puts the translation at risk of becoming antiquated even more quickly” (Tempert, 2013:30). The issue is that youth language “has the disadvantage of being able to very quickly lose its appeal with adolescent readers” (Tempert, 2013:78). Youth language may also be categorized as a non-standard variety of language. This means that it does not possess rules related to spelling and pronunciation (Daniels 2004 in Tempert, 2013:28-29). Moreover, it contains lexical terms and expressions that “do not (yet) occur in dictionaries” (Tempert, 2013:29), showing “linguistic deviations in relation to standard language” (Tempert, 2013:78), and thus it is characterized as a non-standard variety.

In addition, another relevant translation challenge is represented by a practice known as code-switching. Hoffman (1991 in García-Vizcaíno et al., 2008:213) provides a general definition of the phenomenon, stating that code-switching “is the alternate use of two languages or linguistic varieties within the same utterance or during the same

conversation”. Regarding YAL, code-switching exists because protagonists of young adult novels use youth language with their peers, but among adults, they use a variety of language that approximates standard English (Tempert, 2013:29). Moreover, in terms of code-switching Vizcaíno (2018:213) highlights two challenges that translators must face: translators should maintain both the style of the source text and the aesthetic effects triggered by the use of code-switching, and translators should always try to achieve *pragmatic equivalence*, meaning that the translation “should produce the same reactions and effects on the target audience as the source text produced on the source readership” (García-Vizcaíno et al., 2008:213). Hence, translating code-switching requires careful consideration of both cultural references and the message that the author aims at conveying in the first place.

To address the strategies inherent in translating YAL, numerous scholars have tried to identify suitable strategies and approaches to assist the work of translators. First and foremost, it is necessary to note that, as previously discussed in this dissertation, little research has been conducted specifically on the topic of translating YAL. Consequently, many translators rely on the existing practices concerning the translation literature for children in general (Tempert, 2013:29). For instance, Shavit (1987:112) states that because children’s literature occupies a peripheral position in the literary polysystem, translators normally have great liberties regarding the text, meaning that they can change, enlarge, abridge, delete, or add to it. However, these liberties are permitted only when adhering to the following two principles on which translation for children is based:

an adjustment of the text to make it appropriate and useful to the child, in accordance with what society regards (at a certain point in time) as educationally "good for the child"; and an adjustment of plot, characterization, and language to prevailing society's perceptions of the child's ability to read and comprehend. (Shavit, 1987:113)

Furthermore, Shavit focuses on the idea that the decision of what to omit “is the result of the need to revise the text in accordance to two main criteria”, namely “the norms of morality accepted and demanded by the children’s system and the assumed level of the child’s comprehension” (Shavit, 1987:122). In addition, the author mentions the novel

Gulliver's *Travels* to provide examples of those elements that are usually omitted by translators during the translation process. For instance, she explains that translators of this novel "happily give up the scene where Gulliver is suspected of having a love affair with the queen, for such a scene violates the taboo of sexual activity in children's literature" (Shavit, 1987:123). It is crucial to point out that children's literature is "subject to adult influence [...] and is usually expected to carry some type of didactic moral" (Tempert, 2013:26). Likewise, although to a lesser extent, "publishing houses and educational institutions still exert their influence on the reading material of young adults" (Tempert, 2013:26-27). Therefore, during the translation process of YAL, maintaining its didactic moral becomes crucial (Tempert, 2013:27). However, supporting Shavit's perspective, Venzo and Moruzi (2021:1) state that "the didacticism of children's literature is often regarded as axiomatic", meaning that this literature faces a paradox in which the didactic aim clashes with a reluctance to discuss adult themes, for instance sexuality. As a matter of fact, there are still educational and ideological norms that "determine the translation of idioms, colloquial expression and insults in children's literature" (Gonzales, 2006:107 in Tempert, 2013:27). If on the one hand, when translating children's literature, omitting certain topics, colloquial/informal expressions or adult themes becomes necessary, on the other hand translators dealing with YAL may not be expected to do so, "as these themes particularly are a part of most young adult genres" (Tempert, 2013:28), and thus the manipulation of these features in YAL rarely happens.

When translating YAL, it is important to keep in mind the features of youth language. Classified as a non-standard variety of language, youth language requires the same strategies applied for translating dialects. Newmark (1988) for instance provides a solution for translating non-standard varieties by stating that "if dialect appears metalingually, i.e. as an example of language, you normally transfer it, translate it into neutral language" (Newmark, 1988:195). On the other hand, Berezowski (1997) proposes a number of strategies to render dialects, the first being *neutralization*, which means that the TT is rendered with the standard language. By adopting this procedure, translators "consistently decrease the number of dialect markers" (Berezowski, 1997:49), which is why this strategy may "cease to identify the characters as members of any particular social group" (Berezowski, 1997:51). An alternative strategy is called *lexicalization*, which

differs from the former because it results in a TT that does contains traits of dialect markers, although to a lesser extent.

Yet, according to Tempert (2013:29), some of these strategies may cause additional problems. O’Sullivan (2013:451 in Tempert, 2013:32) points out that “each genre of children’s literature, including the young adult genre, requires different translation strategies, because they are ‘heterogeneous body of texts’”. Consequently, these strategies may need to be modified before implementation. Furthermore, due to the ever-changing nature and high circulation rate of youth language, unfortunately “there do not appear to be permanent strategies that can be applied to solve this problem” (Tempert, 2013:32-33).

Based on previous research, the author Sienkiewicz (1997 in Mašlaň, 2006:27) concludes that translators may use four strategies for the translation of youth language:

- 1) Image for image substitution: involves selecting TL varieties that perform similar functions as the original dialects;
- 2) Approximate variety substitution: requires selecting a TL variety that is believed to be equivalent to the SL dialect only in some respects, and different in others;
- 3) Neutralization: involves deleting SL non-standard varieties by means of standard language;
- 4) Amplification: requires introducing additional differentiation where it does not exist in the SL text.

The first strategy, image for image substitution, “foreignizes a translation, which may cause problems for the legibility of a text” (Tempert, 2013:34), potentially making it unintelligible to its readership. Hence, the translation will most likely lose its appeal. Moreover, this strategy does not effectively address the challenge related to the dynamic character of youth language.

The second strategy, approximate variety substitution, preserves code-switching using slang or colloquial forms of the standard TL. However, “the difference between youth language and standard language disappears, as the youth language from the SL is replaced” (Tempert, 2013:34). Furthermore, Nida and Taber (1982) point out a recurrent

problem when translating non-standard varieties which is that of adopting the so-called democratic method. The authors explain that translators often select certain words and forms from one dialect, other words and forms from a second dialect so that “all dialects have been democratically represented”. Regardless of how this procedure might appear effective, it results “in a kind of language that no one speaks and all persons unanimously reject” (Nida and Taber, 1982:130).

The third strategy, neutralization, allows translators to avoid producing a translation that can easily lose its appeal, but it deletes an important stylistic feature, namely code-switching (Tempert, 2013:34). This issue may be related to the idea of translating register, which Halliday (1978) refer to as the different “ways of saying things” determined by what the speaker is doing at the given time (Halliday, 1978:185). The author emphasizes that while a dialect is determined by what one speaks habitually, register changes according to the situation at a particular time. As previously discussed, during the translation process, translators must consider and understand the functions of a non-standard variety in order to explore its cultural aspects and successfully convey the SL message into the TL.

The fourth and final translation strategy, amplification, “replaces the youth language of the ST with youth language of the target culture, maintaining both the aspect of code-switching and the similarity between the reader and the narrator” (Tempert, 2013:35).

As previously discussed at the beginning of the chapter, Baker (2018) discusses the concept of non-equivalence at word level, meaning that “the target language has no direct equivalent for a word which occurs in the source text” (Baker, 2018:19). After discussing the different types of non-equivalence at word level, the author lists the common strategies adopted by professional translators to deal with this challenge. I will mention four of them.

- 1) Translation by a more general word: it requires finding “a more general word that covers the core propositional meaning of the missing hyponym in the target language” (Baker, 2018:27). This strategy is used to overcome a lack of specificity in the TL compared to the SL.

- 2) Translation by a more neutral/less expressive word: it results in reducing the negative effects produced by the word in the source language.
- 3) Translation by cultural substitution: it involves “replacing a culture specific item with a target-language item which does not have the same prepositional meaning but is likely to have a similar impact on the reader [...], by evoking a similar context in the target culture” (Baker, 2018:30). For instance, during the translation of chapter 5 of the novel “Without Merit”, I decided to apply this strategy to render the concept of a GED (abbreviation for General Equivalency Diploma), which is a diploma in the US given to someone who did not complete high school. For the translation in Italian, I opted for the word “diploma”, as a way to adapt it to the culture of the target readership.
- 4) Translation by omission: it involves omitting the translation of a word or expression “if the meaning [...] is not vital enough to the development of the text” (Baker, 2018:43).

With all this in mind, the third chapter of this dissertation is dedicated to a general introduction to the author Colleen Hoover and her YA novel “Without Merit”, followed by a translation proposal of chapters 5 and 17.

CHAPTER 3

Expanding the reach of “Without Merit”: translation proposal of chapters 5 and 17

The present chapter contains two sections. The first part is devoted to introducing the author Colleen Hoover, as well as providing an overview of her acclaimed novel “Without Merit”, a poignant and powerful story that deals with innovative and contemporary themes such as family relations, self-discovery, and mental health. The second part of this chapter presents a translation proposal of chapters 5 and 17 that will be analyzed and discussed in the concluding chapter.

3.1 Contextualizing “Without Merit”: an introduction to the author and the novel

Born and raised in Texas, USA, Colleen Hoover is an accomplished contemporary romance and young adult fiction author. Hoover possesses a unique storytelling ability that made her the #1 New York Times bestselling author of twenty four novels. Moreover, throughout her career, the author has proven her versatility as a writer, that allowed her to skillfully transition between genres. As a matter of fact, her novels fall into the New Adult and Young Adult contemporary romance categories, as well as psychological thrillers, dealing with emotional love stories and intriguing young adult controversies.

Hoover attended Texas A&M-Commerce, earning a social degree in 2004 and becoming a counselor for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, a federal program. In 2011 she began writing her first novel *Slammed*, which became successful especially on social media platforms, although being at first rejected by numerous publishers. Her novels became popular in 2020 particularly on TikTok, which is when she started appearing on best-sellers lists all over the world. As previously mentioned, Hoover has the ability to deal with a dazzling array of themes, particularly focusing on her (most of the time) teenage protagonists’ struggle in trying to fathom the adult world. Yet, romance and romantic relationships in general appear to be key topics.

The novel “Without Merit” was first published on October 3rd, 2017, by the author Colleen Hoover. It belongs to the Young Adult literary genre, weaving elements of romance, contemporary fiction, and compelling narratives. The story is told from the

perspective of Merit Voss, the seventeen-year-old protagonist struggling with profound challenges to her mental well-being, specifically depression, which intertwines with her personal insecurities. Amidst the backdrop of a rather unconventional family, she dislikes most of her family members as she perceives herself as unimportant to their eyes.

Within the physical boundaries of their residence, a deconsecrated and repurposed church called Dollar Voss, each family member bears their own burdens. Merit is intelligent and sarcastic, but she finds herself at odds with her parents, feeling isolated and misunderstood. Moreover, she lives in the shadow of her popular twin sister, Honor Voss, and their older brother, Utah, a standout athlete. Their mother, Victoria, once a survivor of cancer, suffers from mental health issues and a severe case of agoraphobia, confining herself in the basement. Barnaby Voss, the father, wed to Victoria's former nurse (also named Victoria), is a successful businessman, yet emotionally detached from his children. Amidst the intricacies, Merit's half-brother, Moby, appears as an innocent and naïve character. Luck, Merit's step-uncle, helps her see the world in a different light, prompting her to confront a past veiled in secrecy. Sagan, the love interest of Merit, becomes a source of stability and understanding, becoming fundamental through her journey of self-discovery.

Behind the appearance of affluence, accomplishment, and outward beauty lies a well-guarded secret – one that Merit has concealed at a great personal cost. When her plan to shatter her happy family illusion fails, taking an unexpected turn, both Merit and her family are forced to face the consequences of the truth, and to find a way of healing and moving forward.

3.2 Translation proposal of chapters 5 and 17

CHAPTER 5

Merit, wake up.”

I didn't know it was possible to roll my eyes before opening them, but I accomplish this feat.

“What,” I grumble, pulling the covers over my head.

“You need to wake up,” Honor says. She flips on the light to my bedroom. I pull my cell phone out from under my pillow to see what time it is. “It's six in the morning,” I mutter, annoyed. “None of us wake up this early.” Not to mention she knows I don't go to school anymore, so what's it matter if I'm awake?

“It's six in the evening, dumb ass. It's your night to take Mom dinner.”

She slams the door.

It's six in the evening? Which means it's still today. Shitty today.

Joy.

I spoon mashed potatoes onto a plate next to a piece of blackened chicken.

There may not be much about Victoria to like, but her cooking has always been good. I do wonder, though, what it must be like to have to cook extra food every night for your husband's ex-wife who lives in your basement.

CAPITOLO 5

Merit, svegliati”.

Non pensavo fosse possibile alzare gli occhi al cielo prima di aprirli, ma riesco in questa impresa.

“Cosa”, brontolo, tirando le coperte sopra la mia testa.

“Devi svegliarti”, dice Honor. Accende la luce della mia camera. Tiro fuori il telefono da sotto il cuscino per vedere che ore sono. “Sono le sei del mattino,” borbotto infastidita. “Nessuno si sveglia così presto”. Per non parlare del fatto che lei sa che non sto più andando a scuola, quindi cosa cambia se sono sveglia?

“Sono le sei di sera, stupida. Stasera tocca a te portare la cena alla mamma”.

Sbatte la porta.

Sono le sei di sera? Ciò significa che è ancora oggi. Una giornata di merda.

Che gioia.

Metto il purè di patate in un piatto insieme ad un pezzo di pollo affumicato.

Potrebbe non esserci molto da apprezzare di Vittoria, ma la sua cucina è sempre stata buona. Tuttavia, mi chiedo come debba essere dover cucinare tutti le sere del cibo in più per l'ex moglie di tuo marito che vive nel seminterrato.

I spin around to grab a roll for the plate, but I bump into Sagan, who has appeared behind me. “Sorry.” I try to move around him before having to inhale his scent, or God forbid, look at his face. I move left, he moves right. We’re still in each other’s way. I move right, he moves left. Are you freaking kidding me?

He laughs at our little dance, but that’s because he can breathe when he’s around me. He only loses his breath around Honor. I finally spin and walk the other direction and go around the bar. Right before I reach the basement door, I glance back in the kitchen. Honor is now standing next to her boyfriend, making her plate. But he’s staring at me with a quizzical look.

He must think I’m such a bitch, especially when something as simple as being in his way happens. I’m not able to laugh it off like he does. I get frustrated and go the other direction.

“Merit?”

I’m not even halfway down the stairs and she can tell it’s me. She’s somehow memorized the footsteps of everyone in the house. I guess when all you do is watch Netflix and play on Facebook, you get pretty good at listening to footsteps.

Mi giro per prendere del pane per il piatto, ma vado a sbattere contro Sagan, che è apparso dietro di me. “Scusa.” Cerco di oltrepassarlo prima che io possa inalare il suo odore, o per l’amor di Dio, guardarlo in faccia. Vado a sinistra, e lui va a destra. Ci blocchiamo la strada a vicenda. Io vado a destra, e lui a sinistra. Mi prendi in giro? Lui ride del nostro balletto, ma è perché lui riesce a respirare quando siamo insieme. Gli manca il respiro solo in presenza di Honor. Alla fine, mi giro e cammino nella direzione opposta, facendo il giro del bancone. Prima di raggiungere la porta del seminterrato, do un’occhiata in cucina. Honor è in piedi vicino al suo fidanzato, mentre prepara il suo piatto. Ma lui sta fissando me con uno sguardo interrogativo.

Deve pensare che sia proprio una stronza, soprattutto quando succede qualcosa di così semplice come essergli d’intralcio. Non ce la faccio a riderci su come fa lui. Mi sento frustrata e vado nella direzione opposta.

“Merit?”

Non sono neanche a metà delle scale e lei sa che sono io. In qualche modo ha memorizzato i passi di ognuno in questa casa. Suppongo che quando non si ha altro da fare che guardare Netflix o giocare su

“Yeah, it’s me.”

She’s sitting on the couch when I make it down to the basement. She closes her laptop and slides it to the floor. “What’s for dinner tonight?”

“Chicken and potatoes again.” I hand her the plate and take a seat next to her on the couch. She looks at the plate and sets it down on the table next to her.

“I’m not really that hungry,” she says.

“I’m trying to lose ten pounds.”

“Maybe you should go for a run. The weather is nice.”

She frowns. I think I’m the only one who still tries to encourage her to go outside. But at this point, it’s not really encouragement. It’s more a sarcastic suggestion.

“You haven’t been down to see me since last week.” She reaches up her hand to brush my hair over my shoulder, but she hesitates before touching me. Her hand falls back to her lap. “Have you been sick?”

Frustrated is a better word. The older I get, the harder it is to understand her phobia. I get not wanting to leave your house, but to hole yourself up in a basement for years while your children continue to live their lives upstairs seems more like the world’s

Facebook, si diventa abbastanza bravi ad ascoltare i passi.

“Sì, sono io.”

È seduta sul divano quando arrivo alla fine delle scale. Chiude il suo computer e lo fa scivolare sul pavimento. “Cosa c’è stasera per cena?”

“Di nuovo pollo e patate.” Le porgo il piatto e mi siedo accanto a lei sul divano. Lei guarda il piatto e lo appoggia sul tavolo accanto a lei.

“Non ho molto appetito,” dice. “Sto cercando di perdere quattro chili e mezzo.”

“Magari puoi andare a correre. C’è bel tempo.” Si acciglia. Penso di essere l’unica che ancora prova ad incoraggiarla ad uscire. Ma a questo punto, non è proprio un incoraggiamento. È più un suggerimento sarcastico.

“Non sei venuta a trovarmi la settimana scorsa.” Alza la mano per accarezzarmi i capelli sopra la mia spalla, ma esita prima di toccarmi. La sua mano ricade sulle sue gambe. “Sei stata male?”

Delusa è la parola giusta. Più divento grande, più diventa difficile comprendere la sua fobia. Capisco che non voglia uscire di casa, ma rintanarsi nel seminterrato per anni mentre i suoi figli continuano la loro vita al piano superiore, sembra più il

longest temper tantrum than a social phobia.

“Yeah, I haven’t been feeling well,” I say.

“Is that why you’ve been out of school?”

I narrow my eyes a bit, wondering how she knows I haven’t been going to school.

“Your principal called today to check on you.”

“Oh. What did you tell him?”

She shrugs. “I didn’t answer my cell phone. He left a voice mail.”

I let out a quiet sigh of relief. At least the school doesn’t know the extent of her social phobia. They still call her before calling our father whenever an issue arises.

My mother tosses the blanket off her lap and stands up. “Can you mail something for me tomorrow?” She walks the length of her living room—all four feet of it—and grabs an empty box from her shelf. “I have some books I promised I’d get to Shelly.”

My mother may not leave the basement, but she’s got more friends than Honor and I put together. She’s obsessed with reading and has joined several online reading groups. If she isn’t watching Netflix, she’s reading a book or doing video chats with her book friends. I sometimes walk in on her video chats and she’ll introduce me and make me talk to her friends.

capriccio più lungo al mondo più che una fobia sociale.

“Sì, non sono stata bene,” dico.

“È per questo che hai smesso di andare a scuola?”

Stringendo gli occhi, mi chiedo come fa a sapere che non sono più andata a scuola.

“Il tuo preside ha chiamato oggi per sapere come stavi.” “Oh. Cosa gli hai detto?”

Fa spallucce. “Non ho risposto al telefono. Ha lasciato un messaggio in segreteria.”

Faccio un sospiro di sollievo silenziosamente. Almeno la scuola non conosce la gravità della sua fobia sociale. Ancora chiamano lei prima di chiamare mio padre quando sorge un problema.

Mia madre getta via la coperta dalle ginocchia e si alza in piedi. “Puoi spedire una cosa per me domani?” Percorre tutta la lunghezza del suo soggiorno - ben un metro e venti centimetri - e afferra una scatola vuota dal suo scaffale. “Ho dei libri che ho promesso di dare a Shelly.”

Mia madre potrà anche non lasciare il seminterrato, ma ha più amici di me e Honor messe insieme. Ha un’ossessione per la lettura e fa parte di diversi gruppi di lettura online. Quando non guarda Netflix, sta leggendo un libro o sta facendo una videochiamata con i suoi amici di libro. Ogni tanto prendo parte alle

She tries so hard to put on the air of a normal mother leading a normal life. But sometimes when I'm forced to be in one of her videos, I get the urge to scream, "She hasn't left the basement in two years!"

"Shelly said she mailed me a package last week. It should be here tomorrow."

"I'll bring it down when it gets here," I assure her. She writes an address on the box and while she has her back to me, it's the first I've noticed of her outfit. She's wearing a black maxi dress that goes all the way to her feet.

"Your dress is cute. Is it new?"

My mother nods, but doesn't reveal how she got it. She must order her clothes online because she hasn't had a visitor other than her children and occasionally my father when they need to discuss a parenting issue. It's a shame, too, because she's gorgeous for her age. It doesn't matter that she hasn't left the basement in forever; she still takes very good care of herself. She applies makeup every morning and her hair is always washed and styled. She probably still shaves her legs every day, which makes no sense because if I decided to never leave the house again, the first thing I would do is stop shaving.

videochiamate e mi fa presentare e mi fa parlare con i suoi amici.

Cerca in tutti i modi di dare l'idea di essere una madre normale che conduce una vita normale. Ma a volte quando mi obbliga ad esserci in una delle sue videochiamate, mi viene voglia di urlare, "Non esce dal seminterrato da due anni!"

"Shelly ha detto che mi ha spedito un pacco la settimana scorsa. Dovrebbe arrivare domani." "Te lo porto giù quando arriva," la rassicuro. Scrive un indirizzo sulla scatola e mentre è di spalle, è la prima volta che mi accorgo del suo outfit. Indossa un maxi-abito nero che arriva fino a terra.

"Bello il tuo vestito. È nuovo?"

Mia madre annuisce, ma non dice dove l'ha preso. Ordinerà i suoi vestiti online perché non ha avuto altri visitatori oltre che i suoi figli e occasionalmente mio padre quando devono discutere cose da genitori. È un peccato perché è bellissima per la sua età. Non ha importanza che non esca dal seminterrato da una vita. Si prende sempre cura di sé. Si trucca tutte le mattine e i suoi capelli sono sempre puliti e acconciati. Probabilmente si depila ancora le gambe ogni giorno, il che non ha alcun senso perché se io decidessi di non uscire mai più di casa, la prima cosa che

Maybe she's in an online relationship. Normally I wouldn't advocate for those, but I support anything that might give her motivation to leave the basement in the future.

I take the box from her and head toward the stairs. I used to hang out with her for longer periods of time, but it's gotten hard to do that lately. I'm starting to resent her. I used to feel sorry for her and assumed her social phobia wasn't something she could control. But the older I get and the more of my life she misses by choosing to stay in the basement, the angrier at her I am. Sometimes I get so angry when I'm down here, I start shaking and have to leave before I explode on her. Which is where things will lead if I don't get out of this basement right now.

"See you later, Mom," I say as I head back up the stairs.

"Merit," she says, calling after me.

I let the door to the basement close behind me.

Victoria is in the kitchen, cutting up a chicken breast for Moby.

Everyone else is already at the table eating. I grab a plate for myself, just as my father walks through the front door. It's half past six now and his football game starts at seven, so he has his dinner plate made before I do.

farei è smettere di depilarmi.

Forse è in una relazione virtuale. Generalmente non sosterrai una cosa del genere, ma supporto tutto ciò che potrebbe darle la motivazione di uscire dal seminterrato nel futuro.

Prendo la scatola e mi dirigo verso le scale. Ero solita passare più tempo con lei, ma è diventato difficile ultimamente. Sto iniziando ad avercela con lei. Mi dispiaceva per lei e pensavo che la sua fobia sociale fosse qualcosa che non potesse controllare. Ma più cresco e più lei si perde della mia vita scegliendo di rimanere nel seminterrato, e più sono arrabbiata con lei. A volte sono così arrabbiata che quando sono qui sotto inizio a tremare e me ne devo andare prima di esplodere. Cosa che succederà se non esco subito da questo seminterrato.

"A dopo, mamma," dico, salendo le scale.

"Merit," dice chiamandomi.

Lascio che la porta del seminterrato si richiuda dietro di me.

Victoria è in cucina che taglia il petto di pollo per Moby.

Tutti gli altri sono già seduti a tavola a mangiare. Prendo un piatto per me, proprio quando mio padre entra dalla porta d'ingresso. Sono le 18:30 e la sua partita

When I finally walk my food to the table, there's only one empty seat left.

Right next to what's-his-face. Honor is on the other side of him, leaning into him and laughing at something he just said. I'm sure it was clever, whatever it was. I plop down in my chair and scoot it forward. Moby is seated on my other side, to my relief. "You have a good day?" I ask him. He's shoving a bite of corn in his mouth when he nods.

"Tyler got in trouble for saying bastard." Most of us laugh, but Victoria gasps. "Moby, that's a bad word!" "Technically, it isn't," my father says.

Victoria glares at my father. "It is when you're only four and you say it at preschool."

"What's a bastard?" Moby asks.

"A kid born to parents who haven't gotten married yet. It's what you almost were," I reply.

You would think I slapped the kid with the way Victoria reacts to my comment. She immediately pushes her chair back and stands up.

"Go to your room!"

di calcio inizia alle 19, perciò il suo piatto è pronto prima del mio.

Quando finalmente porto il cibo a tavola, c'è solo un posto libero.

Proprio vicino a lui. Honor è dall'altra parte, che si appoggia su di lui mentre ride di qualcosa che lui ha detto. Sono sicura fosse qualcosa di intelligente, qualsiasi cosa fosse. Mi metto a sedere sulla mia sedia e la sposto in avanti. Moby è seduto vicino a me dall'altra parte, per mio sollievo. "Hai passato una buona giornata?" Gli chiedo. Annuisce, infilandosi un boccone di mais in bocca. "Tyler è finito nei guai per avere detto bastardo." La maggior parte di noi ride, ma Victoria sussulta. "Moby, quella è una parolaccia!" "Tecnicamente non lo è," dice mio padre.

Victoria guarda mio padre. "Lo è quando hai solo quattro anni e lo dici alla scuola materna."

"Cos'è un bastardo?" Chiede Moby.

"Un bambino nato da due genitori non ancora sposati. È quello che sei quasi stato tu," rispondo.

Si potrebbe pensare che abbia tirato uno schiaffo al bambino, visto il modo in cui Victoria reagisce al mio commento. Spinge immediatamente la sedia all'indietro e si alza in piedi. "Vai in camera tua!"

I laugh because at first I think she's kidding. But then I stop smiling because her anger is authentic.

You've got to be kidding me. I look at my father and he's staring at Victoria, his fork paused in front of his mouth. I look back at Victoria. "He asked what a bastard was. Did you want me to lie to him?"

Victoria's eyes are boring into mine. Her nostrils might even be flaring. I've never seen her so mad. I honestly didn't say it out of cruelty. "A bastard is a child born out of wedlock," I say to Victoria. "Isn't that what he almost was?"

Victoria points toward the hallway. "You will not speak that way in front of my child, Merit. Go to your room." She looks to my father for backup.

"Barnaby?"

I scoot back and fold my arms over my chest. I'm not backing down. "So you want me to lie to your child?" I look at a wide-eyed Moby. "Since sex is a bad eighties TV show, a bastard is the commercial." I look at Victoria. "Is that better?"

"Merit," Utah says. He says it like I'm the one out of line at this table. I turn my attention to him.

"Are you seriously taking Victoria's side now?"

Rido perché all'inizio penso stia scherzando. Ma poi smetto di sorridere perché la sua rabbia è vera.

Non ci posso credere. Guardo mio padre e lui sta fissando Victoria, la forchetta sospesa davanti alla sua bocca. Mi volto a guardare Victoria. "Ha chiesto cos'è un bastardo. Volevi che gli dicessi una bugia?" Gli occhi di Victoria sono fissi sui miei. Le sue narici addirittura si dilatano.

Non l'ho mai vista così arrabbiata. Davvero non l'ho detto per crudeltà. "Un bastardo è un bambino nato fuori dal matrimonio," dico a Victoria. "Non è forse quello che è quasi successo?" Victoria indica verso il corridoio. "Non parlerai in questo modo di fronte a mio figlio, Merit. Vai in camera tua." Guarda mio padre per avere un sostegno. "Barnaby?"

Mi sposto all'indietro e piego le braccia al petto. Non mi tirerò indietro. "Perciò vuoi che menta a tua figlio?" Guardo Moby che ha gli occhi spalancati. "Visto che *sex* è una serie tv scadente degli anni '80, un bastardo è la pubblicità." Guardo Victoria.

"Va meglio così?"

"Merit," dice Utah. Lo dice come se fossi io quella inappropriata a questo tavolo. Rivolgo la mia attenzione a lui.

"Stai davvero prendendo le parti di Victoria?"

“Can we please just make it through one meal as a family without a fight breaking out?” Honor says, frustrated.

“Barnaby?” Victoria says, still standing, still waiting for him to punish me.

My father wraps his hand around Victoria’s wrist and tries to get her to sit back down. “I’ll deal with her later. Let’s just eat, okay?”

Victoria snatches her hand away from my father and grabs her plate. She walks toward the kitchen and tosses her food into the trash can.

“Save the scraps,” I call out to her.

“Excuse me?”

I point to the trash. “The scraps. Wolfgang can eat them.”

“Wolfgang?” my father says. “Why are you bringing up that bastard dog?”

“And here we go again with that word,”

Honor mutters.

“Is that why there’s a bag of dog food by the back door?” Utah asks.

My father’s eyes move to the bag of dog food. He stands up. “Is that dog here?”

I take a bite of my mashed potatoes because I have no idea if I’m about to be sent to my room, but I’m hungry. “He showed up in the middle of the night last night,” I say with a mouthful. I swallow

“Possiamo per favore riuscire a finire un pasto come una famiglia senza che scoppi una lite?” Dice Honor, frustrata.

“Barnaby?” Dice Victoria, ancora in piedi, ancora aspettando che lui mi punisca.

Mio padre cinge il polso di Victoria con la mano e cerca di farla sedere. “Mi occuperò di lei dopo. Mangiamo ora, okay?”

Victoria tira via la mano da mio padre e prende il suo piatto. Si dirige verso la cucina e getta il cibo nel cestino.

“Conserva gli scarti,” le dico.

“Come?”

Indico il cestino. “Gli scarti. Li può mangiare Wolfgang.”

“Wolfgang?” Dice mio padre. “Perché tiri fuori quel bastardo di un cane?”

“Eccoci di nuovo con quella parola”, borbotta Honor.

“È per quello che c’è una busta di cibo per cani dalla porta sul retro?” Chiede Utah.

Gli occhi di mio padre si dirigono verso la busta di cibo per cani. Si alza in piedi.

“Quel cane è qui?”

Mangio un boccone di purè perché non ho idea se mi manderanno in camera mia ma ho fame. “Si è presentato qui ieri nel mezzo della notte,” dico con la bocca piena.

and throw my thumb over my shoulder. “He’s in the backyard.”

“You let him in the backyard!?” my father yells.

Victoria throws her hands in the air. “Oh, this is just great. You get angry at her for allowing a dog in the yard but not for calling your son a bastard?”

I hold up my fork. “I said he was almost a bastard,” I clarify.

“Why do you always do this?” Utah whispers. He’s so quiet when he says it, which means he’s not directing his question at Victoria on the other side of the kitchen. Surely he isn’t talking to me.

“You think this is my fault?”

“It usually is,” Honor says. “We can’t get through one meal without you doing something to piss her off.”

I laugh incredulously. “And that’s my fault?” I raise my voice loud enough for Victoria to hear our conversation. “Maybe she gets pissed off because she’s an unreasonable person. Just ask the little brother she abandoned.”

I make sure to look at Victoria so I can see her face. Sure enough, that last sentence was a shocker.

“What did you just say?” She’s looking at me like she either didn’t hear me or doesn’t want to hear me. I open my mouth

Deglutisco e alzo un pollice oltre la mia spalla. “È nel giardino sul retro.”

“Lo hai lasciato entrare nel cortile!?” Urla mio padre.

Victoria alza le mani al cielo. “Oh, è magnifico. Ti arrabbi con lei perché ha permesso ad un cane di entrare nel cortile ma non per aver chiamato tuo figlio un bastardo?”

Alzo la mia forchetta. “Ho detto quasi un bastardo,” chiarisco.

“Perché fai sempre così?” Bisbiglia Utah. È molto silenzioso quando lo dice, il che significa che la sua domanda non è diretta a Victoria dall’altra parte della cucina. Sicuramente non sta parlando con me.

“Pensi sia colpa mia?”

“Di solito lo è,” dice Honor. “Non riusciamo a concludere un pasto senza che tu faccia qualcosa per farla arrabbiare.”

Rido incredula. “Ed è colpa mia?” Alzo la voce abbastanza così che Victoria senta la nostra conversazione. “Forse si arrabbiata perché è una persona irragionevole. Basta chiedere al fratello minore che ha abbandonato.”

Mi assicuro di guardare Victoria così da vedere la sua faccia. Come previsto, quell’ultima frase è stata uno shock.

“Cosa hai appena detto?” Mi sta guardando come se non mi avesse sentita o non volesse sentirmi. Apro la bocca per

to repeat what I said, but my father interrupts me.

“Merit,” he says, more defeated than angry. “Go to your room.”

Victoria slowly turns her head toward my father. “You told her about Luck?”

He immediately shakes his head. “No, they don’t know about Luck. She’s pushing your buttons.”

Now I’m dying to know what she doesn’t want us to know. I take two more quick bites of my potatoes in case I’m forced to carry out my punishment. “I’m not pushing her buttons.” I swallow and wipe my mouth and then prepare to explain myself. Not that I should be required to do so.

“Wolfgang showed up here last night. It was raining and I felt bad for him, so I let him in the backyard. Then I found out Pastor Brian died and forgot to tell any of you about the dog. I went to Tractor Supply to get dog food today and this weird guy in a kilt asked me for a ride to his sister’s house, which turned out to be this house. His name is Luck, he’s Victoria’s little brother, and he’s asleep in Dad’s office, since Sagan apparently lives in the guest room now. And like it or not, the definition of a bastard is a child born out of wedlock. And in case any of you forgot, Victoria got pregnant while Dad

ripetere quello che ho detto, ma mio padre mi interrompe.

“Merit,” dice sconfitto più che arrabbiato. “Vai in camera tua.”

Victoria gira lentamente la testa verso mio padre. “Le hai parlato di Luck?”

Lui scuote immediatamente la testa. “No, non sanno di Luck. Ti sta provocando.”

Ora muoio dalla voglia di sapere cosa non vuole che sappiamo. Mangio altri due bocconi delle mie patate nel caso sia costretta a seguire la mia punizione. “Non la sto provocando.” Deglutisco e mi pulisco la bocca e mi preparo a dare una spiegazione. Non che mi sia richiesto di farlo.

“Wolfgang si è presentato qui ieri notte. Stava piovendo e mi dispiaceva per lui, così l’ho fatto entrare in cortile. Poi ho scoperto che il Pastore Brian era morto e mi sono dimenticata di dirvi del cane. Oggi sono andata da Tractor Supply per comprare del cibo per cani e questo strano ragazzo con un kilt mi ha chiesto un passaggio a casa di sua sorella, che si è rivelata essere questa casa. Si chiama Luck, è il fratello minore di Victoria e sta dormendo nell’ufficio di papà, visto che a quanto pare ora Sagan vive nella camera degli ospiti. E nel caso in cui qualcuno di voi si fosse dimenticato, Victoria è rimasta

was still married to Mom, so Moby was practically a bastard.”

When I finish my explanation, everyone is quietly staring at me. I face forward and give my full attention to my food.

“He was wearing a kilt?” Sagan asks. As much as I wish he wasn’t talking to me, I appreciate him trying to ease the tension with humor. “What color was it?” I force myself to look across the table at him. A small smile plays across his lips.

“Green plaid.”

He nods appreciatively. “Can’t wait to meet him.”

“My brother is here?” Victoria says. Her voice is much quieter now.

“Luck is here? In this house?”

I start to respond, but I don’t have to because Luck is now standing at the end of the hallway. “Technically, it’s not a house,” he says to her. “It looks more like a misunderstood church.”

I’m starting to understand what Luck meant about conversations being a Ping-Pong match, because we’re all looking back and forth between Luck and Victoria, waiting for the emotional reunion.

Victoria’s hand goes up to her mouth. My father walks up to her and puts his hands on her shoulders, trying to take her

incinta mentre papà era ancora sposato con mamma, quindi Moby era di fatto un bastardo.”

Quando finisco la mia spiegazione, tutti mi fissano in silenzio. Mi giro e mi concentro totalmente sul mio cibo.

“Indossava un kilt?” Chiede Sagan. Per quanto vorrei non stesse parlando con me, apprezzo che cerchi di smorzare la tensione con l’umorismo. “Di che colore?” Mi sforzo di guardarlo dall’altra parte del tavolo. Un piccolo sorriso nasce sulle sue labbra.

“A quadri verdi.”

Fa un cenno di apprezzamento. “Non vedo l’ora di conoscerlo.”

“Mio fratello è qui?” Dice Victoria la sua voce è molto più tranquilla ora.

“Luck è qui? In questa casa?”

Sto per rispondere, ma non ce n’è bisogno perché Luck è in piedi alla fine del corridoio. “Tecnicamente, non è una casa,” le dice. “È più una chiesa incompresa.”

Inizio a capire cosa intendesse Luck col dire che le conversazioni sono come una partita di ping-pong, perché stiamo tutti facendo avanti e indietro con lo sguardo tra Luck e Victoria, in attesa di un ricongiungimento commovente.

Victoria porta le mani alla bocca. Mio padre le si avvicina e le mette le mani sulle

attention away from her little brother. “Sweetie,” he says soothingly. “Let’s go talk it out with him in the bedroom.”

Victoria shakes her head and pushes past my father, toward Luck. “You can’t just show up unannounced, Luck. You need to leave.”

Luck doesn’t move. He looks a little surprised by her reaction. “You aren’t going to hug me first?”

Victoria takes a step closer to him. “Leave,” she says. “And next time you want to show up without apologizing first, try calling. It’ll save you money on travel!”

“Victoria,” my father says in a whisper. He pulls her in the opposite direction. “Go to the bedroom. I’ll be there in a second.” She immediately starts trying to hide the fact that she’s sniffing a bit when she walks away from Luck, toward their bedroom. My father faces Luck.

Luck smiles and walks toward him with his hand out. “You must be my brother-in-law,” Luck says. My father reluctantly shakes his hand.

“Barnaby.”

“I honestly thought she’d be over it by now,” Luck says. “She’s right. Maybe I should have called first.”

“Be over what?” Honor asks. Luck swings his gaze to Honor and he gives her a

spalle, cercando di distrarla dal fratello minore. “Tesoro,” le dice calmo. “Andiamo a parlarne con lui in camera”.

Victoria scuote la testa e si spinge oltre mio padre verso Luck. “Non puoi presentarti senza avvisare, Luck. Te ne devi andare.”

Luck non si muove. Sembra un po’ sorpreso dalla sua reazione. “Non mi abbracci prima?”

Victoria fa un passo verso di lui. “Vattene,” dice. “E la prossima volta che vuoi presentarti senza prima scusarti, prova a chiamare. Ti farà risparmiare sul viaggio!”

“Victoria,” dice mio padre in un sussurro. La porta nella direzione opposta. “Vai in camera. Sarò lì tra un secondo.” Lei cerca subito di nascondere il fatto che sta tirando su con il naso mentre si allontana da Luck e si dirige verso la loro camera. Mio padre si gira verso Luck.

Luck sorride e si incammina verso di lui con la mano tesa. “Tu devi essere mio cognato,” dice Luck. Mio padre gli stringe la mano con riluttanza.

“Barnaby.”

“Onestamente speravo che oramai avesse superato la cosa,” dice Luck. “Ha ragione. Forse avrei dovuto chiamare prima.”

“Superato cosa?” Chiede Honor. Luck sposta il suo sguardo verso Honor e le

familiar smile, but then his smile disappears when he notices me. He looks back at Honor, then back at me. then he points between us.

“Which one of you gave me a ride today?”

I lift my hand.

“Thank you for the hospitality, Merit.”

Luck walks toward the table. He introduces himself to Utah, Honor, and then Sagan. When he gets to Moby, he kneels down in front of him.

“You must be my nephew.”

“I’m a nephew?” Moby asks. “Merit said I’m a bastard.”

“Almost a bastard,” I correct.

“Luck,” my father says, interrupting the introductions. “Can we please sort this out first before you make yourself at home?”

Luck stands up and puts his hands on his hips. “Yeah, sure. But . . . I just woke up from a four-hour nap. Kind of already made myself at home.” He laughs, but he’s the only one laughing. I have to hand it to him. Luck is cheerful, if anything.

He follows my father to Quarter Three. I’m sad they’re moving the conversation out of Quarter One. I was enjoying it.

“Sounds like your day was productive,” Honor says to me. “At least you weren’t wasting away your entire life by sleeping all day.”

rivolge un sorriso familiare, ma poi il sorriso svanisce quando si accorge di me. Guarda Honor, e poi guarda me. Poi indica tra di noi.

“Chi di voi mi ha dato un passaggio oggi?”

Alzo la mano.

“Grazie per l’ospitalità, Merit.” Luck cammina verso il tavolo. Si presenta a Utah, Honor, e infine Sagan. Quando giunge a Moby, si inginocchia di fronte a lui.

“Tu devi essere mio nipote.”

“Sono un nipote?” Chiede Moby. “Merit ha detto che sono un bastardo.

“*Quasi* un bastardo,” lo correggo.

“Luck,” dice mio padre, interrompendo le presentazioni. “Possiamo risolvere la questione prima che tu ti metta a tuo agio?” Luck si alza in piedi e appoggia la mano sul suo fianco. “Sì, certo. Ma... mi sono appena svegliato da un riposino di quattro ore. Direi che mi sono già messo a mio agio.” Ride, ma è l’unico a ridere. Devo riconoscerlo. Semmai, Luck è solare. Segue mio padre verso il Quartiere Tre. Sono triste che spostino la conversazione dal Quartiere Uno. Mi stavo divertendo. “Sembra che la tua giornata sia stata produttiva,” dice Honor rivolgendosi a me. “Almeno non stavi sprecato *tutta* la tua vita dormendo tutto il giorno.”

I can put up with a lot, but Honor's snarky attitude about my decision to stop going to school is my boiling point. I toss my roll back on my plate.

"Tell me, Honor. What have I missed this week that's going to miraculously prep me for life beyond high school?"

"An opportunity to graduate, maybe?"

I roll my eyes. "I can get a GED before Christmas."

"Yes, because that's a reasonable alternative to a scholarship," she says.

"You want to talk to me about reasonable?" I challenge. "Does your new boyfriend know how reasonable you've been when it comes to your past relationships?"

Honor's jaw clenches. I've hit a nerve. Good. Maybe she'll back off.

"That's not fair, Merit," Utah says.

"Whatever," I mutter. I tear off a piece of my bread and pop it in my mouth. "Of course you're going to defend her. She's your favorite."

Utah leans back in his chair. "I don't have a favorite sister. I'm defending her because you always get too personal with your attacks." I nod. "Oh, right. I forgot. We like to sweep things under the rug and pretend Honor doesn't need therapy."

Posso tollerare molte cose, ma l'atteggiamento sprezzante di Honor riguardo la mia decisione di smettere di andare a scuola è la goccia che fa traboccare il vaso. Rimetto il pane nel mio piatto. "Dimmi, Honor. Cosa mi sono persa questa settimana che miracolosamente mi preparerà alla vita fuori dal liceo?"

"La possibilità di diplomarti, forse?"

Alzo gli occhi al cielo. "Posso ottenere un diploma prima di Natale. "Certo, perché quella è un'alternativa ragionevole ad una borsa di studio," dice.

"Vuoi parlare a me di ragionevolezza?" Sfido io. "Lo sa il tuo nuovo ragazzo come sei stata ragionevole quando si è trattato delle tue relazioni passate?"

Honor serra la mascella. Ho toccato un tasto dolente. Bene. Magari si tirerà indietro. "Non è giusto, Merit," dice Utah. "Come ti pare," borbotto. Strappo un pezzo del pane e lo metto in bocca. "Naturalmente la difendi. È la tua preferita."

Utah si appoggia alla sedia. "Non ho una sorella preferita. La difendo perché vai sempre troppo sul personale con i tuoi attacchi." Annuisco. "Ah, giusto. Dimenticavo. A noi piace nascondere le cose sotto il tappeto e far finta che Honor

Honor glares at me from across the table. non abbia bisogno di andare in terapia.”

“And you wonder why you have no friends.” Honor mi guarda dall’altra parte del tavolo. “E poi ti chiedi perché non hai amici.”

“Actually, I don’t wonder that at all.” “In realtà non me lo chiedo affatto.”

The raised voices coming from Quarter Three interrupt our sibling bonding. It’s too muffled to make out what they’re saying, but it’s clear that Luck and Victoria aren’t having the homecoming Luck was hoping for. L’aumento delle voci proveniente dal Quartiere Tre interrompe il nostro fraternizzare. È troppo smorzato per capire cosa stanno dicendo, ma è chiaro che Luck e Victoria non stanno avendo la rimpatriata che Luck sperava.

“Did anyone else notice how strange his accent was?” Sagan asks. “Qualcun altro ha notato com’era strano il suo accento?” chiede Sagan.

“Thank you!” I say. “It’s so weird! It’s like his brain can’t decide if he grew up in Australia or London.” “Grazie!” dico. “È così strano! È come se il suo cervello non sapesse decidere se è nato in Australia o a Londra.”

“He sounded Irish to me,” Utah says. “A me sembrava irlandese,” dice Utah.

Sagan shakes his head. “Nah, that was just the kilt playing tricks on you.” Sagan scuote la testa. “Nah, il kilt ti ha giocato un brutto scherzo.”

I laugh and then glance down at Moby, who is still seated next to me. Rido e rivolgo lo sguardo in basso verso Moby, che è ancora seduto accanto a me.

He’s looking down, so I can’t see his face. Sta guardando verso il basso quindi non riesco a vedere la sua faccia. “Moby?”

“Moby?” Non alza lo sguardo ma tira sul con il naso.

He doesn’t look up, but he sniffles. “Hey. Perché stai piangendo?”

“Hey. Why are you crying?” Moby tira ancora su con il naso e poi dice, “Stanno litigando tutti.”

Moby sniffles some more and then says, “Everyone is fighting.” Uffa. Niente mi fa sentire peggio di quando Moby è arrabbiato.

Ugh. Nothing can make me feel worse than when Moby is upset. “È tutto okay,” dico. “A volte gli adulti litigano. Non significa niente.”

“It’s okay,” I say. “Sometimes adults fight. It doesn’t mean anything.”

He wipes his eyes on his shirtsleeve. “Then why do they do it?”

I wish I had an answer for him. “I don’t know,” I say with a sigh. “Come on, let’s wash up and I’ll tuck you in.” Moby has always been a great sleeper.

He’s been sleeping in his own bedroom in Quarter Two since he was two.

His bedtime has always been seven, but I heard Victoria tell him a few days ago that she would change it to eight in a few weeks.

The rest of us don’t really have a bedtime. My father likes us to be at the house on school nights by ten, but once we’re in our rooms, he never checks on us. I’m rarely ever in bed before midnight.

I take Moby to the bathroom and help him brush his teeth and wash his hands. His bedroom is right across the hall from where Luck is staying, which, by the sound of the shouting continuing in the other room, might be my father’s office again within the hour. Victoria puts Moby to bed most nights, but occasionally he’ll ask for Honor, Utah, or me to do it. I enjoy tucking him in at night, but I only do it when Moby specifically asks for me. I don’t like to do Victoria any unnecessary favors.

Si asciuga gli occhi con la manica della maglia. “E allora perché lo fanno?”

Vorrei avere una risposta per lui. “Non lo so,” dico con un sospiro. “Dai, andiamo a lavarci e poi ti rimbocco le coperte.”

Moby è sempre stato un ottimo dormiglione. Dorme nel suo letto nel Quartiere Due da quando ha due anni.

Per lui, l’orario per andare a letto è sempre stato alle 19, ma qualche giorno fa ho sentito Victoria dirgli che l’avrebbe spostato alle 20 tra qualche settimana.

Il resto di noi non ha un vero e proprio orario per dormire. Mio padre ci vuole tutti a casa alle 22 quando c’è scuola, ma una volta che siamo nelle nostre camere, non ci controlla mai. Raramente sono a letto prima di mezzanotte.

Porto Moby in bagno e lo aiuto a lavarsi i denti e le mani. La sua camera da letto è proprio di fronte a dove sta Luck, il che, dal suono delle grida continue nell’altra stanza, potrebbe essere ancora nell’ufficio di mio padre nel giro di un’ora. La maggior parte delle sere è Victoria che mette a letto Moby, ma occasionalmente lui chiede a Honor, Utah oppure a me di farlo. Mi piace rimboccarli le coperte la sera, ma lo faccio solo quando è Moby a chiedermelo espressamente. Non mi piace fare favori inutili a Victoria.

Moby's room is whale-themed, which I hope changes before he starts having sleepovers. It's bad enough he was named after a murderous whale, but for Victoria to actually go so far as to extend the theme to his bedroom is just asking for Moby to get bullied.

Moby likes the whales, though. He also loves that he was named after a whale. Moby-Dick is Victoria's favorite book. I also don't trust people who claim for a classic to be their favorite novel. I think they're lying just to sound educated, or they simply haven't read another book beyond high school English requirements.

My favorite book is God-Shaped Hole. It's not a classic. It's better than a classic. It's a modern-day tragedy. I've never read Moby-Dick but I can almost bet it doesn't leave you feeling like you have less skin than before you opened the book.

I tuck Moby into his bed, pulling the whale-themed blanket up to his chin. "Will you read me a story?" he asks.

It's not entirely inconvenient so I nod and grab a book from his bookshelf. I choose the thinnest one, but Moby protests. "No, read 'The King's Perspective.'"

That's a new one. I glance back at the bookshelf and scan through them but I

La stanza di Moby è a tema balena, e spero cambi prima che inizi a organizzare dei pigiama party. È già abbastanza grave che sia stato chiamato come una balena, ma che Victoria si spinga fino ad estendere questo tema alla sua camera da letto è una richiesta di bullismo nei suoi confronti.

A Moby però piacciono le balene. Adora il fatto di avere il nome di una balena. Moby-Dick è il libro preferito di Victoria. Non mi fido delle persone che dichiarano che il proprio romanzo preferito è un classico. Penso che mentano solo per sembrare istruiti, o semplicemente non hanno letto altri libri oltre a quelli requisiti dal liceo per Inglese.

Il mio libro preferito è God-Shaped Hole. Non è un classico. È meglio di un classico. È una tragedia moderna. Non ho mai letto Moby-Dick ma posso quasi scommetterci che non ti fa sentire come se ti avessero scorticato una volta terminato di leggere.

Rimbocco le coperte a Moby, tirando la coperta a tema balena fino al mento.

"Mi leggi una storia?" Chiede. Non è del tutto inopportuno, perciò annuisco e prendo un libro dalla libreria. Scelgo il più sottile, ma Moby protesta. "No, leggi 'La Prospettiva del Re.'"

È nuovo. Torno con lo sguardo verso la libreria e la scruto ma non trovo un libro

don't see one with that title. "It's not here. How about Goodnight Moon?"

"That's for babies," he says. He picks up a stack of pages from the table beside his bed. "Read this one. Sagan wrote it." He shoves it toward me.

I take the pages from him. They're stapled together in the top left corner.

In the center of the front page it reads:

The King's Perspective

By Sagan Kattan

I sit down on the edge of the bed and run my fingers over the top of the page.

"Sagan wrote you a story?"

Moby nods. "It's a true story. And it rhymes!"

"When did he give you this?"

Moby shrugs. "Like seven years ago."

I laugh. Moby is the smartest four-year-old I know, but he cannot, for the life of him, grasp the concept of time.

I move to the spot next to Moby and sit against the headboard. I normally don't make myself this comfortable when it comes to tucking him in, but I might be more excited about story time than Moby is tonight. I feel like I'm in on one of Honor's boyfriend's secrets and it makes me way more excited than it should. I pull my knees up and rest the pages on

con quel titolo. "Non c'è qui. Che ne dici di *Buonanotte Luna*?"

"È per bambini quello," dice. Raccoglie una pila di fogli dal tavolo accanto al letto. "Leggi questo. L'ha scritto Sagan." La spinge verso di me.

Prendo le pagine da lui. Sono spillate insieme nell'angolo in alto a sinistra.

Al centro della pagina si legge:

La Prospettiva del Re

Di Sagan Kattan

Mi siedo sul bordo del letto e passo le dita sulla parte superiore della pagina. "Sagan ti ha scritto una storia?"

Moby annuisce. "È una storia vera. Ed è anche in rima!"

"Quando te l'ha data?"

Moby fa spallucce. "Tipo sette anni fa."

Rido. Moby è il bambino più intelligente che conosca, ma non riesce proprio a comprendere la concezione del tempo.

Mi sposto vicino a Moby and mi siedo contro la testiera. Di solito non mi metto così a mio agio quando si tratta di rimboccarli le coperte, ma questa sera potrei essere io più entusiasta di Moby per l'ora della storia. Mi sento come se fossi in uno dei segreti del fidanzato di Honor e mi rende più entusiasta di quanto dovrei. Piego ginocchia e lascio le pagine sulle

my thighs. “The King’s Perspective,” I say aloud. I glance down at Moby. “Do you even know what perspective means?”

He nods and rolls over onto his side so that he’s facing me. “Sagan said it’s kind of like putting someone else’s eyeballs inside your own head.”

“Pretty close,” I say. “I’m impressed.”

I am impressed. Not so much with Moby, but with Sagan for taking the time to write him a story. And for obviously explaining its meaning.

Moby sits up and flips the page for me.

“Read it!”

On the next page is a picture of a bird. It looks like a cardinal.

“Is the story about a bird?” I ask Moby.

“Just read it!” he says.

I flip the page again. “Fine. No spoilers.”

The King’s Perspective

There’s a story of a King
And this story is very true
Some say it’s just a rumor
Some say it’s just a ruse

They called the man King Flip
But that wasn’t really his name
His name was Filipileetus
But that’s too hard to say

mie gambe. “La Prospettiva del Re,” dico ad alta voce. Guardo in basso verso Moby. “Sai almeno cosa significa ‘prospettiva?’”

Annuisce e si gira di fianco in modo da essere rivolto verso di me. “Sagan ha detto che è un po’ come mettere gli occhi di qualcun altro dentro la proprio testa.”

“Piuttosto azzecato,” dico. “Sono colpita.” Sono davvero colpita. Non tanto per Moby, ma per Sagan per essersi preso del tempo per scrivergli una storia. E ovviamente per avergli spiegato il significato. Moby si siede e gira la pagina per me. “Leggi!”

Nella pagina successiva c’è un’immagine di un uccello. Sembra un cardinale.

“La storia parla di un uccello?” Chiedo a Moby. “Leggi e basta!” Dice.

Giro ancora la pagina. “Va bene. Niente spoiler.”

La Prospettiva del Re

Questa è la storia di un Re
E questo è un racconto vero
Una diceria per qualcuno
Una furberia per taluno

Lo chiamavano Re Flip
Ma quello non era il suo nome reale
Il suo nome era Filipileetus
Ma era difficile da pronunciare

King Flip had a penchant
For really expensive things
He liked anything shiny
And anything with bling

He had the nicest castle
Out of all the lands
But that didn't stop him
From wanting one even more grand

So he bought a town called Perspective
And made the people build him a castle
At the top of their highest mountain
He didn't care if it was a hassle

When the work was finally done
He decided to go inspect it
But when he arrived in the town of
Perspective
It was exactly as he'd left it

He couldn't find a castle
It wasn't on the mountain
It wasn't on the beach
It wasn't on the mainland

He immediately grew angry
And sought his just revenge
On all those who had fooled him
On the town, his army did descend

Re Flip aveva un debole
Per le cose costose
Gli piaceva ciò che brillava
E tutte le cose vistose

Aveva il castello più bello
Di tutte le lande
Ma questo non gli impedì
Di volerne uno ancora più grande

Comprò una città chiamata Prospettiva
E un castello alla gente fece costruire
In cima alla montagna più alta
Non gli importava potesse loro infastidire

Quando il lavoro fu terminato
Decise che l'avrebbe ispezionato
Ma quando giunse alla città di Prospettiva
Era tutto esattamente come lo aveva
lasciato

Non riuscì a trovare il castello
Non era sull'altura
Non era sulla spiaggia
Non era sulla pianura

Immediatamente si arrabbiò
E vendetta giurò
Su coloro che lo avevano ingannato
Sulla città il suo esercito calò

When the people were all dead
A red cardinal then appeared
“King Flip, what have you done?
You killed good people, I do fear.”

King Flip tried to explain
That the town deserved to die
For his castle was never built
Or he would see it with his own eyes

The bird said, “But king, you merely
assumed.
You didn’t even try
Look from a different perspective.
Don’t just look from your own two eyes.”

The bird then led him over to where
The castle should surely be
He then moved aside a boulder
And King Flip fell to his knees

For inside the mountain was the castle
The most magnificent one ever built
King Flip couldn’t believe his eyes
He quickly became wrecked with guilt

He had killed so many people
People he should have protected
Simply because he couldn’t see
The castle from their perspective

“Hide their bodies!” King Flip yelled.

Quando tutti furono morti
Un cardinale rosso sopraggiunse
“Re Flip, cos’hai combinato?
Hai ucciso brava gente”, aggiunse

Re Flip cercò di spiegare
Che la città meritava i mortali attacchi
Poiché il suo castello non fu mai costruito
O lo avrebbe visto con i suoi stessi occhi

L’uccello disse, “Ma Re, l’hai solo
ipotizzato.
Non ci hai nemmeno provato
Guarda da un’altra prospettiva.
Non guardare solo con il tuo di sguardo.”

L’uccello quindi lo portò
Dove il castello si sarebbe trovato
Spostò di lato un masso
E Re Flip cadde a terra inginocchiato

Perché dentro la montagna c’era il castello
Il più sontuoso mai realizzato
Re Flip non credeva ai propri occhi
Subito dal senso di colpa fu annientato

Fece uccidere così tante persone
Persone che avrebbe dovuto accudire
Solo perché non riusciva a vedere
Il castello dalle loro prospettive

“Nascondete i corpi!” Urlò Re Flip

“Hide every last one!
Put them inside the mountain.
And then close those doors for good!”

The king’s army hid the bodies
And King Flip fled the land
He went back to his old castle
And never spoke of Perspective again

Some say this story isn’t true
Some say the town never existed

But look at any map and you’ll see
There is no longer a town called
Perspective.

I flip back to the first page of the poem, a little in shock by what I just read. This is a children’s poem? This is just as morbid, if not more morbid than the art he creates. And the fact that Moby now believes it’s a true story!

“You know this is fiction, right?” I look down at Moby but his eyes are closed. I didn’t even notice he had fallen asleep while I was reading. I place the story back on his nightstand. I turn off the light before I leave the room and head straight to Quarter One. Sagan is in the kitchen helping Honor wash the dishes. “What is wrong with you?”

“Nascondeteli fino all’ultimo!
Metteteli dentro la montagna.
E poi chiudete quelle porte per sempre!”

L’esercito del re nascose i corpi
E Re Flip la terra lasciò
Al suo vecchio castello tornò
E mai più di Prospettiva parlò

Alcuni dicono che la storia non sia vera
Alcuni dicono che la città non sia mai esistita

Ma guardate in ogni mappa e vedrete
Che non esiste più una città chiamata
Prospettiva.

Torno indietro fino alla prima pagina della poesia, un po’ scioccata per quello che ho appena letto. Questa sarebbe una poesia per bambini? È altrettanto macabra, se non più, dell’arte che lui crea. E ora Moby crede sia una storia vera!

“Lo sai che è una storia di fantasia, vero?” Guardo in basso verso Moby ma ha gli occhi chiusi. Non mi ero nemmeno accorta che si fosse addormentato mentre leggevo. Ripongo la storia sul comodino. Spengo le luci prima di uscire dalla stanza e mi dirigo subito verso il Quartiere Uno. Sagan è in cucina che aiuta Honor a lavare i piatti. “Qual è il tuo problema?”

They both look up at me, but I'm staring at him.

"Is that an open-ended question?" he asks.

"You slaughtered an entire town of innocent people!"

He nods as registration marks his expression. "Oh, you read to Moby."

"That's disturbing! It's his favorite story now."

"What are you talking about?" Honor asks me.

I flip a hand in her morbid boyfriend's direction. "He wrote a poem for Moby, but it's the worst children's story I've ever read."

"It's not that bad," he says in defense. "It has a good message."

"Does it?" I ask, flabbergasted. "Because the message I got was that a materialistic ruler wasn't happy with the peasants he hired to build his castle, so he slaughtered them all, hid their bodies in a mountain, and went on with his happy life."

Honor makes a face to show how disturbed she is. I make it a point never to make that expression. Seeing it on her lets me know how unappealing it would be on me.

"You completely missed the message, then," he says. "It's a poem about perspective."

Entrambi mi guardano, ma io sto fissando lui.

"Sarebbe una domanda a risposta aperta?"

chiede lui. "Hai massacrato un'intera città di persone innocenti!"

Annuisce mentre la realizzazione segna la sua espressione. "Ah, hai letto a Moby."

"È inquietante! Ora è la sua storia preferita."

"Di cosa stai parlando?" Mi domanda Honor.

Lancio una mano in direzione del suo morboso fidanzato. "Ha scritto una poesia per Moby, ma è la peggiore storia per bambini che abbia mai letto."

"Non è così male," si difende lui. "Ha un messaggio positivo."

"Ah, sì? Chiedo, sbalordita. "Perché il messaggio che ho recepito è che un sovrano materialista non era felice dei contadini che ha assunto per costruire il suo castello, così li ha massacrati tutti, ha nascosto i corpi in una montagna e ha continuato a vivere felicemente la sua vita". Honor fa una faccia per far vedere quanto è turbata. Prendo nota di non fare mai quella espressione. Vederla su di lei mi fa capire quando repellente sarebbe su di me.

"Hai completamente mancato il messaggio, allora," dice. "È una poesia che parla di prospettiva."

“What are we talking about?” Utah asks as he walks into the kitchen.

“The story I wrote for Moby.”

Utah laughs as he grabs a soda from the refrigerator. “I loved that story,” he says, right before he takes a sip. He wipes his mouth. “I can’t listen to this all night,” he says, referring to the arguing still coming from Quarter Three. “Want to go swimming?”

“We’re in,” Honor says, referring to Sagan and herself. “Anything to get out of this house.”

They all look at me. No one verbally invites me, but with the way they’re all looking at me, I assume this is their way of asking if I’d like to come along.

“I’m good,” I say, turning down their nonverbal invite. I’ve never gone swimming at the hotel with Honor and Utah before. It’s gotten to where they don’t even invite me, but since I’m standing right in front of them they probably feel pressured. When I turn them down, Honor almost looks relieved.

“Suit yourself,” she says, tossing the dish towel on the counter.

Sagan is still looking at me, but with a touch of curiosity in his expression. “You sure you don’t want to come?” he asks.

The fact that he looks like he’d appreciate my company makes me want to change

“Di cosa state parlando?” Chiede Utah entrando in cucina.

“La storia che ho scritto per Moby.”

Utah ride e prende una bibita dal frigorifero. “Mi è piaciuta molto quella storia,” dice, prima di bere un sorso. Si pulisce la bocca, “Non ce la faccio ad ascoltare questo tutta la notte,” dice, riferendosi al litigio che ancora continua nel Quartiere Tre. “Vi va una nuotata?”

“Noi ci stiamo,” dice Honor, riferendosi a Sagan e se stessa. “Tutto per uscire da questa casa.”

Tutti mi guardano. Nessuno mi invita esplicitamente, ma per come mi stanno guardando tutti, presumo sia il loro modo di chiedermi se ho piacere ad andare con loro.

“Sto bene così,” dico, rifiutando il loro invito non verbale. Non sono mai andata a nuotare all’hotel con Honor a Utah. Siamo arrivati al punto dove non mi invitano neanche più, ma siccome sono proprio di fronte a loro probabilmente si sentono sotto pressione. Quando rifiuto il loro invito, Honor sembra quasi sollevata.

“Fai come ti pare,” dice, lanciando lo straccio per i piatti sul bancone.

Sagan sta ancora guardando me, ma c’è un pizzico di curiosità nei suoi occhi. “Sicura di non voler venire?”, chiede.

Il fatto che sembra che potrebbe apprezzare la mia compagnia mi fa venire

my mind. With Honor and Utah, it's obvious they prefer to hang out without me. They don't find my presence an added bonus. To them, my presence is an inconvenience. But the way he's staring at me, it seems he might actually value my presence.

It confuses me. It makes me want to go swimming with my siblings for the first time since they started going the day Utah got his license.

The bedroom door to Quarter Three opens and Luck appears. He walks into the kitchen with his hands shoved in his pockets. My father and Victoria are close behind. My father clears his throat as he addresses all of us.

"Luck will be staying with us for a while. Victoria and I would appreciate it if you would all make him feel welcome."

It's odd, because even though it seems Luck won this argument, his demeanor says otherwise.

"Welcome," Utah says to him. "Feel like going swimming?"

"You have a pool?" Luck asks.

Utah shakes his head. "No, but there's a hotel in town with an indoor heated pool and Honor has connections."

"Nice," Luck says. "Let me grab some shorts." He begins to walk out of the

voglia di cambiare idea. Per quanto riguarda Honor e Utah, è ovvio che preferirebbero passare del tempo senza di me. Non percepiscono la mia presenza come un bonus aggiuntivo. Per loro, la mia presenza è un'inconveniente. Ma il modo in cui mi sta fissando, sembra che possa davvero apprezzare la mia presenza.

Mi confonde. Mi fa venire voglia di andare a nuotare con i miei fratelli per la prima volta da quando hanno iniziato ad andare il giorno in cui Utah ha ottenuto la sua licenza.

La porta della camera da letto del Quartiere Tre si apre e appare Luck. Entra in cucina con le mani infilate nelle tasche. Mio padre e Victoria sono dietro vicini. Mio padre si schiarisce la gola e si rivolge a tutti noi. "Luck starà con noi per un po'". Io e Victoria apprezzeremmo se tutti voi lo faceste sentire il benvenuto."

È strano, perché nonostante sembrerebbe che Luck abbiamo vinto la discussione, il suo atteggiamento dice il contrario.

"Benvenuto," dice Utah. "Hai voglia di fare una nuotata?"

"Avete una piscina?" Chiede Luck.

Utah scuote la testa. "No, ma c'è un hotel in città con una piscina interna riscaldata e Honor ha delle conoscenze."

"Forte," dice Luck. "Prendo dei pantaloncini." Sta per uscire dalla cucina,

kitchen, but turns to me. “You’re coming, too, right?” Luck says this as if it’s a plea not to leave him stranded with the rest of my siblings.

I am the only one he’s had any interaction with beyond an introduction. I nod. “Yeah, I’ll come.”

Sagan is just about to round the corner when he hears me accept Luck’s invite. He looks over his shoulder at me with a moment of pause, but then continues walking.

“Where’s Moby?” Victoria asks.

“I put him to bed already.” I let that be the end of our conversation as I head toward my room.

Earlier today I was regretting running into Luck at the store, but now it seems I might finally have a friend in this house. I never go swimming with Utah and Honor because they never seem to want me to, but I’m afraid if I don’t go tonight, Luck will bond with the three of them and I’ll be odd man out again.

I grab a one-piece and an oversized T-shirt and head back into the hallway. Sagan is walking out of his room and pauses when he sees me. He opens his mouth, but before he says whatever he’s about to say, Honor opens her door. His mouth clamps shut.

ma si volta verso di me. “Vieni anche tu, vero?” Dice Luck come se mi stesse supplicando di non lasciarlo solo con i miei fratelli.

Sono l’unica con cui ha interagito, al di là delle presentazioni. Annuisco. “Sì, vengo.”

Sagan sta per girare l’angolo quando sente che ho accettato l’invito di Luck. Mi guarda da sopra la spalla con un attimo di pausa, ma poi continua a camminare.

“Dov’è Moby?” Chiede Victoria.

“L’ho già messo a letto.” Lascio che quella sia la fine della nostra conversazione mentre mi dirigo verso la mia stanza.

Oggi mi ero pentita di aver incontrato Luck al negozio, ma ora sembra che io abbia finalmente un amico in questa casa. Non vado mai a nuotare con Utah e Honor perché sembrano non volermi mai, ma temo che se non vado stasera, Luck si legherà a loro tre e io sarò di nuovo l’intrusa.

Prendo un costume intero e una maglia oversize e mi dirigo verso il corridoio. Sagan sta uscendo dalla sua stanza e si ferma quando mi vede. Apre la bocca, ma prima di dire qualsiasi cosa stia per dire, Honor apre la porta. La sua bocca si richiude.

Now I'll be wondering what he was about to say for the rest of the evening.

They follow Utah and Luck outside. I stop by the bathroom and grab a few towels. Before I reach the front door, I look up at the statue of Cheesus Christ.

I wonder if God answers prayers before they're asked of Him? Is that why Luck is here? Is he the distraction from Sagan that I prayed for earlier?

"Are you responsible for His sacrilegious outfit?"

My father's voice jolts me from my thoughts. He's standing a few feet away, staring at the statue.

"Nope," I lie. "It must have been an immaculate conception of wardrobe."

I go to close the front door and I hear my father's muffled voice from the other side. "If the Cowboys lose, you're grounded!"

The Cowboys chances of losing are good. The chances of my father actually following through with a threat are not.

CHAPTER 17

Even though it's Saturday — a day I finally don't have to pretend to wake up and go to school—I still wake up earlier

Ora passerò tutta la sera a chiedermi cosa stesse per dire.

Seguono Utah e Luck all'esterno. Mi fermo in bagno e prendo qualche asciugamano. Prima di raggiungere la porta d'ingresso, alzo lo sguardo verso la statua di Cheesù Cristo.

Mi chiedo se Dio risponda alle preghiere ancora prima che gli venga chiesto. È per questo che Luck è qui? È lui la distrazione da Sagan per cui ho pregato prima?

"Sei tu la responsabile del Suo abbigliamento blasfemo?"

La voce di mio padre mi riscuote dai miei pensieri. È in piedi a qualche metro di distanza, che fissa la statua.

"No," mento. "Deve essere stata un'immacolata concezione dell'armadio."

Chiudo la porta d'ingresso e sento la voce debole di mio padre che viene dall'interno. "Se i Cowboys perdono, sei in punizione!"

Le probabilità che i Cowboys perdano sono buone. Le probabilità che mio padre metta davvero in atto una minaccia non lo sono.

CAPITOLO 17

Anche se è sabato — un giorno in cui finalmente non devo far finta di svegliarmi e andare a scuola — mi sveglio comunque

than I want to. Sagan fell asleep in my room last night, so as soon as I open my eyes, I roll over to wake him up so my father won't catch him in here.

But he's not here anymore. On the pillow where he slept last night is a drawing. I smile and pick it up. On the back, Sagan has written, "I don't even know what this is, but I drew it while I watched you sleep. I thought you might like it."

I don't know what it is either, but I love it. It might even be my new favorite. I tack it to the wall.

I pull on some jeans and a tank top and then head to the kitchen, but I come to a halt when I look in Sagan's room. It's a mess. The drawers are open, his wall hangings are gone. My heart starts to beat wildly in my chest and I try to sustain the panic I feel coming. I turn to go to the kitchen and find out what happened, but I'm intercepted right outside Sagan's bedroom door by my father.

"Where's Sagan?"

"I kicked him out," my father says, matter-of-fact.

I bring my hands up to my head. "What?"

"He slept in your bed last night, Merit."

This is unbelievable. "So you kicked him out? Without even talking to me?" I spin

prima di quanto vorrei. Sagan ieri notte si è addormentato in camera mia, quindi non appena apro gli occhi, mi giro per svegliarlo così che mio padre non lo scopra qui. Ma non è più qui. C'è un disegno sul cuscino su cui ha dormito ieri. Sorrido e lo prendo in mano. Sul retro, Sagan ha scritto "Non so nemmeno cosa sia, ma l'ho disegnato mentre ti guardavo dormire. Ho pensato potesse piacerti."

Nemmeno io so cosa sia, ma lo adoro. Potrebbe addirittura essere il mio nuovo preferito. Lo attacco al muro.

Mi metto dei jeans and una canottiera e poi mi dirigo in cucina, ma mi fermo quando guardo nella camera di Sagan. È un disastro. I cassetti sono aperti, le tappezzerie sono sparite. Il mio cuore inizia a battere all'impazzata nel petto e cerco di trattenere il panico che sento arrivare. Mi giro per andare in cucina e scoprire cosa è successo, ma vengo intercettata da mio padre proprio davanti alla porta della camera di Sagan.

"Dov'è Sagan?"

"L'ho cacciato di casa," dice mio padre, impassibile.

Porto le mani sulla testa. "Cosa?"

"Stanotte ha dormito nel tuo letto, Merit."

È assurdo. "E quindi l'hai sbattuto fuori? Senza nemmeno parlargliene?" Mi giro e

around and look at the guest room again, hoping I'm dreaming.

Almost everything is gone. "Do you not have a heart?" I spin back around to face my father. "Do you not know about his family? What he's been going through?"

My father sighs. "Merit, calm down." He grabs my wrist and pulls me down the hallway, through the kitchen and to the back door. Sagan is almost to the other side of the yard, carrying a thirty-gallon trash bag over his shoulder. "He's moving into our old house."

I watch Sagan as he opens the gate and carries the trash bag to the back porch of our old house.

"Oh."

"I told Sagan he could live in this house as long as he wasn't involved with either of you girls. He broke that rule."

"We aren't involved, Dad. We didn't even do anything last night. We just fell asleep talking."

My father raises an eyebrow. "Then why did he agree to move when I told him that was his only option if he wanted to date you?"

I press my lips together and look back out the door just in time to see Sagan disappear inside the house. "He agreed to move?" I ask quietly.

guardo di nuovo la camera degli ospiti, sperando che sia un sogno.

È sparito quasi tutto. "Ma non hai un cuore?" Mi giro di nuovo verso mio padre. "Non sai nulla della sua famiglia? Di quello che sta passando?"

Mio padre sospira. "Merit, calmati." Mi prende il polso e mi trascina lungo il corridoio, per la cucina fino alla porta sul retro. Sagan è quasi dall'altra parte del giardino, mentre porta in spalla un sacco della spazzatura da trenta galloni. "Si trasferisce nella nostra vecchia casa."

Guardo Sagan mentre apre il cancello e trasporta il sacco della spazzatura verso il portico sul retro della nostra vecchia casa.

"Oh."

"Avevo detto a Sagan che poteva stare da noi a patto che non fosse impegnato con nessuna di voi ragazze. Ha infranto questa regola."

"Non siamo impegnati, papà. Non abbiamo neanche fatto niente ieri sera. Ci siamo solo addormentati parlando."

Mio padre alza un sopracciglio. "E allora perché ha accettato di trasferirsi quando gli ho detto che era l'unica possibilità se voleva uscire con te?"

Stringo le labbra e guardo di nuovo fuori dalla porta giusto in tempo per vedere Sagan sparire dentro la casa. "Ha accettato di trasferirsi?" Chiedo a bassa voce.

“Yep,” my father says.

Oh. That somehow changes my whole attitude. “Can I go over there?”

“No. You’re grounded.”

I spin around again. “Why?”

“Let’s see. For having a guy in your room. For stealing your mother’s medicine. For painting my fence purple. For . . .”

I hold up my hand. “Okay. That’s fair.”

“For dropping out of school,” he adds.

I scrunch up my nose and take a step back.

“Oh. You know about that?”

“Your mother told me she’s been getting phone calls from the school.”

My father walks into the kitchen and opens the dishwasher. He points at it, letting me know I’m getting all the chores while I’m grounded. He then turns to make himself a cup of coffee. I walk to the dishwasher and pull out a couple of plates.

“I met with your principal yesterday,” my father says. “He’s willing to work with you on catching up on missed assignments, but you can’t miss another day of school for the rest of the year. I’ll be taking you to school on Monday. And then I’ll pick you up after and we’ll go see Dr. Criss.”

“Proprio così,” dice mio padre.

Oh. Questo in qualche modo cambia del tutto il mio atteggiamento. “Posso andare lì?”

“No. Sei in punizione.”

Mi giro di nuovo. “Perché?”

“Vediamo. Per essere stata con un ragazzo in camera tua. Per aver rubato le medicine di tua madre. Per aver dipinto di viola la mia staccionata. Per...”

Alzo la mano. “Okay. Mi sembra giusto.”

“Per aver smesso di andare a scuola,” aggiunge.

Ariccio il naso e faccio un passo indietro.

“Oh. Lo sai?”

“Tua madre mi ha detto che sta ricevendo delle chiamate dalla scuola.”

Mio padre entra in cucina e apre la lavastoviglie. La indica, facendomi sapere che mi occuperò di tutte le faccende di casa mentre sono in punizione. Poi si gira per prepararsi una tazza di caffè. Mi avvicino alla lavastoviglie e tiro fuori dei piatti.

“Ieri ho incontrato il tuo preside,” dice mio padre. “È disposto a lavorare con te per recuperare i compiti mancati, ma non puoi saltare un altro giorno di scuola per tutto il resto dell’anno. Lunedì ti accompagnerò a scuola. E dopo ti verrò a prendere e andremo dalla Dottoressa Criss.”

I reach for a pan and open another cabinet. “We’ll go see Dr. Criss?” I say.

“Does that mean you’re also going to therapy?”

I’m half-kidding, so when he says, “We’re all going to therapy,” I’m shocked.

I turn and face him. “All of us?”

He nods. “Me, you, Honor, Utah, Victoria.” He sets his coffee cup down. “I think it’s a few years overdue.”

I smile, because I’m relieved. So relieved. I’ve already decided I’d go to therapy, especially after that stupid crumpled-up piece of paper on my bedroom floor and the cheesy conversation it led to last night.

But I really did think it was a little unfair that no one else in this family was being required to go.

My father is right. This family is long overdue.

“What about Mom? Will she be going to therapy?”

His face is sullen. “I’ll try my best with her. I promise.”

“You promise what?” Utah asks. He’s walking through the back door with Honor.

My father stands up straight and clears his throat. “Clear your schedules after school Monday. We’re going to family therapy.”

Prendo una padella e apro un altro sportello. “*Noi* andremo dalla Dottoressa Criss?” Dico.

“Significa che anche tu andrai in terapia?”

In parte sto scherzando. Perciò quando dice “Andremo *tutti* in terapia,” rimango scioccata. Mi giro verso di lui. “Tutti noi?”

Annuisce. “Io, tu, Honor, Utah, Victoria.”

Posa la sua tazza di caffè. “Avremmo dovuto farlo molti anni fa.”

Sorrido, perché sono sollevata. *Molto* sollevata. Ho già deciso che sarei andata in terapia, soprattutto dopo quello stupido pezzo di carta accartocciato sul pavimento della mia camera da letto e quella conversazione smielata a cui siamo arrivati ieri sera. Tuttavia, pensavo davvero che fosse un po’ ingiusto che nessun altro in questa famiglia fosse obbligato ad andarci. Mio padre ha ragione. È ora che questa famiglia si dia da fare. “E mamma? Lei ci andrà in terapia?”

Il suo volto è cupo. “Farò del mio meglio con lei. Lo prometto.”

“Prometti cosa?” Chiede Utah. Sta entrando dalla porta sul retro insieme ad Honor.

Mio padre si alza dritto e si schiarisce la gola. “Cancellate tutti gli impegni per lunedì dopo scuola. Andiamo in terapia

Honor groans. "That sounds terrible."
"Is it too late to be emancipated from you?" Utah asks.

My father laughs. "You're eighteen, you're already an adult." He starts to walk out of the kitchen, but stops short and takes a step back.

"Merit? What the hell is on your back?"
I feel my father's fingers brush my back and I immediately freeze.

Crap. I pulled on jeans and a tank top when I got out of bed, which doesn't fully cover my skin. The tattoo.

"Um . . ." I hear the screen door slam and look up to see Sagan standing there.

Honor leans around me and looks at the tattoo.

"Uh . . . I drew it. It's only temporary."
"Yeah," I quickly agree. "It's . . . like henna."

"Honor doesn't draw that well," my father says.

I turn around and face him so he'll stop looking at it. "Dad, of course she does. Sagan's been teaching her." I look to Sagan for backup and he's immediately nodding his head.

"Yeah, Honor wants to be an artist. She's really good."

"I'm so good," Honor says.

familiare." Honor si lamenta. "Sembra terribile." "È troppo tardi per emanciparsi da te?" Chiede Utah.

Mio padre ride. "Hai diciott'anni, sei già un adulto." Sta per uscire dalla cucina, ma si ferma di colpo e fa un passo indietro.

"Merit? Cosa diavolo hai sulla schiena?"
Sento le dita di mio padre sfiorare la mia schiena e mi blocco immediatamente.

Merda. Mi sono messa dei jeans e una canottiera quando mi sono alzata dal letto, che non coprono del tutto la mia pelle. *Il tatuaggio.* "Ehm..." sento la zanzariera chiudersi e alzando lo sguardo vedo Sagan lì in piedi.

Honor si appoggia su di me e guarda il tatuaggio. "Ehm... l'ho disegnato io. È temporaneo." "Esatto," concordo velocemente. "È... come l'henné."

"Honor non disegna così bene," dice mio padre.

Mi giro verso di lui così che smetta di guardarlo. "Papà, certo che disegna bene. Le sta insegnando Sagan." Guardo Sagan per avere supporto e subito annuisce.

"Sì, Honor vuole diventare un'artista. È davvero brava."

"Sono molto brava," dice Honor.

My father watches all three of us, but then decides he can't tell who's lying. He gives up and walks away.

"Thank you," I mouth to Honor.

She winks at me and then says, "Feel like cooking breakfast?"

—

We're almost finished with the eggs when Victoria walks out of her bedroom.

"What's going on?" She's looking at us suspiciously.

Honor takes over the eggs while I start with the rest of the stuff. "Giving you a break," Honor says.

"Is this a trick?" Victoria asks.

"No trick." I pour water into the pancake batter. "Just making you breakfast."

Victoria doesn't stop with her suspicion. She walks slowly to an already made pot of coffee and pours herself a cup, never taking her eyes off us.

"The eggs should be cooked last."

I smile. "We're learning. It's our first time."

Victoria takes a seat at the bar. "I'm enjoying this too much to stop watching."

I'm still stirring the pancake batter when I decide to lay things out in the open for Victoria. "Listen," I tell her. "I'm Moby's big sister. And sometimes big sisters do

Mio padre ci guarda tutti e tre, ma poi decide che non può capire chi sta mentendo. Si arrende e se ne va.

"Grazie," sussurro a Honor. Mi fa l'occhiolino e poi dice, "Ti va di preparare la colazione?"

—

Abbiamo quasi finito con le uova quando Victoria esce dalla sua camera da letto.

"Che sta succedendo?" Si guarda con sospetto.

Honor controlla le uova mentre io inizio con il resto. "Ti stiamo dando un tregua," dice Honor.

"È uno scherzo?" Chiede Victoria.

"Nessuno scherzo." Verso dell'acqua nell'impasto dei pancake. "Ti stiamo solo preparando la colazione."

Victoria non smette di essere sospettosa. Si avvicina lentamente ad una caffettiera già pronta e se ne versa una tazza, senza mai toglierci gli occhi di dosso.

"Le uova dovrebbero essere preparate per ultime."

Sorrido. "Stiamo imparando. È la nostra prima volta." Victoria si siede al bancone.

"Tutto questo mi piace un po' troppo per smettere di guardare."

Sto ancora mescolando l'impasto dei pancake quando decido di mettere le cose in chiaro con Victoria. "Ascolta," le dico.

"Sono la sorella maggiore di Moby. E a

things like sneak donuts to their little brother. I'm not going to stop doing that because that's mine and Moby's thing. But . . ."

I look up at her. "I'll cut it down to like once a week. If that's okay with you."

Victoria looks at me like I've been possessed. Then she nods. "I would appreciate that, Merit. Thank you."

And just like that, we come to an understanding that's been long overdue.

I turn around and pour the first pancake into the pan, just as Sagan walks in from another trip to the old house. He stops in his tracks and takes in the scene. Me and Honor cooking breakfast. Victoria standing by with a smile on her face. He soaks it up and then walks over to Honor and kisses her on her cheek. "Good morning, beautiful."

When he reaches me, he wraps his arms around me from behind in a much more intimate gesture than how he just said hello to Honor. He kisses the back of my head and then rests his chin on my shoulder as he looks down at the pancake I'm trying to make. "You win beauty pageants, bowling tournaments, track meets, and now I find out you're a chef? I think I might keep you, Merit."

"If I let you," I deadpan. *I would absolutely let him.*

volte le sorelle maggiori fanno cose come dare di nascosto le ciambelle ai proprio fratelli minori. Non smetterò di farlo perché è una cosa mia e di Moby. Ma . . ."

La guardo. "Lo farò solo una volta a settimana. Se per te va bene." Victoria mi guarda come se fossi stata posseduta. Poi annuisce. "Lo apprezzerei molto, Merit. Ti ringrazio."

E così, siamo giunte ad un accordo necessario da tanto tempo.

Mi giro per versare il primo pancake nella padella, proprio quando Sagan rientra da un altro dei suoi viaggi verso la casa vecchia. Si ferma ad osservare la scena. Io ed Honor che prepariamo la colazione. Victoria in piedi con un sorriso sulle labbra. Assorbe il tutto e poi si avvicina ad Honor e le dà un bacio sulla guancia. "Buongiorno, bellissima."

Quando mi raggiunge, mi abbraccia da dietro, in un gesto molto più intimo di quello con cui ha appena salutato Honor. Mi dà un bacio sulla nuca e appoggia il mento sulla mia spalla mentre guarda il pancake che sto cercando di cucinare. "Vinci concorsi di bellezza, tornei di bowling, gare di atletica, e ora scopro che sei una cuoca? Credo proprio che potrei tenerti, Merit."

"Se te lo permetto," dico impassibile. *Glielo permetterei assolutamente.*

“Sagan, look!” Moby says, barreling into the kitchen. Sagan picks him up and sets him down on the bar. Moby hands him a drawing.

“Oh. Wow,” Sagan says, folding it in half. He immediately shoves it in his pocket.

“What is it?” Victoria asks. Sagan shakes his head, obviously hiding something. “Nothing. Nothing at all.”

“I drew all the dead bodies the king shoved inside the mountain!” Moby says excitedly.

Victoria looks at Sagan. Sagan just laughs and pulls Moby off the bar.

“Maybe we should practice drawing plants before we move on to dead bodies.” Utah intercepts Sagan and Moby and he grabs Moby and plops him into a chair at the table. “Are you excited about today, Moby?”

“Yes!”

“How excited?”

“So excited!” Moby giggles.

“How excited?”

“The most excited!”

Honor leans over me and looks down at the two pancakes I’ve managed to burn. “We’re gonna need some practice. I think I just ruined the eggs.”

—

“Sagan, guarda!” Dice Moby, precipitandosi in cucina. Sagan lo prende in braccio e lo fa sedere sul bancone. Moby gli porge un disegno.

“Oh. Wow,” dice Sagan, piegandolo a metà. Lo nasconde subito in tasca.

“Che cos’è?” Chiede Victoria. Sagan scuote la testa, nascondendo ovviamente qualcosa. “Niente. Niente di niente.”

“Ho disegnato tutti i corpi dei morti che il re ha gettato dentro la montagna!” Dice Moby con entusiasmo.

Victoria guarda Sagan. Sagan ride e tira Moby giù dal bancone.

“Forse dovremmo esercitarci a disegnare piante prima di passare ai cadaveri.” Utah intercetta Sagan e Moby e prende Moby e lo fa sedere su una sedia intorno al tavolo. “Sei entusiasta per oggi, Moby?”

“Sì!”

“Quanto entusiasta?”

“Così entusiasta!” Ridacchia Moby.

“Quando entusiasta?”

“Super entusiasta!”

Honor si appoggia a me e guarda i due pancake che sono riuscita a bruciare. “Ci vorrà un po’ di pratica. Credo di aver appena stracotto le uova.”

—

Half an hour later, almost everything is done and I'm working on the last pancake when Luck walks into the kitchen. He's wearing his regulation Starbucks shirt . . . but he's paired it with his green kilt.

I hear Utah laugh from the table. "Are you trying to get fired?"

Luck grabs a cup from the cabinet. "If they don't let me wear my kilt to work, I'll sue for religious discrimination."

I take the last pancake out and flip it onto the plate. Honor has just finished putting the rest of the food on the kitchen table when I set the pancakes down and take a seat between Sagan and Moby.

Moby takes a bite of a pancake and, with a mouthful, says, "Are you gay, Utah?"

We all immediately look at Moby. Utah spatters laughter.

Victoria clears her throat and says, "Where did you hear that word, Moby?"

Moby shrugs. "I heard it like ten years ago. Somebody said Utah is gay. Is that like a bastard?"

Utah laughs and says, "Being gay just means a guy might like to marry another guy instead of a girl."

Victoria adds, "Or a girl might marry a girl."

Luck nods. "And some people like guys *and* girls."

"I like Legos," Moby says.

Mezz'ora dopo, quasi tutto è pronto e sto lavorando all'ultimo pancake quando Luck entra in cucina. Indossa la sua maglia regolamentare di Starbucks... ma l'ha abbinata al suo kilt verde. Sento Utah che ride dal tavolo. "Stai cercando di farti licenziare?"

Luck prende una tazza dal mobile. "Se non mi lasciano indossare il mio kilt a lavoro, farò causa per discriminazione religiosa."

Tolgo l'ultimo pancake e lo capovolgo sul piatto. Honor ha appena finito di mettere il resto del cibo sul tavolo della cucina quando appoggio i pancake e prendo posto tra Sagan e Moby.

Moby mangia un boccone di un pancake e, con la bocca piena, dice, "Sei gay, Utah?" Immediatamente guardiamo tutti Moby. Utah scoppia a ridere.

Victoria si schiarisce la gola e dice, "Dove hai sentito quella parola, Moby?"

Moby alza le spalle. "L'ho sentita qualcosa come dieci anni fa. Qualcuno ha detto che Utah è gay. È tipo un bastardo?"

Utah ride e dice, "Essere gay significa che un ragazzo preferirebbe sposare un altro ragazzo invece che una ragazza."

Victoria aggiunge, "O che una ragazza preferisca sposare una ragazza."

Luck annuisce. "E ad alcune persone piacciono i ragazzi *e* le ragazze."

"A me piacciono i Lego," dice Moby.

“You can’t marry a Lego,” Victoria says to him.

Moby’s face drops in disappointment. “Why not?”

My father points his fork at Moby. “It’s not a living thing, son.”

“So it has to be alive?” Moby asks my father. “Like the puppies you showed me last night?”

My father immediately shakes his head. “You have to stick with your own species. You have to marry a human.”

Moby pouts. “That’s not fair. I want to marry the puppies.”

I laugh. “You’re learning early that life isn’t fair. Took me seventeen years.”

Victoria forks another pancake onto her plate. “This is really good, girls.”

“It is,” my father agrees.

Everyone else kind of mutters the same with mouthfuls of food, but we’re all distracted by a sudden banging on the front door. I look out the window and see a cop car in our driveway.

“Oh, no.”

My dad scans all of us. None of us look him in the eye. “Why do you all look guilty?” None of us speak.

In fact, we all fork bites of food into our mouths at the same time, making us look even more suspicious.

“Non puoi sposare un Lego,” gli dice Victoria.

La delusione segna il volto di Moby. “Perché no?”

Mio padre rivolge la forchetta verso Moby. “Non è un essere vivente, figliolo.”

“Quindi deve essere vivo?” Moby chiede a mio padre. “Come i cuccioli che mi hai mostrato ieri sera?”

Mio padre subito scuote la testa. “Devi attenerti alla tua specie. Devi sposare un essere umano.”

Moby mette il broncio. “Non è giusto. Io voglio sposare i cuccioli.”

Rido. “Stai imparando presto che la vita non è giusta. A me ci sono voluti diciassette anni.”

Victoria mette un altro pancake nel suo piatto. “È davvero buono, ragazze.”

“Sono d’accordo,” dice mio padre.

Tutti gli altri a bocca piena dicono più o meno la stessa cosa a bassa voce, ma veniamo distratti da un improvviso bussare alla porta d’ingresso. Guardo fuori dalla finestra e vedo una macchina della polizia nel nostro vialetto. “Oh, no.”

Mio padre ci scruta tutti. Nessuno di noi lo guarda negli occhi. “Perché avete tutti l’aria da colpevoli?” Nessuno di noi parla.

Anzi, tutti noi allo stesso tempo ci infiliamo bocconi di cibo in bocca, facendoci sembrare ancora più sospettosi.

My father shakes his head and scoots back from the table.

No one else gets up when he opens the door. We all just listen quietly.

“Morning, Barnaby,” the officer says.

“Morning. What’s the problem?”

“Well . . . after we buried Pastor Brian’s dog at the church last night, his grave was tampered with. As was Pastor Brian’s. Seems that someone moved the dog.”

“Is that right?”

The officer sighs sharply. “Cut the shit, Barnaby. Did you dig up the dog again after we already arrested you for it?”

My father laughs and says, “Of course not. I came straight home and went to bed.”

The officer begins to speak again, but my father cuts him off.

“With all due respect, you’re wasting your time. The dog is dead and it sounds to me like she’s right where Pastor Brian would want her to be.

Don’t you guys have more important things to focus on?”

The officer once again tries to get a word in, but my father says, “Do you have a warrant?”

“Well, no. We just came to speak with you about . . .”

Mio padre scuote la testa e si allontana dal tavolo. Nessuno si alza quando apre la porta. Ci limitiamo ad ascoltare in silenzio.

“Giorno, Barnaby,” dice l’agente

“Giorno. Qual è il problema?”

“Beh... ieri sera dopo aver seppellito il cane del Pastore Brian nella chiesa, la sua tomba è stata manomessa. E anche quella del Pastore Brian. Sembra che qualcuno abbiamo sposato il cane.” “Ah si?”

L’agente sospira bruscamente. “Piantala con le stronzate, Barnaby. Hai dissotterrato di nuovo il cane dopo che per questo ti avevamo già arrestato?”

Mio padre ride e dice, “Certo che no. Sono tornato subito a casa e sono andato a letto.” L’agente sta per parlare di nuovo, ma mio padre lo interrompe.

“Con tutto il rispetto, sta sprecando il suo tempo. Il cane è morto e mi sembra che si trovi esattamente dove il Pastore Brian vorrebbe che fosse.

Non avete nient’altro di più importante su cui concentrarvi?”

L’agente ancora una volta cerca di dire qualcosa, ma mio padre dice, “Avete un mandato?”

“Beh, no. Siamo sono venuti a parlarti di...”

“Good. You spoke to me about it. I’d like to get back to my breakfast now. Have a great day, crime fighter.”

Our father slams the door. I watch as he makes his way back to the table. It’s hard to tell if he’s angry or not. He scoots his chair forward and picks up his fork. He stabs at a couple of pieces of pancake and then looks up at all of us. “You’re all a bunch of heathens.”

“Bene. Me ne avete parlato. Ora vorrei tornare alla mia colazione. Le auguro una buona giornata, cacciatore di criminali.”

Nostro padre sbatte la porta. Lo guardo mentre si riavvicina al tavolo. È difficile capire se sia arrabbiato o no. Sposta la sedia in avanti e raccoglie la sua forchetta. Infilza dei pezzetti di pancake e poi alza lo sguardo su tutti noi. “Siete un branco di selvaggi.”

CHAPTER 4

Translation in focus: an in-depth analysis of the translation proposal

The final chapter of this dissertation primarily aims to offer a practical demonstration of the complex art of translating Young Adult Literature, connecting theory with practical application. I will strive to put the theoretical framework illustrated in the previous chapters into action within a practical context. At the same time, I will analyze and comment on the most interesting and outstanding aspects encompassed in my proposed translation. The chapter is divided into four distinct sections, three of which represent the novel's most prominent features.

4.1 General considerations

The translation of the two chapters presented in the previous chapter of this dissertation is rooted in a range of strategies and practices. They encompass not only the broader aspects of the translation process, but also address the precise challenges of translating Young Adult Literature (YAL). In particular, Newmark (1988) discusses a translation approach called “semantic translation”, explaining it and differentiating it from “faithful translation” as follows:

Semantic translation differs from 'faithful translation' only in as far as it must take more account of the aesthetic value (that is, the beautiful and natural sounds of the SL text), compromising on 'meaning' where appropriate so that no assonance, word-play or repetition jars in the finished version. (Newmark, 1988:46)

Newmark's semantic translation allows translators to prioritize the meaning of the original text and its linguistic distinctiveness while adhering to the grammatical rules of the target language. Without a doubt, as mentioned in the preceding chapters of this dissertation, translators must keep in mind that it is not always possible to find suitable and direct equivalents from a source language to a target language. Eco (2013) explains that “la traduzione si fond[a] su una serie di processi di negoziazione” (translation: “the translation process is based on a series of negotiation processes” (Eco, 2013)), meaning that translators, as negotiators, may at times have to agree to give up certain aspects of the ST in order to highlight other more important aspects. Consequently, the primary objective within the context of this dissertation was to ensure the faithful translation of

chapters 5 and 17, focusing on accuracy, acceptability, and readability – three fundamental attributes that, as emphasized by McDonald (2020) constitute the hallmark of a high-quality translation.

Finally, it is crucial to bear in mind that youth language is a relatively recent phenomenon characterized by its distinctive and dynamic nature, which may pose a significant challenge for translators. As a result of its rapid circulation and evolution, translating youth language directly from the SL by means of standard language of a TL may lead to a text quickly becoming outdated.

4.2 The translation of youth language

The two chapters I selected for my translation proposal are the chapters that I consider most representative of the complex family situation I mentioned in the previous chapter, in the introduction to the book and the author. However, the primary objective of this dissertation is to analyze and comment on the challenges translators face when dealing with the translation of YAL, which is the second reason why I chose these specific chapters. As a matter of fact, they contain precious examples of the previously mentioned *youth language* – language used by young adults. This type of language may be considered a way for them to express themselves and to create their own identities, which is why it is common to run into colloquial expressions, including “swear” words. Consequently, specific translation strategies are required. Pavesi and Malinverno (2000) state that expletives and “swear” words are typically used in informal contexts and conversations, explaining that they may be subject to linguistic interdiction when labeled as unsuitable for the context and the readership. However, as previously stated in this dissertation, adult themes, taboo topics, or vulgar expressions are a crucial part of the essence of YAL, which is why translators should include them in the final work. In this regard, when translating “swear” words particularly, I decided to maintain the same level of “taboo” as in the ST, rather than softening the meaning of specific words or expressions (see Extract 1). The reason why I opted for this approach is based on the goal of this dissertation, which is that of explaining the importance of rendering YAL as faithfully as possible in regard to the ST. For instance, if Sienkiewicz’s image for image substitution strategy was to be used, it would not have been possible to convey the author’s original intentions and effects on its readership. As a matter of fact, this strategy tends to cause problems for the legibility of a text, making it unintelligible to the readership.

In addition, I employed the semantic translation strategy previously proposed by Newmark (1988) to further adjust the language, and make it more familiar to the target audience, in this case Italian-speaking young adults (see Extract 2). As a matter of fact, “bitch” here cannot be rendered as “unpleasant woman”. This is because the point is that Merit believes to be always in Sagan’s way, a thing which she assumes he must perceive as particularly annoying. Another possible solution could have been “insopportabile”. Yet, in this dissertation I aim to maintain the TT as faithful as possible to the ST in terms on both meaning and emotional tone of the dialogues. In this case (Extract 2), by adopting this approach, I was able to capture the sense of annoyance that the original term conveyed in the ST. Adopting Baker’s strategy “translation by omission” could have been possible, as the meaning of the words in bold are not vital to the development of the story. Yet, this decision would result in a loss of the informal tone, the emotions behind these expressions and the overall impact of the conversation.

Extract 1

<p>“It’s six in the evening, dumb ass. It’s your night to take Mom dinner.”</p> <p>She slams the door.</p> <p>It’s six in the evening? Which means it’s still today.</p> <p>Shitty today.</p> <p>Joy.</p>	<p>“Sono le sei di sera, stupida. Stasera tocca a te portare la cena alla mamma”.</p> <p>Sbatte la porta.</p> <p>Sono le sei di sera? Ciò significa che è ancora oggi.</p> <p>Una giornata di merda.</p> <p>Che gioia.</p>
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Extract 2

<p>He must think I’m such a bitch, especially when something as simple as being in his way happens.</p>	<p>Deve pensare che sia proprio una rottura di palle, soprattutto quando succede qualcosa di così banale come essergli d’intralcio.</p>
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Furthermore, the author makes use of slang in dialogues among her teenage characters. The use of colloquial expressions exclusively in dialogues between adolescents serves as an indicator of the presence of teen language. As a matter of fact, this book provides compelling examples of the difference in the way teenagers converse with each another and with adults. An interesting aspect to point out is that the phenomenon of teen language is further enhanced by the fact that colloquial expressions are employed more in teen-teen conversations, or in adult-adult conversations, and less in teen-adult conversations. For instance, Extract 3 illustrates a conversation between the father Barnaby and his daughter Honor, while Extract 4 shows a dialogue between Honor and Merit, the twin-sisters. The emphasis is on the two different ways Honor interacts with her father and her sister. Even though these are both examples of spoken English, when replying to her father Honor chooses to include the subject of the sentence, in this case “that” (see Extract 3). However, when speaking to her sister, she omits the subject “it”, making use of ellipsis which is a typical feature of spoken English (see Extract 4). Furthermore, Extract 5 shows the decision to make use of the informal abbreviation “prep” during the conversation between the two sisters. It is the short form of the verb “prepare”, meaning “to get ready”, which symbolizes the informal relationship between the characters.

Extract 3

My father stands up straight and clears his throat. “Clear your schedules after school Monday. We’re going to family therapy.” Honor groans. “ That sounds terrible.”	Mio padre si alza dritto e si schiarisce la gola. “Cancellate tutti gli impegni per lunedì dopo scuola. Andiamo in terapia familiare.” Honor si lamenta. “Sembra terribile.”
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Extract 4

“ Sounds like your day was productive,” Honor says to me. [...]	“Sembra che la tua giornata sia stata produttiva,” dice Honor rivolgendosi a me. [...]
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<p>“Tell me, Honor. What have I missed this week that’s going to miraculously prep me for life beyond high school?”</p>	<p>“Dimmi, Honor. Cosa mi sono persa questa settimana che miracolosamente mi preparerà alla vita fuori dal liceo?”</p>
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A third example is shown in Extract 5 as a conversation between two adults, the father and a policeman. This extract includes the idiom “cut the shit” which is considered an informal, vulgar expression. As mentioned above, colloquial expressions throughout the novel are always employed for a greater extent in teen-teen or adult-adult conversations.

Extract 5

<p>The officer sighs sharply. “Cut the shit, Barnaby. Did you dig up the dog again after we already arrested you for it?”</p>	<p>L’agente sospira bruscamente. “Piantala con le stronzate, Barnaby. Hai dissotterrato di nuovo il cane dopo che per questo ti avevamo già arrestato?”</p>
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The presence of teen language may pose a limit during the translation process of YAL, as the translator’s main goal is to preserve this distinctive element and to achieve a *pragmatic equivalence*. Youth language is more pronounced in the English version due to the omission of the auxiliary verb “do” in questions (see Extracts 6, 7). However, this approach is not applicable in Italian, since the omission of the verb “avere”, or any other verb, is simply not feasible.

Moreover, the author emphasizes youth language by using informal contractions (see Extract 8), serving to indicate a casual conversation. Similar to the cases presented in Extracts 6 and 7, representing casual conversations in Italian poses a challenge, given the absence of contractions to mirror this aspect. Although there may be a number of possible solutions to maintain a sort of informality (see Extracts 6 and 7), generally speaking the informal aspect of a conversation in Italian is lost in translation to some extent, such as in Extract 8. This arises from structural and grammatical differences between English and

Italian. While in English contractions are more commonly employed in casual contexts, in Italian these kinds of contractions are not used as much, since the language structure is more rigid. This is why, in order to maintain the same level of informality, the Italian language often relies on other linguistic cues, such as specific vocabulary, word choice, or even sentence structure. Besides, the idea is that the informality often relies on the context in which the conversation unfolds, and this contextual informality can be challenging to replicate precisely in translation. Extract 8 exemplifies this, as it shows an interaction between Honor and Merit in a familiar home environment preparing breakfast. This setting is a sign of informal speech due to the relationship between the two sisters. Furthermore, Extract 7 showcases a dialogue between Honor and Merit. In order to maintain the informality in Italian, I opted for using the informal “you” to indicate a familiar and close relationship between the characters. Finally, in Extract 6 the Italian phrase “vi va” indeed represents a casual and informal conversation, as it is normally used as a colloquial expression in casual interactions between people that are familiar with each other. Moreover, the use of “una nuotata” further suggests informality, used as a friendly way of suggesting an activity.

Extract 6

“Feel like going swimming?”	“ Vi va una nuotata?”
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Extract 7

“Feel like cooking breakfast?”	“ Ti va di preparare la colazione?”
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Extract 8

“We’re gonna need some practice.”	“Ci vorrà un po’ di pratica.”
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4.3 The translation of poetic expression

Chapter 5 of the novel contains a poem written by Sagan for Moby, aiming to teach him to look at the world from different perspectives. Yet, Merit disapproves of this story, describing it as “morbid” and “disturbing” because of its subject matter. When it came to the translation of this poem, I used a strategy called *adaptation* by Newmark (1988),

which means that “the themes, character, plots are usually preserved, the SL culture converted to the TL culture and the text rewritten” (Newmark, 1988:46). The story rhymes, as Moby points out during his conversation with Merit. This is precisely the reason why I adopted the strategy, so as to maintain the rhyming pattern. The intention was to render the poem with its musicality and to achieve a result that would evoke similar effects from the readers of the translated text. For instance, one of the solutions that I considered most effective involved altering the rhyme scheme, in some cases adopting a coupled rhyme scheme instead of the original alternate rhyme scheme (see Extract 9), or even employing a chain rhyme structure (see Extract 10) in other instances. Moreover, I opted to reorganize the word order from the SL (see Extract 9 and Extract 11). Finally, I decided to transform nouns into a verb (see Extract 11).

Furthermore, during the translation of the poem I faced another significant challenge. On the one hand, the poem is introduced as intended for a child, prompting me to consider the option of neutralizing any aspects of the story that might be labeled as inappropriate for a child to read or listen to. Yet, on the other hand, as the chapter unfolds, the protagonist herself criticizes and condemns this very unsuitability. At this point, I realized that omitting nouns or verbs such as “dead” or “killed” could potentially affect the book’s integrity, making Merit’s critique redundant and unnecessary. For this reason, I made the decision to convey both expressions unaltered so as to preserve the story’s flow (see Extract 12).

Extract 9

There’s a story of a King	Questa è la storia di un Re
And this story is very true	E questo è un racconto vero
Some say it’s just a rumor	Una diceria per qualcuno
Some say it’s just a ruse	Una furberia per taluno

Extract 10

When the work was finally done	Quando il lavoro fu terminato
He decided to go inspect it	Decise che l’avrebbe ispezionato
But when he arrived in the town of Perspective	Ma quando giunse alla città di Prospettiva

It was exactly as he'd left it	Era tutto esattamente come lo aveva lasciato
---------------------------------------	--

Extract 11

So he bought a town called Perspective	Comprò una città chiamata Prospettiva
And made the people build him a castle	E un castello alla gente fece costruire
At the top of their highest mountain	In cima alla montagna più alta
He didn't care if it was a hassle	Non gli importava potesse loro infastidire

Extract 12

When the people were all dead	Quando tutti furono morti
A red cardinal then appeared	Un cardinale rosso sopraggiunse
“King Flip, what have you done?”	“Re Flip, cos’hai combinato?”
You killed good people, I do fear.”	Hai ucciso brava gente”, aggiunse

By means of these choices, despite the obvious limits, I was able to render the poem in an acceptable and clear way. Moreover, when translating poems or stories for children, it is fundamental to keep in mind not only the final reader, in this case Merit's baby half-brother Moby, but also its ability to read and comprehend, so as to effectively deliver the final work.

4.4 The translation of idiomatic expressions

Another challenge I had to face during the translation process was how to render idiomatic expressions from English into Italian. For instance, I came across the expression “to be (long/a few years) overdue”, which was the most problematic to translate. A literal translation from English to Italian would not have been effective, which is why I based my work on Baker's (2018) idea of semantic equivalence, further supported by Larson's (1998) idea of “going from the form of the first language to the form of the second

language by way of semantic language” (Larson, 1998:3). The aim was to convey the same meaning of the SL even if it meant opting for a paraphrase of the ST sentence. As depicted in Extracts 13, 14 and 15, the translation of the same expression results in three different variations. They all refer to the fact that a certain action was meant to have taken place many years prior. In particular, Extract 13 and 14 imply that the family is now expected to fulfill what should have been accomplished in the past. On the other hand, Extract 15 suggests that the understanding between Merit and her stepmother has been a long awaited and desired development. Nevertheless, the three extracts convey slightly different nuances, depending on the context in which the conversation unfolds. While on the one hand, Extract 13 shows what may be considered a more straightforward way of translating this particular expression, Extract 14 and 15 are clear examples of paraphrasing the sentence in the SL in order to obtain what Baker (2018) defines as semantic equivalence.

Extract 13

He nods. “Me, you, Honor, Utah, Victoria.” He sets his coffee cup down. “I think it’s a few years overdue.”	Annunisce. “Io, tu, Honor, Utah, Victoria.” Posa la sua tazza di caffè. “Avremmo dovuto farlo molti anni fa.”
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Extract 14

This family is long overdue .	È ora che questa famiglia si dia da fare.
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Extract 15

And just like that, we come to an understanding that’s been long overdue .	E così, siamo giunte ad un accordo necessario da tanto tempo .
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Another challenging idiom to translate is “to push one’s buttons”. In this case, similarly to what I stated above when dealing with the expression “to be long overdue”, I immediately discarded the adoption of a literal translation. In contrast, I opted for a

translation strategy proposed by Baker (2018) to deal with the translation of idioms. The strategy consists of using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar in form, which can be used to maintain the naturalness and cultural relevance of the translation (see Extract 16).

Extract 16

He immediately shakes his head.	Lui scuote immediatamente la testa.
“No, they don’t know about Luck. She’s pushing your buttons. ”	“No, non sanno di Luck. Ti sta solo provocando. ”

To conclude, the final chapter of this dissertation focuses on applying theoretical notions to a tangible context and providing real-world examples, to combine theory and practice. For instance, the application of my approach to translating youth language, which includes “swear” words and other informal expressions, is guided by the principle of preserving faithfully the overall meaning of the ST. This approach is relevant as taboo words and topics are considered a crucial part of this literary genre, which is why they are rarely manipulated or omitted in the final translation.

Moreover, to obtain a successful translation of the poem showcased in chapter 5 of the novel, I decided to make changes and adaptations keeping in mind the main goal, which was that of maintaining the rhyming pattern. By doing so, I aimed to maintain both the musicality of the poem and its emotional and artistic essence. For example, in some cases I was able to adopt a coupled rhyme scheme instead of the original alternate rhyme scheme; in other cases, I decided to change the word order in a sentence, or to transform a noun into a verb.

Finally, to address the challenge of inequivalence at word level, specifically referring to the translation of idiomatic expressions, I opted for Baker’s strategies, that allowed me not only to preserve the naturalness of the language but also to maintain the cultural relevance, making the TT resonate with the audience.

CONCLUSIONS

The overall aim of this dissertation was to offer a translation proposal of two selected chapters from a novel written for young adults by Colleen Hoover. The proposed translation served as the basis for the development of the present dissertation, making it possible to navigate and investigate the world of the Young Adult Literature genre. In order to do so, it was necessary to first understand the notion of young adult, focusing particularly on the age range of this social group that constitutes the intended readership of this literature. Moreover, I dedicated a subsection to highlighting its most salient features and key elements. The goal was to understand the genre to its core so as to successfully produce a translation that was able to convey the original message intended by the author. Furthermore, understanding the readership was vital to adapt the translation to the target culture, ultimately offering a finished work that deeply resonated with the audience. Finally, before delving into the translation from English into Italian of the two chapters of the book, an introduction to the novel and the author was provided. This introduction aimed to capture the essence of the story through an overview of the plot and its main themes.

The heart of this dissertation lies in the translation proposal. However, in order to offer an accurate and effective analysis, it was necessary to thoroughly investigate the role of YAL in the broad field of translation studies. In this regard, experts have shown that this literary genre occupies a peripheral position in the literal polysystem, meaning that it is considered to have a relatively less established position. This implies that YAL might not receive the same level of attention and recognition as other genres in the literary world. Moreover, it is a relatively recent phenomenon, and only recently has it started to become the subject of in-depth studies. Besides, its status influences the way it is approached in translation studies, consequently requiring specific strategies, so as to accurately render its unique characteristics. The challenge when translating literature intended for young adults lies in the fact that, given its recent development, there have not been sufficient academic studies dedicated to the genre in order to provide a definite guideline, especially adapted for translators. As a consequence, translators often find themselves relying on the existing practices concerning the translation of literature for children. However, this approach might not be optimal because of the unique features of both genres.

While some strategies for the translation of literature for children may be adopted when translating YAL, the difference in themes, language and cultural references is significant also. As a matter of fact, YAL delves into more complex themes such self-discovery, relationships, mental health with a language complexity that indeed requires more age-appropriate translation practices. Applying translation strategies for children's literature might oversimplify the nuances required when rendering YAL, potentially neutralizing the resonance of the text with its intended readership. For instance, in my work of translation, the omission of "swear" words or expletives would have resulted in a TT that no longer mirrored a teenager's lively way of communicating and expressing oneself.

Having said that, I strongly believe that more research should be conducted on the topic of YAL in translation, in order to develop translation strategies specifically for this genre, without having to draw on strategies dedicated to other literary genres as they might not capture the details and key elements essential to the YAL genre. Indeed, more in-depth research would provide a clear understanding of the genre, language, and themes particularly, as well as the challenges for translators. This would lead to the development of specialized strategies, providing translators with the tools to deal with the world of YAL. For instance, it could lead to the creation of a glossary of the most used YAL slang, informal expressions or even idiomatic expressions, followed by an explanation for translators. Moreover, specialized approaches to translation would allow them to produce target texts that fully represent the challenges faced by young adults in transitioning between childhood and adulthood, depicting a reality that the readership can identify with, consequently promoting reader engagement.

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RIASSUNTO IN ITALIANO

TRADURRE LA LETTERATURA PER GIOVANI ADULTI: PROPOSTA DI TRADUZIONE DI “WITHOUT MERIT” DI COLLEEN HOOVER

La letteratura per giovani adulti è considerata il collegamento tra l'infanzia e l'età adulta, mettendosi al servizio degli adolescenti nel loro tentativo di navigare le complessità che questo passaggio comporta. Questo genere offre loro uno spazio in cui creare e coltivare la loro identità e allo stesso tempo mette a disposizione una realtà in cui potersi identificare e di cui sentirsi parte. Inserita nell'ambito degli studi traduttivi, questa letteratura rappresenta una difficile impresa per i traduttori, soprattutto a causa del suo recente sviluppo. Per questo motivo, ancora non ci sono stati studi abbastanza approfonditi ed esauritivi in merito a questo genere per poter offrire delle linee guida coerenti per i traduttori, lasciandolo perciò ai margini del polisistema letterario. Ne segue un grado di considerazione più basso rispetto ad altri generi letterari e ad uno status che influenza le modalità in cui viene approcciato nell'ambito della traduzione. La difficoltà nel tradurre questa letteratura emerge principalmente nel comprenderne la vera essenza e le caratteristiche che la rendono unica, come per esempio il linguaggio utilizzato dagli adolescenti per esprimersi e comunicare tra loro e con gli adulti. Possiamo dire che il principale obiettivo della presente tesi è quello di entrare nel mondo del genere letterario della letteratura per giovani adulti, con le sue caratteristiche peculiari, concentrandosi in particolar modo sulle pratiche di traduzione da adottare per arrivare ad una sua adeguata traduzione. La tesi si concentra principalmente sulle difficoltà che i traduttori possono riscontrare nel tradurre un testo per giovani adulti, con l'obiettivo di esplorare varie prospettive e vari metodi nell'affrontare questa pratica, offrendo inoltre una serie di strategie che possono assistere i traduttori nel loro lavoro. A questo proposito, ho deciso di proporre una mia traduzione di due capitoli del romanzo intitolato “Without Merit” di Colleen Hoover, allo scopo di adottare le teorie e strategie proposte dai vari esperti del genere e applicarle a casi ed esempi concreti, fornendo una spiegazione delle principali tematiche trattate in questa tesi.

Il presente lavoro si divide in quattro capitoli, il cui contenuto verrà riassunto nei seguenti paragrafi.

Il primo capitolo è incentrato sul fornire un'introduzione generale del genere letterario della letteratura per giovani adulti, introduzione che funge da base per lo sviluppo dell'intera tesi. Il primo concetto analizzato è la fascia di età in cui si inseriscono i lettori di questo genere. È emerso che la definizione stessa di "giovane adulto" si basa sull'età. Sono state evidenziate tre differenti definizioni di letteratura per giovani adulti. La prima viene proposta da Nilsen and Donelson, i quali intendono letteratura per giovani adulti tutto ciò che i lettori di età compresa tra i 12 e i 18 anni scelgono di leggere o per piacere o per adempiere ai compiti scolastici. La seconda definizione viene dal Educational Resources Information Clearinghouse (ERIC) che spiega che i giovani adulti sono persone tra i 18 e i 22 anni di età. La terza definizione è data dal National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) che parla di giovani adulti riferendosi agli individui tra i 21 e i 25 anni di età. Tuttavia, Cart, esperto in letteratura per giovani adulti, spiega che la fascia 12-18 non è più abbastanza ampia da includere tutti i lettori di questo genere; perciò, a partire dagli anni '90 per classificare questa fetta di popolazione si parte dai 18 anni fino ai 25, classificazione che viene supportata anche da studi scientifici che dimostrano come il cervello degli adolescenti raggiunge la sua maturazione solo intorno ai 25 anni.

Dopodiché, il capitolo continua con una panoramica storica dello sviluppo del genere letterario. Nasce intorno agli anni '40 del '900 con il libro *Seventeenth Summer* di Maureen Daly. Non va dimenticato il romanzo *The Catcher in the Rye* di J. D. Salinger nel 1951, tuttavia all'epoca non ancora classificato come libro per giovani adulti. Gli anni '40 e '50 vedono una grande attenzione verso le tematiche d'azione, che sono poi superate negli anni '60, quando emerge un nuovo genere, la letteratura per giovani adulti, incentrato sul rappresentare la realtà. Nel 1967 viene pubblicato il romanzo *The Outsiders* di S. E. Hinton, considerato il primo vero romanzo per giovani adulti. Crowe, infatti, classifica come letteratura per giovani adulti tutti i romanzi pubblicati dopo il 1967. Gli anni '70 sono considerati come il decennio d'oro di questa letteratura, un successo che dura fino agli anni '90, quando una crisi scaturisce da una serie di avvenimenti. Tuttavia, il genere si riprende in seguito, segnando la sua seconda età dell'oro che continua tutt'oggi. Sono da menzionare anche opere letterarie di grande rilevanza come *Harry Potter* and la saga di *Twilight*, che hanno dato il via allo sviluppo del genere.

La parte conclusiva del capitolo si propone di scoprire le caratteristiche principali di questo genere, soffermandosi su stile e tematiche, quali la salute mentale, le dinamiche familiari, la scoperta personale e il romanticismo.

La decisione di trattare tematiche così attuali come la salute mentale può essere vista come la volontà di offrire ai lettori un supporto emotivo e psicologico, cercando anche di normalizzare queste “problematiche” così che gli adolescenti che leggono le storie possano sentirsi parte di un gruppo.

Il tema della scoperta personale fa riferimento all’esperienza di varcare l’età adulta, un viaggio che rappresenta il trampolino di lancio per i giovani lettori per capire se stessi e per crescere.

Parlando di dinamiche familiari, gli autori di questo genere si impegnano a raccontare come il rapporto con i genitori possa influire sul processo di crescita degli adolescenti. Si conclude che tutti gli adolescenti necessitano di una figura adulta che possa sostenerli e consigliarli nella quotidianità per affrontare al meglio le sfide della vita.

Infine, il tema del romanticismo è necessario per descrivere l’idea che gli adolescenti possano interessarsi al sesso opposto (o anche allo stesso). Inoltre, vengono descritte le emozioni che derivano da questo complicato sentimento, quale l’amore.

Dopo aver analizzato le tematiche principali, il capitolo si chiude con le scelte stilistiche e linguistiche del genere. I romanzi sono principalmente scritti in prima persona al tempo presente, riuscendo così ad avere un impatto particolarmente significativo sui lettori e rendendoli partecipi della storia. Oltretutto, i protagonisti sono adolescenti, così che i lettori possano identificarsi al meglio, creando un legame tra lettore e protagonista. La volontà di mantenere l’autenticità della storia è evidenziata dall’uso di parole ed espressioni appartenenti al gergo giovanile attuale, utili per facilitare la comunicazione con i lettori.

Il secondo capitolo della tesi tratta i principali approcci e le problematiche più frequenti quando si traduce la letteratura per giovani adulti, prendendo in considerazione alcune definizioni del termine “traduzione” e di cosa questa pratica comporta, così come si propone di spiegare il ruolo del traduttore.

Il capitolo si apre con una definizione di traduzione proposta dal dizionario Collins: “la traduzione è un testo scritto o parlato che è stato tradotto da una lingua diversa”. Tuttavia,

questa definizione non comprende tutte le sfumature di questa pratica. Catford propone una nuova prospettiva, sostenendo che la traduzione può essere vista come “la sostituzione di materiale testuale in una lingua con materiale testuale equivalente in un'altra lingua”, sottolineando che il fine ultimo della traduzione è quello di trovare i giusti equivalenti. In effetti, Baker parla dell'importanza dell'*equivalenza di significato* in traduzione. Inoltre, Larson sostiene che “la traduzione consiste nel trasferire il significato della lingua di partenza nella lingua di arrivo”. Tenendo conto di queste varie opinioni, si conclude che l'essenza della traduzione è il trasferimento del significato.

Il capitolo continua concentrandosi sul ruolo del traduttore, definendolo come mediatore culturale. Harliani sostiene che la lingua non può essere separata dai suoi contenuti e dagli elementi paralinguistici. La cultura in effetti può rappresentare uno dei più grandi ostacoli nel processo di traduzione e richiede professionalità ed esperienza, oltre ad una padronanza della lingua di origine.

Infine, il capitolo tratta delle principali problematiche che il traduttore può riscontrare al momento della traduzione, seguite da una serie di strategie utili ad affrontare eventuali ostacoli. Da subito, viene evidenziata la mancanza di studi specifici sul tema della letteratura per giovani adulti, il che comporta la mancanza di linee guida nell'affrontare questo genere nell'ambito della traduzione.

La prima problematica da tenere a mente è il linguaggio usato dai giovani adulti per comunicare, chiamato proprio linguaggio giovanile. Esso è flessibile e caratterizzato da un rapido mutamento poiché influenzato da una serie di fattori culturali che lo rendono dinamico. Inoltre, per le sue caratteristiche, viene considerato una varietà linguistica non standard, ossia senza regole grammaticali o di pronuncia e con parole che (ancora) non rientrano nei dizionari ufficiali.

La seconda problematica da osservare è la presenza della cosiddetta commutazione dei codici, ossia “l'uso alternato di due lingue o varietà linguistiche all'interno dello stesso enunciato o durante la stessa conversazione”. Indica un diverso modo con cui gli adolescenti comunicano tra di loro rispetto che con gli adulti. Vizcaíno sostiene che l'obiettivo finale del traduttore è quello di raggiungere una *equivalenza pragmatica*, ossia produrre sul pubblico di destinazione le stesse reazioni e gli stessi effetti che il testo di partenza ha prodotto sul pubblico di origine.

Come già accennato, la mancanza di studi sul tema della letteratura per giovani adulti in traduzione fa sì che spesso i traduttori si basino su strategie che riguardano la traduzione per bambini. Shavit introduce due principi per tradurre per bambini, ossia adattare il testo affinché sia appropriato ed utile per un bambino e adattare la trama e il linguaggio alla percezione della società circa la capacità di lettura e comprensione del bambino. Quindi, il testo finale deve essere prodotto in conformità alle norme di moralità accettate e richieste dal sistema infantile. Per questo motivo, nei libri per bambini le cosiddette tematiche taboo sono spesso riformulate, o addirittura rimosse, cosa che invece nella letteratura per giovani adulti non succede, poiché queste tematiche sono parte integrante della storia.

Per quanto riguarda la traduzione del linguaggio giovanile, tenendo in mente che si tratta di una varietà linguistica non standard, ci si basa sulle tecniche di traduzione adottate per i dialetti. Berezowski propone una serie di strategie, tra cui la *neutralizzazione*, ossia che il testo finale viene reso con una lingua standard, e la *lessicalizzazione*, ossia mantenere nel testo finale delle tracce del “dialetto”. Inoltre, Sienkiewicz suggerisce altre strategie: scegliere una “immagine” che vada a sostituire un’altra “immagine”, che però porta a una traduzione di difficile comprensione per il lettore, poiché la rende “straniera”; optare per una sostituzione approssimativa della varietà, il che mantiene l’aspetto della commutazione dei codici, ma si cancella la differenza tra il linguaggio giovanile e la lingua standard; neutralizzazione, ossia sostituire le varietà non standard con una lingua standard, perdendo del tutto l’aspetto della commutazione dei codici; amplificazione, ossia sostituire il linguaggio giovanile della lingua di partenza con il linguaggio giovanile della lingua di arrivo.

Il capitolo si conclude con una discussione sul concetto di non equivalenza a livello di parola di Baker, la quale propone una serie di strategie per risolvere il problema della mancanza di equivalenti diretti tra una lingua e un’altra: scegliere una parola con un significato generale; scegliere una parola neutrale o meno espressiva; optare per una sostituzione culturale, il cui obiettivo è quello di avere lo stesso impatto sostituendo un elemento specifico della cultura con un elemento della lingua di arrivo; scegliere di omettere determinati aspetti del testo di origine.

Il terzo capitolo è il più esteso della tesi poiché contiene la mia proposta di traduzione dei due capitoli del romanzo “Without Merit” di Colleen Hoover. A questo proposito, il capitolo offre inizialmente un’introduzione dell’autrice, e in seguito del romanzo. Nata e cresciuta in Texas, Colleen Hoover è la scrittrice numero 1 del New York Times di 24 best-seller. Le sue opere rientrano nel genere della letteratura per giovani adulti, nonché del thriller e psicologico. La sua fama inizia nel 2012 dopo la pubblicazione del suo primo romanzo *Slammed*, e continua tutt’oggi soprattutto grazie al successo nato dai social a partire dal 2020.

Il romanzo “Without Merit” viene pubblicato il 3 ottobre 2017, e rientra pienamente nella letteratura per giovani adulti. La storia è raccontata in prima persona dalla protagonista Merit Voss, una ragazza di diciassette anni alle prese con problematiche riguardo la sua salute mentale. Non gode di un buon rapporto con i suoi genitori e si sente trascurata dalla sua famiglia, e il tutto aggrava la sua salute mentale. Vive in una chiesa sconsecrata con la sua famiglia, composta dalla popolare sorella gemella Honor e dal fratello Utah, atleta di spicco, dal padre Barnaby Voss, freddo e distaccato, e dalla madre Victoria, che dopo aver combattuto il cancro si è rinchiusa nel seminterrato a causa della sua agorafobia. Il padre si è risposato con Victoria, ex infermiera della madre, da cui ha avuto un figlio, Moby, che rappresenta l’innocenza in una famiglia così travagliata. Infine, è presente Sagan, interesse amoroso di Merit e personaggio estremamente importante per lo sviluppo della storia e per la crescita personale di Merit.

Dietro le apparenze di una famiglia perfetta, si nasconde un segreto che distruggerà il precario equilibrio familiare. Insieme, dovranno saper trovare la forza di affrontare la verità e di andare avanti.

Il terzo capitolo continua con la proposta di traduzione dall’inglese all’italiano dei capitoli 5 e 17 del romanzo, che vengono poi analizzati del capitolo conclusivo.

Il quarto e ultimo capitolo di questa tesi contiene una dimostrazione pratica delle tecniche e strategie di traduzione della letteratura per giovani adulti trattate e commentate precedentemente nel secondo capitolo.

La prima parte del capitolo offre delle considerazioni generali prima di addentrarsi nell’analisi vera e propria della proposta di traduzione. In effetti, presenta l’approccio di Newmark conosciuto come “traduzione semantica”, che si concentra sul valore estetico

della traduzione, più che sul significato. Procede poi menzionando le tre caratteristiche di una traduzione di qualità, ossia accuratezza, accettabilità e leggibilità.

La sezione successiva tratta della traduzione del linguaggio giovanile. Ho cercato di spiegare che il linguaggio giovanile, essendo un modo giovanile di esprimersi, contiene spesso espressioni informali, comprese le parolacce. Per tradurre questo particolare linguaggio ho deciso di adottare due strategie, tra cui l'*estranamento* proposto da Venuti per tradurre dall'inglese "dumb ass" all'italiano "stupida", e la *traduzione semantica* di Newmark per tradurre dall'inglese "bitch" all'italiano "rottura di palle", per via delle diverse sfumature di significato che la parola inglese può assumere quando tradotta. La traduzione e la scelta di quale significato attribuire in italiano dipendono dal contesto nel quale è inserito il termine.

Il capitolo continua trattando l'aspetto della commutazione dei codici. La presenza di questo fenomeno è resa soprattutto dal fatto che le espressioni colloquiali vengono usate solo ed esclusivamente nelle conversazioni tra due o più adolescenti o tra due o più adulti, e mai in conversazioni tra un adolescente e un adulto. Ho cercato poi di esporre questo fatto interessante attraverso degli esempi di conversazioni tra Honor e il padre (adolescente-adulto) e tra Honor e Merit (adolescente-adolescente), aggiungendo anche un dialogo tra il padre e un poliziotto (adulto-adulto).

Il fenomeno della commutazione dei codici viene evidenziato anche dalla presenza di contrazioni informali nella lingua inglese, non presenti in italiano. Da qui, la difficoltà di rendere in italiano un tono colloquiale attraverso il semplice uso di strutture grammaticali. Ho concluso che nella traduzione italiana l'aspetto informale viene perso nel processo di traduzione, e bisogna perciò tener conto del contesto in cui le conversazioni si svolgono, riuscendo così a determinare la natura del dialogo.

La seconda parte del capitolo tratta la traduzione della poesia contenuta nel capitolo 5 del romanzo. L'obiettivo è stato quello di tradurre la poesia con maggiore fedeltà possibile, mantenendo la musicalità e l'aspetto delle rime. Una soluzione è stata quella di cambiare la tipologia delle rime adottate nel testo inglese, scegliendo una rima baciata invece dell'originale rima alternata, oppure optando per una rima incatenata in altri casi. Un'altra soluzione è stata quella di cambiare l'ordine delle parole nel testo di partenza.

Infine, la neutralizzazione o meno di certi aspetti della poesia è stato un elemento di grande riflessione. Normalmente, nel tradurre una storia per bambini, si opta per

l'eliminazione di tutti quegli elementi che possono essere visti come inappropriati per il lettore. Tuttavia, in questo caso per evitare di influire negativamente sul corso della storia, si è deciso di mantenere parole come “morti” oppure “uccisi”, poiché la stessa inappropriatezza della poesia viene fortemente critica da Merit nel corso del capitolo. L'omissione di questi elementi avrebbe reso superflua la lamentela della protagonista. Il capitolo si conclude con la discussione delle tecniche applicate per la traduzione di espressioni idiomatiche specifiche della cultura e lingua inglese. La prima espressione citata è “to be long overdue”. Da subito viene esclusa la traduzione letterale, adottando invece la tecnica proposta da Baker dell'*equivalenza semantica*, ossia passare da una forma della lingua di partenza ad una forma della lingua di arrivo attraverso il linguaggio semantico. L'aspetto interessante di questa espressione è il fatto che, nonostante faccia riferimento ad una certa azione che avrebbe dovuto compiersi molti anni prima, tradotta in italiano risulta avere tre diverse sfumature di significato, come si può notare nei seguenti estratti.

Extract 13

He nods. “Me, you, Honor, Utah, Victoria.” He sets his coffee cup down. “ I think it’s a few years overdue. ”	Annuisce. “Io, tu, Honor, Utah, Victoria.” Posa la sua tazza di caffè. “ Avremmo dovuto farlo molti anni fa. ”
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Extract 14

This family is long overdue.	È ora che questa famiglia si dia da fare.
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Extract 15

And just like that, we come to an understanding that’s been long overdue.	E così, siamo giunte ad un accordo necessario da tanto tempo.
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Il significato di questa espressione idiomatica varia dal contesto nel quale viene inserita, assumendo una diversa sfumatura di significato.

Il capitolo si conclude con l'analisi di una seconda espressione idiomatica, ossia "to push one's buttons", resa in italiano come "ti sta provocando", adottando la strategia di Baker, ossia optare per una sostituzione culturale con un idioma che ha un simile significato ma una forma scritta diversa.

La conclusione di questa tesi si concentra soprattutto sull'importante necessità di approfondire gli studi relativi alla letteratura per giovani adulti, sia in termini generali che nel contesto specifico della traduzione. In effetti, a causa della sua posizione marginale nell'ampio ambito degli studi letterari, non sono ancora state formulate sufficienti strategie e linee guida per affrontare al meglio questo genere, tanto che spesso i traduttori si vedono obbligati a seguire le regole di traduzione per l'infanzia. Tuttavia, l'adozione di queste norme non è sempre ottimale nella traduzione per giovani adulti, poiché i due generi presentano delle differenze sostanziali, in termini di tematiche affrontate, linguaggio e stile utilizzati. La formulazione di strategie specifiche per questo genere garantirebbe ai traduttori di produrre testi che rappresentano appieno l'identità dei giovani protagonisti, permettendo ai lettori di identificarvisi e riconoscersi nella realtà descritta.